

# Decentralizing the School: The Necessity of Teacher Involvement in School Management

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*“Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.”  
-Booker T. Washington*

THE ROLE of school management is to ensure that the school is run in efficient and orderly ways, providing an ideal education environment for teachers and students. Effective school management can substantially promote teacher professional development whereas flawed school management undermines the teacher’s job satisfaction and identification with the teaching career, leading to increased turnover rates (Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Tang, 2024). Also, the leadership style of the school is closely related to the students’ quality of learning, making a significant difference to their interest, motivation, and outcomes (Robinson & Gray, 2019; Yu et al., 2021). Therefore, developing legitimate school management patterns is of vital significance for educational quality enhancement.

In effect, a portion of schools are suffering from out-of-date management styles and the consequential low management productivity, hampering effective education and teaching enactment. In the Chinese context, bureaucratic centralization constitutes a major factor that curbs management outcomes of the school (Liu & Wu, 2013). Bureaucratic centralization is a form of management that is centered around bureaucrats, who have absolute control over all decision-making processes at the expense of marginalizing other members of the organization (Meng, 2019). With the presence of this management style, the teachers, the pivotal educational actors, become the subordinates of the school administrators, being deprived of their autonomy in instruction and teaching research planning and implementation, which severely impairs their career development; in the meantime, school administrators can easily develop the mentality that they are entitled to make arbitrary decisions in school management with no need to pay regard for the central roles of the teachers in education and teaching (Liu & Wu, 2013; Meng, 2019), which could result in injudicious resource allocation and a decline in morale, downgrading the education standards of the school.

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Encouraging teacher participation in school management is an effective countermeasure to the harm of bureaucratic centralization to school development. Involving teachers in school decision-making helps develop their ownership of school operation, increasing their senses of responsibility for the improvement of the school as well as igniting their enthusiasm for further personal professional development (Zhang, 2023). Meanwhile, teacher involvement in school management is beneficial for the school reaching more scientific and informed decisions. This is because the teachers are the most capable of providing workable suggestions to the school leadership as they are most familiar with the school's everyday operation and witness students' cognitive and non-cognitive behavior on a daily basis in carrying out the regular instructional duties (Liu, 1998). In order to ensure democratic management in Chinese schools and safeguard the teachers' rights to participate in school management, the *Teachers Law of China* stipulates that the teacher has the right to air their opinions and suggestions on school education, teaching, management, and administration work and the right to participate in school management via the congress of faculty and staff or other devices (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, 1993).

Despite the growing advocacy of decentralizing the school and increasing the weight of the teachers' management involvement on the part of the Chinese government and academia, there remain many barriers to their substantive involvement in school governance. *Challenges of Teacher Involvement in School Management in China* in this issue examines the significance of teacher involvement in school management and summarizes its complications and causes in China (Zhou, 2024). Although the article does not give a detailed analysis on how to resolve the issues with Chinese teachers' school management involvement, it still offers valuable implications for further explorations of their potential roles in school governance.

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