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## Research Article

### Teacher Empowerment: Insights on the Enhancement of Teacher Capabilities Leadership Practices and Teacher Empowerment

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#### ABSTRACT

Teacher empowerment is essential to enhance learning outcomes as it directly influences classroom dynamics and educational effectiveness. Thus, this study investigated the teacher empowerment towards enhanced capability among public school teachers in Tagbilaran City and Bohol Divisions for the school year 2023-2024. It employed mixed method approach, particularly convergent parallel design. In the quantitative strand, the study surveyed 280 administrators and 369 public school teachers. In the qualitative strand, an in-depth interview was conducted to ten (10) participants. Results revealed that school heads had a more positive view of teacher empowerment than the teachers themselves, a difference confirmed by statistical analysis. Both groups rated professional growth and self-efficacy domains favourably, but teachers saw their decision-making power as moderate. Factors like leadership, trust, support, and collaboration enhanced empowerment, while micromanagement, limited autonomy, and poor communication hindered it. The study revealed a gap in how the two groups viewed decision-making processes, likely influenced by collaborative program development and tensions around teacher independence within curriculum guidelines. High professional growth ratings aligned with teachers' focus on reflection and effective strategies. Interestingly, qualitative data highlighting teacher collaboration and innovation suggests why teachers may have rated their overall impact lower than school heads did. Recommendations were given to enhance teachers' empowerment.

**Keywords:** *Professional growth, School administrators, Teacher capabilities, Teacher empowerment*

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## Introduction

Teacher empowerment is a crucial aspect of ensuring quality education in public schools. It significantly predicts professional commitment and job satisfaction (Kauts, 2020; Vasudevan, 2021), with decision-making and self-efficacy particularly influential (Ahrari, 2021). Professional development programs also play a crucial role in empowering teachers as lifelong learners and change managers (Savić, 2020). However, many schools worldwide face challenges in providing teachers with the necessary support, resources, and autonomy to perform their roles effectively. This lack of empowerment can lead to decreased job satisfaction, reduced motivation, and ultimately, a negative impact on student learning outcomes (Nagabhooshanam, 2022; Ahmadi, 2022; Yunus, 2021).

Interestingly, public school teachers globally encounter many barriers hindering their professional growth and effectiveness. Excessive workloads limited professional development (Riastini, 2021; Eroğlu, 2021), and restricted decision-making in curriculum and instruction (Fauziah, 2021) are prevalent challenges. In some countries, the societal devaluation of teaching as a profession further compounds these difficulties (Fauziah, 2021). Implementing new curricula presents additional hurdles regarding resource availability (Ngwenya, 2020). Teacher recruitment struggles further complicate the situation (Alatalo, 2021). The pandemic has significantly exacerbated these issues. Teachers grapple with adapting to remote instruction amidst limited professional development opportunities, inadequate resources, and restricted curricular decision-making (Caratiquit, 2022). These challenges are compounded by heavy workloads, low salaries, and a general lack of societal recognition for their contributions.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, the teacher empowerment gap is particularly evident. Teachers face significant challenges despite the government's efforts to improve the education system. Recent studies revealed that public school teachers in the country feel disempowered and unsupported in their roles (Tabao, 2020; Gonzales, 2020; Magallanes, 2022; Santos-Pallasigui, 2019). These challenges are

exacerbated by inadequate resources, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tus, 2021), and the need for more significant investment in teacher training and improved working conditions (Saro, 2023).

Furthermore, implementing the No Child Left Behind policy has also been found to place additional demands on teachers (Saro, 2023). Moreover, the use of traditional teaching methods and the need for more training in learner-centered approaches have been identified as areas for improvement (Olegario, 2018). Despite these challenges, public school teachers in the Philippines are actively involved in their communities (Roxas, 2018). These studies imply the urgency for more significant investment in teacher training, improved working conditions, and increased opportunities for teachers to participate in decision-making processes at the school and district levels.

The implications of teacher disempowerment are far-reaching. When teachers feel unsupported and undervalued, they are less likely to engage in innovative teaching practices and may struggle to create positive learning environments for their students. This can lead to lower student achievement, increased dropout rates, and a widening achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Furthermore, teacher disempowerment can contribute to high teacher turnover and apathy, disrupting the continuity of learning and negatively impacting school culture.

Along this line, the researcher, being part of the province of Bohol, explored the level of teacher empowerment in Tagbilaran City and Bohol Divisions to identify strategies for addressing the current gaps. The researcher believes that determining their level of empowerment and the enabling and hindering factors towards teacher empowerment would provide insights into evidence-based practice in the province. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to developing a more supportive and effective educational system that enables teachers to thrive and learners to succeed.

## Theoretical Background

In the constantly evolving educational system in the world, the role of teachers has be-

come increasingly challenging. As the foundation of the educational system, teachers bear the responsibility of molding the intellects of future generations. However, teachers should be empowered with the requisite skills, knowledge, and support to discharge their duties and make sense of contemporary education effectively. Thus, it is necessary to examine the concept of teacher empowerment, exploring insights that would augment teachers' capabilities and enable them to flourish in their vocation.

Klecker and Loadman's Teacher Empowerment Theory (1996), grounded in Short and Rinehart's earlier work (1992), provides a multidimensional framework for understanding teacher empowerment within educational contexts. This theory identifies six key dimensions (decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact) and utilizes the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) for measurement. It emphasizes professional growth and considers teacher-specific factors and organizational context, offering a comprehensive understanding of empowerment tailored to the teaching profession.

The theory focuses on the concept of empowering teachers within their professional context. Empowering teachers involves granting them autonomy, decision-making power, and professional growth opportunities within their educational setting. It emphasizes the importance of providing teachers with the necessary resources, support, and authority to make informed decisions about their teaching practices, curriculum, and classroom management. The theory posits that when teachers are empowered, they are more likely to feel motivated, engaged, and committed to their work, leading to improved job satisfaction and enhanced student learning outcomes.

In context, the theory supports the study as it explored the factors that contribute to teacher empowerment and its impact on various aspects of their professional lives. Examining teacher empowerment through the lens of this theory, the researcher can investigate how providing teachers with autonomy, decision-making power, and professional growth opportunities influences their sense of empowerment and, consequently, their effectiveness in

the classroom. The theory supports the study's objective of understanding the dynamics of teacher empowerment and its potential to enhance educational practices and student learning outcomes.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, teacher empowerment in the Department of Education (DepEd) public schools is supported by several legal bases. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, specifically Article XIV, Section 5(5), recognizes the vital role of teachers in nation-building and mandates the State to "assign the highest budgetary priority to education and ensure that teaching will attract and retain its rightful share of the best available talents through adequate remuneration and other means of job satisfaction and fulfillment." This constitutional provision lays the foundation for teacher empowerment by acknowledging the importance of teachers and ensuring their well-being and professional growth.

Furthermore, the Republic Act No. 4670, also known as the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, was enacted in 1966 to promote and improve the social and economic status of public-school teachers, their living and working conditions, and their terms of employment. This act provides for the rights and privileges of teachers, including the right to organize and engage in collective bargaining, the right to participate in policy and decision-making processes, and the right to professional development and training. The Magna Carta serves as a legal basis for teacher empowerment by recognizing their essential role in the educational system and ensuring their well-being and professional growth.

In addition to these legal bases, the DepEd has issued various policies and guidelines that support teacher empowerment. DepEd Order No. 42, series of 2017, or the National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), aims to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the country by providing a framework for teacher professional development and empowerment. The PPST plays a crucial role in supporting teacher empowerment in the Philippines. The PPST provides a comprehensive framework that defines the competencies, skills, and values expected of Filipino teachers

at different career stages. Through clear articulation of these standards, the PPST empowers teachers to take ownership of their professional growth and development. It serves as a roadmap for teachers to assess their current competencies, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for their professional advancement.

The PPST also promotes teacher autonomy by encouraging them to engage in reflective practice, self-directed learning, and continuous professional development. Furthermore, the PPST recognizes the importance of teacher participation in decision-making processes and leadership roles within their schools and communities. Through the alignment of teacher performance with these standards, the PPST supports the creation of an environment that values and nurtures teacher empowerment, ultimately leading to improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes in the Philippine education system.

Moreover, DepEd Order No. 35, series of 2016, titled "The Learning Action Cell as a K to 12 Basic Education Program School-Based Continuing Professional Development Strategy for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning," further reinforces teacher empowerment. This order institutionalizes the Learning Action Cell (LAC) as a school-based professional development strategy that empowers teachers to collaborate, share best practices, and engage in reflective practice to improve their teaching and learning processes. Through the LAC, teachers are encouraged to take ownership of their professional growth, identify areas for improvement, and develop action plans to address challenges in their classrooms. This strategy promotes teacher autonomy, decision-making, and professional learning, which are key components of teacher empowerment.

Teacher empowerment is a crucial concept in education that focuses on providing teachers with the necessary resources, support, and autonomy to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities. It is a critical factor in education, with a direct impact on student outcomes and school culture (Nagabhooshanam, 2022). It involves providing teachers with the necessary resources, support, and autonomy to

effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities (Ahmadi, 2022).

Empowerment can be achieved through strategies such as involvement in decision-making processes, continuous professional development, and a positive school environment (Ahmadi, 2022; Alghamdi, 2021). Thus, empowered teachers are more likely to be motivated, committed, and effective in their work, leading to improved student outcomes and a more positive school culture.

As a concept, teacher empowerment encompasses several crucial aspects such as decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and impact, each contributing to educational success. Empowerment in decision-making remains a challenge, with many teachers feeling they lack sufficient involvement in institutional decision-making processes, even though they may have some autonomy in classroom-related decisions (Tindowen, 2019).

Professional growth is enhanced through empowerment initiatives that support continuous learning and skill improvement. For instance, professional development programs that focus on data-based decision-making significantly increase teachers' skills and self-efficacy, although the results vary across different contexts (Gesel et al., 2021). Furthermore, empowered teachers exhibit higher self-efficacy and impact, which correlates with increased teacher commitment and potentially higher student achievement. This demonstrates that empowerment can significantly affect educational outcomes by making teachers feel more competent and valued.

Decision-making is a crucial dimension of teacher empowerment and has significant implications for professional development, effectiveness, and job satisfaction (Nagabhooshanam, 2022; Ahmadi, 2022; Kauts, 2020). When teachers actively participate in decisions regarding curriculum development, instructional practices, and policymaking, they experience a greater sense of ownership and investment in their work, which enhances their autonomy and enables them to tailor their teaching approaches to meet the specific needs of their students. This leads to more effective and engaging learning experiences and fosters a cohesive

and collaborative school environment as teachers are more likely to support the initiatives being implemented (Rafferty, 2018; Chopra, 2020).

Teacher empowerment through decision-making also reduces isolation, increases collaboration, and improves the quality of education, thereby fostering a positive school culture, enhancing teacher leadership, and promoting student agency (Webber, 2022; Pineda-Báez, 2020; Gratton, 2019). However, the success of these initiatives relies heavily on the support and structures provided by school leaders (Rafferty, 2018).

Professional growth is crucial for teacher empowerment, with effective mentoring strategies and continuous professional development (CPD) recognized as key components (Gonzalez et al., 2019). Studies highlight that collaborative mentoring can significantly enhance job satisfaction and classroom effectiveness, while school-university partnerships foster improved professional competencies and self-confidence in teachers. These development opportunities not only update teachers with the latest educational research and technologies but also increase their likelihood of feeling valued and remaining in the profession, ultimately benefitting the educational system (Nagabhooshanam, 2022; Sin, 2022).

Self-efficacy is a critical component of teacher empowerment, referring to teachers' beliefs in their ability to influence student learning and achievement positively. Research consistently demonstrates the critical role of self-efficacy in teacher empowerment, with high levels of self-efficacy leading to improved student outcomes, increased teacher resilience, and lower levels of burnout (Lazarides, 2020; Swarnalatha, 2019). The development of self-efficacy is influenced by mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and somatic and affective states (Lazarides, 2020), and teacher education programs that incorporate these sources of self-efficacy can effectively increase teacher self-efficacy (Martins, 2021). The relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, and job involvement further underscores the importance of self-efficacy in the teaching profession (Demir, 2020), and the

concept of teacher empowerment, which involves providing teachers with the resources and freedom to engage in continuous professional development, is closely related to self-efficacy (Nagabhooshanam, 2022). The pandemic has also highlighted the role of self-efficacy in helping teachers find agency in challenging circumstances (Narayanan, 2021), and teacher educators play a key role in developing self-efficacy in teacher candidates, with confidence/self-empowerment and commitment.

Lastly, the impact of teacher empowerment cannot be overstated. Empowered teachers view themselves as change agents, capable of creating positive learning environments that foster student success (Marjuni, 2020). They are motivated to make a difference in the lives of their students and are committed to ensuring that every child can reach their full potential. This sense of purpose and fulfillment enhances their commitment to the teaching profession (Marjuni, 2020). Recognizing and celebrating the impact of teachers is essential for creating a culture of empowerment and appreciation within schools, which in turn leads to improved educational quality and school progress (Ahmadi, 2022).

Teacher empowerment is closely linked to professional development and effectiveness, with the use of information and communication technology playing a significant role (Nagabhooshanam, 2022; Albion, 2018). Emotional intelligence and effective communication are also key components of teacher effectiveness (Singh, 2023; Chiusaroli, 2021). Through investing in the development of these skills and providing teachers with the necessary tools and resources, schools can foster a culture of empowerment that benefits both teachers and students. Ultimately, empowering teachers is not only about recognizing their impact but also about creating an environment that supports their growth and enables them to make a meaningful difference in the lives of their students and the wider community.

In capsule, the existing literature on teacher empowerment highlights its significance in enhancing educational outcomes, job satisfaction, and professional growth. Empowerment is achieved through various strategies, such as involvement in decision-making processes,

continuous professional development, and a supportive school environment. Empowered teachers exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy, commitment, and effectiveness, leading to improved student outcomes and a positive school culture.

However, while the literature emphasizes the importance of teacher empowerment, there is a lack of comprehensive research that explores the interplay between the various dimensions of empowerment, such as decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and impact, within the specific context of the Department of Education (DepEd) public schools in the Philippines, particularly in the province of Bohol. Thus, a mixed-methods research approach would be beneficial in addressing this gap, as it would allow for a more holistic

understanding of teacher empowerment by combining quantitative data on the levels and correlates of empowerment with qualitative insights into teachers' lived experiences and perceptions of empowerment within the DepEd public school system.

### Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Teacher Empowerment Theory of Klecker and Loadman (1996), which is grounded in the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) developed by Short and Rinehart (1992). Guided by this theoretical lens, the study conceptualizes teacher empowerment as a multidimensional construct influenced by leadership practices within the school context.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Teacher Empowerment

In this framework, school heads' leadership practices serve as enabling or hindering conditions that shape teachers' experiences across key empowerment domains, namely decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and impact. These empowerment domains are expected to influence teachers' perceived capabilities, professional engagement, and sense of agency in their instructional and organizational roles. The framework guided the selection of variables, the design of the research instruments, and the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative findings in the study.

### Methods

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design using a convergent parallel approach, in which quantitative and qualitative

data were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and integrated during interpretation. This design was appropriate for examining teacher empowerment because it allowed the study to capture both measurable patterns of empowerment and in-depth perspectives on leadership practices influencing empowerment. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how teacher empowerment is perceived and experienced within public schools and supported the development of an evidence-informed teacher empowerment framework.

The study was conducted in the province of Bohol, located in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines, during the 2023–2024 school year. Two public school divisions were

included: Tagbilaran City Division, which covers schools within the city, and Bohol Division, which encompasses public schools across the rest of the province. Including both divisions allowed for representation of diverse school contexts, administrative structures, and leadership practices within the provincial public education system.

Participants consisted of elementary public-school administrators and teachers from both divisions. In the quantitative strand, 280 school administrators and 369 teachers participated in the survey. Cluster random sampling was employed, with sample allocation based on division to ensure proportional representation.

Inclusion criteria required administrators to be holding active school leadership positions and teachers to be actively engaged in classroom teaching during the study period. Excluded from participation were retirees, newly hired teachers, and individuals not actively teaching during the 2023–2024 school year. These criteria ensured that respondents had current and relevant experiences related to leadership and empowerment practices.

For the qualitative strand, ten (10) participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their professional roles, leadership exposure, and length of service. Both school heads and teachers were included to capture multiple perspectives on leadership and empowerment. Interviews were conducted until data saturation and sufficient information power were achieved, indicating that additional data collection was unlikely to yield new themes.

Quantitative data were collected using a modified version of the Teacher Empowerment Scale developed by Klecker and Loadman (1996). While the original instrument measures multiple dimensions of empowerment, this study retained four domains—decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and impact—based on expert validation and contextual alignment with the Department of Education (DepEd) system. The domains of status and autonomy were excluded due to contextual incongruence. The modified instrument underwent pilot testing, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .724, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews guided by an interview protocol designed to explore leadership practices and experiences related to teacher empowerment. The semi-structured format allowed for consistency across interviews while permitting participants to elaborate on their experiences and perceptions.

Prior to data collection, formal approval was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendents of Tagbilaran City Division and Bohol Division. Participants were informed of the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical safeguards, and written informed consent was secured.

Quantitative surveys were administered to teachers and school heads within their respective schools. Qualitative interviews were conducted with selected participants at mutually agreed times and locations to ensure comfort and confidentiality. All data were anonymized, and identifying information was removed prior to analysis.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including weighted means and percentages, to determine levels of teacher empowerment across domains. Independent-samples t-tests were employed to examine differences between teachers' self-perceptions and school heads' ratings of teacher empowerment.

Qualitative data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following the approach of Braun and Clarke. Interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve familiarization, coded inductively, and organized into themes and subthemes reflecting enabling and hindering leadership practices. This process emphasized reflexivity and allowed themes to emerge directly from participants' narratives.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was achieved through joint display analysis, enabling convergence and divergence between datasets to be examined systematically and supporting interpretation at a meta-inferential level.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Holy Name University Ethics Review Board. The study adhered to ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary

participation, beneficence, and non-maleficence. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. No conflicts of interest were declared.

**Declaration of AI Use in Research Methodology and Manuscript Writing**

This research employs artificial intelligence (AI) methodologies, including AI-assisted manuscript writing. The AI tools used, such as Chat GPT and Quillbot, are integrated into stages encompassing data collection, analysis, interpretation, and manuscript composition review. This integration upholds transparency and ethical standards, aligning with established guidelines.

Dr. Rex U. Celosia, Dr. Maria Liesle A. Dopeno, Jay L. Galimpin, the researchers, affirm full responsibility for the ethical use of AI throughout the study. In manuscript writing, considerations include transparent authorship attribution, disclosure of AI tools to peer reviewers, ensuring clarity and coherence, and safeguarding data security. Integrating AI-generated and human-authored content is approached with diligence, emphasizing review, quality assurance, and commitment to openness and reproducibility.

**Result and Discussion**

**Teachers' Level of Empowerment**

*Decision-Making Domain.* Table 1 presents the level of teacher empowerment from the perspectives of school heads (n=276) and teachers (n=365) in terms of decision-making.

Table 1. Teacher Empowerment in terms of Decision-Making

| Items   | School Heads |           | Teachers    |          |
|---|--------------|-----------|-------------|----------|
|   | WM           | DV        | WM          | DV       |
| <i>The Teachers...</i>  |              |           |             |          |
| 1. are given the responsibility to monitor programs.                      | 4.48         | VH        | 3.78        | H        |
| 2. can make decisions about the implementation of new programs in school. | 4.35         | VH        | 3.46        | H        |
| 3. can teach as they choose.  | 4.25         | VH        | 3.71        | H        |
| 4. make decisions about the selection of other teachers for the school.   | 4.11         | VH        | 3.04        | M        |
| 5. have the freedom to make decisions on what is taught.                  | 4.19         | VH        | 3.64        | H        |
| 6. are involved in school budget decisions.                               | 4.49         | VH        | 2.99        | M        |
| 7. make decisions about curriculum.                                       | 3.96         | H         | 2.87        | M        |
| 8. are considered as decision-makers.                                     | 4.39         | VH        | 3.41        | H        |
| <b>Composite Mean</b>   | <b>4.28</b>  | <b>VH</b> | <b>3.36</b> | <b>M</b> |

The item with the highest rating is "Teachers are involved in school budget decisions," with a weighted mean of 4.49 from school heads, indicating a very high level of agreement. On the other hand, the three least rated items are "Teachers make decisions about curriculum" (WM=3.96, High) from the school heads' perspective, and "Teachers make decisions about curriculum" (WM=2.87, Moderate), "Teachers are involved in school budget decisions" (WM=2.99, Moderate), and "Teachers make decisions about the selection of other teachers for the school" (WM=3.04, Moderate) from the teachers' viewpoint. The overall composite mean scores reveal that school heads

have a very high level of agreement (WM=4.28) regarding teacher empowerment, while teachers have a moderate level of agreement (WM=3.36).

Evidently, school heads consistently have a higher level of agreement compared to teachers across all items related to teacher empowerment. This discrepancy suggests that while school leaders believe they are providing teachers with a high level of empowerment, teachers may not feel as empowered, particularly in areas such as curriculum decision-making, school budget decisions, and teacher selection processes. The gap between the perceptions of school heads and teachers is most

pronounced in items related to budget decisions and curriculum decision-making, indicating potential areas for improvement in terms of teacher involvement and autonomy. The decision-making domain captures teachers' participation in school-level and curriculum-related decisions, revealing a clear perception gap between school heads and teachers.

The findings from this study indicate that there is room for enhancing teacher empowerment in decision-making processes within schools. While school heads strongly believe that teachers are empowered in various aspects, teachers themselves feel less empowered, especially in critical areas such as curriculum planning, budgeting, and teacher selection. This discrepancy signifies the need for school leaders to actively involve teachers in these decision-making processes, promote open communication, and provide opportunities for teachers to contribute their expertise and insights.

Interestingly, recent studies support the findings of this research. Maral (2022) found that school administrators often exclude teachers from decision-making, particularly when decisions involve additional workload, underlining the need for teacher involvement in decision-making to enhance empowerment. Similarly, Chen (2023) highlighted that teachers perceive administrators' decision-making as directive and analytic, which limits their autonomy and involvement. Both studies emphasize the importance of involving teachers in key decision-making processes and establishing clear communication channels to boost their sense of empowerment and autonomy.

*Professional Growth.* Table 2 presents the level of teacher empowerment in terms of professional growth. Teacher empowerment by school heads in terms of professional growth involves various strategies to enhance teachers' capabilities and career development.

Table 2. Teacher Empowerment in terms of Professional Growth

| Items  | School Heads |           | Teachers    |           |
|--|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
|  | WM           | DV        | WM          | DV        |
| <i>The teachers.....</i>   |              |           |             |           |
| 1. can participate in the staff development program.                 | 4.63         | VH        | 4.50        | VH        |
| 2. have the opportunity for professional growth.                     | 4.53         | VH        | 4.37        | VH        |
| 3. feel that they are involved in an important program for learners. | 4.61         | VH        | 4.34        | VH        |
| 4. are given the opportunity to continue learning.                   | 4.66         | VH        | 4.36        | VH        |
| <b>Composite Mean</b>  | <b>4.61</b>  | <b>VH</b> | <b>4.39</b> | <b>VH</b> |

Table 2 reveals that both groups have a very high level of agreement regarding the various dimensions of professional growth opportunities provided to teachers. Among the four items in this dimension, "Teachers are given the opportunity to continue learning" received the highest rating from school heads (WM=4.66, Very High), closely followed by "Teachers participate in staff development" (WM=4.63, Very High). Teachers also rated these dimensions highly, with weighted means of 4.36 and 4.50, respectively, indicating a strong consensus on the importance and prevalence of these professional growth opportunities. The composite mean scores for both school heads (WM=4.61, Very High) and teachers (WM=4.39, Very High) further reinforce the overall high level of agreement regarding

teacher empowerment in terms of professional growth.

The consistently high ratings across all dimensions suggest that schools are placing a strong emphasis on providing teachers with opportunities for professional development and growth. The findings indicate that teachers are actively participating in staff development programs, have access to opportunities for professional growth, feel involved in important programs for learners, and are given the chance to continue learning. This commitment to teacher professional growth is crucial for enhancing teacher skills, knowledge, and effectiveness in the classroom. Professional growth, as a core domain of teacher empowerment, is explicitly examined through teachers' access to

staff development programs, continuous learning opportunities, and institutional support for professional advancement.

The alignment between school heads' and teachers' perceptions regarding professional growth opportunities is a positive sign, as it indicates a shared understanding and appreciation of the importance of teacher development. This consensus can promote a supportive and collaborative environment that encourages teachers to actively engage in professional growth activities and apply their learning to improve student outcomes.

A recent study corroborates the findings of this research, emphasizing the significance of teacher professional growth in enhancing teacher empowerment and student achievement. Nagabhooshanam (2022) highlights the relationship between teacher empowerment, professional development, and effectiveness,

showing that empowered teachers are better equipped to engage in continuous professional development, leading to improved teaching practices and student outcomes.

Likewise, Muir et al. (2021) found that professional growth is achieved when teachers collaborate to engage in professional experimentation, which positively impacts student learning outcomes. The alignment between these findings and the current research stresses the critical role of professional growth in fostering teacher empowerment and ultimately improving educational outcomes.

*Self-Efficacy Domain.* Table 3 focuses on teacher empowerment in terms of the self-efficacy domain, as perceived by both school heads and teachers. The table reveals that both groups have a generally high level of agreement regarding various aspects of teacher self-efficacy.

Table 3. Teacher Empowerment in terms of Self-Efficacy Domain

| Items   | School Heads |           | Teachers    |           |
|---|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
|   | WM           | DV        | WM          | DV        |
| <i>The teachers.....</i>  |              |           |             |           |
| 1. believe that they are helping learners become independent.                     | 4.56         | VH        | 4.47        | VH        |
| 2. believe that they have the ability to get things done.                         | 4.51         | VH        | 4.36        | VH        |
| 3. believe that are very effective.   | 4.28         | VH        | 4.06        | H         |
| 4. believe that they are empowering students.                                     | 4.43         | VH        | 4.23        | VH        |
| 5. believe that they have an impact to learners.                                  | 4.46         | VH        | 4.20        | VH        |
| 6. see students learn.  | 4.49         | VH        | 4.35        | VH        |
| 7. have a strong knowledge base in the areas in which I teach.                    | 4.37         | VH        | 4.15        | H         |
| 8. believe that they have the opportunity to grow by working daily with students. | 4.46         | VH        | 4.35        | VH        |
| 9. perceive that they have the opportunity to influence others.                   | 4.51         | VH        | 4.19        | H         |
| 10. perceive that they are making a difference.                                   | 4.37         | VH        | 4.14        | H         |
| 11. believe that they are good at what they do.                                   | 4.33         | VH        | 4.13        | H         |
| 12. perceive that they have an impact on other teachers and students.             | 4.38         | VH        | 4.07        | H         |
| <b>Composite Mean</b>   | <b>4.43</b>  | <b>VH</b> | <b>4.22</b> | <b>VH</b> |

Among the twelve items, "Teachers believe that they are helping learners become independent" received the highest rating from both school heads (WM=4.56, Very High) and teachers (WM=4.47, Very High). This suggests a strong consensus on the importance of fostering learner independence and the belief that teachers are effectively contributing to this goal. On the other hand, the three items with

the lowest ratings from teachers are "Teachers believe that they are very effective" (WM=4.06, High), "Teachers perceive that they have an impact on other teachers and students" (WM=4.07, High), and "Teachers believe that they are good at what they do" (WM=4.13, High). Despite being the lowest-rated items, they still fall within the "High" category, indi-

cating a positive perception of teacher self-efficacy in these areas. The composite mean scores for both school heads (WM=4.43, Very High) and teachers (WM=4.22, Very High) demonstrate an overall high level of agreement regarding teacher empowerment in terms of self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy was measured through teachers' beliefs in their effectiveness, their ability to influence student learning, and their perceived impact on learners and colleagues.

It is evident that school heads consistently rate teacher self-efficacy slightly higher than teachers themselves across all items. This suggests that while both groups have a positive perception of teacher self-efficacy, school heads may have a more optimistic view of teachers' beliefs in their own effectiveness and impact. Despite this slight discrepancy, the overall high ratings from both school heads and teachers indicate a strong sense of self-efficacy among teachers in various aspects of their work, such as helping learners become independent, empowering students, and having an impact on student learning.

The findings from this study stresses the importance of promoting a strong sense of self-efficacy among teachers. When teachers believe in their own abilities and effectiveness,

they are more likely to set high expectations for their students, persist in the face of challenges, and create a positive learning environment. The high levels of self-efficacy reported by both school heads and teachers in this study suggest that the participating schools have created a supportive and empowering environment that nurtures teacher confidence and belief in their own abilities.

A recent study by Azizifar et al. (2020) supports the findings of this research, emphasizing the crucial role of teacher self-efficacy in promoting teacher empowerment and student achievement. Their study found that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy were more likely to adopt effective instructional strategies, engage in professional development activities, and create a positive classroom climate. The authors also noted that school leaders play a vital role in fostering teacher self-efficacy by providing support, resources, and opportunities for growth and collaboration.

*Impact Domain.* The data presented in Table 4 focuses on teacher empowerment in terms of the impact domain, as perceived by both school heads and teachers. The table reveals a notable discrepancy between the perceptions of school heads and teachers regarding the various aspects of teacher impact.

Table 4. Teacher Empowerment in terms of Impact Domain

| Items  | School Heads |           | Teachers    |          |
|--|--------------|-----------|-------------|----------|
|  | WM           | DV        | WM          | DV       |
| <i>The teachers.....</i>   |              |           |             |          |
| 1. are given the opportunity to teach other teachers.  | 4.57         | VH        | 3.32        | M        |
| 2. can collaborate with other teachers in the school.  | 4.63         | VH        | 3.88        | H        |
| 3. believe that their principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit their advice. | 4.54         | VH        | 3.32        | M        |
| 4. feel that their advices are solicited by others.  | 4.54         | VH        | 3.33        | M        |
| 5. have an opportunity to teach other teachers about innovative ideas.                       | 4.54         | VH        | 3.24        | M        |
| <b>Composite Mean</b>  | <b>4.56</b>  | <b>VH</b> | <b>3.42</b> | <b>H</b> |

School heads consistently rate teacher impact very highly, with all items receiving a weighted mean above 4.50, falling into the "Very High" category. The item with the highest rating from school heads is "Teachers can collaborate with other teachers in the school" (WM=4.63, Very High), suggesting that school leaders strongly believe in the importance and

prevalence of teacher collaboration. On the other hand, teachers' ratings of their impact are considerably lower, with most items falling into the "Moderate" category. The highest-rated item by teachers is "My teachers can collaborate with other teachers in the school" (WM=3.88, High), which aligns with the school heads' perspective but with a lower level of

agreement. The composite mean scores further highlight the discrepancy between school heads' perceptions (WM=4.56, Very High) and teachers' perceptions (WM=3.42, High) of teacher impact.

The data reveals a significant gap between school heads' and teachers' perceptions of teacher impact. School heads seem to have a much more optimistic view of teachers' opportunities to teach other teachers, collaborate with colleagues, and have their advice solicited by others. In contrast, teachers appear to feel less empowered in terms of their impact on their peers and the school community. This discrepancy suggests that while school leaders may believe they are providing ample opportunities for teacher impact, teachers themselves may not feel as strongly about their ability to influence and contribute to the professional growth of their colleagues. In this study, the impact domain also reflects teachers' perceived professional status within the school, as indicated by the extent to which their expertise is recognized, their advice is solicited, and they are given opportunities to influence colleagues and school practices.

The findings from this study highlight the need for school leaders to bridge the gap between their perceptions and teachers' experiences of impact. It is crucial for school heads to engage in open communication with teachers, actively seek their input, and create meaningful opportunities for teachers to share their expertise and influence their peers.

A recent study by Vrhovnik et al. (2018) provides insights that can help interpret the findings of this research. Their study explored the factors influencing teacher empowerment and found that teachers' perceptions of their impact on colleagues and the school community were strongly influenced by the level of support and recognition they received from school leaders. The authors emphasized the importance of creating a school culture that values teacher expertise, encourages collaboration, and provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles. They also noted that when teachers feel their contributions are recognized and valued, they are more likely to engage in activities that positively impact their colleagues and the school.

Moreover, recent studies on teacher empowerment align with these findings, emphasizing a gap between perception and reality in teacher empowerment (Lee, 2016; Rafferty, 2018). These studies advocate for more inclusive decision-making processes and a stronger acknowledgment of teachers' roles in shaping educational outcomes.

Level of Teacher Empowerment (Overall). Table 5 provides an overview of teacher empowerment as perceived by school heads and teachers across four domains: Decision-Making, Professional Growth, Self-Efficacy, and Impact.

Table 5. Summary Table for Level of Teacher Empowerment

| Domain                        | School Heads |           | Teachers    |          | Overall     |          |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|                               | WM           | DV        | WM          | DV       | WM          | DV       |
| A. Decision-Making            | 4.28         | VH        | 3.36        | M        | 3.82        | H        |
| B. Professional Growth        | 4.61         | VH        | 4.39        | VH       | 4.50        | VH       |
| C. Self-Efficacy              | 4.43         | VH        | 4.22        | VH       | 4.33        | VH       |
| D. Impact                     | 4.56         | VH        | 3.42        | H        | 3.99        | H        |
| <b>Overall Composite Mean</b> | <b>4.44</b>  | <b>VH</b> | <b>3.87</b> | <b>H</b> | <b>4.16</b> | <b>H</b> |

The overall composite mean for both groups combined is 4.16, indicating a high level of teacher empowerment. School heads consistently perceive teacher empowerment as very high across all domains, with the highest rating in the Professional Growth domain (4.61) and the lowest in the Decision-Making

domain (4.28). This suggests that school heads believe teachers have ample opportunities for professional development and growth, while their involvement in decision-making processes may be slightly lower in comparison.

On the other hand, teachers' perceptions vary across domains. They perceive their

empowerment as very high in the Professional Growth (4.39) and Self-Efficacy (4.22) domains, indicating a strong sense of personal and professional development and a belief in their ability to make a positive impact on students. However, teachers rate their empowerment as moderate in the Decision-Making domain (3.36) and high in the Impact domain (3.42), suggesting that they may feel less involved in school-wide decisions and have a lower perception of their impact beyond the classroom compared to school heads.

The overall composite mean for teachers (3.85) is lower than that of school heads (4.47), indicating a discrepancy in perceptions between the two groups. This difference

highlights the need for open communication and collaboration between school heads and teachers to align their understanding of teacher empowerment and address any areas where teachers may feel less empowered.

Despite the differences in perceptions, the overall high level of teacher empowerment across both groups is a positive finding. It suggests that schools are providing supportive environments that foster professional growth, self-efficacy, and decision-making opportunities for teachers. However, there is room for improvement, particularly in involving teachers more actively in decision-making processes and recognizing their impact beyond the classroom.

Table 6. Comparison of Teacher Empowerment Perceptions between School Heads and Teachers

| Group        | M    | SD   | t     | p       | Result      | Decision on H <sub>0</sub> |
|--------------|------|------|-------|---------|-------------|----------------------------|
| School Heads | 4.44 | 0.16 | 5.770 | < 0.001 | Significant | Reject                     |
| Teachers     | 3.87 | 0.50 |       |         |             |                            |

The t-statistic of 5.770 indicates that there is a significant difference in perceptions between School Heads and Teachers. This difference is statistically significant at a very high level, with a p-value of 0.0001. This means that there is only a 0.01% chance (or 1 in 10,000) that such a difference could occur by random chance if there were no actual difference in perceptions between School Heads and Teachers. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant variation in perceptions between these two groups. Specifically, school heads have a higher mean perception score compared to teachers based on the given data.

The disparity could indicate that school heads, due to their leadership positions and broader responsibilities, might have more favorable views or feel more empowered in their roles compared to Teachers. This could stem from greater access to resources, decision-making authority, or a stronger sense of autonomy, which are often more pronounced in leadership positions.

The significant difference in perceptions between school heads and teachers aligns with existing literature on the topic. Previous studies have shown that individuals in leadership positions, such as school heads, often have

more positive perceptions of their roles and the organization compared to those in non-leadership positions (Baştea, 2023; Zahid, 2021; Siddiqui, 2021; Nader, 2019; Godwin, 2019; Dube, 2023; Thompson, 2023; Torrado, 2023).

This gap is attributed to various factors, including the greater access to resources and decision-making authority of school heads (Baştea, 2023). However, it also highlights the need for open communication, shared decision-making, and a supportive organizational culture to bridge this gap (Baştea, 2023; Thompson, 2023).

### **Enabling and Hindering Factors in School Heads' Leadership in Teacher Empowerment**

Table 7 presents the generated themes on the enabling and hindering factors in school heads' leadership in teacher empowerment.

#### **Enabling Factors in School Heads' Leadership in Teacher Empowerment**

##### *Inclusive Leadership and Trust*

Inclusive Leadership and Trust pertain to a leadership style where school heads actively involve teachers in decision-making processes, demonstrating respect for their professional opinions and cultivating a trust-based relationship. As articulated by Master Teacher 1 from

Dao Elementary School, the school head's approach to leadership is characterized by actively seeking teacher input before making decisions: "Our school head demonstrated effective leadership in deciding what programs need to be applied... He'll seek first our ideas, then from there he'll make the final decision." This inclusive approach is further supported by

actions that exemplify integrity and respect for individual differences, establishing a foundation of trust that enhances the school's collaborative environment. Inclusive leadership fosters a sense of agency among teachers, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to school initiatives.

Table 7. Enabling and Hindering Factors in Teacher Empowerment

| Theme  | Categories                                   | Codes  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>A: Enabling Factors</b>   |  |  |
| <b>Theme 1:</b> Inclusive Leadership and Trust                     | Participatory Decision-Making                | Participatory decision-making, Teacher consultation, Program implementation      |
|  | Respect and Professional Integrity           | Respect for individuality, Professional communication, Integrity in leadership   |
| <b>Theme 2:</b> Empowerment through Role Assignment and Support    | Delegation of Responsibilities               | Delegation of authority, Role assignment, Trust in teachers                      |
|  | Financial and Moral Support                  | Financial support, Professional development opportunities, Moral encouragement   |
| <b>Theme 3:</b> Collaborative Culture and Communication            | Encouragement of Teamwork and Collaboration  | Teamwork, Collaborative goals, Participative leadership                          |
|  | Clear and Effective Communication            | Clear communication, Shared goals, Teacher accountability                        |
| <b>B: Hindering Factors</b>  |  |  |
| <b>Theme 1:</b> Micromanagement and Autonomy Limitation            | Over-Control and Lack of Freedom             | Micromanagement, Lack of autonomy, Innovation suppression, Teacher voicelessness |
|  | Pre-determined Decisions                     | Pre-determined decisions, Lack of initiative, Creativity hindrance               |
| <b>Theme 2:</b> Insufficient Engagement and Transparency           | Exclusion from Decision-Making               | Decision-making exclusion, Lack of consultation, Teacher disenfranchisement      |
|  | Lack of Transparency in Resource Utilization | Lack of transparency, Resource utilization, Morale impact                        |
| <b>Theme 3:</b> Restricted Professional Development and Innovation | Limiting Experienced Teachers to Trainings   | Training limitations, Experienced teacher preference, Empowerment hindrance      |
|  | Perceived Overpowering of Leadership         | Leadership overpowering, Trust issues, Management difficulties                   |

The school head's behavior, as described by the Master Teacher, "He'll listen to everyone's idea. He'll respect individual differences. He's very professional in communicating his thoughts," epitomizes a leadership style that values and respects teacher contributions. This not only strengthens the school but also aligns with effective empowerment practices, where teachers feel respected, heard, and motivated to collaborate towards common goals.

*Empowerment through Role Assignment and Support*

Empowerment through Role Assignment and Support encapsulates the school head's strategy of assigning specific roles to teachers and providing them with the necessary support to fulfill these roles effectively. This approach is highlighted by Teacher III from Tubigon West District- Elementary, who notes, "Our school head assigned each teacher as person-in-charge of different committees and activities.

We feel valued and trusted as teachers.” By assigning responsibilities that match teachers’ skills and supporting their professional development, school heads empower teachers to excel in their roles and contribute positively to the school’s mission.

The empowerment process is significantly enhanced by the provision of financial and moral support for professional development, as mentioned by the same teacher: “We are very lucky that the school provides us with opportunities and financial support to develop professionally...” This investment in teacher growth reflects a commitment to enhancing the educational experience for both teachers and students, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

#### *Collaborative Culture and Communication*

Collaborative Culture and Communication involves fostering a team-oriented environment where clear communication and collaborative efforts are prioritized to achieve school goals. This is exemplified by the initiative of the school head at Talibon I District, as noted by Secondary School Teacher III: “Our school head created teams tasked to accomplish key goals of the school... This gave opportunity for participative leadership and increased involvement of teachers.” Such a culture encourages collective problem-solving and goal achievement, essential for a thriving educational environment. The effectiveness of this collaborative approach hinges on clear and consistent communication, which aligns team efforts with the school’s strategic objectives. Master Teacher I from Buenavista District, Division of Bohol, underscores this point: “Clear communication from school head is important in promoting teacher empowerment...” Through establishing transparent communication channels and setting clear expectations, school heads empower teachers to take initiative and work collaboratively towards shared objectives, enhancing the overall performance and success of the school.

#### ***Hindering Factors in School Heads’ Leadership in Teacher Empowerment***

##### *Micromanagement and Autonomy Limitation*

Micromanagement and Autonomy Limitation pertain to a leadership approach where

school heads overly control or dictate every aspect of school operations, leaving little room for teacher initiative or autonomy. This is evident in the experience shared by a Teacher III from Tubigon West District-Elementary, who observed, “sometimes, our school head tends to micro-manage the school... We as teachers become voiceless, and it kills our desire to innovate and collaborate.” This behavior stifles teacher creativity and reduces their motivation to engage in collaborative and innovative practices.

The tendency to micro-manage can erode trust and diminish the professional agency of teachers, hindering their capacity to contribute effectively to the school’s development. As teachers feel their voices are unheard and their expertise underutilized, it negatively impacts their enthusiasm and willingness to take initiative. The absence of autonomy not only limits teachers’ professional growth but also affects the overall dynamism and innovative potential of the school environment.

##### ***Restrictive Decision-Making Processes***

Restrictive Decision-Making Processes occur when school heads dominate decision-making, limiting teacher involvement and contribution. This is highlighted in the statement by a Teacher from Booy Elementary School, “Yes, there are times when the school head asks for our suggestions but at the end of it, her decision is the one to be followed.” Such practices can demotivate teachers, as they feel their insights and professional judgments are undervalued, leading to a lack of motivation and diminished drive to innovate or take proactive actions.

When teachers perceive that their input is routinely overlooked or disregarded in the decision-making process, it can lead to feelings of disenfranchisement and reduce their commitment to school initiatives. This top-down approach can stifle open dialogue and collaboration, essential elements for fostering an empowering and innovative educational setting. It ultimately impacts the school’s ability to harness the collective expertise and creativity of its staff, essential for addressing complex educational challenges and fostering a dynamic learning environment.

### *Insufficient Engagement and Transparency*

Insufficient Engagement and Transparency are characterized by a lack of open communication and meaningful involvement of teachers in school governance and decision-making. This is reflected in the experience of a Teacher III from Tagbilaran City Division-Elementary, who noted, "There were instances when our school head just informed us about certain decisions...without consulting us...our inputs were not taken into consideration." This lack of engagement and transparency can lead to mistrust and a feeling of exclusion among teachers, affecting their morale and willingness to contribute to school initiatives.

The failure to adequately involve teachers in important discussions and decisions not only undermines their professional expertise but also diminishes their sense of belonging and value within the school community. When teachers feel that their insights and knowledge are not respected or valued, it can lead to decreased job satisfaction and a weakened commitment to school goals. Establishing clear and open channels of communication, along with genuine consideration of teacher input, is crucial for building a supportive and empowering school culture that values and leverages the contributions of all educators.

### **Conclusion**

The study underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing the gap in perceptions of teacher empowerment between school heads and teachers. The school heads view their teachers as highly empowered, teachers themselves feel they have less influence, particularly in decision-making. By understanding and addressing the enabling and hindering factors of empowerment, schools can create a more supportive and empowering environment for teachers. This alignment is essential for enhancing teacher capabilities and ultimately improving educational outcomes.

The insights gained from this research contribute significantly to the field of educational management, highlighting the need for inclusive leadership practices and the promotion of a collaborative culture to foster teacher empowerment in the globalized educational landscape.

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