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# Leadership and Decision-making: A Study on Reflexive Relationship Between Leadership Style and Decision-making Approach

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*Authors' contributions*

*This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author BKK  designed the study, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors AQM and IAF, managed data collection analyses and managed the literature searches  All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** This paper introduces how substantial decision-making and leadership styles relates with each other. Decision-making styles are connected with leadership practices and institutional arrangements.
**Study Design:**  Qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. A semi structure interview was use to elicit data from the participants on both leadership styles and decision-making.
**Place and Duration of Study:** Institute of Education international Islamic University Malaysia 2012-2013.
**Methodology:** A semi structure interview was used to elicit data from the participants on both leadership and decision-making. Two Head of departments (male) from Institute of education international Islamic university Malaysia were interviewed.
**Results:** Findings from study show that leadership and decision-making styles are though opaque in theory, but are highly connected in practice.  Also the leadership and decision style that is most favored are participatory leadership style and consultative decision-

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making approach.

**Conclusion:** This ideal relationship to some extent has substantial contributed to superior-subordinate relationship and employee performance.

*Keywords: Leadership style; decision-making approach.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership, is the process of inspiring others to work together to achieve a common goal in a given entity, it is an inevitable element of group dynamics [1]. However, the relationship between leader's participation and his or her effectiveness in accomplishing goals is complex [2]. Leadership style is a term that has been defined in numerous ways—mostly refers to the characteristic manner in which an individual leads others [3]. Researchers and other practitioners have suggested a participatory theory of leadership, which assumes that a group's performance depends on the extent to which leaders share or retain their decision-making authority.This is a way to assess leadership effectiveness [4].

Here leader may be singled out as an individual contributor or failure, it affects all other organizational factors [5]. Leadership affects corporate culture, project culture, decision-making and employees' commitment [6]. Without appropriate leadership, the risk of business or school failure will increase [6]. Thus, leadership is viewed as the ability to make strategic decisions, using skills such as communication, interpersonal relationship, motivation, decision making, and emotional maturity, to achieve the school or organizational goals [7]. However, there are varieties of leadership styles known that may be applicable in dealing with many challenges an organization could faced at all time. Although, getting leader who can combine management principles with ethical justification of actions remains a challenge in organization today.

### 1.1 Problem

Ethical lapses in leadership and decision-making style are undermining society trust in schools and their leaders. In institutions like business and educational, people are known for their higher standard of moral behavior than their peers in political arenas [8]. Issues such as financial kickbacks, nepotism, conflict of interest, and reform scandals in educational institutions are now frequently being reported in the media, especially the problematic routine decisions school leaders make every day that can have a negative and long term impact on schools moral compass [9,10], argued that superintendent, principal and school heads make many decisions on a daily basis, and at the heart of every one of them, is the resolution of a moral dilemma because every decision carries with it the potential to restructure human life. As such, the work of educational leaders should be the semblance of intellectual and moral—an activity that is characterized by a blend of human, professional, and civic concerns [11] asserted that the moral challenges that confront schools are enormous, and this necessitate a call for more moral leadership, by investigating leadership style and decision approach of schools leaders which have subjected educational activities to ethical criticism from the society.

## 1.2 Purpose

The presesent research clearly shows how leadership styles and decision making relate to each other. The related literatures perused showed need for more investigation on the behavior and internal lives of school leaders. Therefore, this study aims at elaborating on this issue with intention to stimulate researches in area of leadership and decision-making to fill this gap. The relationship between decision making and leadership styles of schools is not only worthy of study but is also needed, because this will enable us to always figure out the kind of decision making style in a setting. Very few significant studies have been done in an attempt to evaluate the ethical decision-making practices of public school superintendents, principals and administrators in higher institutions  [12]. A brief discussion on leadership and leadership style are discussed in the next section.

## 1.3 Leadership

Theoretically, leadership  is much like other abstracts concepts such as love, democracy, freedom e.t.c. A general but working definition of leadership is the process of influencing people to achieve a common goal. It is also define as a process whereby leaders influence followers and followers influence leaders [2] Leadership is categorized by early researcher such as [13] as autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire. Evaluating leadership styles is a challenging exercise. Great numbers of literature concerning leadership have attempted to define and analyze leadership [14,15,16,17]. The literature, however, give relatively wide range of varying approaches to leadership [18] Leadership is a complex and dynamic subject that encompasses and influence by many variables—that is leaders assumed varieties of   roles and these roles have impact on factors that affect them. This intricacy accounted for the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the constituents of good or effective leadership [18]. Leadership as mentioned earlier is a dynamic relationship based on "mutual influence and common purpose between leaders and collaborators in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they influence others through action to accomplish an objective" [19].

[1] defined a leader as one who exercised intentional authority over one or more other individuals, in an effort to guide actions toward the accomplishment of some mutual goal—which often requires mutually supporting actions among members of the group. In any organizational setting, the leader is required to interact with followers on a regular basis and at the same time, listen and direct them towards success[ 20]. For example Allah in the holy Qur'an emphasis to Prophet the need for a leader to consult with his followers in any decision making before it is finalized. [21] suggest that good leaders should be trusted by their followers for whom they provide a sense of autonomy. The leader should be consistent in decision making with followers as well as the overall good of the organization. Also leader should be able to envisage problems and drawbacks before the event unfolds [22,23] maintained effective  leader should be able to balance many variables while mobilizing the organization's resources in pursuit of a common objective. They further affirmed that achieving such objectives required the unification of purpose for both leader and followers. Meanwhile, to achieve balance does not necessarily rely on the development of a particular trait or style of leadership but more on the leader's ability to analyze the situation and adopt a leadership approach and decision that mobilize followers [24]. The general definition of leadership as used  within the context of this write-up, is the ability to recognize the need to implement change, establish direction, align people, motivate and inspire, communicate,

build teams and share decision making, mentor and coach subordinates and demonstrate a high degree of integrity [25,26].

[27] argued that if the task of administrator of schools and universities is to merely comply with the routine regulations to achieve the stated goal, then decision-making and administrative activities in institutions will only portray a mere scientific procedure and not the value of the actions. Essences of leadership and decision-making are to enact change, and not to merely support current organization systemic processes [28].

Researchers such as [29] and [30] emphasized on the importance of ethics in decision-making of principal and administrators of schools. To establish ethic decision making format among administrators of schools, there is need to investigate the interplay between leadership style and decision making approach.

## 1.4 Theoretical Concepts of Leadership

The study of leaders and the leadership process stems from social psychology, sociology, psychology, and organizational behavior [1]. Since late 1950's there have been about 65 different classification of leadership [2]. The discussion in this paper viewed leadership from two perspectives. Firstly, Leadership is viewed as the ability to make strategic decisions using communication [31]. Second as human resource skills of interpersonal relationship, motivation, decision making, and emotional maturity [7].

Leadership theories describe the behavioral pattern of leaders and the consequences of various styles in terms of effectiveness. Concern for people, employee-centeredness, and concern for production, production centeredness, and task orientation are other terms used. These factors are found simultaneously in the behavior of leaders, but in different degrees. This statement is profoundly established, both theoretically and empirically. There are different classifications of theoretical approaches to leadership; these include the following: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, Laissez Faire Leadership and authentic leadership.

## 1.5 Laissez Faire Leadership

Laissez faire is a French term which connotes *hands off*. Laissez faire leadership therefore is an absence of formal leadership; it is leadership that is informal and emergent. No one attempts to influence anyone else. Few policies and procedures are established by management; almost all are derived by the organizational stakeholders. Members of the group often can do what they want to; members even determine the organization's direction and goals though management does provide the resources to achieve them.

Laissez faire leadership is appropriate and effective if members of school or organization are full of professionals. That is, the workers are highly skilled, experienced, dedicated, and has pride in their work. Laissez faire leadership will invariably lead to adverse decision in a situation where members are insecure, untrained, unmotivated. Laissez faire leadership is placed beyond democratic leadership on a continuum of leadership styles [32]. However, leaders who utilize a *laissez faire* style take a *"let-it-ride"* approach. The leader chooses to have little or no interaction with the followers. Then he abdicates responsibility, delays decision, gives no feedback, and makes little effort to satisfy followers needs [2].

## 1.6 Transactional Leadership

[33] posited that leadership can be viewed as either a transactional or transformational process. Leadership behaviors such as initiating structure and consideration are based on "*quid pro quo*" that is exchange for value consideration transactions [34]. Transactional leaders are those oriented towards accomplishing the task at hand and at maintaining good relations with those working with them by exchanging rewards promised for performance [21].Transactional leadership diverges from transformational leadership because the formal does not individualize the needs of subordinates nor focus on their personal development [2]. The behavior of transactional leaders is dictated by the application of contingent rewards and /or management by exception (MBE). The active transactional leader offers rewards to the follower for meeting objectives that were mutually set and agreed upon previously. The leader in an active transactional relationship determines the goal and then defines what the subordinate will get for achieving that goal [21]. If the subordinate attains the objective then the reward could be a raise in pay, a promotion or some other form of recognition within the work group [1]. The passive transactional leader on the other hand employs an avoidance of corrective actions once goals are achieved [35].

## 1.7 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was first coined by [36]. Transformational leadership is the style of leadership that is closely related with ethics. Individuals who demonstrate transformational leadership characteristics often have a strong set of internal values and beliefs, and they are effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self interests [37].

[33] argued that transactional leadership and transformational leadership have strong philosophical underpinnings and ethical components. Transactional leadership focuses on the exchanges that occur between leaders and followers while transformational leadership focuses on the link that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower [2]. At the core of leadership and at the very core of life rests morality and value judgment. Individual virtue in transformational leadership terminology is known as idealized influence [26]. Idealized influence as explained by [2] is the characteristic given to transformational leaders because they exhibit very high standards of moral and ethical conduct. Idealized influence describes leaders who act as strong role models for followers.

In summary transformational leadership is a broad-based perspective that encompasses many facet and dimensions of the leadership process. Transformational leaders empower followers, raise moral consciousness, provide support, act as role models, and initiate change.

## 1.8 Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is a new term for a leadership style that is similar to transformational leadership. Authentic leadership is rooted in hedonism and eudaemonia; that is to say, authentic leadership focuses on human happiness and the worthiness of human life. Authentic leadership involves self awareness, unbiased processing, transparent behavior, and true relationships [38]. Authentic leadership is also described as the relationship between personal values and leadership behaviors. A values approach to leadership is essential in times of change and uncertainty because followers need to regain confidence

through the reaffirmation of values when the environment becomes ambiguous, turbulent, and even chaotic [39]. Leadership is a moral activity built upon virtues. Authenticity is always relational with people, a cause, or a career. Finally, authenticity is the freedom of an individual to choose and shape one's own life. Authenticity demands that we shuold be true to ourselves and to be true to others [11].  Authentic leadership then involves self-knowledge because authentic leaders are resistant to social or situational pressures by being true to themselves and to their core values [40].

## 1.9 Decision-making

[41] claimed that human are guided by one of the four formal functions used when solving problems. These functions are: sensing which is a perception through our senses; thinking which gives us meaning and understanding; feeling which judges and assesses, and intuition which tells us about the possibilities in the future [42]. Every human being has one function which is applied most when making decision- the dominant function. The opposite of the dominant function (which is the strength of that person) is the inferior function (which is the weakness of that person). When, the dominant function is thinking the weakest function will be feeling. When the dominant function is intuition, the inferior function will be sensing.

According to Jung,there are two ways human being can perceive problems; the use of sensing and intuition function. Problem can also be solved in two ways;—the use of thinking and feeling functions. Example of this is cited in the Quran calls the attention of man to make use of their thinking faculty in appreciating His existence and also in their problem solving process. The combination of the perceiving and judging functions is called the decision-making style. [43] adopted the theory and applied it to management. Keegan claim that Jung's typology gives a genuine insight into the question as to why individuals succeed or fail in their decision-making.

Nevertheless, [3] studied how power is widely dispersed in  European companies, which is associated to an emphasis on gaining consensus in making decisions. Valuing consensus-oriented decision-making processes reduces the power of the leader. Power is spread within the management and supervisory boards and to experts elsewhere in the organization. It involves worker participation at all levels. An overall participative climate enhances worker satisfaction more than occasional participation on specific decisions or goal setting [44]. A huge variety of classifications of decision making style and examples are available. The following are some of the decision making style according to literature.

## 1.10 Facilitative

The facilitative decision making style indicates a joint effort between leaders and subordinates, both providing input to make or shared decision. It is important that subordinate have access to the information required to make the decision. They should also have some degree of expertise /or motivation to ensure the best decision is made.  Both the leader and the fellowship  share bear the responsibility of both intended consequences and unintended consequences of this decision.This decision style can actually be very empowering to subordinates.

## 1.11 Consultative

Consultative decision making is said to occur when the leader asks for advice and opinions from his subordinates, and makes the decision himself. As in the authoritative decision making style, responsibility remains with the leader. If the subordinates are expertise or have information that will help makes a more effective decision, a wise leader may seek advice or information from the surbodinate. But this would be s the subordinates understand the phenomena perfectly, unless it can lead to grudge or disappointment. The Prophet Muhammad(SAW) exhibited this during the battle of khandaq(Trench) when he called upon his companions to deliberate on the best approach to be used to crushed down the Makkans, the final suggestion was made by Salman al-farsi which eventually led to the Muslims victorious over the unbelievers of Makkah.

## 1.12 Delegative

Delegative decision making, as the name implies, is when a leader passes responsibility for the decision making and the decision to one or more subordinates. It may even be all the subordinates. Again, the pros and cons are determined by the expertise and knowledge of those actually making the decision. The style is gradually introduced as the organization gets larger, and means the leader does not necessarily have to make all the decisions.

## 1.13 Flexibility

A good leader will chose easily among the styles depending on context. It takes quite a degree of self wareness as well as understanding the limits of your own knowledge to be able to use the flexible style

## 1.14 Leadership and Decision Making

Leadership over human being. . is exercised when people with certain purposes mobilize, in competition or in conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse and satisfy the motives of followers [45]. According to Victor [4] contingency model, there is a remarkable clarity that the central issue in contemporary leadership is participation in the process of making decision. Findings shows that the complexities of modern organizations require careful selection of decision-making processes in organization. There may be situations where an  autocratic style is most effective and other situation call for highly participatory methods for greatest effectiveness. The major challenge for İeader in schools and business organizations is to analyze the contingencies in each situation and handle it effectively.

## 1.15 Summary

From the findings different studies have shown that leadership and decision-making greatly relate and influence each other. It is also clear that for every decision made or to be made, goes with a particular leadership approach. Thus, it is not a gain-say that leadership style has a high influence in decision-making. Authoritative decision style calls for an Autocratic leadership approach. A facilitative decision making style will usually attracts democratic or contingency approach of leadership. Delegative, consultative and flexible decision-making styles attract democratic, participative and transformational leadership style respectively.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research approach was the method adopted in this study. Qualitative researchers generally study fewer respondents [46]. However the approach must delve more deeply into those individuals, settings, subcultures and scenes. This will enable the researcher to generate a subjective understanding of *how* and *why* people perceive, take-role, interpret, and interact in a particular scenario. Generally, qualitative researcher made little or no effort to generalized the findings of selected sample to the population understudy. The ontological and epistemological tenet of qualitative esearch approach inretrospect is to understand the phenomenon through the experience of the respondents. Based on epistemological foundation of qualitative research, two department coordinators from Institute of Education international Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) were selected as the sample size and interviewed until saturated point. Each of the coordinators has at least 2 years experience as department coordinators. One of the participants (Associate professor) is 56years old, while the other (Professor) is 54years old. Both of them involved in academic activities in the faculty in addition to their administrative workloads.

The participants were asked about the kind of leaders they are and how they come to a conclusive decision during meetings. The interview sessions were recorded and were later listened to repeatedly, transcribed and read, in order to have an overall understanding of the respondents' view. The themes in these interviews were extracted and analyzed according to the research questions and issue identifiable from the literatures.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews were conducted on the study with two administrators from Institute of Education IIUM, the responses were transcribed, and the following themes were derived from the interviews.

1. Democratic-cum-Autocratic,.
2. Organizational goal
3. Subordinate assistance.

The interview reveal that, there is no absolute leadership style that can be permanently used, although a leader may have a style of leadership but sometimes situation may warrant a change in the leadership style in taking the decision. Below is the quotation from one of the respondents

> "when it comes to being the leader for the administrative staff I will say to some extent am democratic but to some extent I have to be autocratic but I think that I cannot allow them decide by themselves I have to decide but I think when they have more knowledge about the area of the area of the scope then I will consult them because being an academicians first and you are administrative is second so the administrative post is always base on the rotation"

According to the respondent, consulting the subordinates is something encouraged, because this will give them sense of belonging and increased their interest in the effective implementation of the decision taking. However, there are some situations when the leader will need to take decision by himself, most especially, when the subordinate are not cooperating and intend to follow their whim and caprices. So that he will not lose his function

as the leader. It is believed that leader direct the affairs of the organization in order to achieve a set goals and objectives. Any effort to deviate from the goals and objectives, can lead the organization to the state of jeopardy. Therefore, the next theme to be discussed is the place of mission, objectives and goal of organization in decision making.

Every organization or institution has its set goals, mission and objectives, these will determine the modus operandi of the organization. Equally the leadership and decision making style largely depend on the goals and mission. This was revealed during the interview when one of the respondent asserts thus:

> "Policy is not easy to change we have to do it together because we are in this is such a small faculty in a university so when something that people know about this particular university when we talk about their policy.  Policy we have to go back to the philosophy, we have to go back to the mission we have to go back to the vision of the university.  Okay so is a longer time."

The first consideration in taking any decision in an organization is the philosophy and goal of the institution. However the leader cannot implement the decision alone, he needs the support of his subordinates, therefore, it is then imperative on the leader to find means to convince his/her subordinates. This is where the issue of value arises, hence in this stage the leader need to use value laden leadership style, in order to win the support of his/her subordinates. [39], asserts that, a values approach to leadership is essential in times of change and uncertainty because followers need to regain confidence through the reaffirmation of values when the environment becomes ambiguous, turbulent, and even chaotic. For this reason authentic leadership style will be preferred. Authentic leadership involves self awareness, unbiased processing, transparent behavior, and true relationships [38]. Support from the subordinate is also one important aspect of decision making and implementation, therefore, the next theme derived from the interview centered on the effort of the leader making the subordinates implement the decision made.

The major function of the leader is to coordinate and organize the subordinate, for a targeted task. From the interview it was made to know that, one of the ways to accomplish institutional task with the support of the subordinate is through, consultation, monitoring, as well as assisting them on the task they could not accomplish, on this, one of the respondent explained thus:

> "So usually  after, at least the longest is one week  I will look at the minutes and follow up those who are suppose to take the action and ask about the progress  of each of the things each are suppose to be done  and if it get stocked somewhere we will basically have to  look at the  where it got stocked and why  and then, if I find out that my subordinate  are not able to carry out what has been  ask to do or requested them to do  if I feel that my subordinate are not able to do it I will take up the responsibility myself."

The respondent made us to know that, leaders cannot take decision alone no matter how intelligent he is, ideas from the subordinates must also be considered, their views must be acknowledged and respected as well as accepted, if it does not contradict the need, goals and the philosophy of the institution. An overall participative climate enhances worker satisfaction more than occasional participation on specific decisions or goal setting [44]. During implementation it is also important for the leader to monitor the steps, in order to

guide against any deviation from the decision made. At the same time, a good leader could also assist when he find out that task has not been implemented correctly.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Generally, from the interviews and the literatures reviewed, we find out that:

- Institute of Education IIUM leaders and administrators use almost, all leadership styles in making decision, whatever styles used depends on the situation. But they are democratic, transformational, and authentic in nature. Even, where autocratic style is used they employ an authentic way of implementing it or transformational way this is supported by argument of [38,11,40] that for leaders to gain the support of subordinates and community, decision making must be transparent as well as ethical justified.
- Leadership and decision making style in Institute of Education IIUM depend largely on the philosophy, mission, vision and goal of the institution. Despite that, there is good relationship between the administrators and the subordinates this result is in line with studies of [42] and [3] who emphasized collaboration between school administrators and academic staff to gain consensus in making decisions.
- Subordinate are consulted in every decision to be made, their views are respected and acknowledged. Thuogh they have targeted objectives and goals. There is good interaction between the leader and the subordinates. Even whenever subordinate view is rejected, such subordinate do not feel bad.

## RECOMMENDATION

Leadership is a very sensitive aspect in an organization because it deals with human being. Human beings are the most difficult set of beings to direct. For this reason, the most important thing in leadership is the ability of the leader to be of good conduct in order to have good human relation with his subordinate and win the heart of the surbodinate. This can lead to effective service delivery and work with interest and love to achieve the set goal This is what operates in Institute of Education IIUM, therefore, the findings suggest that the sole administrators and leaders treat surbodinate with respect, by consulting them, respecting their views and acknowledging it makes them feel they are part of decision makers this make them feel sense of belonging and develop interest towards the institution and see the goals and aims of the institution as a collective one to be achieved together. Since this study is focusing only on one faculty in a university, future studies should include leadership and decision making across entire faculty in the university either in the same institution or relevant organization order to make comparison, perhaps using a large sample.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing Interests Exist.

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