TEACHERS' CLASSROOM CONTROL AND DECISION-MAKING: A CASE STUDY OF A PRIVATE SCHOOL IN SUBANG, SELANGOR

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ABSTRACT

This is a contextual study where personal decision-making is strongly regulated by the bureaucratic structure. Fifteen respondents were chosen to explore their alternative means of disciplining when physical punishments are only limited to the role of the Head of Discipline (HOD). In addition, the process and issues associated with personal decision-making were explored. Results indicated that tactics of classroom control were directed towards self, students, situations and the organization. Each tactic had fundamental purposes of correction, education, prevention and punishment. Other analyses revealed that teachers could gather evidence, identify the cause of discipline problems, and differentiate the type of problems within the phase of personal involvement. Beyond these personal initiatives, the decision to collaborate or transfer is often preferred when Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), parental involvement and other conditions in the list became unfavorable for further involvement. Lastly, a list of suggestions was tabulated for organizational learning and awareness for change.

INTRODUCTION

Past researches on the field of discipline management were concentrated in explaining teachers' efficacy (Bandura, 1986), teachers' pupil control ideologies (Willower, 1967), teachers' discipline styles (Tomal, 1998) and other leadership models (Lewis, 1999) as efforts to supplement teachers' education. It is extremely rare to find any local evidence that encompasses the areas of classroom control and decision-making in a private school environment. While many studies were undertaken on areas of leadership styles and teachers' efficacy, no case study was ever done to study teachers' behaviors under a unique school setting whilst confronted with discipline problems in the class.

In the context of Malaysian schools, the word 'discipline' has a negative connotation to punishment or repressions. There were many separate incidents in the newspapers that reported about teachers' abusing students and punishing them inappropriately. As a consequence, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOEM) issued a directive to remind teachers to use alternative means of disciplining other than punishments (MOEM, 1995). On the other extreme, the MOE has also reported about teachers' abdicating their roles with respect to discipline and constantly transfer trivial discipline matters to others (MOEM, 2001). With these two directives, schools are to cascade the instructions down to remind teachers to intervene and curb discipline problems cleverly through alternative means.

However, it is not known if teachers have succeeded or failed to comply since the two directives were implemented. In reality, to arrive to an empirical conclusion would require a longitudinal and large sample of analyses across many geographical locations or different school settings. In addition, many variables for comparison and for control must be considered before a generalization can be made as each school implemented these directives differently due to different occasions, different leadership styles, disparate school climates and other complicated factors that exist within. Nevertheless, it is possible to conduct a case study where findings are contextual and beneficial for specific interventions and future improvements of the school. Thus, the focal areas of the study were concentrated on investigating the state of teachers' classroom control and the process of decision-making. These two elements would explain the state and the extent of how selected teachers in an organization behaved in response to the problems and environment that surrounds them.

The case study was carried out to investigate on teachers' classroom control strategies in a setting where personal decision-making is regulated and strongly dictated by the principal, organizational procedures and professional ethics. For such criteria, a private secondary school in Selangor was chosen to be the sample for the case study. In the school, the principal prohibits teachers from punishing students physically. Strong preventive measures were established in its own Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) because the private school faces potential threats from parents who would not doubt to sue teachers or the organization if they have acted wrongly whilst disciplining their children. In addition, these parents consist of mostly professionals, came from wealthy economic backgrounds and had a certain level of legal literacy.

Therefore, how did teachers in the school dealt with discipline problems if teachers were to act accordingly to the instructions of the principal? Secondly, the Head of Discipline (HOD) indicated that teachers were too reliant on him to solve all kinds of discipline problems in the school. What are their limitations associated with any unfavorable conditions to personal decision-making? To what extent teachers can play better roles as discipline teachers in the school? Subsequently, eight research questions were designed to address these problem statements. In addition, these research questions were timely to fulfill the primary objectives for staff development and organizational learning.

The objectives of the study are stated below.

1. To investigate control strategies that respondents practice in the organization.
2. To conceptualize respondents' classroom-control strategies so that it can be easily understood.
3. To observe and conclude the patterns of decision-making among respondents when managing classroom discipline.
4. To investigate the extent of personal involvement among respondents when managing classroom discipline.
5. To investigate how respondents differentiate between a serious and a less serious discipline problem.
6. To highlight unfavorable conditions to personal decision-making.
7. To highlight the obstacles that respondents perceive if they were confronted with the need for personal decision-making.
8. To suggest some key objectives from respondents for organizational improvements in aspects of classroom control and decision-making.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, classroom control strategies are too numerous to mention and included in this article. Nevertheless, the literature review served to enhance the theoretical perspective before conducting the case study. Oliver and Reschly (2014) cited the works of Emmer and Stough (2001) pertaining several key effective classroom management practices. These practices include:

1. Structuring the physical environment to accommodate traffic patterns and minimize distractions as well as structuring instructional time and transitions.
2. Establishing a few positively stated behavioral expectations.
3. Identifying rules that provide behavioral examples of the expectations.
4. Establishing routines for classroom tasks such as turning in homework.
5. Actively teaching the rules and routines.
6. Establishing procedures to reinforce appropriate behaviors.
7. Utilizing effective procedures to reduce and respond to inappropriate behavior.
8. Collecting data to monitor student behavior and modify the classroom management plan as needed.

Emmer and Stough (2001) highlighted that effective classroom management focus on prevention rather than reactive approaches, and that teachers "teach students desirable behaviors rather than expecting those behaviors to occur naturally" (as cited in Oliver et al., 2011). In an extended literature review by the same authors, they cited five broad areas of effective classroom management as originated from Simonsen et al. (2008). These practices include: (a) maximized structure and predictability; (b) post, teach, review and provide feedback on expectations; (c) actively engaged students in observable ways; (d) use a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior; and (e) use a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior.

In another study, Tomal (1998) evaluated, categorized and introduced the concept of discipline style. His study was focused on types of discipline problems, ways of handling them, typical discipline situations, students' response to discipline and teachers' style with students. As a result, he formulated the Five-Styles Teacher

Discipline Model that is based on teachers' degree of enforcing rules and supporting students. From data, he also concluded that teachers used all of the five discipline styles (enforcer, abdicator, supporter, compromiser and negotiator) when disciplining their students according to situations and types of discipline problems.

Lewis (1999, 2006) mentioned that a more democratic values of approach have begun to replace authoritarian values in the classrooms. He offered three discipline styles that provide guidance in classroom management: (a) the model of influence; (b) model of control and; (c) model of management. The model of influence describes "student-owned and teacher-owned problems with a student oriented approach to problem solving. The model of control describes "a teacher-oriented approach and discusses steps on deciding behavioral consequences. Lastly, the model of management describes "a group-oriented approach' and discusses on inappropriate behaviors, intervention and observation on Glasser's (1977) 10-step approach to student behavior. Lewis (1999) mentioned that teachers select from a range of models and techniques while exercising discipline in school. Factors influencing their choice are associated with the assumptions of underlying competing techniques, the impact of different models on students' attitudes, behavior and achievement, and the relative extent to which the aim of the disciplinary interaction is to establish order or to teach values.

The literature review on decision-making process looked into several characteristics. Tuten (2006) mentioned that while researchers emphasize on idealized versions of decision-making, they failed to focus on the development of understanding of actual decision-making in practice. From a pragmatic perspective of Trevino (1986) and Redelmeier and Shafir (1995), decision-making practices are informed by situations. Whitney, McGuire and McCullough (2004) argued that shared decision-making and informed consent are appropriate, when decision contains both risks and uncertainties. In addition, Snowden and Boone (2007) mentioned that while a decision-making model may be used to address an issue, the leader's course of action may be determined by the circumstances surrounding the situation. Situations change over time and leaders must learn to shift their decision-making style to match the changing business environment.

In the context of a school, teachers as leaders in the classroom should not limit their roles to just classroom managers. Zaleznik (1977) differentiated between managers and leaders that lies in the conceptions they hold, deep in their psyches, of chaos and order. Managers embrace process, seek sustainability and control, and instinctively try to resolve problems quickly-sometimes before they fully understand the problem's significance. Leaders in contrast, tolerate chaos and lack of structure and are willing to delay closure in order to understand the issues more fully. However, Zaleznik (1977) highlighted that organizations need both managers and leaders to succeed, and developing both requires a reduced focus on logic and strategic exercises in favor of an environment where creativity and imagination are permitted to flourish.

Besides creativity and imagination, intuition is needed as much expertise in decision-making. Kahneman and Klein (2009) explored the difference between two approaches to intuition and expertise that are often viewed conflicting: Heuristics decision-making and naturalistic decision-making. By highlighting that professional intuition is sometimes marvelous and sometimes flawed, they tried to map the boundary conditions that separate true intuitive skill from overconfident and biased impressions. As a result, they conclude that evaluating the likely quantity of intuitive judgment requires "an assessment of the predictability of the environment in which judgment is made and of the individual's opportunity to learn the regularities and environment."

Pertaining to issues of decision-making, Tuten (2006) described the "context" in Pettigrew's (1985) framework as individual(s) who are participating in the decision-making process. Many decision-making functions will fail without staff involvement and participation as mentioned by Klein, (1999) and Vroom & Yetton (1973). Involvement in decision-making should exist in a continuum, with different degrees of shareholder participation dependent on personal empowerment (Wall & Rinehart, 1997). In this contextual study, the writer intends to uncover the issues and obstacles that teachers faced in order to identify more opportunities for personal decision-making in the classrooms. Ingram, Seashore Louis, and Schroeder (2004) mentioned that most teachers are willing to have direct involvement in the school's process of decision-making, but highlighted that "teachers have significant concerns about the kind of information that is available and how it is used to judge their own and colleagues "performance." As a result, teachers could not play more roles as decision-makers when situations are ambiguous and discipline problems are complicated.

METHODS

Preparation

Prior to conducting data collection, the researcher spent a year as a participant observer to achieve three outcomes. First, there is a need to justify if the setting, problem statement and purpose of the study were worth pursuing in the

organization. Secondly, the researcher designed a decision-making questionnaire that was edited and approved by two education experts and three language teachers. Thirdly, the researcher applied for permissions from the Research Unit of the Education Ministry to conduct the case study in the school. In addition, he had to seek and get approval from the developers of two questionnaires: *The Pupil Control Ideology* (PCI) questionnaire and the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale* (TSES) questionnaire.

Participants
When all questionnaires and approval for research were ready, the researcher briefed the Head of Discipline (HOD) on the problem statement and purpose of the study. Knowing that he was also a respondent himself, his additional role was to select several individuals who were prone to transfer discipline cases to him. As the HOD was the central figure in knowing all discipline issues in the school, he qualified another fourteen teachers to be considered by the researcher as a purposive sampling exercise. These individual feedbacks do not represent the population sample of the school because of the first phase of exploration. Nevertheless, their opinions contributed to the initial framework for the design of a questionnaire to collect more data towards a generalization study in the future.

Procedures
During data collection each individual's process and issues of decision-making were described through personal writing and followed by a voiced-recorded interview. Questions from the decision-making questionnaire were more subjective in nature, and respondents were to reflect and elaborate on their classroom control and personal decision-making. Every respondent were given two weeks to complete all the three questionnaires. As timing was not convenient for everyone, some teachers took up to six weeks to complete all three questionnaires. As a strategy to save time, the researcher would proceed with the voiced-recorded interview when any of the teachers had completed the questionnaires. Simultaneously, this positive move would allow other teachers to complete their assignments at their own pace.

Upon completion of all the questionnaires, the researcher had achieved three outcomes: (a) capturing raw and written data; (b) identifying responses that needed further clarification and; (c) creating rapport with the respondents for a more detailed interview. During the voiced-recorded interview, all respondents were invited to share their opinions as guided by the researcher. Respondents elaborated on their personal encounters with students, while some clarified further on what had been written in the decision-making questionnaire. Teachers who worked in the school for many years were great informers of school history and culture, while keeping in mind the present situation at school. The time taken for each interview ranged between twenty to fifty minutes, and ended when respondents can no longer proceed with their opinions. Eventually, all fifteen respondents completed the case study successfully by the end of November 2013.

Data Analysis
Through open-ended questions in a voiced-recorded interview, data of respondents were transcribed and entered into ATLAS.ti data analytical software to carry out, qualitative analyses on respondents' classroom control strategies and personal decision-making. Because of information overload, non-relevant data were sifted out, leaving only data within the scope and objectives of the research. As a result, the process of transcribing, coding and analyses was prolonged but nevertheless completed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Throughout the process of this case study, much information has been uncovered from the analyses of data from the selected respondents. In this section of results and discussion, theoretical references would be incorporated to evaluate or support the findings from this case study. Results are presented into 5 sections: (a) teachers' demographic profiles; (b) classroom control strategies; (c) process of decision-making; (d) issues relating to decision-making and; (e) suggestions from respondents to improve classroom control and decision-making.

Teachers' Demographic Profiles
All information pertaining to respondents' demographic profiles are presented as follows. Through purposive sampling, they were selected from different demographic backgrounds, positions and teaching experiences.

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF ALL RESPONDENTS

Demographic profiles	Total Respondents	(%)
A. Gender		
1. Male	5	33.3
2. Female	10	66.7
Total	15	100
B. Age		
1. 21-30	3	20.0
2. 31-40	6	40.0
3. 41-50	2	13.3
4. 51-60	2	13.3
5. 61-70	2	13.3
Total	15	100
C. Position		
1. Teacher	11	73.3
2. Discipline Coordinator	3	20.0
3. Head of Discipline	1	6.7
Total	15	100.0
D. Highest academic qualification		
1. Certificate		
2. Diploma	2	13.3
3. Degree	7	46.7
4. Master	6	40.0
Total	15	100.0
E. Teaching level		
1. Higher secondary (Form 4−5)	5	33.3
2. Lower secondary (Form 1−3)	4	26.7
3. Both Higher and Lower Secondary	6	40.0
Total	15	100.0
F. Department		
1. Languages	3	20.0
2. Sciences	2	13.3
3. Mathematics	3	20.0
4. Social Sciences	1	6.7
5. Technical Sciences	4	26.7
6. Others	2	13.3
Total	15	100.0
G. Certified from Teachers' Training College		
1. Yes	8	53.3
2. No	7	46.7
Total	15	100.0

Note: *Total respondents, N=15.*

Classroom Control Strategies

Analyses from data transcription, coding and pattern recognition showed that the fifteen teachers in the school applied many strategies of classroom control. These strategies appeared to be disparate and were not distinctive enough to be classified in accordance to the list of tactics portrayed. Table 2 is a list of classroom control strategies compiled and analyzed from all fifteen respondents.

TABLE 2. LIST OF CLASSROOM CONTROL STRATEGIES AS MENTIONED BY RESPONDENTS

Strategies	Tactics		No. of times mentioned
Self-directed	1.	Approachable to students	3
	2.	Flexible with different behaviors	9
	3.	Investigative	16
	4.	Strict to get things done	14
	5.	Strict when discipline problems occur	8
	6.	Build good teacher-student relationship	6
	7.	Do not stereotype students on their past	21
	8.	Not being emotional	1
	9.	Rationalize on students' patterns of behaviors	10
	10.	Resourceful to relate to students	3
	11.	Sensitive and aware of socio-cultural differences	3
Student-directed	12.	Allocates time for students to reflect and apologize	7
	13.	Allows students to explain	3
	14.	Aware of students' behaviors and temperaments	8
	15.	Lenient towards childish behaviors	5
	16.	Demands compliance to school rules	6
	17.	Execute mild punishment	1
	18.	Explain rationale before punishment	1
	19.	Focus on trust	11
	20.	Intolerant towards repeated mistakes	10
	21.	Prefers correction over punishment	4
	22.	Prefers to reason than to enforce	9
	23.	Refers to counselor	3
	24.	Reminds students on behaviors	2
	25.	Scolds students publicly	4
	26.	Show temperaments to students	1
Situation-directed	27.	Anticipate risks and threats	5
	28.	Contain problem from escalating further	4
	29.	Intervene immediately on urgent matters	4
Organizational-directed	30.	Writing incident-reports	1
	31.	Rely strictly on SOPs for decision-making	4

Note: Data were purely qualitative and codes were analyzed into the number of times mentioned by participants. These codes were then used to categorize all tactics into four-directed strategies.

As a limitation of research, the list of tactics was non-exhaustive and results were only derived from fifteen respondents. Yet, data analyses have outlined four fundamental purposes behind every tactic: (1) For education, (2) For prevention, (3) For correction, and (4) For punishment. With exception to punitive strategies, the purpose of punishment is to impose physical corrections that include corporal punishment, suspensions and expulsion. It is an organizational practice that punitive strategies can only be carried out by the Head of Discipline and the Principal. Teachers in the school are not allowed to use any forms of physical punishments even if these punishments appeared to be mild. Table 3 highlights the different purposes behind the tactics that respondents use in their classroom control.

TABLE 3. CLASSROOM CONTROL STYLES AMONG RESPONDENTS

Strategies	Tactics	Purposes
Self-directed	Approachable to students Flexible with different behaviors Investigative Strict to get things done Strict when discipline problems occur Build good teacher-student relationship Do not stereotype students on their past Not being emotional Rationalize on students' patterns of behaviors Resourceful to relate to students Sensitive and aware of socio-cultural differences	a) For Education: As a basic approach for self-reflection, self-efficacy and portrayal of style b) For Prevention: As efforts for personal risk-management c) For Correction: To enhance professional practice
Student-directed	Allocates time for students to reflect and apologize Allows students to explain Aware of students' behaviors and temperaments Lenient towards childish behaviors Demands compliance to school rules Execute mild punishment Explain rationale before punishment Focus on trust Intolerant towards repeated mistakes Prefers correction over punishment Prefers to reason than to enforce Refers to counselor Reminds students on behaviors Scolds students publicly Show temperaments to students	a) For Education: As a basic approach to cultivate students towards good behaviors b) For Correction: As alternative strategies to respond to different kinds of students c) For Prevention: To curb students behaviors from deteriorating and re-occurring d) For Punishment: To impose physical corrections such as corporal punishment, suspensions and expulsion
Situation-directed	Anticipate risks and threats Contain problem from escalating further Intervene immediately on urgent matters	a) For Education: To alert, evaluate and communicate on situations. b) For Prevention: To curb potential threats of discipline situations from deteriorating and reoccurring c) For Correction: Changing the environment to alter behavior
Setting or Organizational directed	- Collaborate with other teachers Rely strictly on SOPs for decision-making Transfer to Head of Discipline (HOD)	a) For Education: As constructive efforts for organizational learning b) For Correction: As alternative strategies to respond to different kinds of problems and crisis c) For Prevention: Instituting organizational risk management d) For Correction: Towards improvements and consistency

Note: *Student-directed punishments such as Writing incident-reports, Corporal punishment, Suspensions, Expulsion, Detention and Public apology are part of Standard Operating Procedures and not considered as personal tactics.*

In another aspect of style, respondents portrayed abilities of enforcing and supporting in their tactics for classroom control. Emotions played a prominent role as the differentiating aspect. Through interpretive analyses, key emotions were identified and defined behind the list of tactics. For the purpose of comparisons, key emotions behind enforcing and supportive styles could only refer to self-directed and student-directed strategies. Both situational-directed and setting-directed do not have any emotional elements for comparisons. Table 4 highlights the key emotions behind the style of supportive and enforcing.

TABLE 4. DIFFERENTIATING ENFORCING OR SUPPORTIVE STYLES THROUGH KEY EMOTIONS

| Styles	Tactics	Key emotions
Supportive	Approachable to students	Accommodative
	Flexible with different behaviors	
	Build good teacher-student relationship	
	Focus on trust	
	Resourceful to relate to students	
	Lenient towards childish behaviors	Lenience
	Allocates time for students to reflect and apologize	Nurturing
	Explain rationale before punishment	
	Prefers correction over punishment	
	Prefers to reason than to enforce	
	Refers to counselor	
	Reminds students on behaviors	
	Aware of students' behaviors and temperaments	Empathy
	Rationalize on students' patterns of behaviors	
	Sensitive and aware of socio-cultural differences	
	Allows students to explain	Patience
	Investigative	
	Do not stereotype students on their past	
	Not being emotional	
Enforcing	Strict to get things done	Authoritarian
	Strict when discipline problems occur	
	Demands compliance to school rules	
	Execute mild punishment	
	Intolerant towards repeated mistakes	
	Scolds students publicly	Anger and Frustration

Note: *Key emotions are identified through data coding and limited to a total of fifteen respondents.*

How Can These Classroom Control Strategies Be Conceptualized And Understood?

Figure 1 is a conceptual diagram that is synthesized to highlight teachers' classroom control in four different aspects: (a) setting; (b) situation; (c) style and; (d) strategies. By referring to the figure, styles were differentiated in terms of enforcing or supporting (Tomal, 1998), while strategies had the interweaving purposes of education, prevention, correction or punishment. In terms of setting, the organizational climate has been described by respondents as bureaucratic through their perceptions in the PCI form. As for the aspect of situation, respondents were able to differentiate if any discipline problem is considered serious or less serious. All four aspects (situation, style, setting and strategy) determined the choice of decision for classroom control as reported by respondents. In essence, this conceptual figure is to portray that classroom control strategies are preferential, unpredictable and situational between one respondent to another. Respondents described how different discipline situations would require different choice of strategies and styles in a setting where organizational procedures must be adhered strictly.

FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAM ON TEACHERS' CLASSROOM CONTROL
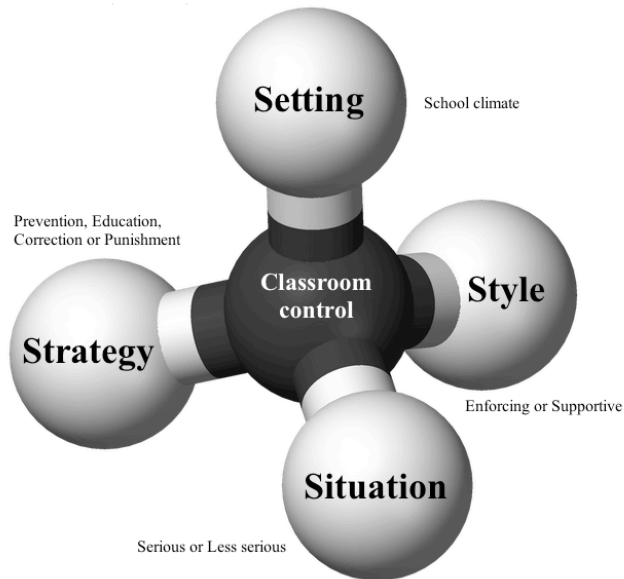

Process of Decision-Making

For the second section of the research, respondents were asked of how they made decisions pertaining to discipline problems. While every respondent differ in their form of strategies and styles, the intention was to identify any process of decision-making that respondents underwent in the classroom. Through pattern recognition, data were also conceptualized into an illustration for understanding. The following subsections will reveal the reasons and rationale behind teachers' personal decisions. Although discipline situations differ from one respondent to the other, all of them worked under a common organizational setting. As long as data could be gathered, analyzed and presented collectively from multiple perspectives, it would explain the organizational behavior while highlighting the matters that concern most respondents in decision-making.

What Observable Patterns of Decision-Making among Respondents When Managing Classroom Discipline?

Analyses of data suggests that regardless if teachers chose to be supportive or enforcing, the process of decision-making was found to be progressing from personal involvement, collaboration and finally transfer to the Head of Discipline (HOD). Teachers expect the HOD to intervene and solve all kinds of discipline problems upon transfer.

Another recognizable pattern was that teachers would progress their process of decision-making from personal involvement to finally transfer when discipline problems deteriorates from less serious to more serious. Figure 2 illustrates the process of decision-making as synthesized from the patterns found in the stage of data coding.

FIGURE 2. PROCESS OF DECISION-MAKING

Serious discipline problem

Transfer

Collaborate

Less serious discipline problem

Personal involvement
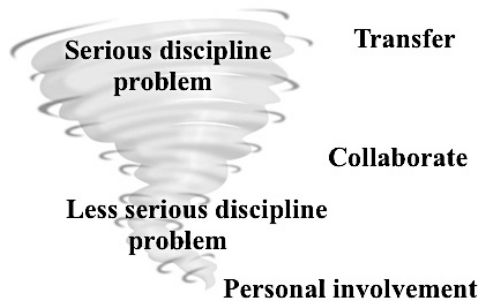
What Is The Extent Of Personal Involvement Among Respondents When Managing Classroom Discipline?

It was evident that respondents have different perceptions of seriousness when they are confronted by the same discipline situation. These differences of perceptions led to different strategies and styles of classroom control. During the phase of personal involvement, all respondents mentioned that they could gather evidences, diagnose problems to find causes and differentiate the seriousness of discipline problems. They claimed that these measures were taken to conclude if discipline situations were serious enough before they decide on their next course of actions.

Nevertheless, it was not known if respondents applied these measures consistently in their professional practice. Respondents were only probed on the frequency of transfer between serious or less serious discipline problems. If respondents have indicated they have frequently transferred less serious discipline problems to the Head of Discipline, it could implicate a lesser tendency to carry out these measures within the personal involvement stage. As a limitation of research, respondents may not necessarily behave the same way as declared in the questionnaires and interview. However, the ability to carry out all three measures was a good indicator that none of them were lacking in basic skills for personal involvement.

In addition, the frequency of personal involvement and transfer varied between one respondent to another. Some respondents preferred to give second chances to their students, to allow students to reflect on their mistakes and to delay transfers to HOD. These teachers preferred to withhold punishments and concentrate on corrections and support. Other respondents would transfer discipline problems immediately to the Head of Discipline to comply with organizational protocol, even though they were capable handling matters directly. For these few respondents, transfer was perceived as an act of compliance, rather than a projection of incompetence. Naturally, respondents would expect the HOD to decide on the best outcome if any discipline cases were to be transferred to him.

In essence, all respondents admitted that *Teachers' Code of Ethics* and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the school have limited personal involvement, especially in personal decision-making. While all respondents acknowledged their personal duty to manage students' discipline, they expressed the risk of trespassing beyond the SOPs. Several teachers cautioned that a lack of awareness to SOPs could lead to wrong strategies and styles of classroom control even though they have diagnosed the discipline problem correctly. Other teachers have also expressed that they would spread out risks of decision-making through collaboration with other teachers, and thread along the fine lines of SOPs when solutions are unclear or unstated.

If there were no option to transfer serious discipline cases to the Head of Discipline, respondents would be obligated to make further decisions. They have to figure out what should best be done to contain the situation: (a) gather as much evidence as possible and; (b) be prepared to give an account to the principal or Head of Discipline. These steps were carried out to fulfill personal responsibilities, before proceeding into the next level to collaborate with other persons-in-charge.

As an extension of research, individual preferences of personal involvement were studied from aspects of personal obstacles to decision-making. By far, the researcher had explained the extent of personal involvement among respondents. Nevertheless, uncovering these aspects could highlight key improvement areas for individual and organizational decision-making.

How Would Respondents Differentiate Between A Serious And A Less Serious Discipline Problem?

Table 5 is a comparative description between a serious and a less serious discipline problem according to respondents' perceptions. Aspects for comparisons were mostly situational in nature.

TABLE 5. COMPARISON BETWEEN A SERIOUS AND LESS SERIOUS DISCIPLINE PROBLEM ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Aspects	Situation of Discipline Problem	
	Less Serious	Serious
Involvement of principal	Less likely	More likely
Involvement of other people especially parents	Less likely	More likely
Standard Operating Procedures	Less procedures	More procedures
Potential physical injury	Not likely	Likely
Time for contemplation	Shorter duration	Longer duration
Urgency for decision-making	Need not be immediate	Must be immediate
Emotional harm or injury	Less likely	More likely
Need of corroboration	Less likely	More likely
Requires transfer	Less likely	More likely
Misbehavior	Verbal	Physical and emotional
Familiarity to the problem	High	Low
Pranks and mischiefs	More likely	Less likely
Frequency of encounter	More	Less

Note: Aspects of differentiation were identified through data coding and limited to a total of fifteen respondents.

Generally, all respondents shared a similar viewpoint that serious discipline problems are likely to cause physical injuries as compared to less serious discipline problems. From respondents' viewpoints, physical risk is the differentiating aspect that distinguishes a serious discipline problem from a less serious one. Other aspects of comparison were insignificant due to differences in respondents' personal experiences and perceptions on students' social behaviors. In reality, not every respondent shared the same number of aspects for comparison. Nevertheless, all responses were gathered and compiled altogether to present a general overview on how discipline problems were perceived among the fifteen respondents. The next section on findings will concentrate on the issues of decision-making.

What are the Unfavorable Conditions for Personal Decision-Making?

In this section, respondents were asked to highlight conditions that are favorable or unfavorable to personal decision-making. These questions were important in the study to describe the extent and rationale behind the decision for personal involvement. If favorable conditions were stronger than unfavorable conditions, respondents would likely to be more involved in personal decision-making. Vice versa, personal actions would resort to collaboration or transfer if unfavorable conditions were more prevalent. One of the limitations of this research was to find out which conditions are stronger in relation personal decision-making. Future studies must include efforts to construct instrument for a more detailed comparison and correlation analyses on strengths of relationships. Such exercise could then be carried out on a larger size of sample. At this juncture, data analyses could only suggest that these aspects were prominent and important in the consideration of among respondents. Similar to the manner of comparing between a serious and less serious problem, each respondent faced different situations and connotations on each of these aspects. In other words, each respondent's perspectives were actually personal and experiential in nature. For the purpose of research, all the common viewpoints of respondents were identified, tabulated and compared for general reference. In addition, both favorable and unfavorable conditions were also included when referring to personal decision-making as shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6. FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE CONDITIONS TO PERSONAL DECISION-MAKING

Aspects	Favorable conditions	Unfavorable conditions
Alternative to solution	Present	Exhausted
Consultation with others	If occurred	If did not occur
Compliance to SOPs	When fully complied	When not fully complied
Discipline problem	Less serious	Serious
Experience	High	Low
Familiarity with problem	Yes	No
Limited by existing roles	No	Yes
Outcome of decision	If likely positive	If likely negative
Parental involvement	No	Yes
Personal judgment	Able	Unable
Principal empowerment	If granted	If not granted
Solutions at hand	Yes	No
To fulfill personal responsibility	Yes	No
To portray personal competency	Yes	No
To portray personal credibility	Yes	No
Trained and prepared	Yes	No
Wanting to involve	Yes	No

Note: *Favorable and unfavorable conditions identified through data coding and limited to a total of fifteen respondents.*

Having more favorable conditions to personal decision-making would simultaneously lead to fewer transfers of cases to the Head of Discipline. However, within the list of favorable or unfavorable conditions, each aspect could counter and contra with another aspect. As an example, some respondents actually knew what to do with serious discipline matters because of their experience, but chose to transfer instead due to lack of empowerment. For respondents who shared the same concern, empowerment is considered a stronger condition when compared to experience, even though the degree of strength was not a quantitative measure in this study due to differing research purpose. In other words, analyses of comparison could only highlight the aspects that were obvious and spoken out by the respondents, identifiable to the specific individuals or groups within.

As a common perception, all respondents felt favorable to handle minor discipline problems as compared to serious ones. They mentioned of relying on personal experience and rationale to evaluate and decide on the next course of actions. Some of respondents claimed that they did not want to be seen incompetent or indecisive. Therefore, they would perceive conditions to be favorable when there are still chances for them to correct the child, or if they are certain that they have followed SOPs correctly when dealing with discipline problems. Respondents have also reported of experiencing unfavorable conditions when discipline matters turned complicated, or they fear of making the wrong decisions. As a result, most respondents prefer to consult others prior to making personal decisions when experiencing unfavorable conditions.

What Obstacles Would Respondents Perceive If Confronted With The Need For Personal Decision-Making?

During interview sessions, respondents were asked to imagine the obstacles that persist when personal decisions must be deliberately carried out as the person-in-charge. As a priority of research, most of the environmental factors were studied for organizational improvements as compared to personal intervention or therapeutic change. As an "outside-in" approach, the following investigations on decision-making were concentrated on environmental factors because respondents were affected in the way they work and behaved under a common setting of a bureaucratic organization. Through data analysis, a majority of respondents highlighted the significant influence of SOPs and parental involvement as obstacles in personal decision-making. Other environmental factors such as pre-existing work culture, learning disability among students, socio-cultural difference were less mentioned as obstacles for personal involvement. For each of the obstacles, respondents were asked to explain further on how it affected their personal decision-making. As a result, many personal reasons were featured and highlighted within each obstacle as highlighted in Table 7. As for other obstacles that were undetected from both interviews and written replies, it was listed as the limitation of study.

TABLE 7. RESPONDENTS' OBSTACLES IN PERSONAL DECISION-MAKING

Type of obstacles	Reasons
Parental involvement	Teachers were cautious when communicating with parents
	Parents were confused with many SOPs
	Parents were fed with one-sided story from their children
	Parents lacked counsel to understand situation
	Parents lacked respect for teachers
	Parents not totally honest with child's discipline history
	Parents felt entitled as a client
	Parents were defensive and overly protective of their child
	Parents complained and complicated discipline matters
Pre-existing work culture	Teachers had difficult to assimilate with teachers from different backgrounds
	Teachers had different expectations and consistencies to discipline problems
	Teachers had differing opinions on work expectations
	Teachers do not like interruptions to personal work
	Teachers lack collaborations and discussions
	Teachers lack initiatives to intervene with trivial problems
	Teachers had resistance to change
	Teachers had difficulty to cope with leadership styles
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	Difficulty to comply to rigid procedures
	Inconsistency and changing expectations
	Some procedures are irrelevant and needs to be reviewed
	Subjected to biasness when implemented
	Subjected to miscommunication and misinterpretation
	Decision may turned out to be unfavorable to management
	Lenience in screening and acceptance of students
	Involved many procedures
	Restricts personal involvement for decision-making
	SOPs is never a perfect guide for solutions
	Source of information only came from HOD or Principal
Socio-cultural difference	Teachers taking premature actions without considering socio-cultural differences
	Students resist to accommodate and assimilate due to different paradigm
Students with learning disabilities	Teacher enforcing punishment on these students without knowing the state of learning disorder
Teacher-student relationship	Teacher-student relationship subject to stereotyping and biasness
	Disciplining could affect existing relationships
	Lenience could invite more discipline problems

Note: *Reasons to obstacles of personal decision-making were identified through data coding and limited to a total of fifteen respondents.*

What Are Some Key Suggestions From Respondents For Organizational Improvements In Aspects Of Classroom Control And Decision-Making?

As suggestions for improvements, respondents were asked of suggestions to improve on personal obstacles of decision-making. The phase of investigation was important because it could help teachers to be more resourceful and proactive when threading along risks associated with decision-making.

Along the process, respondents were encouraged to voice their thoughts and suggestions freely. As a result, most of the data captured through voice recording were spontaneous, fragmented and required organization of data. Initially, data coding was carried out to identify and categorize respondents' suggestions into two stages as set out intentionally in the research: classroom control and decision-making. Analyses of data have highlighted that respondents would not be making personal decisions solely for serious discipline matters. Even if they could, the process of decision-making would still progress from personal involvement, collaboration and finally transfer in accordance to the SOPs of the organization, or as when other obstacles existed to dissuade them from more personal involvement in decision-making.

In another aspect, this research does not implicate that personal decision-making is better than collaboration or transfer. From data, it was evident that respondents were capable of carrying out the three distinctive measures as found within the phase of personal decision-making. Reasonably, if all teachers in the school are competent and committed in taking all the three measures seriously, if could lessen the unnecessary tasks that should be completed at the personal level prior to transfer to the Head of Discipline. Thus, the HOD could concentrate on more

complicated matters in areas where his role and responsibilities can fully be utilized, and decrease the waiting time for every decision to be made when facts are readily made available by other teachers. It is fair to suggest that further improvement and suggestions ought to concentrate on identifying, diagnosing and differentiation of discipline problems in both the personal involvement and extended to the collaboration stage. In addition, the focus on improvements must be dispersed economically among strategy, situation, style and setting so that no areas are overlooked for organizational learning.

As stated in the imitation of research, the lists of improvements were limited as these responses only came from all fifteen respondents. These suggestions for improvements could be evaluated if carried out through an action research in accordance to teachers' personality and readiness to engage in change. In addition, these areas of suggestions were compiled from all fifteen respondents, uniquely from their own perception within the context and setting of the organization. As long as areas of improvements were identified and categorized accordingly to quadrants, strategic interventions could be carried out and evaluated from time to time for organizational improvements. Table 8 summarizes their suggestions for improvements as categorized into self-directed, student-directed, situational-directed and organizational-directed strategies.

TABLE 8. LIST OF SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS FOR CLASSROOM CONTROL AND DECISION MAKING

Type	Suggestions for improvements
Self-directed	Aware of students' background
	Clear with of teacher-student boundary
	Consistent with decision and action
	Cooperate and Collaborate
	Seek assistance from the right source
	Do not make premature decisions
	Use common sense with informed decisions
	Do not stereotype students
	Be rational and not emotional
	Learn more tactics on classroom control
	Practice to sharpen own skills
	Project professional behavior
	Take calculated risk in decision-making
	Use punishment as last resort
Student-directed	Work on trust between teacher and student
	Teacher-student reconciliation beyond correction and punishment
Situational-directed	Match discipline problem with the appropriate punishment
Organizational-directed	Improve students' screening process prior to intake
	Institute change management program with teachers
	Keep evaluating and improving SOPs
	Keep superiors informed with situation
	Trust as a form of empowerment

Note: Suggestions for organizational improvements were identified through data coding and limited to a total of fifteen respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

A large contribution from this study stemmed in uncovering the aspects relating to classroom control and decision-making that was happening within a bureaucratic organization. As a general rule, SOPs are rules that dictate the decisions of all school communities. As the organization faces new sets of challenges and threats of personal decision-making, this research suggests that the school's SOPs must undergo improvements in aspects of teacher education, teacher supervision and program interventions. Therefore, inculcating multiple viewpoints was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle that would help school leaders to have a larger perspective on the predicament that teachers faced when dealing with discipline problems As a result, the analyses of data have concluded that teachers looked into four different aspects in classroom control: situation, setting, strategy and style. Each component takes its own preposition to explain how teachers conduct their classroom management. Within each of the four directed-strategies, there were different tactics used to achieve a single or multifold purpose (s) that are targeted towards self,

students, the situation and the organization. Fundamentally, these purposes are to educate, control, prevent or punish the student in accordance to the seriousness of the discipline problem. Each respondent have also defined and compared between a serious to a less serious discipline problem. According to all respondents, serious discipline problems were defined as having a potential risk to physical injury.

Other analyses of data have also revealed that the processes of decision-making spiraled upwards from personal involvement, to collaboration and finally transfer when discipline problem deteriorates. If teachers had to transfer the case directly to the Head of Discipline (HOD), the matter would often shift downwards to the mode of collaboration among discipline level coordinators before the HOD determines his final decision.

The study explored further into the level of personal involvement. There was a need to investigate why respondents habitually transfer discipline cases to the HOD. It is of interest to investigate if the reasons were due to abdication, incompetence or other factors that was associated to unfavorable conditions. While all respondents mentioned that they had to comply with the Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs), some respondents admitted of having personal capabilities to deal with serious discipline problems. For these few respondents, the decision to transfer was carried out of compliance and not due to personal incompetence.

Within the level of personal involvement, all respondents could carry out three investigative measures on their own: (1) gather evidences; (2) differentiate problems and; (3) diagnosing discipline problems to find causes. As a limitation of research, data could not support if respondents were carrying out all of these measures consistently in their classrooms. In addition, analyses of data could not rank these separate actions into sequential steps. Instead, data could only suggest that these steps were interrelated, occurred simultaneously and differ among each respondent.

As competency levels of each respondent were different, the manner and frequency of personal involvement were also influenced by personal perceptions, preference and urgency. Nevertheless, the limits of personal involvement were described in terms of conditions being favorable or unfavorable for personal decision-making. This research did not inculcate quantitative analyses to compare which aspect or conditions were stronger to influence personal decision-making. On the contrary, some conclusions could be made on the basis of verbal records that were identifiable to specific individuals or groups within the sample of respondents.

In response to the list of unfavorable conditions, further research was concentrated on environmental factors to identify the obstacles to personal decision-making. Analyses have concluded that SOPs and parental involvement were frequently mentioned as dissuading obstacles for personal involvement. According to respondents, they behaved in such manner to avoid taking on more risks on themselves, and to also safeguard the reputation and interest of the organization. Other environmental factors such as pre-existing work culture, learning disability among students, socio-cultural difference were less mentioned as obstacles for personal involvement.

Towards the end of the research, respondents contributed their ideas and suggestions to improve on classroom control. For the Head of Discipline, the benefits of knowing the obstacles that teachers faced during personal decision-making would enable him to institute change management programs to assist teachers to be more competent in their own personal involvement. Such example would be training teachers to be more skillful in identifying, diagnosing or differentiating discipline problem prior to transfer. Thus, this research had also highlighted the key strategic objectives that would encourage more organizational learning in the areas that are needed most.

Inevitably, there are three limitations in this case study. Firstly the purpose and scope of research is important to ensure that a qualitative study can have an acceptable end. A reasonable scope has to consider the resources of time and finance for completion for this qualitative study. Thus, the case study was designed as to explore the real scenario, establish the organizational problem, examine the case and educate the school communities towards a new understanding on classroom control and decision-making. The purpose of study must be carried in consideration of a setting, and how it would affect teachers' behaviors in aspects of classroom control and personal decision-making. Through a series of historical interaction and encounter with discipline cases, the Head of Discipline had identified teachers who were frequently transferring minor and trivial discipline cases to him. Teachers were fearful of taking on more roles as disciplinarians due to risks associated with personal decision-making. Thus, this case study was to enhance understanding on teachers' classroom control strategies in a bureaucratic environment, and uncover alternative solutions and suggestions for organizational learning. Analyses from all fifteen respondents were not considered as a representing the views of other teachers, but rather, producing a collective view to highlight individual thoughts, processes and issues associated with classroom control and personal decision-making.

Secondly, it was difficult to control factors that motivate or inhibit teachers' behaviors in the classroom. Nevertheless, the identification of favorable and unfavorable conditions could only explain why some teachers prefer to transfer discipline cases, while others take on disciplining tasks personally. As these conclusions are

preliminary, the strength of relationship between both conditions to personal decision-making could only be ascertained if there are future efforts to quantify and rank these variables through quantitative analyses. For the time being, no further conclusions can be made because of the methods used in this study.

Thirdly, there must be an inclusion to specify the aspect of limitation to personal perception and interpretations of the researcher. From the analyses of data, it was evident that personal classroom control strategies and personal decision-making were not consistent among and within respondents. Despite data showing similarities or differences in strategies and styles, there were other factors involved in classroom control such as situations and setting of the school. The researcher did not limit findings to only these four important aspects. In the near future, there could perhaps be a fifth element that has yet to be found when more respondents were involved in the study.

It is also important to note that the behavioral patterns of decision-making should not be equated with predictability. As for example, the pattern of decision-making was identified through a limited data of fifteen respondents, and should not be used as predictions for larger population of samples. While it was evident that all respondents chose to discipline students through the process of personal involvement, collaboration and finally transfer, a difference in terms of regularity and time taken for each process was observed.

Data interpretation in the similar field of study could be limited by existing theoretical frames of mind, or other behavioral theories that could be used to explain teachers' and organizational behavior. Beyond the contextualization, conceptualization, and clarification of data, there could be a limitation of personal interpretation, preferences and biasness. In other words, instead of concluding on data, the researcher could be concluding with his assumptions or judgmental perceptions. This personal blind spot of research must be addressed in this section. Nevertheless, measures that were taken to lessen the impact of human error included the use of triangulation and getting validation and acknowledgement from respondents over what was said.

In a conclusion, nothing is permanent and predictable about organizational behavior when catching "reality in flight" as mentioned by Pettigrew (1985). Nevertheless, this research has contributed strategic procedures and conditions in which this case study should best be carried out. Questions about the organizational setting, classroom control strategies and styles, favorable conditions and obstacles to decision-making were all ironed out as the study progresses through time. In this research, it is a challenge to ascertain if the opinions provided by the respondents were truthful. For example, even though the respondents in this study acknowledged that they knew how to identify, diagnose and differentiate discipline problems, the limitation of research lies in the confirming if respondents were truthful or practicing exactly what was being said. Things could also go in a way that respondents were cautious in the voiced-recorded interview and only provided opinions to suit what they perceived the researcher wanted to hear. Nevertheless, such problems were mitigation by addressing questions in three separate approaches: (1) having respondents to reflect and complete three questionnaires; (2) corroborating facts with the Head of Discipline and; (3) conducting a voiced-recorded interview with the respondents.

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