

# Teachers' Involvement in School Decision-Making: Musings of Teachers in the Secondary School

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**Abstract:** This study explored the involvement of secondary school teachers in school decision-making through the lived experiences of twenty-four (24) purposively selected participants, employing a phenomenological inquiry with in-depth interviews and thematic content analysis. The findings revealed two key themes of teacher participation such as active committee participation and performing leadership roles, highlighting how structured collaboration and leadership roles enable teachers to influence curriculum, policies, and school operations. This echoes the view that when teachers are given opportunities to take part in formal decision-making structures, they develop a stronger sense of ownership and accountability for school outcomes. Conversely, the study identified critical challenges such as time constraints, workload overload, and leadership and administrative issues, which revealed that excessive non-teaching duties and top-down decision-making often marginalize teacher voices. These challenges underscored systemic barriers, including micromanagement, symbolic inclusion, and competing priorities, which hindered meaningful engagement despite teachers' expertise. Drawing from participants' insights, the study proposed actionable recommendations, such as reducing non-teaching burdens and conducting administrator training on inclusive leadership, to foster collaborative governance. Furthermore, encouraging shared decision-making not only enhances school policies but also strengthens teacher morale and retention, since educators feel more valued and professionally respected when their input shapes institutional directions.

**Keywords:** Teachers' Involvement, School Decision-Making, Musings of Teacher.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' participation in decision-making is a vital component of effective school leadership and management. As institutions of learning, schools rely on various stakeholders to ensure success, and among the most critical are teachers. They are directly responsible for implementing the curriculum and facilitating student learning. Because of this, their involvement in decision-making processes should not only be recognized but also strengthened to enhance both productivity and the overall effectiveness of educational institutions.

Globally, the topic of teachers' engagement in school governance has attracted considerable academic attention. Musengamana et al. (2024) emphasized the crucial role teachers play in shaping educational outcomes, noting the importance of a collaborative and inclusive approach in policy-making. The study highlighted that many educators feel uncertain or

sidelined when it comes to their role in institutional decisions, underlining the need for clarity and empowerment.

In Kenya, Shikokoti, Okoth, and Chepkonga (2023) also found that while teacher involvement is essential for effective school operations, many educators are often excluded from important discussions. This exclusion can lead to a diminished sense of ownership and responsibility, ultimately impacting their motivation and sense of belonging within the school community.

Similarly, research conducted by Mawajdeh (2021) in Dubai revealed that teachers are frequently left out of decision-making, even in matters directly related to teaching methods, curriculum design, or the integration of technology. This lack of inclusion can hinder the development of effective and innovative teaching practices.

In a related study, Drah (2011), as cited in Belay (2023), pointed out that although teachers are among the most valuable human resources in any school, their involvement in decisions varies significantly. Some are highly engaged, while others prefer to remain uninvolved. It becomes the role of school leaders to recognize each teacher's interests and strengths and to involve them accordingly.

In the Philippine context, teacher involvement is institutionalized through the School-Based Management (SBM) framework, as outlined in DepEd Order No. 7, s. 2024. SBM promotes decentralized governance by encouraging teachers to actively contribute to decisions that affect classroom practices and student learning. This collaborative model taps into the valuable insights and experiences of teachers, leading to more grounded and practical strategies for school improvement.

Supporting this view, Irembere (2019) argued that teachers are foundational to the development of effective school curricula. Curriculum design is typically a collaborative process that includes classroom teachers, school administrators, and sometimes external experts such as university faculty. Their combined efforts ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and responsive to learners' needs.

On the other hand, Mawajdeh (2020) noted that many decisions in schools are still made by principals and management teams, often without adequate consultation with teachers. This is concerning, especially when those decisions directly affect classroom instruction, teaching methods, and curriculum enhancements. Such a disconnect between leadership and teaching staff can limit the effectiveness of school initiatives.

In the Davao Region, a study by Tionsgon and Gempes (2018) highlighted how involving teachers in planning and decision-making can significantly boost their motivation and engagement. The research pointed to a strong link between teacher participation, professional flexibility, reflective practice, and overall job satisfaction.

In our own school, located in the Compostela West District under the Davao de Oro Division, teacher participation in decision-making is acknowledged as an important aspect of shared governance under the SBM framework. However, given the multiple responsibilities teachers juggle, their perspectives on involvement vary. Some may view it as empowering, while others might see it as an added burden. As the researcher, I am particularly interested in exploring whether this involvement enhances their motivation, improves curriculum implementation, and builds self-esteem.

Given the diverse leadership styles of school administrators, it is essential to delve into the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of teachers when it comes to participating in school decisions. This study seeks to shed light

on the realities of teacher involvement in governance, aiming to support and strengthen teacher empowerment across all areas of school decision-making.

## II. METHOD

To investigate the lived experiences and meanings that people within particular groups ascribed to a given phenomenon, my study used a qualitative phenomenological research design. By analyzing how a phenomenon affected participants and the meaning they ascribed to it, phenomenology aimed to record unadulterated, unedited facts. This phenomenological investigation aimed to elucidate the perspectives of secondary school educators regarding their participation in decision-making processes.

This study involved Twenty-four (24) participants. They were the subject coordinators of the 8 core subjects under the Matatag Curriculum who came from 3 different schools classified as small, medium, and large school categories. Gathering data from the three different school environments was important for environmental triangulation. Purposive sampling was used to identify the participants. Articulating on the nature of purposive sampling, Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) posited that purposive sampling was found in any research paradigm and helped ensure that a quality sample was located without biases, thereby increasing the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings.

Moreover, the primary methods used by the researcher for data collection were in-depth interviews. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), as cited in Dunwoodie, Macaulay, and Newman (2023), interviews provided participants the opportunity to express their emotions, biases, viewpoints, aspirations, and attitudes toward various phenomena encountered in the workplace or other organizational settings.

Further, to ensure compliance, the Research Ethics Committee (REC) grants approval. The primary objective of research ethics is to ensure that researchers fulfill their responsibilities to participants and affected communities, treating subjects with respect and safeguarding their well-being. Additionally, investigators adhere to the highest standards of integrity and transparency when disseminating findings (Cameron et al., 1994; Judd et al., 1991, as cited in Mirza, Bellaleem, & Mirza, 2023).

In analyzing the data gathered, the study employed Thematic Content Analysis (TCA). This analytical approach is characterized by the identification of themes that encapsulated the narratives present within the data sets. According to Dawadi (2020) citing King (2004) in, this process necessitated meticulous reading and re-reading of the transcribed data to reveal these underlying themes. A fundamental element of this analysis consisted of categorizing and coding the ideas expressed in the transcriptions followed the formulation of

significant themes that elucidated key insights derived from the data.

Furthermore, this study specifically implemented environmental triangulation, which involved the comparison and integration of insights across diverse contexts to enhance the validity of the findings. According to Vivek (2023), environmental triangulation was a methodological strategy that necessitated the collection of data from multiple environments to bolster the credibility and reliability of qualitative results. This approach served to mitigate potential biases that might have arisen.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study. On the involvement of secondary school teachers in school decision-making, the themes that emerged from the narrations of participants were active committee participation and performing leadership roles. The findings of this study are thoroughly discussed below.

#### ➤ *Active Committee Participation*

Committee participation enables teachers to collaboratively influence school decisions through structured involvement in planning, policymaking, and event organization. The findings on active committee participation reveal that it serves as a vital mechanism for secondary school teachers to engage in school decision-making, particularly in areas such as curriculum planning, event organization, and policy formulation. Musengamana, et.al (2024) conveyed that the educational system underscores the significance of teachers' roles in decision-making and their potential impact on the quality of education in the country. It emphasizes the need for a more inclusive and collaborative approach in educational policy and practice by the source of the teachers in decision and improbability over their role in decision-making.

#### ➤ *Performing Leadership Roles*

Performing leadership roles enable secondary school teachers to actively shape school decision-making through positions like coordinators, guidance advocates, and department heads, where they influence curriculum development, policy formulation, and operational improvements. The study revealed that leadership roles, such as coordinators, department heads, and committee leads, empower secondary school teachers to actively influence critical school decisions, including curriculum development, policy formulation, and operational improvements. Schott et al. (2020) underscored that teacher leadership mediated the association between principal leadership and several favorable outcomes, such as improved trust between parents and teachers, professional development for teachers, and a positive learning environment, these elements support better student development and achievement.

However, the involvement of teachers in school decision-making faced significant challenges. The challenges of teachers' involvement in school decision-making are systemic, organizational, and interpersonal barriers that hinder educators from actively and meaningfully participating in the planning, policy-making, and operational decisions within schools. The following are the themes that emerged on the challenges of teachers' involvement in school decision-making.

#### ➤ *Time Constraints and Workload Overload*

Heavy workloads and unmanageable schedules often force teachers to prioritize immediate teaching responsibilities over decision-making roles, leading to stress, burnout, and reduced motivation to contribute. This study revealed that teachers' involvement in school decision-making had significantly hindered by competing time demands and excessive workloads, which force them to prioritize immediate classroom responsibilities over collaborative governance. The findings conformed with LinkedIn (2024) articulating that teacher involvement in decision-making can be hampered by a variety of challenges, such as time constraints, workload pressures, or competing priorities that might limit their availability.

#### ➤ *Leadership and Administrative Issues*

Leadership and Administrative Issues are controversies that manifest ineffective leadership and administrative barriers that hinder teachers' meaningful involvement in school decision-making. The narrations of participants highlighted the challenge on leadership and administrative issues in micromanagement and lack of autonomy, symbolic participation in decisions and poor communication. The study revealed that ineffective leadership and administrative barriers significantly hinder teachers' meaningful participation in school decision-making. Amer and Kunos (2021) emphasized that leaders who are excellent at allocating resources and creating a positive atmosphere regularly improve team and individual performance

Further, this study presents the actionable recommendations to improve the implementation and practice of teachers' involvement in school decision-making. It recommended two key interventions such as reducing non-teaching burdens and allocating dedicated participation time and the conduct of administrators' training on cultivating inclusive leadership. Reducing non-teaching burdens and allocating dedicated participation time is essential to enable teachers to engage meaningfully in school decision-making. Meanwhile, administrators' training on cultivating inclusive leadership is a critical step toward fostering meaningful teacher participation in school decision-making.

Overall, the findings of this study carry significant implications for school governance, highlighting the urgent need to restructure decision-making processes to prioritize teacher involvement. They advocate for structural reforms, such as redefined teacher roles with protected time for decision-

making and redistributed non-teaching tasks, to create sustainable participation frameworks. These changes would not only enhance teacher morale and retention but also foster a school culture where collective problem-solving becomes the norm.

The study's findings aligned evidently with Herbert Simon's Decision-Making Theory and Lambert's Shared Leadership Theory, as they collectively emphasize the importance of bounded rationality, collaborative processes, and distributed leadership in organizational governance. Simon's theory, which highlights how individuals make decisions within cognitive and structural constraints, resonates with the study's identification of time constraints, workload overload, and poor communication as barriers to teacher participation. Meanwhile, Lambert's Shared Leadership Theory, which advocates for decentralized, collective leadership, aligns with the study's call for inclusive leadership models, committee participation, and administrator training to redistribute power and foster collaborative decision-making.

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