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# Processual Analysis on Organizational Decision-making: A Practical Approach to Explore Teachers' Decision-making and Classroom Management in a Private Secondary School in Subang, Selangor

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**Abstract**

This paper presents the features, rationale and theoretical support to use Pettigrew's (1987) model of processual analysis as an initial guide to explore organizational decision-making in a private education institution. Processual analysis suggests that case studies conducted on organizational decision-making should not be concentrated on the process itself, but issues encountered during decision-making and perceptions of teachers as decision-makers. As a result of further exploration, both theoretical and conceptual frameworks were expanded from the model through other support of literature review and initial participant observation surrounding the researched organization.

*Keywords:* School decision-making; discipline management; classroom management; processual Analysis, classroom control

## 1. Introduction

Teachers play pivotal roles as classroom managers despite their daily teaching activities. Inevitably, teachers are to be ready to handle all sorts of discipline problems that occur in their classrooms. There are many theoretical perceptions to describe teachers' behavior pertaining to classroom management. In the academia, few studies are

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concerned about teachers' classroom management in aspects of decision-making. For the researcher, organizational decision-making will be studied at teachers' level concerning their behaviors and classroom control strategies.

## 2.  Background of Study

On the national landscape, Malaysia's Ministry of Education (MOEM) has issued several directives pertaining to how discipline matters should be managed by schools. In one occasion, Professional Circular No. 7/1995 (MOEM, 1995) prohibited  teachers from using excessive force while disciplining their students. At that time, complaints were prevalent because some teachers failed to follow *Teachers' Code of Ethics* (INTAN, 1991) and the *School Disciplinary Procedure handbook for Headmasters and Teachers* (MOEM, 1988) that were instrumented by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. Six years after Professional Circular No. 7/1997 was issued, another Professional Circular No.10/2001 (MOEM, 2001c) was sent to schools to remind teachers that they are disciplinarians. The problems persist because teachers were habitually transferring discipline cases to other persons-in-charge, while others were reported of abdicating personal responsibilities to discipline students.

In essence, all issues and content within professional circulars are to be heeded as instructions, corrections and preventions, regardless if situations are existent or non-existent in schools. In the academia, there is a lack of local evidence to explain why some teachers prefer to transfer all discipline-related cases to persons-in-charge, while some prefer to do otherwise by handling things on their own. Professional Circular No.10/2001 advised teachers to consider preventive, educative and corrective measures before resorting to punishments Regardless of the size of discipline problems, a bad decision could backfire and jeopardize their professional career. Hence, teachers could be knowingly or unknowingly taking on risks when making personal decisions. In some instances, parents were suing teachers and schools through litigation due to mismanagement or inappropriate use of punishments on students (Tie, 2004).  Therefore, personal decision-making becomes the integral part of the case study as the researcher considers all the threats and problems above.

## 3.  Problem Statement

Previously, a local evidence indicated that teachers' collaborative participation in schools' decision-making remained low and unsatisfactory, and that teachers' involvement in decision-making in student's affair management was the least as compared to issues related to co-curricular or curriculum (Samad & Shoib, 2006). Due to the circumstances highlighted in the background of study, the first problem lies in describing decision-making as a subject of exploration. As decision-making is not merely a description of people's thoughts and processes, the writer attempts to incorporate the context of schools in which decision-making is practiced. The second problem lies in crafting a research design to effectively collect and analyze data on teachers' behaviors in their classroom. Preliminary, a theoretical and conceptual framework has to be established to guide the researcher to understand organizational decision-making before a case study could be carried out.

## 4.  Purpose

The overall purpose of this article is to describe the preparations of a research design prior to the phase of data collection. As a participant observer, the writer has to ascertain that issues pertaining to the background of study are inherent within the school. The discussions presented in this paper are resulted from literature reviews and researcher's reflections as a participant observer.  In the span of two years, it has led to the development of a decision-making questionnaire and a clear research design that is supported by a theoretical and conceptual framework. Sequentially, the features and feasibility of a processual analysis will be elaborated in the segment of literature review and rationale of research. Finally, the research design will be presented together with the preliminary limitations of research.

## 5.  Key Questions

Considering the problem statement, three key questions to be addressed in this article are:
a)   How to explore and explain organizational decision-making where internal and external issues are concerned?
b)   What are some practical approaches to study organizational decision-making concerning sampling and areas of analyses?
c)   To what extent is the scope and depth of research to describe teachers' decision-making in the classroom?

## 6.   Literature Review

The study of organizational behavior has been one of the great themes in social science. Many theoretical literatures and empirical findings have explored on the areas of birth, development, transformation, decay and decline in human natural systems as mentioned by Pettigrew, Woodman & Cameron (2001). In addition, this field has evolved in the last 30 years with many researchers and authors tapping into the Processual Framework by Andrew M. Pettigrew (1987). He is one of the leading management scholars who proposed that change should not be considered in terms of process but from historical, cultural, and political features of the organization. The extensive work focuses on three dimensions of interpreting organizational behavior and change. As illustrated in Figure 1, three dimensions that are in continuous interactions are: (a) the content of the chosen strategy (or the what of change); (b) the process of change (or the how of change); (c) the context (or the why of change).
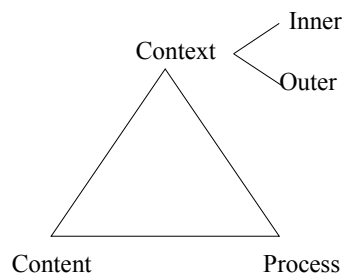


Fig 1. Processual Framework by A. M. Pettigrew (1987)

The processual view from Pettigrew (1987) is a practical mechanism to understand how organizations device, develop and implement strategic initiatives. It is also useful for understanding the complexities of organizational change even for smaller or ordinary level of change. To further explore this framework, there is a need to understand how individuals within and organization interact with each other and how information changes and influence strategic activity in the organization (Acumen Insights, 2009).

Pettigrew's dimension of context contains two elements: the inner and the outer context. The outer context refers to social, political, economic, business, and competitive environment, while the inner context refers to the structure, corporate culture and political context within the organization.  Within the inner contexts, there are the tangibles (such as structures and resources of organization) and the intangibles (such as the organizational culture and politics). Notably, the intangibles governs and tangibles. In essence, Pettigrew's framework of processual change view firms as "interactive, multilevel process, with outcomes shaped by interests and commitment of individuals and groups, the force of bureaucratic momentum, gross change of the environment and the manipulation of structural context around decisions" (Pettigrew, 1992). At a glance, Figure 2 is a portrayal of elements within the context, content and process of processual research.
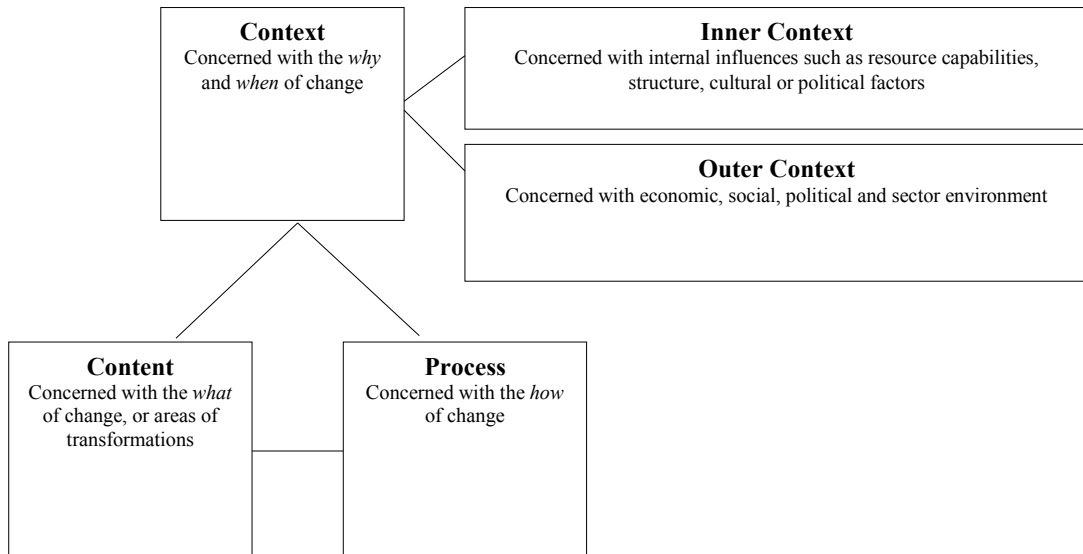
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          ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          │      Context        │        │                 Inner Context                      │
          │ Concerned with the *why* │   │ Concerned with internal influences such as resource capabilities, │
          │  and *when* of change │     │      structure, cultural or political factors       │
          │                     │        └──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
          │                     │        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          │                     │        │                 Outer Context                      │
          │                     │        │ Concerned with economic, social, political and sector environment │
          └─────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

  ┌─────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────┐
  │      Content        │   │      Process        │
  │ Concerned with the *what* │ │ Concerned with the *how* │
  │ of change, or areas of │  │      of change       │
  │   transformations    │   │                     │
  │                     │   │                     │
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Fig 2.  Elements within the Processual Framework (Pettigrew, 1987)

## 7.  Outcomes

### 7.1 Chronological Development of the Research Design

With reference to the private secondary school in Subang, organizational problems related to the theme of study were ascertained before the start of data collection. For two years, the writer became a participant observer to explore and to build the foundations for a case study. In addition, there was a lack of local evidences to support the initial development of this study. Nevertheless, issues on decision-making and incidents of teachers referring discipline cases to the Head of Discipline were eventually ascertained to pave way for a case study to be conducted in the organization. Further planning involved constructing and appropriating a decision-making questionnaire, gaining approvals from MOEM and respective questionnaire sources abroad, selecting the right respondents through purposive sampling and finally convincing the respondents to allow their feedbacks to be voiced-recorded. Initially, the case study was subjected to the approval of school administrators (particularly the principal) as it involved uncovering organizational policies that could be deemed sensitive, private and confidential.

### 7.2  Sampling and Areas of Analyses

There are some practical approaches to study organizational decision-making concerning sampling and areas of analyses.  In terms of sampling, three considerations were addressed: (a) the ability of the researcher to acquire these data in a stipulated time frame through trust, willingness and cooperation from his respondents; (b) the scope and types of data to be acquired for analyses; and (c) the relevance of these data to address the major areas highlighted in the statement of the problem. In total, fifteen teachers including the Head of Discipline agreed to participate in the study.

In terms of (a), selected teachers were studied individually and collectively. During fieldwork, it was unlikely to

find teachers stepping forward to admit their personal shortcomings or faults during classroom management. From the perception of the researcher, the challenge lies in identifying the readiness of the respondents to describe their discipline styles, even when these behaviors were knowingly (or unknowingly) unacceptable within the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the school. For such reasons, the Head of Discipline (HOD) became the central figure to suggest teachers who are suitable to be respondents due to his previous encounters and experiences with them. With the assistance from the HOD, fourteen teachers were finalized as respondents through purposive sampling that were based on the following criteria:

- Teachers who were experience in handling discipline cases personally without relying much on his assistance.
- Teachers who were prone to transfer trivial discipline cases to him.
- Identify teachers who were "hot-tempered" and could pose a threat to discipline students physically.
- Teachers who were very lenient and would not transfer discipline cases unless situations repeat or deteriorate.
- Teachers who were likely to collaborate and participate in decision-making.

Being a participant observer allowed the researcher to triangulate his personal observations with the list suggested by the HOD. Above all, the researcher was appreciative and receptive to the vulnerability and openness of teachers to state personal issues and dilemma in their discipline styles. If sensitive questions were asked, the researcher had to be prepared for psychological and emotional reactions.

For (b), the writer had to depend on behavioral theories and decision-making models to determine the scope and types of data needed for analysis. Relating to the issues and background of study, the subjects of pupil control ideology, self-efficacy and issues in decision-making were eventually identified to be relevant to the themes of the case study. The Pupil Control Ideology (PCI) form and Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) were used to support the profile of each respondent, while other data were acquired and analyzed qualitatively through the decision-making questionnaire and voiced recorded interviews.

For (c), both problem statement and purpose of study were two driving factors behind a case study in the private school. Fundamentally, the Pettigrew's (1987) processual analysis became the theoretical and conceptual framework to explore and analyze the data according to the objectives of the case study. Within processual analysis, key dimensions were outlined and analyzed sequentially that started with: (a) the decision-maker; (b) the decision-making process; and (c) the issues associated with decision-making. Conceptually, the writer encompassed the studying of teachers' pupil control ideology and self-efficacy as decision-makers, while decision-making is studied in the aspects of the process and issues related to them.

### 7.3 Construction of the Theoretical Framework

As this article aims is to study teachers' decision-making as outlined by the scenario and problem statement, the applications of the processual framework ought to incorporate theoretical supports that are relevant to the theme of research. Figure 3 is an overview of major theories and empirical findings that resulted from the researcher's synthesis of literature reviews. For each dimension within Pettigrew's (1987) Processual Analysis, elements of pupil control ideology, teacher's efficacy, school climate, SOPs, decision-making models were added as subjects for the study. Nevertheless, they are not elaborated extensively in this article but only served as a general guide for the reader to grasp the theme and scope of the research design. In addition, these elements expanded the researcher's theoretical perspective and assisted the researcher to explore, identify and interpret raw data towards scholastic discussions, imagery conceptualizations and conclusions.

**Context (The decision-maker)**
- Willower, Eidell and Hoy (1967) on Pupil Control Ideology, PCI
- Bandura (1991) of Self-efficacy
- Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (1998) on Teachers' Sense of Efficacy, TSES

**Inner Context**
- Standard Operating Procedures, SOPs (Verma, 2014)
- School climate and culture (Kelly, 1978)
- Socio-economic factors (Haberman & Post, 1998)
- School Leadership (Muijs & Harris, 2003)

**Outer Context**
- Parental influence and involvement (Veenman, 1984)
- Discipline guide from Malaysia's Ministry of Education (MOEM)
- Teachers' Code of Ethics (Malaysia, 1971)

**Content (Obstacles to Decision-making)**
- Bureaucratic organization (Haberman, 1995; Weiner, 2003)
- Teacher-student relationship (Corcoran, Walker & White, 1998)
- Poor staff relationship (Abel, 1999)

**Process of Decision-making**
- Classical (traditional) model (Li, 2008)
- Satisficing strategy model (Simon, 1947)
- Incremental model (Lindblom, 1959)
- Mixed-scanning model (Etzioni, 1967, 1986, 1989)
- The Political model (Bolman & Deal, 1991)
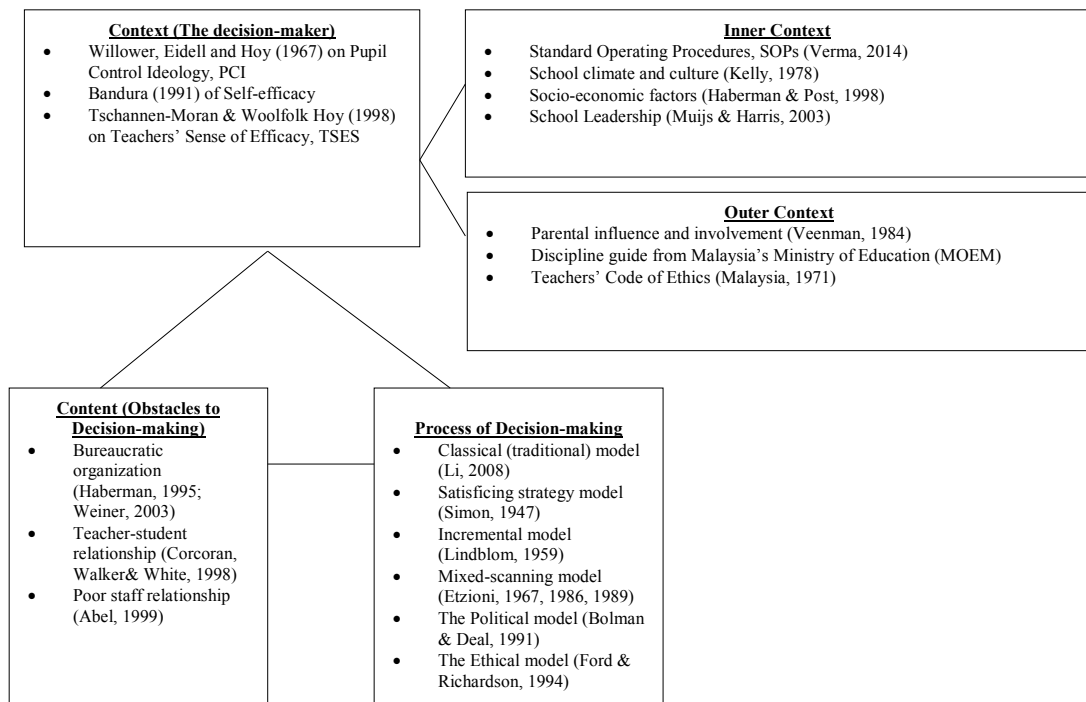- The Ethical model (Ford & Richardson, 1994)

Fig 3. Theoretical framework

In explaining the context, both internal and external contexts were considered because they surround the decision-maker as circumstances when decisions are made. In the dimension of process, seven decision-making models were explored to assist the researcher to identify and interpret the decision-making patterns from the respondents. By far, three issues were identified as key obstacles to personal decision-making. However, the researcher expects to find more issues as both internal and external contexts are explored. Nevertheless, there is no measurement of the strength of influence between issues and process of decision-making due to the early phase of exploration and other limitations of a qualitative research.

### 7.4 Construction of the Conceptual Framework

The researcher was ready to carry out a case study in the private secondary school after the theoretical and conceptual frameworks were established. Subsequently, eight research questions were listed out as follows in correspondence to the case study's research objectives:

  i. What are the classroom control strategies that respondents practice in the organization?
 ii. How can these classroom control strategies be conceptualized and understood?
iii. What are the observable patterns of decision-making when respondents manage classroom discipline?
 iv. What is the extent of personal involvement when respondents manage classroom discipline?
  v. How do respondents differentiate between a serious and a less serious discipline problem?
 vi. What are the unfavorable conditions for personal decision-making?
vii. What obstacles would respondents perceive if they were confronted with the need for personal decision-making?
viii. How to formulate a contextualized decision-making guide to address discipline-related issues within the level of personal involvement?
      These research questions are only highlighted for the benefit of the reader to understand how processual analyses

could assist in uncovering all the data needed for analyses and conclusions. Notably, the phases of research were conducted in accordance to Pettigrew's (1987) processual framework with regards to the context of the decision-maker (research questions 1 and 2), the process of decision-making (research questions 3 to 5) and the content or issues relating to decision-making (research questions 6 and 7). There were other aspects of preparations and procedures prior to data collection. Initially, there were more than fifteen teachers approached as respondents for the case study. The writer did not expect withdrawals to occur after the phase of sampling and selection. Relating to the theoretical framework, Figure 4 was synthesized as the conceptual framework of the case study.
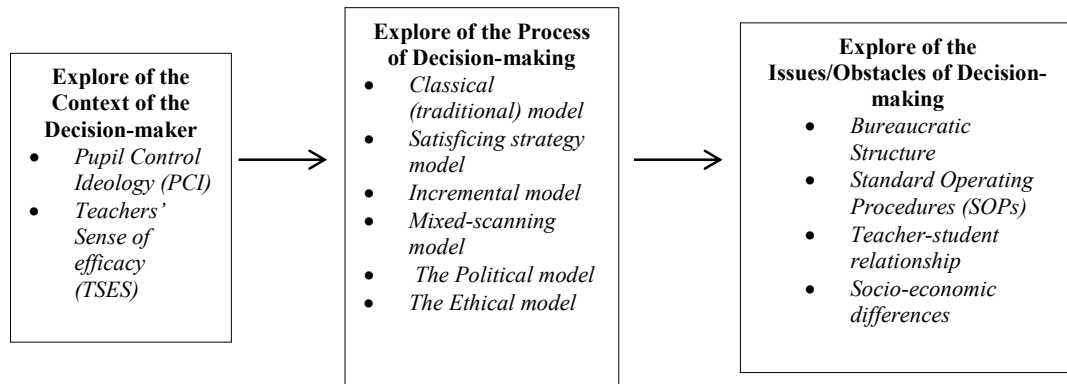
**Explore of the Context of the Decision-maker**
- *Pupil Control Ideology (PCI)*
- *Teachers' Sense of efficacy (TSES)*

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**Explore of the Process of Decision-making**
- *Classical (traditional) model*
- *Satisficing strategy model*
- *Incremental model*
- *Mixed-scanning model*
- *The Political model*
- *The Ethical model*

→

**Explore of the Issues/Obstacles of Decision-making**
- *Bureaucratic Structure*
- *Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)*
- *Teacher-student relationship*
- *Socio-economic differences*

Fig 4. Conceptual framework

## 8. Limitations of Research

Presented below are some important views on the limitations of this research prior to the process of data collection. Firstly, researching on negative teacher-pupil interactions is often considered a taboo, which makes the study in this area more difficult (Poenaru, 1998; Sava, 2002). The anticipation on how respondents think, feel and behave on sensitive questions became an ethical issue and personal consideration to the researcher. Secondly, scoring of the Pupil Control Ideology (PCI) form, Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) and further attempts involved the construction of a decision-making questionnaire to gain teachers' perception on personal decision-making. The researcher has to gather experts' opinion on the relevance and appropriateness of the questionnaire in order to explore the variables in the conceptual framework. Thirdly, not many teachers were willing to share openly about personal struggles and weaknesses in classroom discipline styles. Thus, initial preparations and groundwork took a longer time because of the persuasion process. Nevertheless, another feasible option was to approach the Head of Discipline (HOD) to suggest and select interviewees who have worked with him while dealing with discipline cases in the researched school. After the purposive sampling process, teachers were briefed and eventually invited to be the respondents for this study. Care was also taken to guard against bias in relation to the procedure and reporting of outcomes in this study. Fourthly, a small sample size of fifteen respondents could limit analyses and other possible conclusions from the case study. As mentioned earlier, there is no measurement of the strength of influence between issues and process of decision-making due to the early phase of exploration and the limitations of a qualitative research. Nevertheless, the existing respondents would pave a way for the writer to concentrate, correct and refine on the research design and methodology in order to apply to larger and diverse school populations. Subsequently, the researcher's research skills were sharpened in order to conduct more studies across different geographical locations.

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