



Collaborative Leadership in Education: Increasing Teacher Participation in Decision Making

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative leadership requires the active involvement of teachers in the decision-making process so that they can participate rationally and responsibly. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the application of collaborative leadership in increasing teacher participation in decision-making at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA Bondowoso. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observation. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results of this study found that collaborative leadership at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA in increasing teacher participation in decision-making was carried out in several ways, namely: building an open communication forum, holding discussion groups with anjangsana format, encouraging teacher initiatives through Idea Bank, recognizing and appreciating teacher contributions, and integrating their input into policies. This has proven effective in increasing teachers' motivation, sense of belonging, and commitment to the school.

Keywords: Collaborative Leadership, Decision Making, Increasing Teacher

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of decision-making in the world of education largely determines the success of an institution. The role of the principal or educational leader is not only as a director but also as a facilitator who can involve teachers in the decision-making process. Collaborative leadership theory emphasizes the importance of the active participation of all members of the educational team, especially teachers, in creating an inclusive and participatory environment. This approach has proven more effective than authoritarian or top-down leadership styles that often ignore teacher input (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Ramelan (2010) found that leaders who involve their members in decision-making can increase their commitment to the decisions made. In education, teacher participation in decision-making has been shown to improve the quality of education, create an energetic work atmosphere, and strengthen teamwork (Eriş et al., 2017). However, when teachers feel

that they are not involved in decision-making, this can reduce their enthusiasm in carrying out their duties, as expressed by (Handayani, 2021).

Principals have great potential as drivers of significant change in schools, especially if they adopt a flexible and collaborative leadership approach (Pashiaridis, 1994). By involving teachers in the problem-solving and decision-making process, principals can increase teachers' sense of ownership and responsibility for the decisions made. This approach also creates a more inclusive and productive work environment and encourages the innovation and synergy needed to more effectively achieve educational goals (Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013).

Participation in decision-making is important not only to increase teacher motivation but also to ensure that decisions are made from a broader perspective. When teachers are given space to participate in management decisions, they feel more valued and responsible, which ultimately improves their performance (Muthi, 2019; Ryan & Deci, 1985). Conversely, low teacher involvement in decision-making can hurt their performance and motivation (Muthi, 2021). Decision-making in schools cannot be done in isolation. Teacher participation in decision-making is very important to solve the problems that exist in schools (Sukmawati & Imanah, 2022). At Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA Bondowoso, the principal has implemented a collaborative leadership approach that provides space for teachers to actively participate in various aspects of decision-making. Teachers at this madrasah are involved in communicating ideas and concepts, providing criticism and evaluation, and implementing agreed-upon programs.

Collaborative leadership requires the active involvement of teachers in the decision-making process so that they can participate rationally and responsibly. In this way, the principal not only strengthens teachers' sense of ownership of the decisions made but also creates a more inclusive and productive work environment. This approach promotes synergy and innovation in achieving educational goals and ensures that decisions are made based on a wider range of perspectives, ultimately leading to more sustainable and effective change. Overall, participation in decision-making in schools is a conscious act of choosing among available alternatives to achieve predetermined goals (Tampubolon, 2023). Decision-making is an important cognitive process in motivation, leadership, communication, coordination, and organizational change (Huliatunisa et al., 2023). Sumaryadi (2010) also groups participation in decision-making as a form of involvement, where such participation is useful not only for increasing the sense of responsibility but also for reducing feelings of alienation and anonymity (Wandersman & Florin, 2000). Therefore, principals need to encourage teachers to participate in decision-making, especially in matters related to their duties and development, and provide more opportunities for them to be involved in management decisions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Case studies were chosen because they allow researchers to explore in depth the dynamics of collaborative

leadership in a particular context. Qualitative research is a tradition in the social sciences that relies heavily on observing individuals in their environment and connecting them to the language and events that occur around them (Margono, 2010: 36).

The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the application of collaborative leadership in increasing teacher participation in decision-making at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA Bondowoso.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and administrators to obtain different perspectives on the collaborative leadership practices implemented. Observations were conducted to directly observe interactions and decision-making processes in the schools. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes the process of data reduction, data presentation, and concluding.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The principal of the madrasa implemented several strategies to increase the active participation of teachers in decision-making. This approach is based on the principle of collaborative leadership, which emphasizes participation, collaboration, and appreciation of teachers' contributions. The principal used several methods, including establishing an open communication forum, holding discussion groups in the form of *anjangsana*, encouraging teacher initiatives and ideas through the idea bank, providing recognition and appreciation for their contributions, and integrating teacher input into school policies. These approaches aim not only to improve the effectiveness of decision-making, but also to create a school environment that is inclusive, innovative, and responsive to the needs of the entire educational community. Next, we will discuss in detail how each of these strategies is implemented and supported by relevant theories of leadership and motivation, and how the results of the study at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA demonstrate the effectiveness of these strategies.

1. Create An Open Communication Forum

Collaborative leadership at ATQIA Madrasah Aliyah is implemented through various open communication forums that allow teachers to effectively participate in the decision-making process. Active teacher participation is seen as key to creating an innovative educational environment that is responsive to student needs.

One of the main ways in which the madrasah principal encourages active teacher participation is by holding weekly meetings every Friday morning. This meeting is designed as a forum for open discussion between teachers and the school leadership. At each meeting, the school management not only communicates policies or plans to be implemented, but also actively invites teachers to share their views, suggestions, and experiences. Every teacher at ATQIA Madrasah Aliyah is allowed to freely express his or her ideas without fear of being ignored or negatively judged. This approach makes teachers feel heard and valued, and therefore more enthusiastic about participating.

In addition, the principal of the madrasa also uses the WhatsApp group to strengthen daily communication. This group is a dynamic platform where teachers can

discuss various issues, ask questions, and suggest new ideas in real-time. This digital platform makes communication faster and more efficient. The results of the study at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA showed that open communication forums, such as weekly meetings that engage teachers in policy discussions, are effective in increasing teacher participation. This supports the theory of (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2004) that openness in communication is key to increasing collaboration and participation in decision-making. Their study found that teachers felt more valued and involved when they had a platform to communicate their ideas and opinions directly, which is in line with the findings of (Smylie et al., 1996), who showed that open communication increases teachers' sense of ownership of the policies adopted.

The findings of this study also extend Bush and Glover's (2021) theory that weekly meetings are not only a means of communication, but also a platform for building trust between management and teachers. At Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA, this trust proved to be an important element in building stronger and more innovative collaborations, supporting the theory that trust is the foundation of effective collaboration.

2. Discussion Group

At Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA, the principal uses an effective collaborative leadership approach to increase teacher participation in decision-making, including the use of group discussions. The principal recognizes that open and focused discussions can be an important means of exploring different ideas and views among teachers, which ultimately enriches the decision-making process. These discussion groups focus on specific issues facing the madrasa, such as curriculum development, improving the quality of learning, or planning extracurricular activities. What makes this approach unique is that the implementation of these discussion groups does not take place in the school, but is packaged in the form of alternating visits to each teacher's home every two months.

This format makes the discussion atmosphere more relaxed and personal, encouraging deeper teacher involvement. The principal participates in each discussion as a facilitator, ensuring that each teacher has the opportunity to openly express his or her opinions and ideas.

This approach to the visit not only strengthens relationships among teachers but also provides a different nuance to decision-making, where ideas can develop more freely and creatively.

The results of the collaborative leadership study at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA above show that regular discussion groups, especially in the form of visits to teachers' homes, create a more relaxed and personal atmosphere that encourages deeper teacher engagement. This is consistent with (Clinton & Kelly, 2020) theory of communities of practice, which explains that group discussions help teachers develop innovative solutions to educational challenges. In the context of Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA, visits provide a different nuance that improves relationships between teachers and

management and facilitates the creation of a more collaborative environment. The same point was made by (Nurhaifa et al., 2023), who emphasized the importance of group discussions in sharing best practices and teaching strategies. This is important because group discussions increase teachers' sense of involvement in decision-making, which supports DuFour's (2004) theory about the importance of professional learning communities in increasing participation and collaboration.

3. Encourage Teacher Initiative And Ideas

At Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA, the principal took an innovative step to increase teacher participation in decision-making by implementing the concept of an idea bank based on a suggestion box. This step was taken to accommodate various creative ideas and initiatives from teachers that may not have been communicated before.

The principal provided a physical suggestion box that was placed in the teacher's room where any teacher could easily access it. This box was designed as a place where teachers could submit ideas, suggestions, or criticism anonymously or with their names. With this suggestion box, the principal created an environment where every teacher felt his or her voice was heard and valued.

The principal and leadership team routinely review the suggestion box to review all ideas submitted. Each idea is then categorized by topic, such as instructional innovation, classroom management, or curriculum development. These ideas are then discussed in an all-hands meeting where teachers can provide feedback, refine ideas, or offer additional solutions. At this meeting, teachers whose ideas are deemed most relevant and have the potential to make a positive impact are invited to become more involved in the planning and implementation process. This not only increases teachers' sense of ownership of the decisions made but also strengthens collaboration between teachers and school leadership.

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the suggestion box as a component of the idea bank at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA successfully encouraged teachers to submit innovative ideas. This is in line with the views of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), who emphasized that leadership that prioritizes teacher empowerment contributes to increased creativity and innovation. Teachers who contribute to the Idea Bank feel more valued and motivated to innovate in education, which is consistent with (Ryan & Deci, 1985) theory of motivation and autonomy. This also extends Davenport and Prusak's (1998) theory of idea management in organizations by showing that the suggestion box, as an open and anonymous platform, is effective in increasing teacher participation. This suggests that a simple yet structured approach can be a powerful tool for encouraging individual initiative and innovation in education.

4. Recognize and Appreciate Contributions

At Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA, the principal uses a collaborative leadership approach that focuses on recognizing and rewarding teachers' contributions as a way to increase their participation in decision-making. The principal understands that sincere

and structured recognition can motivate teachers to participate more actively and feel valued for their efforts and ideas. To achieve this, the principal begins by establishing a transparent and fair recognition system. Each time a teacher makes a significant contribution, whether in the form of a new idea, innovation, or improvement in the learning process, the principal routinely provides appropriate recognition. This recognition may take the form of a certificate, a certificate of achievement, or even just a word of thanks.

The results of the above study confirm that recognition of teachers' contributions at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA increases their motivation and involvement in decision-making. This supports the motivational theories of Herzberg (1966) and Deci and Ryan (1985) which state that recognition is one of the most important motivational factors in the context of work. Teachers who feel that their contributions are recognized tend to be more motivated to continue to innovate and participate in school policy Bass (1985). This is also supported by Kouzes and Posner (2002) who explain that awards can increase the sense of belonging and commitment to the organization. At Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA, awards routinely given to teachers have been shown to increase their loyalty and commitment to the school's mission.

5. Integrating Input Into Policy

At Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA, the principal practices collaborative leadership with a focus on integrating teacher input into school policies to increase teacher participation in decision-making. The principal understands that actively involving teachers in the policy process not only builds ownership but also ensures that policies are more relevant and effective in meeting student needs. One of the first steps the principal took was to establish a formal mechanism for gathering teacher input. The principal holds regular listening sessions where teachers can openly share their suggestions, criticisms, or ideas about various aspects of school operations, from teaching methods to student management. All input received is recorded and analyzed by the management team to ensure that no ideas or suggestions are ignored.

Next, the principal implements a two-way feedback process. After listening to teacher input, the principal and team conduct an in-depth management analysis and then develop a policy plan that reflects the input. The results of the analysis and policy plan are then returned to the teachers in the form of a draft policy ready for further discussion. This process allows teachers to provide additional feedback before the final policy is implemented.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the integration of teacher input into school policies at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA increases the effectiveness and relevance of the resulting policies. This supports Fullan's (2001) theory that policies that are designed inclusively tend to be implemented more successfully. The results of this study are also consistent with the findings of (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2004), who emphasize the importance of teacher participation in strategic decision-making to increase a sense of ownership and support for policies.

Teacher involvement in the policy process creates policies that are more adaptable and relevant to the needs of students and the school environment. This supports the findings of (Harslett et al., 2000), who explains that participatory decision-making increases teachers' job satisfaction and commitment.

CONCLUSION

Research conducted at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA shows that the implementation of collaborative leadership involving the active participation of teachers in decision-making has a positive impact on school climate and the effectiveness of the resulting policies.

The results of this study found that collaborative leadership at Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA in increasing teacher participation in decision-making is carried out in several ways, namely: building an open communication forum, holding discussion groups with anjangsana format, encouraging teacher initiatives through Idea Bank, recognizing and appreciating teacher contributions, and integrating their input into policies. This has proven effective in increasing teacher motivation, sense of belonging, and commitment to the school.

Overall, this study makes an important contribution to our understanding of collaborative leadership in education, particularly in the context of secondary schools such as Madrasah Aliyah ATQIA. The findings show that leadership that supports teacher participation in decision-making can strengthen collaboration, increase the effectiveness of policies, and create a more dynamic and responsive educational environment to the needs of students and teachers.

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