

Levels of Engineers Participative Decision-Making in Tenaga Nasional Berhad

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Abstract

Greater chances of participation in the organisational decision-making processes, will allows employees a greater understanding and familiarity with their tasks. The more chances available for expressing ideas and participating in decision-making process, the greater the satisfaction for them. Data were collected from 336 Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) engineers from four regions in Malaysia Peninsula. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to answer the objectives and to test the hypothesis of the study. The result shows that, majority of TNB engineers participated in the organisational decision-making process. However, the level of their participation are still considered to be moderate or low. Hence, it is important to have high level of involvement, especially when the respective engineers are involved in generating alternatives, planning processes and evaluating results.

Keywords: engineers, decision-making, participative

1. Introduction

Participative decision-making which is also known as participation in decision-making, is one of the variables of factors that is related to organisational commitment. It refers to employers sharing decision-making with employees by giving the latter an opportunity to have a say in decisions that affect them. It can be defined as sharing decision-making with others to achieve organisational objectives (Knoop, 1995). Apart from this, it is also known as a socially constructed phenomenon created by mutual understanding of superiors and subordinates.

Black and Gregersen (1997) have synthesised concepts and ideas put forward by other researchers to develop six different dimensions of participative decision-making. The six dimensions are rationale of participation in decision-making; formal and informal participation; direct and indirect participation; decision issues in participation; degree of involvement, and process of decision-making. The framework of Black and Gregersen (1997) supports Cotton et al.'s (1988) views that participative decision-making involvement is a multi-dimensional and needs to be studied.

2. Literature Review

There have been many approaches to implementing and evaluating participative decision-making. Känd and Rekor (2005) generate the concepts of 'employee involvement' in organisational decision-making. According to them, employee involvement consists of four basic dimensions, namely, the degree of involvement, the form of involvement, the level within the organisational hierarchy at which involvement takes place and the scope of the issues encompassed by it.

Ali Mohamad (2004) found that the dominant leadership style of managers was participative. He stressed that employees demonstrated less satisfaction with salaries, benefits, work conditions, promotion and communication as satisfier factors and more satisfaction with factors such as the nature of the job, co-workers, and supervision type factors. According to him, although in certain conditions employee job satisfaction depends upon the leadership style of managers, participative management is not always a good management style.

Scott-Ladd (2004) observes that employees perceived that participative decision-making contributed to performance effectiveness and led to greater gains in the workplace. However, she also found that those benefits did not contribute to increased job satisfaction or commitment despite participative decision-making having a direct positive influence on job satisfaction, which in turn increased commitment. Her findings support arguments that employees believe participation in decision-making offers them substantial benefits, but suggest they are more ambivalent about increasing task demands and the gains they receive for their extra effort.

Another empirical work by Scott-Ladd (2006) later discovered that participation in decision-making appears to promote job satisfaction and work commitment. However, although participation in decision-making positively influences work effort, autonomy and commitment, there is a need for keeping a balance between employees' and employers' needs. Therefore, organisational commitment is at risk in the long term if participation is viewed merely as a survival strategy for coping with work effort and task variety.

Based on the literature review, the following hypothesis is formulated where participative decision-making is positively related to organisational commitment.

3. Research Design

This study employed a self-administered questionnaire as a means to collecting data. The data collection stages cover conceptualising, survey design, planning, sampling, briefing, pretesting, surveying, monitoring, verifying, coding, processing, analysing and reporting. According to Ruziah (2007) and Aishah (2006), the self-administered questionnaire form is the most common method for surveying or measuring people's interests, beliefs or perceptions.

3.1 Population and Sample

Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) has been identified for this study. As of 4 May 2009, there are more 1,911 TNB engineers working in three divisions in Peninsular Malaysia (Table 1). These engineers represented four regions in TNB-North Region, Central Region, East Region, and South Region (Table 2). TNB has been identified for this study. Based on the organisation's website information (www.tnb.com.my), the company is the largest electricity utility company in Malaysia with more than RM69.8 billion assets. The company has been listed on the main board of Bursa Malaysia and in 2008, it employed approximately 29,210 people to serve a customer base of over seven million in Malaysia Peninsula and Sabah.

TNB's core businesses are distribution, transmission and generation besides other sales of electricity. The company's subsidiaries include TNB Engineering Corporation Sdn Bhd, TNB Repair and Maintenance Sdn Bhd, TNB Engineers Sdn Bhd, TNB Capital (L) Ltd, Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd, Malaysia Transformer Manufacturing Sdn Bhd and TNB Coal International Ltd. However, engineers from Sabah were not included in this study as they are working with TNB's subsidiary, i.e. Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd (SESB). Furthermore, SESB is not wholly-owned by TNB.

Table 1. Total of TNB Engineers in Peninsular Malaysia as of 4 May 2009

DIVISION	STATE	TOTAL
	Johor	66
	Kedah	31
	Kelantan	20
	Melaka	14
	Negeri Sembilan	31
Distribution	Pahang	38
	Perak	313
	Perlis	6
	Pulau Pinang	44
	Selangor	100
	Terengganu	17
	Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory	81
	Total	761

DIVISION	STATE	TOTAL
Transmission	Johor	49
	Kedah	10
	Kelantan	9
	Negeri Sembilan	15
	Pahang	15
	Perak	362
	Pulau Pinang	24
	Selangor	46
	Terengganu	5
	Total	535
Generation	Johor	29
	Pulau Pinang	34
	Negeri Sembilan	43
	Perak	320
	Selangor	74
	Terengganu	47
	Kuala Lumpur Federal Territory	68
	Total	615
	Grand Total	1 911

Source: TNB

Table 2. Total of TNB Engineers by Regions in Peninsular Malaysia

REGION	STATE	DIVISION			TOTAL ENGINEERS
		Distribution	Transmission	Generation	
NORTH	Kedah	√	√	-	41
	Perlis	√	-	-	6
	P.Pinang	√	√	√	102
CENTRAL	Perak	√	√	√	995
	Selangor	√	√	√	220
	Kuala Lumpur	√	-	√	149
	Negeri Sembilan	√	√	√	89
EAST	Melaka	√	-	-	14
	Pahang	√	√	-	53
	Terengganu	√	√	√	69
	Kelantan	√	√	-	29
SOUTH	Johor	√	√	√	144

Source: TNB

3.2 Locality

For this study, the selection of states was conducted by looking at the three core businesses of TNB, which are distribution, transmission, and generation. However, only states from each region that run the three core business were selected. As shown in Table 3, Johor represented the South region, followed by Selangor (central region), Pulau Pinang (north region) and Terengganu (east region). However, draw lots had been conducted as both Selangor and Perak run the three core businesses in the central region. Finally, Selangor was selected.

Table 3. Total of Engineers in the Selected States

	Johor	Selangor	Pulau Pinang	Terengganu	
Distribution	66	100	44	17	227
Transmission	49	46	24	5	124
Generation	29	74	34	47	184
Total	144	220	102	69	535

Source: TNB

3.3 Research Instrument and Measurement

A bilingual questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Scales were also been developed purposely to measure the situation that are believed to exist due to theoretical understanding of the world, but could not be accessed directly. The measurement of scales utilised was composite scores. By summing the individuals' items into composite scores, it transformed the data from discrete to continuous (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Since 5-point Likert scale was used in these study, all the original scales were then changed to 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), for the purpose of consistency with the overall format of questionnaires and to obtain consistent scores from the respondents. The internal consistency for this scale in this study was 0.732.

4. Findings

4.1 Profile of Respondents

The profile of respondents is presented in terms of the respondents' age, gender, marital status, years of service, race, basic income, monthly allowance, designation, and division. The result shows that out of 336 respondents who participated in this study, 96.4% were males and 3.6% were females. With regard to the marital status, less than half (41.4%) of the respondents reported to be married and about 34% of the respondent reported that their spouses were working. Most of them were at the age between 25 to 30 (79.5%), whom we can consider as young engineers. About half (52.1%) of the respondents reported that they have served with TNB for less than five years, while less than a quarter (20.5%) have been employed in TNB for more than 15 years.

From the 336 respondents who took part in this study, the majority of them were Malays (96.7%; n=325), followed by Chinese (1.5%; n=5), Indians (1.2%; n=4) and Sikh's (0.6%; n=2). A large majority of the respondents (85.1%; n=286) reported that they were permanent staff, while only about 15% (n=50) were permanent, but yet to be confirmed with their positions.

4.2 Levels of Participation in Decision-Making

The objective is to study the levels of engineers' participation in organisational decision-making. There were 16 items which measured the level of participation in decision-making. The highest percentage for participative decision-making was 95.8% and the lowest was 74%. The overall percentage of 84.5% showed that the majority of the engineers reported having had experience in organisational decision-making.

The findings demonstrate that most of the engineers agreed with their involvement in organisational decision-making. The highest mean score was (mean=4.60; SD=0.3) represented by subscale 4, "I remain silent in group meeting" (reverse score) and subscale 5, "I say as little as possible about organisational policy in formal conversations with my supervisor" (reverse score)(mean=4.68; SD=0.41).

The score for the level of participative decision-making was approximately 85% (M=4.2%; SD =0.52). The highest mean score was for, "I remain silent when work-related issues are being discussed informally by a group of co-workers" (reverse score) (M=4.79, SD=0.41) followed by, "I remain silent in group meetings" (reverse

score) ($M=4.66$, $SD=0.38$) and “I contribute ideas or suggestions in group meetings” ($M=4.24$, $SD=0.43$). Meanwhile the lowest mean was for “I get involved in the conversation when a group of co-workers are talking about work during the work process” ($M=3.70$, $SD=0.97$).

The results also indicate that participative decision-making are positively correlated to organisational commitment. The range of the relationships is very strong where $r = 0.43$ and it is significant at 0.00001 level. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported.

It is argued that the more chances available for expressing ideas and participating in decision-making process, the greater the satisfaction for the engineers. The available avenue for participative decision-making would encourage openness and risk taking as well as willingness to share ideas, responsibility and commitment (Ford & Angermeier, 2008).

5. Conclusion

The findings show that the level of participative decision-making among the engineers are considered strong. This may due to the organisational policy which offers employees opportunities and chances to participate in organisational decision-making process. The findings also show that most of the TNB engineers were satisfied with their participation during organisational decision-making. Opportunities and chances were given to them to express their ideas, as well as get them involved in certain discussions. As a result, they gave full support and contribution to the organisation. Indirectly, it indicates that the reason why some of the engineers are still working with TNB is because they want to be with the organisation (affective).

In summary, majority of TNB engineers reported that they participated in the organisational decision-making process, even the level of their participation is considered to be moderate or low. It is important to have high level of participative decision-making because the highest satisfaction comes with high-level involvement, and it occurs when employees are involved in generating alternatives, planning processes and evaluating results (Gallie, Kostova, & Kuchar, 1999).

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