



Does participative decision making affect lecturer performance in higher education?

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Abstract

Purpose – The relationship between participation and job performance has captured the interest of not only business researchers but also education researchers. However, the topic has not gained significant attention in the educational management research arena. The purpose of this paper is to empirically examine the impact of participation in decision making on lecturer performance in higher education.

Design/methodology/approach – Mail survey was used to collect the data. Open-ended questionnaires were distributed to the lecturers in Yogyakarta Province in Indonesia. A total of 347 usable questionnaires were obtained which is about 46.3 percent rate of return. Factor analysis was used to identify the constructs. All Cronbach's alpha values are more than 0.7 and factor loading is more than 0.50. Regression analysis was employed to test research hypotheses. In addition, *t*-test and ANOVA test were also conducted to investigate the different impact of demographic data on the job performance of the lecturers.

Findings – This study finds that participative decision making and academic rank have significant effect on lecturer performance. This finding implies that involving lecturers in educational decision making would be useful to improve not only lecturer performance but also organizational performance. In addition, among all demographic variables taken into account, only academic rank significantly affects lecturer performance.

Research limitations/implications – This study assumes constant the reward system and performance appraisal factors that might affect the relationship between participation and lecturer performance. The research findings urge the Indonesian government to immediately set an order of a participative decision making system to facilitate the realization of a better quality of Indonesian higher education performance.

Originality/value – Participative decision making is a tool to align an organization's vision and a lecturer's objectives. The higher the level of lecturer's participation in decision making the higher the lecturer's commitment to the organization's vision and the higher the lecturer's performance will be.

Keywords Participative decision making, Lecturer performance, Higher education, Indonesia, Performance levels, Employee participation

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

Higher education plays its main role in creating expertise and acts as a center of excellence for knowledge creation and developing human resources necessary for a country's development. Higher education is the engine that drives the economy and the vaccination against the worst effects of globalization (Creech, 2000; Brodjonegoro, 2009). Further, higher education affects every area of national development and deserves requisite attention (Chauhan, 2008). Many strategies have been implemented by developing countries such as Indonesia to improve their higher education performance.

Job performance is a significant factor affecting organizational performance. In an educational setting, lecturer performance has a strategic role and is the main factor determining student performance and hence university performance. Kingdon and Teal (2003) mentioned that teachers are a central actor in the learning process that takes place in schools. Studying factors affecting lecturer performance in higher educational institutions from different settings is very useful for not only enriching and refining theory but also for developing reasonable recommendations to increase quality of higher educational institutions.

Since 1980s, considerable attention was placed on enhancing teacher professionalism primarily through increasing teacher participation in decision making regarding issues affecting teachers' schools and classrooms (Rice and Schneider, 1994). Employee participation has been primarily initiated from the industrial and business domains; but only recently it is evident in schools (Conway, 1980, p. 41).

In the USA, teacher participation becomes central to many schools restructuring projects. The term "restructuring" suggests fundamental educational change in response to the need to comprehensively redesign schools (Lipman, 1997, pp. 3-4). Dimensions of managing the teaching-learning process developed by Pozo (2006) mentioned that there are many principal components determining successfulness of teaching-learning process, one of them is giving teacher a chance to participate in decision making.

Participation in decision making is becoming a controversial issue to find a fit between lecturers and universities' objectives. Such researches have been conducted in developed as well as developing countries but still very limited in Indonesia. Moreover, the previous research shows lack of consistent and conclusive evidence about the impact of participative decision making on teaching performance in higher education. The empirical evidence shows that research in this area is still an equivocal topic. The purpose of this research was to ascertain empirical evidence and gain insights about the impact of participative decision making on lecturer performance in higher education in Indonesia.

Literature review

Although job performance is commonly used in business and education fields of studies, its concept is still poorly defined. Different definitions of the concept might be given by different scholars in different fields. For instance, in education, technical engineering and business, we will find different definitions of job performance. Bernardin *et al.* (1995) defined job performance as the outcomes of work because they provide the strongest linkage to the strategic goals of the organization, customer satisfaction, and economic contributions. Campbell *et al.* (1970) conceptualized job performance as behavior and it does not have to be directly observable actions of an individual. It can consist of mental production such as answers or decisions.

Whatever justification given by the leadership of colleges in Indonesia, with the university rankings in Indonesia started in the order of 78 in Asia-Pacific according to *Time* magazine, it still could be a reflection of underdevelopment of the higher education quality in Indonesia (Heriyono, 2009). By having such a condition, it would be still very difficult for Indonesian universities to compete internationally with other foreign universities. Heriyono exposed that improving lecturer performance might