

# School heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism in public elementary schools of Bambang II District

Fernandez, Capitulo R.

Department of Education- SDO Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines ([capitulo.fernandez001@deped.gov.ph](mailto:capitulo.fernandez001@deped.gov.ph))

Nauí, Jesusa L. ✉

Nueva Vizcaya State University, Philippines ([jl\\_nauí@nvsu.edu.ph](mailto:jl_nauí@nvsu.edu.ph))



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## Abstract

This study employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational design to examine the relationship between school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism in public elementary schools of Bambang II District during the academic year 2025–2026. The study focused on four dimensions of decision-making—adaptive, innovative, routine, and participative—and six dimensions of teacher professionalism, namely competency, commitment, self-discipline, expertise, integrity, and interpersonal skills. A total of 108 permanent public elementary school teachers participated as respondents. Data were gathered using a validated and reliability-tested survey questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were utilized to determine the levels of decision-making practices and professionalism, while Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation was employed to examine the relationship between the two variables at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that school heads' decision-making practices were perceived as very good ( $\bar{x} = 4.34$ ), with participative and innovative decision-making rated highest. Teachers' level of professionalism was also rated high ( $\bar{x} = 4.30$ ), with integrity emerging as the strongest dimension. However, correlation analysis indicated a very weak and non-significant relationship ( $\rho = 0.118$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) between decision-making practices and teacher professionalism, suggesting that other factors may exert greater influence on professional behavior. Based on the findings, a targeted training program was developed to strengthen strategic decision-making, ethical leadership, and professional competencies among school heads and teachers. The study provides valuable insights for educational leaders and policymakers seeking to enhance leadership effectiveness, professional growth, and organizational development in public schools.

**Keywords:** decision-making practices, teachers' professionalism, training design

## School heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism in public elementary schools of Bambang II District

### 1. Introduction

Teachers' professionalism has long been recognized as a cornerstone of effective educational systems worldwide. At the international level, professionalism is framed as a multidimensional construct encompassing competence, ethical conduct, commitment to continuous learning, self-regulation, and collaborative capacity. Global education reports consistently emphasize that high-performing school systems are distinguished not only by strong leadership structures but, more critically, by teachers who internalize professional standards and sustain reflective, self-directed practice regardless of contextual constraints. In this perspective, professionalism is less a function of external supervision and more an expression of teachers' intrinsic values, professional identity, and sense of moral responsibility to learners and society. Teachers are viewed as moral and intellectual agents whose daily decisions, behaviors, and interactions directly shape learning outcomes and school culture.

Scholars such as Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argue that teacher professionalism is a defining feature of resilient education systems because it allows instructional quality to remain stable even amid policy shifts and systemic pressures. Similarly, OECD (2019) reports highlight that professional autonomy, ethical commitment, and continuous professional learning enable teachers to adapt to complex classroom demands without relying solely on administrative direction. These international perspectives suggest that while leadership provides structure and vision, the enactment of quality education rests heavily on teachers' internalized professionalism. Thus, professionalism is increasingly understood as an internalized disposition rather than a behavior imposed by leadership control.

Across regions, particularly in Asia and other developing contexts, teacher professionalism has been positioned as a stabilizing force amid rapid educational reforms. Research across Southeast Asia indicates that while leadership quality varies widely, teachers' sense of duty, integrity, and commitment often remains strong (SEAMEO, 2019). Studies by Hallinger and Lee (2018) demonstrate that in many Asian school systems, deeply rooted cultural values—such as respect for education, moral responsibility, and service orientation—reinforce professional behavior among teachers independently of leadership style. These findings suggest that professionalism is not merely reactive to administrative practices but is deeply embedded in teachers' cultural upbringing, training, and ethical frameworks.

In the Philippine context, national education policies strongly articulate professionalism as a core expectation of teachers. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) explicitly define professionalism in terms of competence, integrity, commitment, self-discipline, and interpersonal effectiveness (DepEd, 2017). While school-based management and participative leadership are encouraged, the PPST positions teachers as autonomous professionals accountable for their own growth and conduct. Empirical studies in Philippine public schools support this orientation. For instance, Reyes and Santiago (2021) found that teachers' professionalism was strongly associated with intrinsic motivation and personal work ethics rather than with external administrative factors. Similarly, Del Rosario and Arriola (2020) reported that teachers maintained high ethical standards and instructional quality even during periods of leadership transition and systemic disruption.

Decision-making practices of school administrators, nevertheless, remain an important contextual variable in understanding school dynamics. Leadership decisions influence organizational climate, communication patterns, and opportunities for participation, which may indirectly affect teachers' morale and engagement. Leithwood et al. (2020) emphasize that participative decision-making fosters trust and shared responsibility, potentially reinforcing professional collaboration. Harris and Jones (2018) further argue that innovative and adaptive leadership can create conditions conducive to professional learning and reflective practice. These studies suggest that decision-making

practices function as environmental factors that may support or hinder professionalism, rather than as direct causes of professional behavior.

However, recent research cautions against overstating the causal influence of leadership decision-making on teacher professionalism. Giblin and Stefaniak (2021) assert that professionalism and decision-making must be aligned ethically, but misalignment does not automatically erode teachers' professional values. Teachers often continue to demonstrate professionalism even when leadership decisions are inconsistent or constrained by bureaucracy. Cornito's (2021) systematic review on school decision-making similarly concluded that while leadership decisions affect school performance, empirical evidence directly linking decision-making styles to teacher professionalism remains limited. This reinforces the view that professionalism is largely sustained by teachers' internal dispositions and professional socialization.

Studies focusing on psychological dimensions further explain this phenomenon. Rossier et al. (2022) found that self-efficacy and self-esteem play a central role in decision-related behavior, suggesting that individuals with strong internal confidence maintain functional performance regardless of external conditions. Yildiz and Eldeleklioglu (2021) likewise demonstrated that cognitive flexibility and emotional well-being significantly predict professional confidence and decision-related self-assurance. Applied to teaching, these findings imply that teachers with strong professional identity and emotional resilience are less dependent on administrative decision-making for the enactment of professionalism.

Ethical and cultural dimensions also help explain the weak relationship between administrators' decision-making practices and teacher professionalism. Levitt et al. (2022) emphasized that ethical decision-making is culturally situated and deeply personal, shaped by lived experiences rather than formal leadership structures alone. In the Philippine setting, teaching is widely regarded as a moral vocation, reinforcing ethical conduct and integrity even in the absence of ideal leadership conditions. Korkmazgil and Seferoğlu (2021) similarly conceptualized professionalism as a composite of personal traits, values, and lifelong learning, underscoring that professional behavior evolves through personal reflection and experience more than through administrative control.

Within this framework, the present study is deliberately positioned not to assign responsibility for teachers' professionalism to school administrators, but to examine whether decision-making practices significantly explain variations in professionalism. The findings reveal a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship between administrators' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism. This result aligns with the literature suggesting that professionalism is primarily teacher-centered rather than leadership-dependent. While administrators in the Bambang II District are perceived to demonstrate very good decision-making practices, teachers' professionalism appears to operate independently of these practices.

This perspective reframes the research problem. Rather than identifying leadership deficiencies as the source of variation in professionalism, the findings suggest that the locus of professionalism resides largely within teachers themselves. Attributes such as integrity, commitment, and self-discipline are sustained by intrinsic motivation, ethical standards, and professional norms cultivated through training and experience. As Suyatmo et al. (2022) note, internal motivations such as meaning in life and professional purpose significantly enhance professionalism, often mediated through personal leadership and self-regulation rather than external authority.

Consequently, the implication is not that leadership decision-making is unimportant, but that interventions aimed at strengthening professionalism may be more effective if they focus directly on teachers' continuous professional development, reflective practice, ethical formation, and time management skills. Leadership practices should be viewed as supportive mechanisms that create enabling conditions, while the core responsibility for professionalism remains with teachers as autonomous professionals. This interpretation situates the study within a strengths-based perspective, recognizing both competent leadership and highly professional teachers, while acknowledging that professionalism is a largely self-sustaining attribute that requires targeted, teacher-centered interventions rather than administrative reform alone.

Despite the growing body of international, regional, and local literature on school leadership and teacher professionalism, several critical research gaps persist that provided strong motivation for the conduct of the present study. First, much of the existing research tends to examine decision-making practices of school leaders and teacher professionalism as independent constructs rather than as interrelated phenomena. While leadership studies frequently emphasize decision-making styles—such as participative, adaptive, or innovative leadership—and professionalism studies focus on teachers' competence, ethics, and commitment, few empirical works have rigorously explored how these two domains intersect within actual school contexts, particularly at the basic education level.

Second, the majority of studies that investigate leadership influence often assume a direct and substantial impact of administrators' practices on teacher behavior and professional conduct. This leadership-centric perspective, while valuable, risks oversimplifying professionalism by attributing it largely to external administrative factors. There remains a lack of empirical evidence that critically tests whether decision-making practices significantly explain variations in teachers' professionalism, especially in contexts where professionalism may already be deeply institutionalized through strong cultural norms, national standards, and intrinsic teacher motivations. This gap is particularly evident in developing-country contexts, where teachers often sustain professional values despite systemic constraints.

Third, within the Philippine setting, although policy frameworks such as the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) clearly articulate expectations for both leadership and professionalism, empirical studies linking these standards in practice remain limited. Existing local research often focuses either on leadership effectiveness or on teacher professionalism in isolation, with few studies employing correlational designs to examine whether and how administrators' decision-making practices statistically relate to teachers' professional attributes. Moreover, most Philippine studies are concentrated in urban or highly populated regions, leaving rural and district-level contexts underrepresented in the literature.

Fourth, there is a notable contextual gap concerning Bambang II District. While anecdotal evidence and informal observations suggest variability in leadership styles and teacher professional engagement across schools in the district, no systematic, data-driven investigation has been conducted to examine these dynamics. This absence of localized evidence limits the capacity of district-level leaders and policymakers to design interventions grounded in the actual needs and realities of their schools. Without empirical data, assumptions about leadership influence on professionalism may lead to misdirected reforms that overlook teacher-centered developmental needs.

Finally, previous studies often emphasize leadership improvement as the primary solution to enhancing teacher professionalism, with limited attention to the possibility that professionalism may be largely self-sustaining and rooted in teachers' personal values, professional socialization, and ethical commitments. There is a clear gap in research that intentionally reframes the problem—not as a deficiency in leadership—but as a need to understand the relative contribution of leadership decision-making vis-à-vis teacher attributes. Addressing this gap is essential to avoid overestimating the role of administrators while underestimating teachers' agency and professional autonomy.

Anchored on these gaps, the present study was undertaken to empirically examine the relationship between school heads' decision-making practices—specifically adaptive, innovative, routine, and participative decision-making—and teachers' professionalism in terms of competence, commitment, self-discipline, expertise, integrity, and interpersonal skills in Bambang II District. By employing a descriptive-correlational design, the study seeks to provide evidence-based clarification on whether decision-making practices significantly account for variations in teacher professionalism or whether professionalism operates largely independent of leadership influence.

In doing so, the study contributes to the literature by offering a more nuanced and balanced perspective on leadership and professionalism—one that recognizes administrators as enablers of professional environments while acknowledging teachers as primary stewards of their own professional identity. The findings are intended to

inform leadership development programs, guide district-level educational planning, and support the design of targeted interventions that strengthen both administrative practice and teacher professionalism in ways that are contextually responsive, empirically grounded, and aligned with the broader goals of educational quality and equity.

This study is strongly anchored on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 – Quality Education, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The research recognizes that the enhancement of educational quality is not solely dependent on curricular reforms or infrastructure development but also on the leadership practices of school heads and the professionalism of teachers. By exploring how decision-making practices influence teacher behavior and commitment, the study contributes to the global call for effective, inclusive, and accountable education systems. Furthermore, the research indirectly supports SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, by emphasizing transparency, participative governance, and ethical professionalism in school leadership, fostering a more just and equitable educational environment.

In alignment with the National Higher Education Research Agenda (NHERA) and the National Research Agenda for Teacher Education, this study addresses the core theme of teacher quality and educational leadership. The agenda highlights the need to explore professional standards, school leadership strategies, and governance mechanisms that improve educational outcomes. The examination of teachers' professionalism across dimensions such as commitment, integrity, and self-discipline resonates with national calls to professionalize and elevate the teaching profession. Meanwhile, focusing on school heads' adaptive and participative decision-making practices is consistent with the agenda's emphasis on improving school governance and instructional leadership—key drivers of school effectiveness and student success.

Aligned with the Department of Education (DepEd) Research Agenda 2022–2026, this study addresses two priority themes: “Governance” and “Teaching and Learning.” Under the governance strand, DepEd encourages research on school leadership, decision-making processes, and accountability systems that improve service delivery. This research, by investigating how leadership styles and decision-making approaches affect the professional engagement of teachers, provides timely insights into strengthening school management. Under the teaching and learning strand, the study supports the agenda's aim to identify factors that influence teacher performance, continuous professional development, and quality instruction—cornerstones of teacher effectiveness and learner achievement.

Within the Nueva Vizcaya State University (NVSU) Research Agenda, this study falls under the thematic area of Education and Human Development. As NVSU continues to promote locally relevant and globally competitive research, this study responds to the call for empirical evidence that improves public school systems and teacher development, especially in the context of rural education settings like Bambang II District. The research also aligns with the institution's thrust of contributing to transformative leadership and lifelong learning by informing capacity-building programs for school leaders and professional growth pathways for teachers.

Finally, the College of Teacher Education (CTE) Research Agenda emphasizes innovations in pedagogy, teacher competence, and instructional leadership. This study contributes to the CTE's priority areas by examining the interrelationship between school leadership practices and teacher behavior, aiming to generate actionable insights for pre-service and in-service teacher training. The findings are expected to serve as a basis for designing leadership enhancement seminars, policy briefs, and institutional development plans that reinforce both the decision-making capabilities of administrators and the professional integrity of teachers.

In essence, this research offers a holistic and contextually grounded response to global, national, and institutional education research priorities, contributing to the sustainable transformation of schools through informed leadership and empowered teaching.

Despite numerous policy reforms and leadership development initiatives, a persistent gap remains in understanding the interplay between school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism,

especially in rural school districts like Bambang II. While previous studies have explored leadership styles or teacher professionalism independently, limited research has examined how specific decision-making dimensions—adaptive, innovative, routine, and participative—directly affect the professional conduct, motivation, and collaborative spirit of teachers. This gap presents a crucial area for investigation, particularly in under-researched local contexts where leadership behavior can significantly impact school culture.

Preliminary interviews and observations in Bambang II District revealed several challenges faced by teachers. First, many educators expressed concerns about limited involvement in school decision-making, leading to feelings of disengagement and reduced ownership of school initiatives. Second, there were instances of inconsistent leadership approaches, where some administrators relied heavily on routine or top-down decisions, creating a rigid environment that stifled innovation and teacher autonomy. Third, teachers reported professional burnout linked to unclear expectations, lack of appreciation, and weak support for continuous professional development. In some schools, the absence of transparent communication between administrators and teaching staff also contributed to low morale and diminished collegiality.

These recurring issues highlighted the urgent need to explore the connection between leadership decisions and teacher professionalism. By investigating this relationship, the study aims to provide data-driven insights that can inform leadership practices, foster professional growth, and ultimately enhance the overall quality of education in the district. Hence, this research investigation.

## 2. Related Literature

This research aims to examine the relationship between school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism within the educational context of the Department of Education – Bambang II District. Recognizing that effective school leadership and teacher professionalism are critical to educational quality and organizational success, this study is grounded in two well-established theoretical frameworks that provide a comprehensive foundation for analysis. First, Simon's (1997) Decision-Making Theory underscores the rational and systematic processes involved in organizational decision-making, highlighting how leaders identify problems, evaluate alternatives, and make choices that influence institutional outcomes. Second, the Human Relations Theory, as advanced by Mayo (1933), is applied to the concept of professionalism, emphasizing the importance of interpersonal relationships, employee motivation, and group dynamics in fostering a healthy and productive school environment. Together, these theories offer a dual lens through which the study explores how leadership decisions shape, and are shaped by, the professional conduct of teachers. The succeeding sections elaborate on each theoretical perspective to establish their relevance and justify their integration in guiding this research inquiry.

Decision-making is a fundamental process in every organization, particularly in educational institutions where school heads must consistently make timely and effective decisions to ensure quality teaching and learning. This research anchors its investigation of decision-making practices on Herbert A. Simon's Decision-Making Theory, which emphasizes the rational, step-by-step approach that individuals and organizations use to solve problems and make choices. Simon (1997) conceptualized decision-making as a bounded rational process, acknowledging that decision-makers operate under constraints of limited information, time, and cognitive capacity. Despite these limitations, they strive to make choices that are "good enough" rather than optimal—a concept known as satisficing.

Simon's decision-making model involves several key stages: intelligence gathering, where a problem is identified; design, where possible solutions are developed; and choice, where the best possible solution is selected and implemented. In the school context, this process manifests when administrators respond to institutional challenges, such as student performance gaps, teacher concerns, or curriculum changes, by collecting relevant data, consulting stakeholders, and selecting appropriate courses of action.

In the educational setting, decision-making practices can be categorized into four dimensions: adaptive, innovative, routine, and participative—a classification supported by Duong et al. (2020). These dimensions reflect how school leaders respond to varying degrees of complexity and stakeholder involvement. Adaptive decision-

making involves adjusting policies or practices in response to changes in the internal or external environment. For instance, a principal revising teaching modalities to accommodate new Department of Education policies demonstrates an adaptive approach. This aligns with Simon's emphasis on responsiveness and rational adjustment in decision-making under real-world constraints.

Innovative decision-making, on the other hand, entails introducing novel solutions to emerging problems. School leaders practicing this type of decision-making are often engaged in creative problem-solving, such as launching new instructional programs or integrating technology to enhance learning—decisions that mirror Simon's "design" phase, where new alternatives are developed based on perceived needs (Simon, 1997; Alomari, 2021). Routine decision-making reflects the structured, repetitive choices that administrators make, such as approving leave requests or implementing standardized classroom procedures. These decisions often require minimal deliberation and fall within existing policies, representing Simon's notion of programmed decisions, where standard responses are already developed for recurring issues (Simon, 1997). Lastly, participative decision-making involves collaborative processes, wherein teachers and other stakeholders are engaged in planning and decision-making. This dimension is especially vital in fostering shared governance and building trust within the school community. It mirrors Simon's acknowledgment of organizational complexity and the need for distributed cognition, wherein decisions are enriched by diverse inputs (Vroom & Jago, 1988).

Grounded in Simon's theoretical lens, these dimensions illustrate how school heads navigate both structured and dynamic contexts to maintain organizational health and effectiveness. By anchoring decision-making practices in Simon's theory, this research acknowledges that while ideal decisions are constrained by real-world limitations, school leaders strive for rationality, collaboration, and responsiveness in their roles. Understanding these dimensions and their theoretical foundation provides a meaningful framework for assessing and improving school leadership. On the other hand, the concept of teacher professionalism extends beyond mastery of subject matter and instructional competence; it includes interpersonal conduct, ethical integrity, and the commitment to foster a positive learning environment. This research anchors its exploration of teachers' professionalism on Elton Mayo's Human Relations Theory (1933), which asserts that organizations thrive when they recognize and respond to the human needs, emotions, and relationships of their members. Originally developed in response to mechanistic management approaches, Mayo's theory emphasized the value of employee well-being, motivation, social interaction, and participatory leadership in enhancing productivity and organizational health.

In the school context, Human Relations Theory is particularly relevant because education is inherently relational. Teachers function not only as content experts but also as facilitators of student growth, collaborators with colleagues, and agents of institutional culture. According to Mayo, individuals are motivated not merely by financial incentives or rigid protocols, but by social belonging, recognition, and supportive leadership (Mayo, 1933). This human-centered perspective aligns closely with the multidimensional nature of professionalism among teachers, which includes competency, commitment, self-discipline, expertise, integrity, and interpersonal skills. Competency, as noted by Kowalski (2018), involves a teacher's ability to apply technical, conceptual, and interpersonal skills effectively in the classroom. Competent teachers demonstrate mastery of pedagogy and content, maintain high expectations for student achievement, and engage in reflective practice. Mayo's emphasis on the relational nature of organizations supports the idea that teacher competence is enhanced through collegial collaboration and administrative support.

Commitment refers to a teacher's psychological investment in their role and the learning outcomes of their students. According to Altun (2017), committed teachers are intrinsically motivated, resilient, and emotionally attached to their profession. Human Relations Theory affirms that this commitment deepens when teachers feel respected, heard, and involved in school-level decision-making, reinforcing a sense of purpose and belonging. Self-discipline, defined as the ability to adhere to school rules, maintain consistent routines, and uphold professional conduct, is essential to effective teaching. Setyowati (2023) emphasizes that disciplined teachers are role models who cultivate structured and respectful learning environments. This aligns with Mayo's view that individuals respond positively to environments where expectations are clear and relationships are grounded in

mutual respect.

Expertise encompasses both pedagogical knowledge and the capacity to meet diverse learner needs. Saphier (2023) asserts that expert teachers adjust instruction based on student feedback, use effective strategies, and integrate assessment meaningfully into instruction. In relationally strong organizations, professional learning and expertise are nurtured through mentoring, peer collaboration, and ongoing development—conditions strongly advocated by Mayo. Integrity, or ethical professionalism, includes honesty, fairness, and accountability in both conduct and decision-making. Mossman (2017) highlights that teachers with integrity foster trust with students, parents, and colleagues. Human Relations Theory supports ethical practice by advocating for transparent communication and values-driven leadership in the workplace. Lastly, interpersonal skills refer to a teacher's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with all stakeholders in the school community. As Goodwin (2021) notes, strong interpersonal skills are especially vital in diverse and dynamic educational environments. Mayo's theory places high value on informal social relationships, positing that they are crucial for morale and job satisfaction.

By anchoring teacher professionalism in Human Relations Theory, this study recognizes that professional behavior is shaped not just by personal competence but also by the relational dynamics within the school environment. A culture of support, inclusion, and ethical leadership enables teachers to thrive professionally and contribute meaningfully to student success. This study operates under several key assumptions that guide the interpretation and analysis of its findings. First, the study assumes that the conceptual frameworks used to define decision-making and professionalism—specifically Simon's Decision-Making Theory (1997) and Mayo's Human Relations Theory (1933)—are appropriate and applicable within the educational context of public elementary schools in the Bambang II District. These frameworks are presumed to effectively capture the complex dynamics between administrative leadership and teacher behavior. Second, it is assumed that decision-making practices of school heads have a measurable influence on the professional conduct of teachers. While causality is not claimed due to the correlational nature of the study, a level of association is expected between leadership decisions and teacher professionalism.

### 3. Methodology

**Research Design.** This study employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational research design to examine the relationship between school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism in public elementary schools in the Bambang II District during the academic year 2025–2026. The design allowed for the systematic collection and statistical analysis of numerical data to describe existing conditions and determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables without manipulating them. Consistent with Creswell (2018) and Yin (2015), the study observed naturally occurring practices within authentic school settings. The study was guided by established theories of decision-making, including Vroom and Yetton's normative model, and contemporary frameworks of teacher professionalism. Decision-making practices were categorized as routine, adaptive, innovative, and participative, while teacher professionalism was examined in terms of competency, commitment, integrity, expertise, self-discipline, and interpersonal skills.

**Research Environment.** The study was conducted in the Department of Education–Bambang II District, Nueva Vizcaya, Philippines. The district comprises 14 public elementary schools, serving approximately 3,224 learners and staffed by 149 classroom teachers. Operating under DepEd's school-based management and decentralized governance framework, the district provides an appropriate context for examining leadership decision-making and professional practice in public elementary education.

**Participants and Sampling Procedure.** The respondents consisted of 108 public elementary school teachers, representing 72.48% of the total teacher population. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error. Proportional stratified random sampling was employed, with teachers grouped according to school affiliation to ensure equitable representation across all schools in the district.

**Research Instruments** - Data were collected using two validated survey instruments:

- **Teacher Professionalism Questionnaire** – a 60-item instrument measuring professionalism across six dimensions: competency, commitment, integrity, expertise, self-discipline, and interpersonal skills. The instrument demonstrated high reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of **0.946** following pilot testing.
- **Decision-Making Practices Questionnaire** – a 40-item scale assessing routine, adaptive, innovative, and participative decision-making practices of school heads as perceived by teachers. Pilot testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha of **0.976**, indicating very high internal consistency.

Both instruments used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) and underwent expert validation to ensure contextual relevance.

**Data Gathering Procedure.** Approval was secured from the District Supervisor prior to data collection. Coordination with school heads ensured minimal disruption to school activities. Participants were oriented regarding the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical safeguards, and informed consent was obtained. Questionnaires were administered in printed form, with respondents given three to five working days to complete them. All responses were collected, encoded, and stored securely, with confidentiality and anonymity strictly maintained.

**Ethical Considerations.** The study adhered to established ethical research standards, including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and data security. No identifying information was collected, and findings were reported in aggregate form only. Measures were taken to ensure that participation posed no psychological or professional risk to respondents.

**Statistical Treatment of Data** - Data analysis was conducted using:

- **Mean** to describe levels of school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism; and
- **Spearman's Rank Order Correlation** to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between the two variables. Correlation results were interpreted using Garrett's scale, and all statistical tests were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This study employed a quantitative research design using a descriptive-correlational approach to explore the relationship between school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism in public elementary schools of Bambang II District for the academic year 2025–2026. Specifically, the study examined teachers' perceptions of their principals' decision-making along four dimensions—adaptive, innovative, routine, and participative—based on the framework of Duong et al. (2020). Simultaneously, it assessed teachers' perceived level of professionalism across six dimensions: competency, commitment, self-discipline, expertise, integrity, and interpersonal skills.

The study population consisted of permanent teachers employed in public elementary schools throughout the district. Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire, which was validated by field experts and tested for reliability to ensure consistency and accuracy. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics, specifically mean scores, to determine levels of decision-making practices and professionalism. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation was applied to examine the strength and direction of relationships between the variables, with inferential conclusions drawn at a 0.05 level of significance. This approach allowed the study to systematically quantify teachers' perceptions and identify patterns linking administrative decision-making behaviors to professional practices, providing actionable insights for policy, leadership development, and teacher professional growth within the district.

The study aimed to achieve several key objectives. First, it seeks to determine teachers' perceptions of their

school heads' decision-making practices across the dimensions of adaptive, innovative, routine, and participative decision-making. Second, it intends to assess the perceived level of teacher professionalism in terms of competency, commitment, self-discipline, expertise, integrity, and interpersonal skills. Third, the study examines the potential correlation between school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' perceived professionalism to identify significant relationships. Finally, based on the findings, the study aims to develop an educational management intervention designed to sustain or enhance both school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professional development.

The following are the significant findings of the study:

The respondents' overall perception of their school heads' decision-making practices is very positive, reflected in a grand mean of 4.34 (Very Good). Participative decision-making received the highest rating ( $\bar{x} = 4.54$ , Excellent), indicating strong collaboration, inclusivity, and shared governance that foster trust and teacher ownership. Innovative decision-making followed closely ( $\bar{x} = 4.51$ , Excellent), highlighting administrators' openness to creative solutions and progressive approaches. Adaptive decision-making ( $\bar{x} = 4.17$ , Very Good) shows effective adjustment to emerging challenges, while routine decision-making ( $\bar{x} = 4.14$ , Very Good) demonstrates competence in daily operational decisions. Overall, administrators excel in collaboration and innovation while maintaining effective management.

The respondents' overall level of professionalism is perceived as high, with a grand mean of 4.30, reflecting consistent demonstration of professional values, behaviors, and competencies essential for effective teaching. Integrity emerged as the highest-rated dimension ( $\bar{x} = 4.54$ , Very High), highlighting teachers' commitment to honesty, ethical conduct, and accountability. Interpersonal skills ( $\bar{x} = 4.44$ , High) indicate effective communication and collaboration, while expertise ( $\bar{x} = 4.34$ , High) reflects mastery of subject matter and pedagogical skills. Commitment ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ , High) and competency ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ , High) show dedication and task efficiency, whereas self-discipline ( $\bar{x} = 4.13$ , High) presents room for further development. Overall, teachers demonstrate strong professionalism with integrity as the cornerstone.

The correlation between school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism, based on 108 respondents, is very weak and positive ( $\rho = 0.118$ ). This suggests that higher levels of participative or effective decision-making are associated with only a slight increase in teachers' professionalism. The p-value of 0.2214 exceeds the 0.05 significance level, indicating the relationship is not statistically significant. This implies that the observed association could be due to chance, and other factors likely have a greater influence on teachers' professional behaviors, attitudes, and competencies.

The researcher developed a targeted training program for school heads and teachers based on the study's key findings. Topics were selected from benchmark statements within each dimension of decision-making practices and teacher professionalism that had the lowest mean scores and were qualitatively rated as "sometimes." For administrators, the program is titled "*Strategic and Ethical Decision-Making for School Leaders: Enhancing Accountability, Collaboration, and Innovation*", focusing on improving adaptive, innovative, routine, and participative decision-making. For teachers, the seminar is titled "*Enhancing Teacher Professionalism: Fostering Excellence, Ethics, and Effective Practice in the Classroom*", aiming to strengthen competencies, commitment, self-discipline, expertise, integrity, and interpersonal skills.

## 5. Conclusions

- The respondents perceived their school heads' decision-making practices as very good, suggesting that administrators generally demonstrate sound, consistent, and effective approaches in addressing school concerns, balancing operational demands, and promoting participative and innovative strategies that foster collaboration, inclusivity, and organizational trust.
- The respondents' level of professionalism is high, indicating that teachers consistently exhibit strong

professional values, including integrity, expertise, commitment, self-discipline, competency, and interpersonal skills, which collectively support ethical conduct, effective teaching practices, and positive relationships within the school community.

- The study found no significant relationship between school heads' decision-making practices and teachers' professionalism, suggesting that while administrative decisions may influence school operations, other factors—such as intrinsic motivation, professional development, and individual teacher dispositions—likely play a more substantial role in shaping professional behaviors and attitudes.
- Based on these findings, the researcher developed a targeted training design for both school heads and teachers, aimed at enhancing strategic decision-making, ethical leadership, and the various dimensions of teacher professionalism, thereby supporting continuous improvement, accountability, and collaborative growth within the educational setting.

### **Recommendation**

- School heads should continue to strengthen participative and innovative decision-making practices by actively involving teachers and stakeholders in the planning and implementation of school initiatives. Professional development workshops focusing on strategic, ethical, and context-sensitive decision-making can further improve administrators' leadership effectiveness.
- Schools should implement continuous professional development programs that reinforce key dimensions of teacher professionalism, such as integrity, expertise, commitment, self-discipline, competency, and interpersonal skills. Mentoring, peer coaching, and reflective practice sessions can help teachers translate knowledge into enhanced classroom performance and ethical practice.
- Both administrators and teachers should engage in programs that promote collaborative problem-solving, shared accountability, and a supportive organizational climate. Strengthening professional networks, communication channels, and team-based initiatives can enhance organizational cohesion and improve overall school outcomes.
- The developed training designs for administrators and teachers—focusing on strategic decision-making, ethical leadership, and professionalism—should be regularly conducted and institutionalized as part of the district's professional development agenda to sustain improvements in leadership and teaching quality.
- Future research should replicate this study in other districts or regions, incorporating additional variables such as teacher motivation, school climate, or student outcomes. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the interplay between administrators' decision-making practices and teacher professionalism.

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