Examining Participative Management's Impact on Curriculum Decisions in Secondary Schools through Collaboration.

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This conceptual paper investigates participative management's influence on curriculum decision-making in secondary schools through the lens of collaborative leadership. The main question guiding this research is: How does participative management shape decision-making processes in curriculum development within secondary school contexts? An extensive literature review utilizing sources from (2020-2024) forms the basis of this study, drawing on scholarly articles, case studies and educational reports to examine current trends and challenges. Adopting an interpretive paradigm, the paper explores how participative management fosters collaborative leadership, potentially empowering teachers and school management teams to contribute actively to curriculum design and implementation. Findings are anticipated to reveal both the strengths and limitations of participative management in facilitating inclusive decision-making and promoting effective curriculum development. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to deeper insights on how collaborative leadership approaches can be cultivated to enhance curriculum design in secondary schools, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes. These insights will inform school leaders, policymakers and educational stakeholders on the practical applications and potential impact of participative management strategies. Limitations of the study include its reliance on secondary data and conceptual analysis which may affect the generalizability of the findings across diverse educational settings. **Keywords:** participative management, decision-making, collaborative leadership, secondary schools.

Introduction and background

Ping et al. (2024) assert that educational institutions depends significantly on democratic decision-making procedures to enhance teacher effectiveness and success which subsequently impacts student performance and creativity essential for fostering innovative and critical thinking. Sharp et al. (2024) recommend that, alongside democratic principles, emphasis should be placed on effective communication, transparency and inclusivity to foster trust and cooperation among schools, teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders in educational progress.

Sharma & Adeoye (2024) revealed that the landscape of education is increasingly recognizing the significance of participative management, democratic decision-making processes and collaborative leadership. These phenomenal concepts are critical in shaping effective educational environments particularly in secondary schools. According to (Kilag et al., 2023; Phillips et al., 2024) participative management refers to the engagement of various stakeholders, teachers, administrators, parents and sometimes students in the decision-making processes that shape educational policies and practices. Thus, this approach enhances a sense of ownership among participants and promotes a culture of shared responsibility whereby decision-making in this context is not merely a top-down directive rather, it is a collaborative effort grounded democratic and in ethical practices that emphasize transparency and inclusivity (Willems & van Houten, 2024). Collaborative leadership, on the other hand, epitomizes the principles of participative management which are democratic by

urging principals to work alongside their teams to achieve common educational goals. The author sought to examine how participative management influences curriculum decision-making in secondary schools with a particular focus on collaborative leadership.

Globally, participative management and collaborative leadership notions have gained popularity as effective ways for improving educational outcomes (Willems & van Houten, 2024). Thus, Finland's educational system is defined by a high degree of autonomy for schools with teachers actively participating in curriculum creation and decision-making procedures (Liu, 2024). As a result of this participative method, student performance has improved and teachers are quite satisfied with their education. Similarly, Canadian schools that use collaborative leadership models show better levels of teacher engagement and student accomplishment. According to Meng et al. (2024), collaborative leadership techniques that include shared decision-making and collective responsibility empower teachers, resulting in more effective teaching and learning settings.

In the African context, the execution of participative management and collaborative leadership remains critical for resolving the challenges faced by educational systems. As a result, Countries such as Kenya have embraced democratic and participatory approaches in their educational reform efforts. Clearly, Yan (2024) believes that the introduction of School-Based Management (SBM) in Kenya aimed to decentralize decision-making processes through the involvement of local communities in managing schools. Notably, this paradigm shift has resulted in increased accountability and responsiveness to the needs of learners. However, Woodard et al., (2024) argue that the effectiveness of these initiatives often depends on the commitment of educational leaders to ethical practices such as inclusivity and transparency. Conversely, in South Africa, the educational landscape presents an intricate picture. While the South African Schools Act (SASA) promotes democratic and participatory governance, the reality is often blemished by persistent disparities and a lack of genuine stakeholder engagement (Langeveldt & Pietersen, 2024). Therefore, this highlights the need for concerted efforts to cultivate a culture of collaboration and ethically driven decision-making processes underpinned by democratic principles in secondary schools.

The rationale for participative management and collaborative leadership in education is highlighted by the favourable results linked to these ethical practices. Institutions that adopt participative management generally observe elevated teacher instructional satisfaction and enhanced student achievement (Sheng et al., 2024). When instructors participate in curricular decision-making, they are more likely to feel respected and motivated by resulting in improved instructional efficacy. Furthermore, collaborative leadership fosters a variety of perspectives, leading to more thorough and contextually pertinent teaching practices. Research demonstrates that collaborative leadership enhances problem-solving and innovation in secondary schools (Riddel & Zulfikar, 2024). This is especially relevant in the swiftly evolving educational environment where adaptation and responsiveness are essential for success.

Conversely, the adversarial effects regarding contrary practices cannot be overlooked. When schools adopt top-down and hierarchical management styles that exclude stakeholders from democratic decision-making processes it can lead to disenfranchisement and disengagement among teachers and students (Brownsword, 2023). Such environments are often characterized by low morale, high turnover rates and suboptimal educational outcomes. Thus, in South Africa, a recurrent pertinent lack of genuine stakeholder involvement in democratic decision-making processes has contributed to ongoing challenges in the education system including high dropout rates and poor academic performance in secondary schools (Ally et al., 2024). Conversely, when educational leaders fail to embrace ethical practices in their leadership styles, it undermines the very principles of participative management and collaborative leadership (Pillay & Kikasu, 2024). Unequivocally, Merry & van Melik (2024) argue that this not only represses innovation but also exacerbates a culture of mistrust and resistance among stakeholders ultimately impeding the potential for meaningful educational reform.

Groenewald et al. (2024) clearly articulated that participative management, decision-making, and collaborative leadership are fundamental elements grounded in democratic principles, fostering effective educational environments, especially within secondary schools. This is substantiated by evidence from global, African and South African contexts, which underscores the benefits of these approaches alongside the harmful consequences of adversarial practices. As a result, Eden & Ayeni (2024) assert that it is imperative for educational leaders and policymakers to diligently enhance curriculum decision-making processes while emphasising ethical values and practices that foster inclusivity, transparency, and shared responsibility.

The purpose of this study is to examine how participative management influences curriculum decision-making in secondary schools with a focus on collaborative leadership.

The main question is "How does participative management influence curriculum decision-making in secondary schools through collaborative leadership?"

Theoretical framework

Participative management, a leadership approach that emphasizes collaborative involvement in decision-making is pivotal in influencing curriculum decision-making in secondary schools. This framework is grounded in collaborative leadership theory (CLT) which suggests that effective leadership arises through shared governance and inclusive participation (Bush, 2021). By engaging teachers, students and other stakeholders in the curriculum decision-making processes, participative management cultivates a sense of ownership and accountability thereby enhancing curriculum relevance and effectiveness (Spillane et al., 2018). On the other

hand, a lack of participation can result in resistance as teachers may feel disempowered or disconnected from decisions that directly affect their roles (Fullan, 2019). Conversely, participative management is not without challenges. While it promotes inclusivity, the approach may be time-intensive and require substantial coordination efforts. Nonetheless, the benefits of collaborative decision-making often outweigh these challenges as stakeholders are more likely to commit to and support decisions they have helped shape. Undoubtedly, participative management strengthens relationships within the school by creating a culture of trust and mutual respect. In the same vein, collaborative leadership aligns with democratic principles by fostering open communication and shared responsibility in school management. Similarly, participative management highlights the role of collective agency by reinforcing the idea that inclusive practices in curriculum development can enhance educational outcomes and build a cohesive school culture.

Methodology

Data collection
This study is grounded in an extensive literature review utilizing sources from (2020-2024), which encompasses scholarly articles, case studies and educational reports. This review critically examines current trends and challenges within participative management in curriculum decision-making. By drawing on contemporary research, the study aims to identify how collaborative leadership practices impact educational outcomes and stakeholder engagement in secondary schools. This recent literature provides deeper insights into both the benefits and complexities of participative management in the evolving landscape of education.

Data analysis
Adopting an interpretive paradigm, this paper investigates how participative management cultivates collaborative leadership by potentially empowering teachers and school management teams to contribute actively to curriculum design and implementation. By emphasizing shared decision-making, this approach aims to enhance teacher agency and collective ownership ultimately promoting a more inclusive, responsive and effective curriculum in secondary schools.

Findings

The findings reveal that participative management significantly influences curriculum decision-making in secondary schools by fostering a culture of collaborative leadership. Teachers, school management teams, and even students, when included in decision-making processes, show greater commitment and ownership in curriculum implementation. This inclusion creates a more adaptable curriculum, responsive to the needs of both educators and students, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of educational content. However, the study also identifies certain challenges. While participative management empowers stakeholders, it requires significant time and resources which can slow down the decision-making process (Leithwood & Azah, 2019). On the other hand, the collaborative approach often mitigates potential resistance to curriculum changes as teachers are more likely to support decisions they helped create. Conversely, some participants feel that balancing multiple perspectives can lead to diluted decisions where compromises may prioritize inclusivity over innovation (Bush, 2021). Nonetheless, schools that effectively implement participative management see an increase in trust and cohesion within their teams. Similarly, collaborative leadership builds a sense of shared responsibility, improving teacher morale and fostering a positive school environment conducive to change and growth. In the same vein, these inclusive practices support a democratic ethos by allowing all voices to contribute to curriculum development which aligns with modern educational values of equity and inclusivity (Spillane et al., 2018).

Discussion

De Vries et al. (2024) assert that participative management in education especially in secondary schools represents a collaborative decision-making method that profoundly impacts curriculum creation and execution. The engagement of multiple stakeholders including teachers, parents, students and community members, guarantees the incorporation of diverse viewpoints resulting in a curriculum that is more pertinent and attuned to the requirements of the student demographic (Zhang, 2024). This strategy cultivates educational excellence and fosters a sense of ownership among stakeholders which is essential for the successful implementation of educational reforms. According to Villaver et al. (2024) stakeholder engagement in educational decision-making fosters a culture of shared ownership and collective accountability ultimately improving the educational experience for all participants.

Furthermore, capacity building within schools is critical to improving stakeholder collaboration. Notably, capacity development refers to the procedures by which individuals and organisations improve their ability to function successfully through empowerment (Al Wahid et al., 2024). In the context of participative management, this entails acquiring the skills and knowledge required for stakeholders to participate meaningfully in decision-making procedures. Thus, training programs that improve communication and negotiation skills can enable teachers and parents to participate productively in curriculum development

conversations (Gallo & Raymundo, 2024). These tactics not only encourage ethical practices in schools, but they also foster a collaborative culture that appreciates input from all stakeholders. As a result, this capacity-building framework can lead to more democratic decision-making procedures that represent the school community's needs and goals through consultations (Khan et al., 2024).

Similarly, aptitude strategies which are characterised as the capacity for sound judgement and prompt decision-making are essential to participatory management procedures (George & Baskar, 2024). Therefore, in order to successfully negotiate the challenges of stakeholder collaboration, school leaders need to have strategic insights. Leaders can mitigate potential disputes or misunderstandings while simultaneously identifying and utilising the assets of diverse stakeholders by utilising astute techniques (Elamin, 2024). In this case, school administrators can promote a more inclusive decision-making atmosphere and raise the standard of the curriculum overall by acknowledging the distinctive contributions of each group (Zhang, 2024). Notably, since choices are made openly and cooperatively, this not only promotes ethical behaviour within the school but also aids in fostering trust among stakeholders.

On the other hand, Grant (2024) thinks that adversarial effects can be harmful when opposing behaviours such top-down and hierarchical decision-making without stakeholder participation are common in schools. According to Brice et al. (2024), it is evident that these kinds of settings can cause teachers and students to get disengaged, which can lead to a curriculum that does not satisfy the needs of its users and recipients. According to research, a sense of alienation and a lack of trust can result when stakeholders feel left out of decision-making processes (Simion & Bligh, 2024). This lack of involvement not only compromises the curriculum's efficacy but also raises employee turnover and lowers student motivation. In the end, this hostile environment has the potential to degrade the entire educational process by forcing schools to implement participatory management strategies that encourage cooperation and diversity (Walter, 2024).

Notably, participative management allows schools to respond more effectively to changing educational demands. As society requirements change, so must curriculum development methods. A collaborative approach enables a more agile response to these changes since stakeholders are more likely to anticipate future trends and demands using their aggregate knowledge (Rane et al., 2024). Clearly, the incorporation of technology into education has underlined the importance of curriculum that prepare students for a digital future and a globally competitive economy. Schools that embrace participative management are better positioned to implement these changes because they draw on the skills and viewpoints of numerous stakeholders, including students, who are frequently at the forefront of technological breakthroughs (Shan & Wang, 2024).

Consequently, Xin & Huang (2024) revealed that participative management has a considerable impact on curriculum decision-making in secondary schools via collaborative leadership. Schools can create ethical practices that cultivate the educational experience by encouraging stakeholder engagement, creating capacity and implementing innovative strategies (Fuller & Haglund, 2024). In contrast, the absence of these behaviours can result in antagonistic outcomes that damage the curriculum's effectiveness as well as the broader school environment. Thus, Uy et al. (2024) argue that educational leaders must prioritise participatory management in order to develop a collaborative and responsive educational framework that serves the different demands of all stakeholders.

Curriculum transformation

Curriculum transformation that incorporates Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in secondary schools is essential for creating education that reflects diverse cultural perspectives and local relevance (Xin & Huan, 2024). This approach aligns with participative management, where school leaders, teachers, and community stakeholders collaboratively contribute to curriculum decisions. By fostering a participative approach, schools can integrate IKS meaningfully, enriching the curriculum with traditional knowledge, ecological insights and cultural heritage that resonate with students' lived experiences.

Participative management encourages collaboration by allowing voices from various backgrounds to shape curriculum changes. This collaborative model is particularly beneficial in contexts that value IKS, as it helps bridge the gap between standardized curriculum requirements and the inclusion of indigenous perspectives. According to Yip & Chakma, (2024) teachers play a central role, supported by training to effectively incorporate IKS content and methods. School leaders also provide critical support by advocating for policies that recognize IKS as a valuable educational resource.

Despite the benefits, challenges remain encompassing limited resources, balancing IKS with mainstream curricular demands and potential resistance to non-traditional content. Thus, collaborative leadership is essential to navigate these challenges and cultivate commitment across stakeholders (Rane et al., 2024). By prioritizing participative management, schools can create a curriculum that is both inclusive and responsive thereby promoting cultural awareness and relevance in secondary education.

Conclusion

Notably, participative management has a substantial influence on curriculum decision-making in secondary schools by promoting collaborative leadership. This approach enables teachers and school management teams

to contribute actively by fostering a sense of ownership and accountability in the curriculum process. Undoubtedly, participative management enhances the relevance and responsiveness of the curriculum as it reflects the diverse perspectives and needs of the school community. By involving various stakeholders, the curriculum becomes more adaptable and aligned with contemporary educational goals. On the other hand, implementing participative management is not without its challenges. While it builds inclusivity, the approach can be time-consuming and may require additional resources to accommodate the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Conversely, schools that overlook participative practices may encounter resistance from teachers who feel disconnected from the decisions that directly impact their roles. Nonetheless, the collaborative process often leads to stronger buy-in and commitment as teachers are more likely to support changes they have influenced. Similarly, the sense of shared responsibility cultivated through participative management strengthens trust and cohesion within school teams, creating a positive work environment that supports educational improvement. In the same vein, this approach aligns with democratic values by fostering an inclusive school culture where all voices are respected. Ultimately, participative management not only enhances curriculum decision-making but also promotes a sustainable model of collaborative leadership that can adapt to the evolving needs of secondary education.

Recommendations

To enhance the impact of participative management on curriculum decision-making, schools should prioritize structured channels for stakeholder input. Undoubtedly, creating dedicated committees that include teachers, students and parents will foster a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. Similarly, regular workshops and training on collaborative leadership can empower teachers and management teams to engage effectively in participative processes. On the other hand, schools should remain mindful of potential time constraints. Streamlining decision-making through clear timelines and defined roles can mitigate delays while still preserving inclusivity. Conversely, efforts to balance diverse perspectives should avoid excessive compromise, as this could weaken innovative curriculum changes. In the same vein, schools should establish feedback loops to assess the outcomes of participative practices. Nonetheless, focusing on transparency and open communication will help sustain trust thereby making curriculum decisions more relevant and supported across the school community.

Limitations of the study

This study is limited by its reliance on qualitative data derived from intensive literature reviews of scholarly books and articles (2020-2024) may restrict generalizability. Additionally, time constraints and limited participant diversity may impact the breadth of insights into participative management's influence across varied school contexts.

Author biography

Dr. Saltiel Khololo Collen Mataboge is a Senior Lecturer at the University of South Africa in the Department of Educational Leadership and Management. Research interests encompasses instructional leadership in schools, Transformative leadership and management in schools, School safety, violence and social justice for students in schools, Schools' financial management, school governance, mentorship and mentoring. I authored and published several articles regarding contemporary issues in the field of education.

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