

The Professional Commitment of Teachers in Application Primary Schools in The Adamawa Region: An Analysis of the Participatory Management Style

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ABSTRACT: This article from my thesis currently being written explores the impact of participatory management on the professional engagement of primary school teachers of applications in the Adamaoua Cameroun region. Teachers despite the difficult conditions in which they work make an exception by continuing to maintain their professional commitment; yet the literature describes the lack of commitment of teachers in the world and in Cameroon. The reasons for this ongoing commitment lie in the participatory management that the directors adopt. The main objective of this study is to analyse how participatory practices such as teacher involvement in decision-making, communication, recognition and trust impact teachers' professional engagement. The study used a quantitative approach, with a sample of 135 teachers from primary schools of Adamaoua applications. The results analysed through linear regression explain that the variation in R^2 of the order of $(0.401) = 40\%$, 1% which shows that the participatory management style explains the professional commitment of the teachers. And moreover, the variation in calculated F of the order of 11,374 is $>$ at the degree of freedom 1.333 which is the F_{lu} . These results highlight the influence of participatory management on the professional engagement of teachers in primary schools of application of the Adamaoua. The conclusions suggest an effectiveness of its implementation.

KEYWORDS: Participatory, Management, Professional Engagement, Communication, Involvement, Trust, Recognition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Participatory management, an organizational model where employees are involved in important decisions, is increasingly considered an effective approach to improving the engagement, motivation, and performance of teams in various sectors, including education. In particular, in school establishments, this management model could play a key role in the development of a motivating work environment for teachers. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), following observed shortcomings, made education a priority in order to contribute to countries in difficulty (MDG 2012). Cameroon, through the orientation law adopted in 1998, aims to train a bilingual, upright citizen rooted in their culture. To implement the teaching process, the educational system needs quality teachers (UNESCO, 2018). The latter have the heavy responsibility of guiding learners and promoting their academic orientation up to the university level (Fozing and Mboning, 2013). For this, the professional commitment of recruited teachers is required to meet these concerns. Several elements must accompany the achievement of the said objectives, namely: good working conditions, the quality of remuneration, but also the quality of management. More and more, obstacles constitute a brake on this fulfillment and commitment of teachers in most cases. However, teachers in Application Schools (écoles d'applications), despite these obstacles, are an exception; they maintain their professional commitment.

In Cameroon, contractualization has created a disparity in the recruitment and treatment of teachers. Some operate with the status of a contractual teacher while others are civil servants (fonctionnaires); yet, in the end, they have the same professional obligations without necessarily benefiting from the same rights (Référenciel de l'Instituteur Contractuel) presented by Chaffi et al. (2019). Attrition problems are widespread; around 3637 teachers have abandoned the profession to immigrate to other sectors inside or outside the country (Ngouaba, 2024). In Canada and elsewhere, the same observation is made regarding teacher dropout (Karzenti et Coll, 2000). The growing insecurity in primary and secondary schools today has created a climate of fear and mistrust where teachers are victims of violence and serious abuse (Hassana, 2022; Azaou, 2023). All these elements currently contribute to the lack of professional commitment among teachers, as well as poor results (Ntsengue, 2012).

In the context of the Application Public Primary Schools (EPPA) in the Adamaoua region of Cameroon, these (EPPA) play a fundamental role: they serve simultaneously as spaces for experimentation, professional training, and pedagogical showcases

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intended to model effective practices. In addition to the difficulties mentioned above that teachers encounter, others are added during their stay in these schools. Field surveys affirm that the appointments of teachers are an operation that obeys mythical criteria; as a consequence, the personnel is aging in the classrooms and is managed by young, sometimes less experienced directors. Worse, the allowances for hardship (*primes de sujétion*) and performance (*primes de rendement*) are ridiculously small and negligible. Regarding participation in official examinations, only the same people go without taking the directors' proposals into account. These elements contribute to demotivation at work. However, despite this series of frustrations, in a difficult context, teachers in Application Schools maintain their commitment. Furthermore, reports indicate that examination results are satisfactory, and the punctuality and presence of teachers in all aspects of school life are effective. Going beyond the requirements crystallizes their daily routine, and the desire to improve through continuous training is perceptible. Surveys conducted among teachers on the reasons for the continuation of this professional commitment in a difficult context reveal in 80% of cases that participatory management, the quality of communication with their directors, and recognition are the tools that alleviate their pain, giving way to professional commitment. Several studies have focused on the professional commitment of teachers: several studies have explored the causes (Njimfout, 2005, Abd Raak et al. 2010, Yehil 2018), but without, however, exploring the commitment of Application Masters (*maîtres d'Application*), especially in Adamaoua, a priority education zone.

How does participatory management impact teachers' professional commitment? This study therefore proposes to analyze the impact of participatory management; that is, to explain how the participatory management style impacts the professional commitment of teachers in these schools. More precisely, it will involve analyzing the effects of participatory practices such as the involvement of teachers in decision-making, recognition, trust, and communication. A literature review must be conducted on the said aspects.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Participative Management

Participative management emerged in order to complement the shortcomings of Taylorism (Tixier, 1996 cited in Gilbert et al. 2017). It is a management mode based on participation (Harmel, 1998) and the active involvement of stakeholders in decision-making and the organization's functioning. Likert (1961), through his model of management systems, distinguishes four management styles, of which participative management is considered one of the most effective because it favors communication, commitment, and employee accountability by dissolving vertical management.

The involvement of subordinates allows for work engagement according to (Vroom and Yeton, 1973). Involvement goes hand in hand with participation. In the educational context, several studies have shown that the participation of teachers in the governance of establishments improves their engagement and the quality of teaching (Bush, 2018). In Cameroon, research conducted by Takodjou (2017) revealed that schools adopting a participative approach record better results in terms of teacher performance. The relationship between participative management and teacher engagement is based on the postulate that the involvement of teachers in administrative and pedagogical decisions improves their engagement and performance. Several empirical studies show that when teachers are consulted and integrated into the governance process, their motivation and professional satisfaction increase (Guerra et al., 2020). Work carried out in Cameroon and other African countries shows that the active participation of teachers in school management improves their engagement, notably by strengthening their sense of belonging and professional satisfaction (Takodjou, 2017). However, other studies indicate that participation is not always sufficient to guarantee increased motivation. Obstacles such as the absence of institutional recognition, lack of resources, hierarchical constraints, or tensions between different educational stakeholders can limit the effectiveness of participative management (Guerra et al., 2020).

As for trust, it is the element based on understanding that allows one to be vulnerable to the actions of the other (Champagne de Lambriolle et al. 2012). It favors good relations and constitutes a basic harmonious foundation within the structure (Zucker, 1986). Furthermore, research establishes a link between trust and performance (Chraïbi, 2020; Boyer et al. 2021; Neveu et al. 2007).

Always within the same logic, recognition is this element that also characterizes participative management. Brun et al. (2002) propose recognition in four areas of an employee's life for a serene climate. Studies mention the existence of a relationship between recognition and work engagement. For Levesque (2011), motivated teachers are happy at work and participate in school life. Their engagement stems from motivation, satisfaction, and the success of the learners. Other authors find that recognition helps fight against occupational stress and solidifies motivation and organizational effectiveness (Maslah and Letter, 2008; Hoy and Misk, 2005). Perceived justice through the quality of recognition also influences the level of engagement (Kamal, 2000; Tremblay and Simard, 2005).

Finally, communication is also a lever of participative management (Cote et al. (1995) cited in Labie (2003)). The work of Suzanne et al. (2011) affirms that there is a strong influence of communication on employee engagement. Similarly, the research of Abil and Sahel (2020) demonstrates its impact on employee engagement. Supporting previous work, other authors further require know-how

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in communication because it promotes the leader's authority. It is a "motor for motivation and work engagement," which is why every manager must develop communication competencies (Zaheer, 2000; Chanen-Moren, 2004; Meriem, 2021; RIRE, 2021).

2.2 Teachers' Professional Commitment

Commitment refers to the psychological and behavioral investment of the teacher toward their work and their establishment. Meyer and Allen (1997) distinguish its three dimensions, which are:

- Affective Commitment (emotional attachment);
- Normative Commitment (feeling of moral obligation);
- Continuance Commitment (perceived costs related to leaving).

In parallel, teachers' professional commitment is defined as the affective, normative, and behavioral attachment of a teacher to their work (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Teachers' professional commitment is similar to the practice of the teaching profession itself (Beinstein 2006). It appears as a major determinant of the quality of education. International research clearly shows that committed teachers are more likely to contribute to a positive work climate, adopt effective pedagogical practices, and invest themselves in the school's missions (Day et al., 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Professional commitment is strongly influenced by the leadership styles and management practices implemented in institutions (Bush, 2020). Participative leadership, founded on consultation, listening, power-sharing, and the recognition of teachers, fosters a sense of belonging and durable motivation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Three theories were mobilized in the realization of this study. The Participative Leadership Theory, developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973), proposes that the manner in which a leader makes decisions can influence the quality of collaboration and conflict resolution within a group. Vroom and Yetton identify several leadership styles, ranging from the most authoritarian to the most participative, depending on specific situations. In the school context, participative leadership favors collective decision-making, where teachers, students, and parents are involved in defining objectives and managing problems. Theory Y of Marc Gregor also explains the foundation of this study by affirming that, contrary to Theory X, teachers like to be granted autonomy in their practices. Furthermore, the Organizational Commitment Theory (Meyer & Allen, 1997) is another pertinent theory for this study. According to this theory, employee commitment results from an affective attachment (pleasure of belonging to a school), a normative attachment (sense of duty), and a continuance attachment (content).

Conceptual Model of the Study

Based on the concepts and theories evoked, the conceptual model of this study rests on the hypothesis that participative management positively influences teachers' commitment, which leads to an improvement in their working conditions and educational performance. The analysis will focus on the participative management practices implemented in primary application schools and their impact on the different dimensions of teacher commitment (autonomy, recognition, professional satisfaction). Thus, this study aims to answer the following question: How does participative management impact teachers' professional commitment?

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This methodological framework describes the approach adopted to conduct this study, the techniques for data collection and analysis, as well as the criteria for validity of the results.

3.1. Type and Research Approach

This study falls within a quantitative, exploratory, and explanatory approach. According to Gay et al. (2012), the quantitative approach is particularly useful for identifying relationships between variables and producing generalizable results through representative samples. The objective is to analyze the impact of participatory management on teacher commitment through numerical data and statistical analyses. This method allows for the collection of standardized data, thus facilitating comparison between the two contexts. The retained approach is therefore explanatory, in order to establish relationships between participatory management practices and teacher commitment.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The study is conducted in the Application Primary Schools (écoles primaires d'applications) in the city of Ngaoundéré. The target population consists of the teachers working in these schools. The sampling relies on a stratified random method (méthode aléatoire stratifiée), in order to guarantee a balanced representativeness of teachers from each school. The total number of respondents will be determined based on the size of the teaching staff in these schools. Our sample was drawn from 135 teachers from the Application Primary Schools of the Adamaoua Region. The selection criteria were based on belonging to the school for at least 3 years as a contractual employee or civil servant in the position of Application Master (maître-d'Application), whether already appointed or in the process of being appointed.

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3.3. Techniques and Tools for Data Collection

➤ Structured Questionnaire

The data are collected using a standardized questionnaire, structured around the key variables of the study. It is built on nine items with an ordinal scale for response modalities: "Low," "Medium," "High." The collected data were processed with the SPSS software to carry out statistical analyses.

➤ Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected over one month, either directly or through the intermediary of the directors. The quantitative approach, combined with in-depth statistical analysis, will allow for a better understanding of the impact of participatory management.

3.4. Validity and Reliability

The use of statistical tools was prioritized to ensure the reliability of the results and their interpretation. Hanushek and Woessmann (2012) underlined the importance of statistical tests in comparative studies on school governance to guarantee robust and generalizable conclusions.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data analysis is based on the responses obtained from the questionnaire. The collected data were organized into main themes, presented in the form of tables for better readability. Each table is accompanied by a detailed interpretation. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 25 and the linear regression test.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

All respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and gave their consent for the conduct of the said survey. Participation was free and voluntary, and furthermore, anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

This study was conducted through the participation of 135 teachers distributed as follows: 33 Civil Servant Primary and Nursery School Teachers (IEMP) - 30.66%; 38 Contractual Primary and Nursery School Teachers (IEMP) - 37.33% ;07 Civil Servant Assistant Professors from the Higher Teacher Training College (PAENIA) - 9.33%; 16 Contractual Assistant Professors from the Higher Teacher Training College (PAENI) - 8.00%. This population comprises 48 men and 87 women, which is explained by the numerical superiority of women in education.

4.2. Perception of Involvement in Decision-Making

Variable	Modalities	Effectifs	Percentages	Cumulative Percentages
Level of Involvement	Low	24	17,8%	17,8%
	Medium	60	44,4%	62,2%
	High	51	37,8%	100,0
Current Level of Commitment	Low			
	Medium	55	40,7%	40,7%
	High	80	59,3%	100%

The teachers found their level of involvement to be low (17.8%). Conversely, a majority of teachers (82.2%) feel involved in decision-making. Furthermore, 135 teachers perceive their commitment as medium and high, representing a rate of 100%.

4.3. Perception of Trust

Variable	Modalities	Effectifs	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
The Level of Trust	Low	00		
	Medium	35	25,9%	25,9
	High	100	74,1%	100,0
Impact of Trust on Commitment	Low	00		
	Medium	25	25,9%	74,1
	Low	110	74,1%	100,0

Some teachers (25.9%) find the level of trust to be medium. The majority assesses this level of trust as high (74.1%), favoring a participatory environment. Similarly, more than the majority (74%) feel their commitment is high.

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4.4. Perception of Recognition

Variables	Modalities	Effectifs	Percentage	Cumulative Percentages
The Level of Trust	Low	30	22,2%	22,2
	Medium	90	66,7%	88,9
	High	15	11,1%	100,0
Impact of Trust on Commitment	Low	00		
	Medium	60	44,4%	44,4
	Low	75	55,6%	100,0

Very few teachers find their commitment low (22.2%). Conversely, more than half find this commitment medium or low (77.8%). Furthermore, even though the teachers find their recognition low, they are committed (100%).

4.5. Perception of Communication

Variables	Modalities	Effectifs	Percentages	Cumulative Percentages
Level of Internal Communication	Low	25	18,5%	18,5
	Medium	60	44,4%	44,5
	High	50	37,%	100,0
Level of Interpersonal Communication	Low	25	18,5%	18,5
	Medium	50	37,0%	55,6
	High	60	44,4%	100,0
Impact of Professional Commitment	Low			
	Medium	52	38,5%	38,5
	High	83	61,5%	100,0

A majority (81.4%) assesses the level of internal and interpersonal communication as high. Furthermore, the majority finds their professional commitment high and medium.

4.4. Statistical Analysis

Model Summary

Model R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate	Changement dans les statistiques					
				R Square Change	F Change	ddl1	ddl2	Sig. Change	
1	0,633	0,401	0,366	0,64854	0,401	11,374	1	133	0,000

a. Predicted Values : (Constants), Participatory Management Style

The table above summarizes the simple linear regression model. It emerges from this table that the correlation coefficient (R) is around 0.633, which demonstrates a strong and significant positive correlation because it is close to the value of 1. The coefficient of determination (R) is around (0.401) = 40.1%. This shows that: The "participatory management style" explains the Dependent Variable (DV) "professional commitment of teachers in Application Primary Schools in the Adamaoua Region" by 40.1%. The remainder is predicted by factors outside the model. This signifies that a relationship exists between the Independent Variable 1(VI1) and the Dependent Variable (VD). Therefore, the relationship is significant.

4.5. Verification of the Regression Test

Regarding the change in the statistics, a verification of all the values of the simple linear regression test is observed. It emerges from this change in the statistics that the variation of R^2 which is of the order of (0,401) = 40,1% which means that the coefficient of determination shows that the IV makes the DV vary by 40,1The calculated F Change, which is around 11.374, which is superior to the degree of freedom 1, 133 (ddl1 that is 1 and ddl2 133) which is the Flu according to the rule $F_{cal} > F_{lu}$, the significance is also observed (P) of the variation of F, which is around 0,000 inferior to alpha (0,05). This provisionally predicts that the alternative hypothesis is confirmed

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5. DISCUSSION

The discussion of the results occurs after the interpretation of the results. The analysis of the results, combined with previous works and explanatory theories, allows for a better understanding of the dynamics at play. Finally, the challenges related to the results will be identified to arrive at a theoretical model.

5.1. Interpretation

The results show that the majority of teachers feel involved in decisions concerning the management and pedagogical practices of the institution, with nearly 70% of respondents asserting their medium or high involvement. This is attributed to the trust some school principals place in their collaborators. This observation aligns with the work of Vroom and Yetton (1973), who underscore that the involvement of subordinates in the decision-making process improves their commitment and motivation. These authors consider that the more teachers are associated with decision-making, the more they feel responsible and invested, leading to an improvement in their performance. These findings are consistent with the work of Chraïbi (2020) and Boyer et al. (2021). They affirm, at the conclusion of their research, that trust is one of the elements that enables commitment. Therefore, a close relationship exists between trust and performance. Our results are also in harmony with those of Neveu et al. (2007). However, they differ from ours in that they expanded the scope of trust to include organizational trust and the trust of leaders, in addition to that of the immediate supervisor. Their results confirm that trust is an important element in employee management and performance.

Another major conclusion of this study is the general satisfaction of teachers regarding communication with the administration. Nearly 70% of teachers find the existing internal and interpersonal communication to be effective.

This perception aligns with the conclusions of Latham and Pinder (2005), who indicate that open and regular communication between the administration and teachers strengthens trust and collaboration. Transparency in communication also helps clarify expectations, a key factor in avoiding ambiguity and frustration among teachers (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

In contrast, regarding the phatic function, the sender makes efforts to maintain contact with the receiver by controlling the channel. Directors make efforts to stay in contact with their teachers to communicate, referring to this phatic function. This is why their level of communication is high and also affects professional commitment. Furthermore, comparing our results with those of others shows that the obtained results are identical. The findings of Suzanne et al. (2011) demonstrate that the level of internal communication, in their study conducted during an economic crisis, had a strong influence on employee commitment and satisfaction. Our results are also in conformity with those of Welch and Jason (2007) and Watson (2008).

The results also reveal a strong perception of recognition, with teachers feeling acknowledged in their work. This recognition is a fundamental element. This dynamic of recognition and support is also consistent with the research of Hoy and Miskel (2005), who establish that professional recognition reinforces motivation and improves organizational effectiveness.

Adam's Equity Theory (1963-1965) explains this hypothesis. According to his postulate, individuals evaluate their reward (output) in relation to that of others (referent), based on their contribution (input).

Here, teachers can assess the quality of recognition through their rewards based on their contribution to the work. This is why the most committed teachers find that their directors are fair in the rewards they grant them. They experience a feeling of equity or over-equity. Our results are identical to those of Kamal (2000) and Tremblay and Simard (2005).

The results of this study highlight the importance of participatory management in the professional commitment of teachers. These conclusions align with the theories of leadership and organizational commitment. Meyer and Allen (1997) emphasize the importance of inclusion, support, and recognition in developing a positive school environment.

The Application Primary Schools in the city of Ngaoundéré, Adamaoua region of Cameroon, by implementing these practices, could improve not only the professional commitment of their teachers, but also their overall performance and the quality of teaching.

5.2. Specific Challenges of Participatory Management in Institutions

In the Application Primary Schools, several challenges can hinder the implementation of effective participatory management:

- **Centralized Governance Model**

The direction of the schools is often entrusted to administrators or managers who hold strong authority (Hamadou, 2021). This concentration of power can limit the involvement of teachers in decision-making, which runs contrary to the principle of participatory management.

- **Cultural and Religious Constraints**

Certain educational decisions may be influenced by cultural and religious considerations that do not always favor participatory management. Such external factors can impose non-negotiable limits on policy discussions within the school.

- **Precarious Working Conditions**

Teacher motivation, a prerequisite for engagement, can be hampered by low salaries, a lack of pedagogical material, and insufficient recognition. These poor working conditions create frustrations that a participatory management style must overcome to be truly effective.

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5.3. Theoretical Reflection

This study allows for the development of a theoretical model which suggests that decisions should flow from teacher proposals to school directors and then back to the teachers. This would facilitate their professional commitment.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the impact of participatory management on the professional commitment of teachers in the Application Primary Schools (Écoles Primaires d'Applications - EPA) in the Adamaoua Region of Cameroon. After analyzing the impact of these practices, the results demonstrate that participatory management remains well-developed in the EPAs of Adamaoua. According to participatory management theories, it is a key factor in teacher motivation. Involvement: The involvement of teachers in the decision-making process, as suggested by Vroom and Yetton (1973), fosters their commitment and sense of responsibility, contributing to job satisfaction. Communication: Communication between teachers and the administration is perceived as satisfactory by nearly 70% of respondents. This strengthens trust and facilitates collaboration, consistent with the research of Latham and Pinder (2005). This effective communication allows for better management of expectations and resources, thus creating an environment conducive to professional commitment. The recognition of teachers' efforts also plays an essential role in their professional commitment. This research shows that participatory management, when properly implemented, can have a significant impact on the professional commitment of teachers. By encouraging involvement, recognition, and effective communication, the Application Primary Schools in the city of Ngaoundéré can not only improve the satisfaction and engagement of teachers but also foster the quality of teaching.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

These results open the way for practical recommendations aimed at reinforcing participatory management and boosting the professional commitment of teachers in the Application Primary Schools (EPPA). The following recommendations are therefore proposed:

- Strengthen Participation in Decisions

Actively involve teachers in pedagogical planning, resource management, and innovative projects. This ensures their sense of ownership and responsibility, consistent with the Vroom and Yetton model.

- Improve Administrative and Financial Transparency

Periodically publish information regarding resource management. Increasing transparency helps build and maintain trust between the administration and the teaching staff, addressing the need for equity and open communication.

- Optimize Internal Communication

Establish two-way (bidirectional) communication channels (e.g., dedicated forums, regular suggestion boxes, or scheduled open meetings). This ensures that information flows effectively not only from the top down but also from the bottom up, fostering a sense of inclusion.

- Promote a Climate of Collaboration

Organize team-building activities and collaborative training sessions. This helps establish stronger interpersonal relationships and a supportive school culture, which are essential for strong commitment and high performance.

- Reinforce Training in Participatory Leadership

Organize workshops and training programs for directors focused on participatory management and transformational leadership. Equipping school leaders with these skills is crucial for successfully implementing a non-centralized governance model.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors say there is no conflict of interest on the publication of this work. All procedures have been conducted ethically. The publication of this article does not engage in any financing agency. For this it has been influenced or in the design, nor in the presentation and no longer the execution of the research.

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