

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPALS' DECISION MAKING STYLES AND TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between principals' decision making styles and teacher empowerment. The theoretical framework of this study was developed based on Scott and Bruce (1995) and Short and Rinehart (1992). The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.910. Mixed research method (quantitative and qualitative) was used in this study. 280 teachers from 8 high schools in Sagaing Township were participated in this study. According to quantitative results, teachers from Sagaing Township answered that their principals most highly practiced "rational" decision making styles ( $\bar{X}=3.98$ ), followed by "dependent" ( $\bar{X}=3.50$ ), "spontaneous" ( $\bar{X}=2.72$ ), "intuitive" ( $\bar{X}=2.69$ ), and "avoidant" decision making styles ( $\bar{X}=2.60$ ). And, it was found that teachers from all selected high schools had high empowerment levels ( $\bar{X}=3.78$ ). Furthermore, it was found that there were significant and positive relationship between principals' rational decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r=.473, p<0.01$ ), significant and positive relationship between principals' dependent decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r=.386, p<0.01$ ), significant and low relationship between principals' spontaneous decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r=.120, p<0.05$ ), significant and low relationship between principals' intuitive decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r=.164, p<0.01$ ), and no correlation between principals' avoidant decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r=.086$ ). The results of qualitative data were consistent with the findings of quantitative results. Therefore, based on the results, it can be suggested that the principals should make decisions based on rational reasons and discussion with teachers so that the teachers feel empowered and take responsibilities, which in turn, can directly or indirectly increase school achievement.

**Keywords:** Principals' Decision Making Styles, Teacher Empowerment

### Introduction

Decision making is the process of selecting the best choice to achieve the goals of the organizations. Decision making is similar to management and sometimes it is even equal. The future management emphasizes on the process of decision making. Therefore, decision making has long been recognized as being at the heart of the organizations (Owens, 2000). All principals in educational organizations also have to deal with decision making process. Indeed, principals make decisions by various styles and their decision making styles indicates their perceptions and their qualities (Ghaleno, Pourshafei, & Yunesi, 2015). How decisions are effectively made in a school are usually reliant on principals because they are the staffs who are usually in charge of setting up the decision making process (Nutt, 2008). Therefore, in a school, principals' strategies and styles used for decision making approach and showing decision making behaviors are becoming of high importance (Cetel, Aksoy, Caliskan, & Tennur, 2013).

Teacher empowerment is the possession and use power of teacher to enact teaching tasks and school activities in order to improve school achievement. Empowerment is a key strategy in organization to expand and adapt to the changes. Today's work environment needs empowered employees that can be able to decide, provide solutions and be accountable in front of their work (Joker, Hosseinzadeh, & Davoudi, 2014). When teachers are more empowered, student achievement, responsiveness to student conflict, teacher satisfaction, and the school environment are likely to improve (Short & Johnson, 1994). Teacher empowerment can also encourage teacher effectiveness, leading to improved student learning (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). The outcomes of teacher

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empowerment are high energy levels, positive attitudes, high productivity and commitment to education (Blasé & Blasé, 2001).

Blasé and Blasé (2001) reported that principal's leadership and behavior is the largest contributor to teachers' sense of empowerment. Principals and teachers together, can successfully manage the education system to bring about improved student achievement and competencies to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Lucas & Valentine, 2001). When the principals give enough empowerment to the teachers, they can discover their potential and limitations for themselves as well as developing competence in their professional development. Since there is a correlation between teacher empowerment and student success, the principal should make suitable decisions and create environment that will foster the empowerment of teachers (Balyer, 2017). If the principals use suitable decision making styles, the teachers can be empowered and the education system can be successful (Wren, 1995).

## **Aims of the Research**

### ***Main Aim***

The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between principals' decision making styles and teacher empowerment at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township.

### ***Specific Aims***

The specific aims of this study were:

- (1) To explore teachers' perceptions of their principals' decision making styles at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township
- (2) To determine teachers' perceptions of their empowerment levels at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township
- (3) To determine whether there are any significant differences in teacher empowerment according to their demographic data (gender, age, position, academic qualification, and service year) at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township
- (4) To examine the relationship between principals' decision making styles and teacher empowerment at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township

## **Research Questions**

This research dealt with the following questions regarding principals' decision making styles and teacher empowerment at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township.

- (1) What are the teachers' perceptions of their principals' decision making styles at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township?
- (2) What are the teachers' perceptions of their empowerment levels at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township?
- (3) Are there any significant differences in teacher empowerment according to their demographic data (gender, age, position, academic qualification, and service year) at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township?
- (4) What is the relationship between principals' decision making styles and teacher empowerment at Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township?

## **Definitions of Key Terms**

Important terms were carefully defined in explaining the concepts underlying the development of the investigation.

- (1) **Decision making style** is defined as the way how people make decisions in different situations (Zmud, 1979, as cited in Alqarni, 2003).
- (2) **Principals' decision making styles** can be defined as the response patterns exhibited by principals in decision making situations of the educational organization (Olcum & Titrek, 2015).
- (3) **Empowerment** is defined as the possession and use of power in the pursuit of occupational improvement, professional autonomy, and the overall improvement of the organization (Smith & Lotven, 1993, as cited in Lintner, 2008).
- (4) **Teacher empowerment** is defined as the combination of respect and dignity for teachers which allows them to take responsibility for and participate in work-related decisions (Blasé & Blasé, 2001).

## **Scope of the Study**

- The scope of this study was limited to selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township because this study was based on available time and resources of the researcher.
- The findings of this study could not be generalized to any other schools than high schools in Sagaing Township.

## **Operational Definitions**

In this study, “principals’ decision making styles” refer to the principals’ response-patterns in making decisions about school procedures. “Teacher empowerment” can be operationally defined as teachers’ autonomy and use of power in both teaching tasks and school activities.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Decision Making**

Decision making can be defined as the process of choosing one alternative form among a set of rational alternatives (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). Decision making pervades all other administrative function. Planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, and controlling all include decision making (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012). Effective decision making requires an understanding of the situation. An effective decision would be the one that optimizes profits, sales, staff welfare, or market share. In some situations, an effective decision may be the one that minimizes loss, expenses, or staff turnover. Principals and teachers at all levels make decisions. These decisions have some influences, whether large or small, on the performance of both faculty and students. Therefore, principals and teachers must develop decision making skills because they have to make many decisions that will affect the organization (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

### **Decision Making Styles**

Decision making style can be defined as the habitual response pattern of a person in making decisions (Scott & Bruce, 1995). Decision making styles can differ depending on the decision makers’ approach to decision making. People use different levels of all five styles, but one style is usually dominant. According to Scott and Bruce (1995), there are five different decision making styles. These five styles of decision making are rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous.

- **Rational decision making style:** Rational decision making style is characterized by the search for data and information, developing alternative and logical evaluation of alternatives. This rational decision making style use logical, reasoning and well-structured approach for making decisions.
- **Intuitive decision making style:** Intuitive decision making style is characterized by tendency to depend on premonitions and feelings. This means that intuitive decision making style depends upon hunches, feelings, personal experiences and gut feeling.
- **Dependent decision making style:** Dependent decision making style is characterized by receiving direction and support from others to make a decision. In other word, a dependent decision making style is defined as a search for advice, help, support and guidance for making important decisions.
- **Avoidant decision making style:** Avoidant decision making style is characterized by attempt to avoid making decision whenever possible. Avoidant decision making style is defined by withdrawing, postponing, moving back, ignoring the decision processes.
- **Spontaneous decision making style:** Spontaneous decision making style is characterized by making quick, rapid, impulsive, and prone to make snap decision. This style is also characterized by a feeling of immediacy and a desire to finish the decision making process as fast as possible (Bayram & Aydemir, 2017).

### Teacher Empowerment

According to Lintner (2008), empowerment means bringing the responsibility for decision making to the lowest possible level, which specifies that the administrator does not make all the decisions. Empowerment can also be defined as a form of decentralization that places decision making and accountability at the lowest level: thus, teachers are involved in decisions about instruction, curriculum because they are the ones in the classroom, closest to the students. Lintner (2008) points out that three key elements in teacher empowerment are the ability to act, the opportunity to act, and the desire to act. Empowered teachers are highly competent and work in schools that provide opportunities to show competence. A school that values empowerment of teachers will be better at finding and developing resources than a school that does not support an empowerment philosophy (Short, 1994).

### Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment

Short and Rinehart (1992) identified six dimensions of empowerment. Each of the six attributes is discussed as follows.

- **Decision making:** The decision making dimension of empowerment involves teachers' participation in critical decisions that directly affect their work. Teachers have increased control over their work environment when their opinions influence the outcome of the decision making process. Teachers are less willing to participate in decision making if they perceive that their opinions are not taken in to consideration by the principal when the final decision is made (Short, Miller-Wood, & Johnson, 1991).
- **Impact:** The attribute of impact refers to teachers' perceptions that they have an effect and influence on school life (Short, 1994). Teachers' self-esteem and confidence grow when they feel they are doing something worthwhile and are recognized for their accomplishments (Ashton & Webb, 1983). Teacher impact also means that teachers influence other faculty members to take part in reform efforts and school improvement initiatives (Short, 1994).
- **Status:** The status attribute of empowerment refers to the sense of esteem, respect, and admiration attributed by students, parents, community members, peers, and superiors to the

profession of teaching. Recognition of teacher status can be found in comments and attitudes from the various constituents of the school environment and student response to the teacher's instructions (Short & Johnson, 1994).

- **Autonomy:** Autonomy is the dimension of teacher empowerment that refers to teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life such as scheduling, curriculum, textbooks, and instructional planning (Short, 1994; Short & Johnson, 1994; Short & Rinehart, 1992). Autonomous individuals will generally have an attitude of collegiality, risk taking, and ongoing learning and experience greater satisfaction in the workplace as autonomy increases (Lintner, 2008).
- **Professional growth:** Professional growth refers to teachers' perception that the school in which they work provides them with opportunities to grow and develop professionally, to learn continuously, and to expand one's own skills through the work life of the school (Short & Johnson, 1994).
- **Self-Efficacy:** Self-efficacy refers to teachers' perceptions that they have the skills and ability to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, and can effect changes in student learning. Self-efficacy develops as individuals acquire self-knowledge and the belief that they are personally competent and have mastered skills necessary to affect desired outcomes (Short, 1994; Short & Johnson, 1994).

Rosenholtz (1991) stated that teachers' sense of self efficacy and professional certainty relates to teachers' decisions to remain in teaching. An understanding of the six dimensions of teacher empowerment should be provided the bases for developing strategies to help teachers become more empowered in their work lives (Short, 1994).

### Theoretical Framework

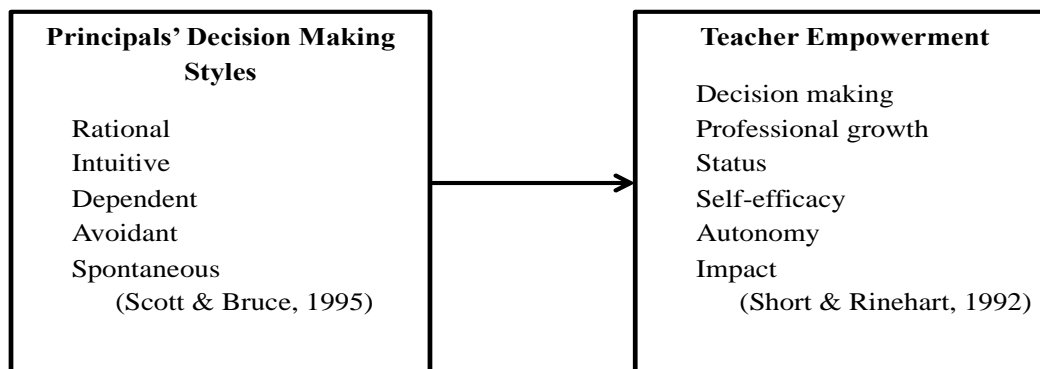
The theoretical framework of this study was based on Scott and Bruce (1995) and Short and Rinehart (1992). Five decision making styles developed by Scott and Bruce (1995) are:

- **Rational decision making style** is characterized by the search for data and information, developing alternative and logical evaluation of alternatives.
- **Intuitive decision making style** is characterized by tendency to depend on premonitions and feelings.
- **Dependent decision making style** is characterized by receiving direction and support from others to make a decision.
- **Avoidant decision making style** is characterized by attempt to avoid making decision whenever possible.
- **Spontaneous decision making style** is characterized by making quick, rapid, impulsive, and prone to make snap decision (Bayram & Aydemir, 2017).

Six dimensions of teacher empowerment developed by Short and Rinehart (1992) are:

- **Decision making** refers to teachers' participation in critical decisions that directly affect their work, involving issues related to budgets, teacher selection, scheduling, and curriculum.
- **Professional growth** refers to the teachers' perception that the school provides them opportunities to grow and develop professionally, to continue to learn, and to expand their skills during their work in school.
- **Status** refers to the professional respect and admiration that the teachers perceive that they earn from colleagues.
- **Self-efficacy** refers to the teachers' perception that they are equipped with the skills and ability to help students learn, and are competent to develop curricula for students.

- **Autonomy** refers to the teachers' feeling that they have control over various aspects of their working life, including scheduling, curriculum development, selection of text books and planning instruction.
- **Impact** refers to the teachers' perception that they can affect and influence school life (Short & Rinehart, 1992).



**Figure 1** Theoretical Framework for Relationship between Principals' Decision Making Styles and Teacher Empowerment

### Methodology

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. For quantitative analysis, "*General Decision Making Style (GDMS)*" developed by Scott and Bruce (1995), and "*School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES)*" developed by Short and Rinehart (1992) were used to collect the required data. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.77 for decision making questionnaire and 0.89 for teacher empowerment questionnaire. Simple random sampling method was used. For quantitative analysis, 280 teachers from 8 selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township participated. Descriptive statistics, Independent samples *t*-Test, one-way ANOVA Post Hoc Test, and the Pearson correlations of the variables were calculated by using SPSS (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2004). For qualitative analysis, 20 teachers from 4 selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township participated. And, interviews with selected teachers were conducted to capture phenomena in teachers' own words about principals' decision making styles and teacher empowerment by using thematic analysis method (Saldaña, 2009).

### Findings

#### Quantitative Findings

According to Table 1, teachers in selected high schools perceived that their principals highly practiced "**rational decision making style**" than the other four decision making styles.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Decision Making Styles Perceived by Teachers in Selected High Schools in Sagaing Township (N=280)

Principals' Decision Making Styles	Mean Values	SD
Rational	<b>3.98</b>	0.47
Intuitive	2.69	0.81
Dependent	3.50	0.37
Avoidant	<b>2.60</b>	0.67
Spontaneous	2.72	0.64

**Scoring direction:** 1-2.33= low level, 2.34-3.67= moderate level, 3.68-5= high level

According to Table 2, teachers in selected high schools in Sagaing Township perceived that their empowerment level was **high**.

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Empowerment in Selected High Schools in Sagaing Township**

Teacher Empowerment	Mean Values	SD
Professional Growth	3.70	0.45
Decision Making	3.29	0.58
Status	3.90	0.37
Self-Efficacy	4.00	0.34
Autonomy	4.05	0.34
Impact	3.73	0.38
<b>Overall Teacher Empowerment</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.33</b>

Scoring direction: 1-2.33= low level, 2.34-3.67= moderate level, 3.68-5= high level

According to overall teacher empowerment results in Tables 3 and 4, teachers who were under 25 years of age had higher empowerment level than the teachers who were 40-44 years and above 55 years of age.

**Table 3 ANOVA Results for Teacher Empowerment according to their Age**

Teacher Empowerment	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
<b>Between Groups</b>	1.851	7	.264	2.590*	.013
<b>Within Groups</b>	27.776	272	.102		
<b>Total</b>	29.627	279			

Note: \* $p < .05$

**Table 4 ANOVA Results for Teacher Empowerment according to their Age**

Teacher Empowerment	Age Groups (I)	Age Groups (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Professional Growth	Under 25	25-29 years	.572*	.042
		Above 55	.578*	.039
Decision Making	Under 25	Above 55	.745*	.043
<b>Overall Teacher Empowerment</b>	Under 25	40-44 years	.402*	.047
		Above 55	.432*	.032

Note: \* $p < .05$

According to the Table 5, there was a significant and moderate relationship between principals' rational decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r = .473, p < 0.01$ ), a significant and low relationship between principals' intuitive decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r = .164, p < 0.01$ ), a significant and moderate relationship between principals' dependent decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r = .386, p < 0.01$ ), no correlation between principals' avoidant decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r = .086$ ), and a significant and low relationship between principals' spontaneous decision making styles and teacher empowerment ( $r = .120, p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 5 Correlation between Principals' Decision Making Styles and Teacher Empowerment**

	<b>Rational</b>	<b>Intuitive</b>	<b>Dependent</b>	<b>Avoidant</b>	<b>Spontaneous</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>
<b>Rational</b> Sig. (2-tailed)	1					
<b>Intuitive</b> Sig. (2-tailed)	-.171** .004	1				
<b>Dependent</b> Sig. (2-tailed)	.365** .000	.233** .000	1			
<b>Avoidant</b> Sig. (2-tailed)	-.206** .001	.700** .000	.395** .000	1		
<b>Spontaneous</b> Sig. (2-tailed)	-.188** .002	.719** .000	.327** .000	.744** .000	1	
<b>Empowerment</b> Sig. (2-tailed)	<b>.473**</b> .000	<b>.164**</b> .006	<b>.386**</b> .000	<b>.086**</b> .152	<b>.120**</b> .045	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Qualitative Findings

For qualitative analysis, the interview transcripts were analyzed by thematic analysis method. The overall framework for analyzing data was arranged into three levels. Firstly, when teachers were asked about their principals' decision making styles, they showed their different perceptions. Some examples are;

*“Our principal makes decisions based on rules and regulation”*

*“In making decisions, their principal considers various options to improve school achievement.”*

*“Their principal makes decisions based on rules and regulation.”*

Then, when teachers were asked whether they were empowered by their principal, they answered differently. Some examples are;

*“The teachers are empowered in making decisions about the teaching methods, teaching tasks, as deans, class teachers.”*

*“The teachers are empowered in the school activities, such as librarian, school committee members.”*

In level 1, interview transcripts were analyzed into 21 codes such as logical and systematic decisions, discussion with others, decision on personal feelings, quick decision, working effectively due to principal's right decisions, and so on. In level 2, 21 codes were developed under 8 categories. They were related to five decision making styles of principals: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous and the facts that the teachers were empowered by their principals and the teachers were not empowered by their principals. Finally, in the Level 3 analysis, codes from level 2 were analyzed in search of answers for main research questions. After analyzing the data collected by thematic analysis, three main themes were discovered to answer the research questions. They are:

- The teachers at selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township perceived that their principals most highly practiced rational decision making styles.
- There were more empowered teachers than not-empowered teachers at selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township.



- Finally, the teachers were empowered by their principals' use of rational decision making styles and dependent decision making styles.

According to the results of both quantitative and qualitative findings, it was found that the teachers perceived that their principals most highly practiced rational decision making styles. It was also found that teacher at selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township were highly empowered. Finally, it was found that the teachers were empowered by their principals' use of rational decision making styles and dependent decision making styles.

### Conclusion and Discussion

According to both quantitative and qualitative findings, it was found that teachers from selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township perceived that their principals mostly practiced "rational" decision making styles. It can be interpreted that the principals made decisions based on rules and regulations, in logical and systematic ways, and by thinking carefully various options for school improvement. According to Koutouzis and Malliara (2017), if the principals use rational decision making styles, teacher job performance can increase. Therefore, it can be concluded that if the principals make decisions based on rational reasons, school achievement can be increased.

In addition, it was found that teachers from selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township had high empowerment levels ( $\bar{X}=3.78$ ). It can be interpreted that teachers from selected Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township had a high empowerment level to perform their teaching tasks and school activities. According to Short (1994), empowered teachers are highly competent, work in schools that provide opportunities to show competence. It can be concluded that if the principals try their best to increase teacher empowerment, teachers can work more effectively to increase school achievement.

Furthermore, it was found that there was a significant and positive relationship between principals' "rational" decision making styles and "teacher empowerment" ( $r= .473, p<0.01$ ). It can be concluded that when the principals make decisions by thinking carefully and in a logical and systematic way, the teachers are empowered and take more responsibility and be more loyal to the organizations. According to Koutouzis and Malliara (2017), if the principals use rational decision making style, teacher's job satisfaction and job performance can increase. Therefore, it could be suggested that principals should make decisions based on rational reasons with equity in order to increase teacher empowerment, which can directly or indirectly increase school achievement.

Finally, it was found that there was a significant and positive relationship between principals' "dependent" decision making styles and "teacher empowerment" ( $r= .386, p<0.01$ ). It can be concluded that when the principals make decisions by discussing with all teachers and accept their advice from meetings, the teachers feel involved in decision making processes of school and then they feel empowered. According to Koutouzis and Malliara (2017), principals' dependent decision making style can increase teacher job satisfaction. Therefore, it could be suggested that principals should discuss with other teachers, deans, school committees in making decisions so that all teachers can involve and feel empowered.

The results of this study pointed out that teachers in Sagaing Township were empowered by their principals' rational decision making styles and dependent decision making styles. According to Allwood and Salo (2012), rational decision making style is the most constructive, associated with better outcomes and an efficient decision making style. Therefore, it could be suggested that principals should make decisions in a logical and systematic way by discussing with teachers in order to increase teacher empowerment.

## Recommendations for further research

Based on the research findings, the recommendations are as follows:

- Further studies are needed to be expanded principals' decision making styles, teacher empowerment and their relationship to school achievement.
- This study was conducted based on teachers' perceptions about principals' decision making styles and teacher empowerment. Therefore, further studies are needed to gather the data from other sources such as the principals, colleagues and students.
- In this research, questionnaires were used to obtain the quantitative data and interview was conducted to gain the detailed information about principals' decision making styles and teacher empowerment. Therefore, observations should also be conducted in further research.

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