ANWAR AMIN AND MICHAEL BELL

14. ENABLING INNOVATION IN
ACEHNESE SCHOOLS

> The challenging part of this research process was when I attempted to dive into the very bottom of the heart of exemplary innovative teachers in model schools to explore and discover their feelings, beliefs, experiences, perspectives and opinions regarding school culture nuances that determined the growth and sustainability of their innovativeness. This part of the research process has indeed given me meaningful lessons and assisted me to transform myself from a student to a researcher. (Amin)

Teachers in Indonesia are facing pressure to adopt curricular innovation. One driving force is a series of educational reforms, including the policy on regional autonomy stipulated in the Regional Autonomy Act No. 22/1999. This policy led to the decentralisation of education, as postulated in the Indonesian Government's Regulation No. 25/2000, which involved the implementation of school-based management (Bandur, 2009; Raihani, 2007), followed in 2006 by a mandated school-based curriculum (in Bahasa Indonesia it is called KTSP; Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pelajaran) (Raihani, 2007). Decentralisation led to delegation of policy, planning and administration decision making processes to municipal and school-based management (SBM) (Zajda, 2006), stressing that individual schools, rather than other government structures, were the primary units of improvement.

Under SBM, every school is granted the authority to make decisions about significant matters related to its operations (Barrera-Osorioet al., 2009; Shoraku, 2008) with the aim of stimulating and sustaining improvement. Schools are mandated to form a School Committee or School Council involving a variety of community members (parents, educational experts, alumni and teacher representatives), and are given authority to monitor teaching and learning quality and school performance, raise funds, and appoint, suspend or remove teachers (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; RTI International, 2010; Shoraku, 2008). Consequently, parents and the wider community become more involved in the operation of schools. In such circumstances, teachers may inevitably deal with a reality where parents and the community scrutinise their instructional practices more closely. This situation may compel teachers to seek new and better ways of performing instructional practices to satisfy the concerned parties.

It is argued that decentralisation policies acknowledge diversity in education across Indonesia, and consider local people's aspirations and needs (Ibrahim, 2008; Musanna, 2009; Shoraku, 2008). This acknowledgement of diversity is part of the

principle of KTSP development (Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan/National Education Standards Body [BSNP], 2006). In contrast to a highly centralised education system, KTSP provides teachers with greater autonomy and opportunity to develop syllabus, teaching materials and assessment tools that cater to, or are congruent with, local wisdom and needs, parental and community expectations, and contemporary learners' learning purposes (BSNP, 2006).

Aceh, one of Indonesia's provinces, possesses a culture and language significantly distinct from other parts of Indonesia. Islamic values are deeply embedded in Acehnese culture. Following the implementation of SBM and KTSP, demand has grown for incorporating Islamic values into public education. For instance, local education analysts have continuously scrutinised curricula and urged the implementation of Islamic values-based education (Ibrahim, 2008). According to the NAD (Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam) Education Strategic Plan 2007-2011, the implementation of Islamic values-based education involves developing a "National Curriculum added with Islamic Values in the Aceh education curriculum" (p. 33). Consequently, teachers in Aceh have been challenged to innovate in developing syllabi, selecting materials and defining teaching methods to incorporate Islamic values into public education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jain (2010, p. 81) argues that "all changes are not innovation, however, all innovations in organisation terms are change; undesired or unintended changes or changes involving nothing new do not constitute innovations". Innovations result in better practices and improvements, while change does not always improve matters in an organisation. Bartol et al. (2008, p. 212) state that innovation represents a "new idea applied to initiating or improving a process, product or service", while change is described as "any alteration of status quo" that may not use new ideas and may not be a major improvement. Scholars agree that organisational culture is a primary determinant of organisational innovation (Ahmed, 1998; Dobni, 2006; Parzefall et al., 2008). Thus, an organisation intending to innovate and promote innovation needs to nurture a culture that facilitates and encourages individual innovativeness. Schools, like industries, require innovation to survive; they hinge on a certain culture that supports innovativeness in order to innovate (Goatley & Johnston, 2013; Jaskyte, 2004).

Literature documents the nature of cultures that encourage and enable individuals' innovativeness in various organisations, including schools. Thus, recognising an innovator for their innovation is viewed as essential in a culture that allows and encourages individual innovativeness (Huhtala & Parzefall, 2007; Malaviya & Wadhwa, 2005). In addition, a culture emphasising professionalism is believed to facilitate individuals' innovativeness (Evan, 2008). Such a culture is concerned with individuals' attitudes and behaviour towards their profession or occupation. According to Haftkhavani et al. (2012), teachers perform better when they are strongly committed to the school. Professional commitment within a school functions as impetus for teachers to exert effort or act to achieve organisational targets (Shagholi et al., 2011).

Knowledge sharing has been suggested as essential in a culture that enables individuals to be innovative (Burg et al., 2013; Cerne et al., 2013) because it allows them to enrich their knowledge and share innovative ideas. Thus, knowledge sharing constitutes the primary precondition for innovativeness. Moreover, this cultural practice allows individuals to learn from their colleagues through mutually sharing ideas, information and experiences about issues related to their organisation (Chen et al., 2012; Tseng et al., 2012).

THE STUDY

Given the demands placed on educators in Indonesia generally and the special character of the Acehnese context, this study sought to explore how the nature of school culture effectively enables and encourages teachers' innovativeness for curricular innovation. The study consists of a case study of two model schools (School A and School B) from Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

METHODS

Six peer selected teachers, revered as notable innovative professionals within the two schools, were interviewed (3 from each site). Interviews were transcribed and translated. An independent bilingual individual checked the translation. Thematic analysis coding involved three stages; open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Ezzy, 2002). Each case was treated separately first, then a cross case analysis was conducted based in the emergent themes from each case.

CASE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Recognition of Innovative Work (Formal, Informal and Peer Recognition)

Recognition of innovative work was reported to encourage innovation in both cases, although this played out slightly differently in each. First, recognition of innovative work was reported to create self-esteem within an innovative teacher. Exemplary innovative teachers at both schools felt themselves worthy for having performed innovation. They perceived they were given recognition due to their innovation being beneficial to both students and colleagues. The effect of self-esteem on exemplary innovative teachers in School A was that they were impelled to continue exploring and seeking innovative ideas about teaching and learning. At School B, self-esteem generated exemplary innovative teachers and increased their willingness to constantly perform innovative work for the school's improvement.

Second, recognition of innovative work created the perception within an innovative teacher that their innovation was supported. In School A, this perception resulted in teachers having the courage to seek support from colleagues when performing innovation. It also increased the teachers' passion to continue to adopt and implement innovation in teaching practices. In School B, the perception of being supported gave teachers more courage and confidence to continue innovating and initiating changes in learning and teaching.

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Additionally, recognition of innovative work in School A caused teachers to feel more comfortable and confident in performing such work; a consequence not observed in School B.

Teacher Professionalism as Commitment and Autonomy

A professional commitment culture generated a creative disposition within teachers in both schools. In School A, this was characterised by the teachers' initiatives and endeavour to discover and apply a variety of teaching and learning models that met students' needs rather than relying on fixed, conventionally applied models. In School B, creative disposition was indicated by the teachers' willingness to continuously seek novel ways of teaching that they believed would be more effective and enhance students' achievement.

Autonomy enabled the School A teachers to be creative in taking the initiative to adopt and implement teaching and learning models that were considered novel and innovative. These teachers were unhampered in seeking out and experimenting with novel ways of teaching. This phenomenon also occurred in School B, although with a slightly different focus. Autonomy in teaching evoked creativity because it got rid of the teachers' apprehension that they would be blamed for doing something outside the conventional instructional practices; they did not feel constrained to perform instructional activities in school-stipulated ways, which enabled them to develop their innovative ideas and put them into action.

Unplanned or Emergent, Informal Knowledge Sharing Among Teachers

The effects of a knowledge-sharing culture on teachers' being innovative in the two schools were both similar and different. Knowledge sharing enabled the teachers to increase or enrich novel ideas regarding how to teach in innovative ways. It provided the teachers an opportunity to learn from their colleagues' experiences in regard to how to teach innovatively.

In School A, however, the teachers' participation in unplanned or emergent and informal knowledge-sharing activities gave them an opportunity to embrace their colleagues in order to initiate and create the collaboration they perceived as crucial to implementing innovation in teaching. This phenomenon was not observed in School B. Also unique to School A was one teacher's experience of having the opportunity to find a critical friend to examine their innovative idea and provide feedback and suggestions. This allowed the teacher to assess the degree to which their idea was suitable and the feasibility of implementing it.

Unique to School B was the opportunity for one of the teachers to introduce and elucidate their innovative ideas to colleagues in a formal setting. In addition, another of the School B teachers had the impetus to keep learning through investigation and experimentation with the aim of discovering other innovative ways of teaching so they had something novel to share with their colleagues.

DISCUSSION

Recognition of Innovative Work

Drawing on the experiences of the exemplary innovative teachers who were interviewed, recognition of innovative work is clearly essential for enabling teacher innovativeness. This corresponds with evidence gathered in the private sector by Malaviya and Wadhwa (2005), who suggest that recognition fosters employees to innovate and that organisational innovation may not prosper without appropriate recognition. Indeed, Malaviya and Wadhwa (2005) assert that innovation originates from individuals in an organisation. Employees' ability to innovate is the embryo for organisational innovation. Organisational culture is an important aspect of developing and encouraging employees' innovative ability and certain cultures in organisations enable individual innovativeness. Indeed, Huhtala and Parzefall (2007) propose that recognition is a significant predictor of innovative performance and employee innovativeness can function as a resource when the contribution of innovative employees is recognised.

   Islamic principles play a role in shaping the nature of recognition, especially if recognition is considered synonymous with the demonstration of respect and appreciation, or regarded as one's effort to make others feel respected or appreciated (Alam et al., 2013). The Islamic principle stipulates that every Muslim respects not only every human being but also every creation. Respect refers to the condition of being honoured, esteemed or well-regarded, and involves treating other individuals the way we would like to be treated. It is viewed as one of the foundations of faith in Islam, originating from Hadith, the Prophet's Practices and Sayings (Imam Reza [A.S.] Network, 2014). Based on this principle, Muslims regard demonstrating recognition to an individual who has contributed valuable new knowledge as an important value. Someone who contributes new knowledge and ideas is regarded as a teacher and should be given respect as great as that of a parent (Imam Reza [A.S.] Network, 2014).

Teacher Professionalism, Commitment and Autonomy

Teachers described the culture of professionalism enacted in their schools as a powerful means of generating their innovativeness, characterised by willingness to change their professional practice and enhance the quality of services provided to students. This finding is consistent Evan's (2008) evidence that professionalism or professional culture must involve changes to professional practice regardless of whether they are consciously imposed upon education professionals or evolve as a direct or indirect consequence of prevailing circumstances.

   This study's finding that the participating exemplary innovative teachers were enabled to be innovative in teaching because they worked in a culture that emphasised professional commitment, requiring them to have a high degree of commitment to the school's norms and attitudes, is in line with the findings of research by Haftkhavani et al. (2012). These authors asserted that teachers'

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commitment to their school as an organisation resulted in better teaching performance and agreement with their school's organisational changes.

The teachers spoke of "freedom", a "constraint-free condition" and the "authority to make decisions regarding what and how to teach" as vital factors that enabled them to be innovative. Being free of constraints and delegating authority to decide the content they needed to teach and the ways of teaching they needed to use enabled and facilitated the teachers to take initiatives that led to the adoption and implementation of innovations in teaching. Correspondingly, research has been conducted to examine the effects of autonomy on employee attitude and behaviour in terms of innovation. That research proposed that employee innovativeness is often influenced by autonomy in a natural and indirect way (Das & Joshi, 2007; Huhtala & Parzefall, 2007). Literature discussing the implication of autonomy for organisational innovativeness claims that promotion of decision making autonomy is an important organisational innovativeness principle. It also shows far-reaching agreement among scholars that innovative organisations tend to provide their members with more autonomy in making decisions (Gebert et al., 2003).

Unplanned or Emergent, Informal Knowledge Sharing Among Teachers

The exemplary innovative teachers described their reliance on other teachers' willingness to share knowledge in order to enrich themselves with new knowledge, insights and ideas for being innovative in teaching. They also acknowledge that their colleagues' significant contributions through unplanned, emergent and informal knowledge-sharing activities enhanced their innovativeness. The significance of knowledge sharing for innovativeness in organisations has been acknowledged by Cerne et al. (2013), Gunsel et al. (2011) and Burg et al. (2013). According to Gunsel et al. (2011), knowledge sharing constitutes part of the knowledge management cycle that plays an important role in organisational innovativeness. Burg et al. (2013) provide evidence that the practice of knowledge sharing in an organisation is driven by the fact that it enhances innovativeness.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that Indonesian educators are under pressure to adapt to a decentralised education system that promotes local values and local scrutiny. This adaptation requires innovations in teaching practices. The adaptation also requires schools to make changes to their organisational cultures. This study has shown that schools can encourage and support teaching and learning innovations by providing teachers with organisational cultures that focus on three major innovation-inducing characteristics: recognition of teachers' innovations; emphasis on teachers' professionalism and commitment to the school, along with the autonomy to experiment with innovations to bring about change; and knowledge sharing to enrich all teachers' knowledge, and facilitate novel ideas and teaching practices.

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