



# DECISION-MAKING DETERMINANTS AND LEADERSHIP ROLES OF EDUCATIONAL SPECIALISTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examined the decision-making determinants and leadership roles of educational specialists in the Philippines, with particular focus on public elementary schools in the Division of Zamboanga del Sur. Employing a descriptive survey design, the study involved educational specialists and teachers with substantial professional experience. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire that assessed decision-making determinants in terms of facilities, process factors, human factors, operational factors, and external factors, as well as leadership roles in terms of leading and training employees, implementing ideas, collaborating with fellow supervisors, responding to supervisory direction, and mediating employee needs. Findings revealed that the identified decision-making determinants were consistently practiced, with human factors emerging as the most prominent dimension, followed by external factors, operational factors, facilities, and process factors. Leadership roles were likewise consistently practiced, particularly responsiveness to supervisory direction, leadership and employee development, collaboration with fellow supervisors, mediation of employee needs, and implementation of ideas. The assessments of educational specialists and teachers did not significantly differ regarding either decision-making determinants or leadership roles, indicating generally consistent perceptions across the two respondent groups. Moreover, decision-making determinants demonstrated a moderate positive relationship with the leadership roles of educational specialists, suggesting that stronger decision-making conditions tend to be associated with more evident leadership practices. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening human-centered decision-making, collaborative leadership, organizational responsiveness, and systematic institutional support to enhance educational leadership and school management.*

**KEYWORDS:** Decision-Making, Educational Leadership, Educational Specialists, Leadership Roles, School Management, Organizational Decision-Making.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Decision-making is a central function of educational leadership because school administrators are continuously required to allocate resources, address personnel concerns, respond to operational challenges, evaluate alternatives, and make choices that influence teaching, learning, and organizational performance. Contemporary school environments have made these responsibilities increasingly complex, requiring leaders to balance human, organizational, physical, and external conditions when determining appropriate courses of action. Mailool et al. (2020) found that principals' decision-making, together with organizational commitment and school climate, contributed to teacher performance, demonstrating that administrative decisions have consequences beyond routine management. Corrigan et al. (2022) likewise emphasized that contemporary principal leadership requires adaptability and leadership behaviors responsive to rapidly changing educational contexts. More recent research indicates that effective school leadership is characterized by collaborative decision-making, relationship building, professional development, and a clear institutional vision (Savaş & Toprak, 2023). A systematic review by Maheshwari et al. (2025) further highlights decision-making as a critical component of educational leadership, particularly as

administrators confront increasingly complex institutional environments and competing organizational demands. These findings support the need to examine decision-making not merely as an individual managerial act but as a process influenced by facilities, organizational processes, human resources, operational conditions, and external factors.

Leadership roles are equally important because educational specialists are expected not only to make decisions but also to translate those decisions into actions that support teachers, coordinate school operations, introduce innovations, manage relationships, and address employee concerns. The present study conceptualizes these roles as leading and training employees, implementing ideas, collaborating with other supervisors, responding appropriately to higher-level supervision, and mediating employee needs. Recent scholarship supports this multidimensional view of educational leadership. Ghamrawi (2024) demonstrated that structured professional development can cultivate teacher leadership and broaden responsibility for organizational improvement, emphasizing the leader's role in developing the capacities of others. Studies of distributed leadership likewise show that participation in decision-making and teamwork are important features of contemporary school leadership and organizational commitment. Philippine evidence further indicates that school



heads' decision-making styles are associated with dimensions of teachers' organizational commitment, underscoring the importance of how leadership decisions are experienced within the school organization (Cerado, 2025). Although decision-making and educational leadership have been widely examined, fewer studies have investigated how specific decision-making determinants relate to the multiple leadership roles performed by educational specialists in Philippine elementary schools. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the extent of decision-making determinants and leadership roles among educational specialists and determines their relationship within the context of public elementary education in the Philippines.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 2.1. To assess the extent to which decision-making determinants are practiced by educational specialists in terms of facilities, process factors, human factors, operational factors, and external factors.
- 2.2. To determine the extent to which educational specialists perform their leadership roles in terms of leading and training employees, implementing ideas, collaborating with fellow supervisors, responding to supervisory direction, and mediating employee needs.
- 2.3. To compare the assessments of educational specialists and teachers regarding decision-making determinants and the leadership roles of educational specialists.
- 2.4. To determine whether significant differences exist between the assessments of educational specialists and teachers regarding decision-making determinants and leadership roles.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Extent of Decision-Making Determinants Among Educational Specialists

| Decision-Making Determinants | Educational Specialists | Teachers | Average Mean | Interpretation   | Rank |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|--------------|------------------|------|
| Human Factors                | 5.47                    | 5.75     | 5.61         | Always Practiced | 1    |
| External Factors             | 5.29                    | 5.85     | 5.57         | Always Practiced | 2    |
| Operational Factors          | 5.24                    | 5.80     | 5.52         | Always Practiced | 3    |
| Facilities                   | 5.49                    | 5.40     | 5.45         | Always Practiced | 4    |
| Process Factors              | 5.29                    | 5.30     | 5.30         | Always Practiced | 5    |
| Overall Mean                 | 5.36                    | 5.62     | 5.49         | Always Practiced | —    |

Table 1 reveals that all five decision-making determinants were always practiced, with an overall mean of 5.49. Human factors obtained the highest mean ( $M = 5.61$ ), followed by external factors ( $M = 5.57$ ), operational factors ( $M = 5.52$ ), facilities ( $M = 5.45$ ), and process factors ( $M = 5.30$ ). The prominence of human factors suggests that educational specialists recognize that effective decisions are strongly shaped by the competencies, experiences, relationships, and needs of the people involved in school operations. This finding is consistent with Mailool et al. (2020), who established that principals' decision-making contributes to teacher performance alongside organizational commitment and school climate, demonstrating that decision-making has important human and organizational consequences. Alipoyo (2022) similarly highlighted the importance of human resources, administrative

2.5. To examine the relationship between decision-making determinants and the leadership roles of educational specialists.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the decision-making determinants and leadership roles of educational specialists in the Division of Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines. The study involved 660 educational specialists and 1,789 teachers with at least five years of service who were assigned in the Division of Zamboanga del Sur during the first and second semesters of School Year 2022–2023. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire-checklist consisting of two major sections: decision-making determinants covering facilities, process factors, human factors, operational factors, and external factors, and leadership roles encompassing leading and training employees, implementing ideas, collaborating with fellow supervisors, responding to supervisory direction, and mediating employee needs. Prior to administration, the instrument underwent a dry run involving qualified educational specialists and teachers outside the principal respondents and was subsequently reviewed and refined for content, mechanics, and appropriateness. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent, after which the questionnaires were distributed and retrieved with the assistance of educational personnel. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the extent of the identified practices, a t-test and z-test to examine differences between the assessments of educational specialists and teachers, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between decision-making determinants and leadership roles.

responsiveness, and organizational conditions in addressing institutional challenges. Aranjuez et al. (2022) emphasized the role of awareness, stakeholder involvement, and institutional responsiveness in translating organizational policies into meaningful practices, while Maheshwari et al. (2025) identified decision-making as a critical component of educational leadership in complex institutional environments. The relatively high ratings for external and operational factors further indicate that decisions are not made in isolation but are influenced by organizational structures, environmental conditions, available resources, and stakeholder expectations. Collectively, these findings reinforce the view that sound educational decision-making requires an integrated approach that considers human capabilities alongside institutional, operational, physical, and environmental conditions.



**Table 2. Extent of Leadership Roles Practiced by Educational Specialists**

| Leadership Roles                      | Educational Specialists | Teachers    | Average Mean | Interpretation          | Rank |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------------|------|
| Responding to Supervisory Direction   | 5.24                    | 5.95        | 5.60         | Always Practiced        | 1    |
| Leading and Training Employees        | 5.15                    | 5.90        | 5.53         | Always Practiced        | 2    |
| Collaborating with Fellow Supervisors | 5.22                    | 5.75        | 5.49         | Always Practiced        | 3    |
| Mediating Employee Needs              | 5.50                    | 5.40        | 5.45         | Always Practiced        | 4    |
| Implementing Ideas                    | 5.14                    | 5.57        | 5.36         | Always Practiced        | 5    |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>                   | <b>5.25</b>             | <b>5.71</b> | <b>5.49</b>  | <b>Always Practiced</b> | —    |

Table 2 demonstrates that the leadership roles of educational specialists were also always practiced, obtaining an overall mean of 5.49. Responding to supervisory direction ranked highest ( $M = 5.60$ ), followed by leading and training employees ( $M = 5.53$ ), collaborating with fellow supervisors ( $M = 5.49$ ), mediating employee needs ( $M = 5.45$ ), and implementing ideas ( $M = 5.36$ ). These results suggest that educational specialists perform leadership through both vertical accountability and horizontal collaboration, balancing responsiveness to organizational direction with responsibilities for personnel development, coordination, mediation, and innovation. Galdames-Calderón (2023) found that distributed leadership practices can promote teachers' professional development and school improvement by expanding leadership knowledge and capabilities beyond formally designated leaders. Similarly, Liu and Watson (2023) demonstrated that distributed leadership roles are associated with teacher

professional collaboration, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, emphasizing that leadership is strengthened when responsibilities are shared across different organizational actors. De Jong et al. (2023) further found that distributed leadership within teacher teams is associated with greater openness to seeking advice and with teachers looking beyond their individual classrooms, reinforcing the importance of collaboration among educational professionals. Aranjuez et al. (2022) likewise underscore the value of participation and institutional responsiveness, while Alipoyo (2022) illustrates how leaders operating under demanding institutional conditions must balance administrative responsibilities with personnel and organizational concerns. Thus, the leadership roles identified in the study reflect a multidimensional conception of educational leadership in which specialists function not merely as supervisors but also as capacity builders, collaborators, mediators, and agents of organizational improvement.

**Table 3. Difference Between Educational Specialists' and Teachers' Assessments of Decision-Making Determinants**

| Respondent Group        | Mean | SD     | Mean Difference | Computed $t$ | Critical $t$ | df       | Decision on $H_0$                      | Interpretation                   |
|-------------------------|------|--------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Educational Specialists | 5.36 | 0.1153 |                 |              |              |          |                                        |                                  |
| Teachers                | 5.62 | 0.2515 | <b>0.26</b>     | <b>2.101</b> | <b>2.306</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>Fail to Reject <math>H_0</math></b> | <b>No Significant Difference</b> |

Table 3 shows no significant difference between educational specialists' and teachers' assessments of decision-making determinants, as the computed  $t$ -value of 2.101 was lower than the critical value of 2.306. Although teachers reported a higher overall mean ( $M = 5.62$ ) than educational specialists ( $M = 5.36$ ), both groups generally viewed the decision-making determinants as consistently practiced. The convergence of perceptions suggests that facilities, human considerations, organizational processes, operational requirements, and external conditions are sufficiently visible within school operations to be similarly recognized by both decision-makers and those affected by their decisions. Mailool et al. (2020) demonstrated that principals' decision-making is consequential to teachers and organizational functioning, supporting the importance of examining leadership decisions from the perspectives of different school stakeholders. Maheshwari et al. (2025) similarly emphasized that

contemporary educational decision-making involves multiple organizational and contextual considerations rather than relying solely on administrators' individual judgments. Research on distributed leadership further supports stakeholder involvement in organizational processes; Galdames-Calderón (2023) emphasized the importance of expanding leadership participation to promote professional development and school improvement, while Ling et al. (2023) described distributed leadership as an approach that broadens participation and leadership responsibilities within educational settings. Aranjuez et al. (2022) likewise demonstrated the broader importance of stakeholder awareness and participation in institutional processes. Taken together, the agreement between the two respondent groups suggests that decision-making among educational specialists is generally experienced as an organizational process rather than an exclusively administrative function.

**Table 4. Difference Between Educational Specialists' and Teachers' Assessments of Leadership Roles**

| Respondent Group        | Mean | SD     | Mean Difference | Computed $z$ | Critical $z$ | Decision on $H_0$                      | Interpretation                   |
|-------------------------|------|--------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Educational Specialists | 5.25 | 0.1463 |                 |              |              |                                        |                                  |
| Teachers                | 5.71 | 0.2298 | <b>0.46</b>     | <b>1.223</b> | <b>1.96</b>  | <b>Fail to Reject <math>H_0</math></b> | <b>No Significant Difference</b> |



Table 4 indicates no significant difference between educational specialists' and teachers' assessments of leadership roles, with the computed z-value of 1.223 falling below the critical value of 1.96. Educational specialists obtained an overall mean of 5.25, while teachers provided a higher assessment of 5.71; nevertheless, the difference was not statistically significant under the analysis used in the original study. The comparable assessments imply that leadership behaviors such as employee development, idea implementation, supervisory collaboration, organizational responsiveness, and mediation of personnel needs are observable and generally recognized across organizational roles. Liu and Watson (2023) found that the distribution of leadership among principals, management teams, and teachers was associated with professional collaboration, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, reinforcing the organizational relevance of shared leadership roles. Galdames-Calderón (2023) similarly demonstrated that principals can promote

school improvement by creating conditions that expand teachers' leadership and professional development. Moreover, research using TALIS data found that instructional and distributed leadership influence teacher professional collaboration through different pathways, indicating that teachers directly experience the consequences of leadership arrangements within schools. Aranjuez (2025) emphasizes the broader importance of institutional and interpersonal support in individuals' experiences of organizational systems, while Aroz et al. (2026) similarly highlight resilience and supportive relationships in navigating difficult circumstances. Although these latter studies involve contexts outside educational leadership, they reinforce the importance of responsive institutional relationships. Overall, the convergence between educational specialists and teachers suggests that leadership roles are manifested through sufficiently tangible practices to generate broadly similar perceptions across groups.

**Table 5. Relationship Between Decision-Making Determinants and Leadership Roles of Educational Specialists**

| Variables                                   | Overall Mean | Pearson <i>r</i> | Strength of Relationship                     |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Decision-Making Determinants                | 5.49         |                  |                                              |
| Leadership Roles of Educational Specialists | 5.49         | 0.53             | Moderate Positive / Substantial Relationship |

Table 5 reveals a moderate positive relationship between decision-making determinants and leadership roles, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of  $r = .53$ . Both constructs obtained an overall mean of 5.49, suggesting that stronger decision-making conditions tend to coexist with stronger manifestations of educational specialists' leadership roles. This relationship is theoretically meaningful because leadership responsibilities require administrators to interpret information, consider personnel and organizational needs, respond to environmental conditions, and translate decisions into coordinated action. Mailool et al. (2020) established that principals' decision-making is associated with important teacher and organizational outcomes, supporting the proposition that decision processes constitute an integral component of educational leadership. Özdemir et al. (2023) further found that distributed leadership and teacher collaboration are relevant to teachers' instructional-practice profiles, illustrating how leadership processes can extend from organizational arrangements into classroom practice. Likewise, de Jong et al. (2023) showed that distributed leadership develops through interactions among individuals, teams, and school-level contexts, reinforcing the idea that leadership is embedded in organizational and human conditions rather than exercised independently of them. Alipoyo (2022) similarly emphasizes how leadership and administrative responses are conditioned by institutional resources and human realities, while Aranjuez et al. (2022) demonstrate the broader relevance of organizational responsiveness and stakeholder engagement. Therefore, the moderate positive correlation found in the present study supports the proposition that decision-making conditions and leadership practice are interconnected dimensions of educational management. However, because the source manuscript reports the correlation coefficient but not its corresponding p-value, the finding should be described as a moderate positive relationship rather than a statistically significant relationship unless the original statistical output confirms significance.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings suggest that educational institutions should strengthen decision-making systems that integrate human, operational, process, facility, and external considerations rather than relying primarily on administrative judgment. Since human factors emerged as the most prominent determinant, educational specialists should give particular attention to teachers' competencies, professional experiences, concerns, and perspectives when making decisions that affect school operations and instructional improvement. At the same time, the consistently high ratings for external and operational factors demonstrate the importance of considering organizational requirements, stakeholder expectations, available resources, and changing environmental conditions. School divisions may therefore institutionalize participatory decision-making mechanisms through regular consultations, data-informed planning, stakeholder engagement, and systematic monitoring of decisions. This implication is consistent with Mailool et al. (2020), who demonstrated the importance of principals' decision-making to teacher performance, and with Maheshwari et al. (2025), who emphasized the increasingly complex and multidimensional nature of decision-making in educational leadership. Alipoyo (2022) likewise highlights the importance of human and institutional conditions in organizational management, while Aranjuez et al. (2022) underscore the value of stakeholder awareness and institutional responsiveness. Thus, professional development for educational specialists should strengthen not only technical decision-making competencies but also communication, consultation, problem-solving, resource management, and responsiveness to internal and external stakeholders.

The findings also imply that leadership development should enable educational specialists to translate sound decisions into employee development, collaboration, innovation, mediation, and organizational responsiveness. Since responding to supervisory direction and leading and



training employees emerged as the most highly practiced leadership roles, educational institutions should sustain these strengths while giving greater attention to implementing ideas, which received the lowest mean among the leadership dimensions. Structured mentoring programs, professional learning communities, collaborative planning teams, innovation-sharing mechanisms, and leadership coaching may provide educational specialists with opportunities to convert ideas and decisions into concrete school-improvement initiatives. The moderate positive relationship between decision-making determinants and leadership roles further suggests that leadership practices may be strengthened when educational specialists operate within supportive decision-making conditions. However, causality cannot be inferred from the correlational design. Distributed leadership research similarly emphasizes that collaboration, shared responsibilities, and professional development can strengthen school leadership and organizational functioning. Consequently, school systems should view decision-making and leadership development as interconnected areas of professional practice, creating structures that empower educational specialists to collaborate with colleagues, respond to employee needs, develop personnel, implement innovations, and contribute collectively to improved teaching and school performance.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that decision-making determinants and leadership roles are strongly manifested among educational specialists, reflecting an educational management environment in which human considerations, external conditions, operational requirements, facilities, and organizational processes contribute to administrative decision-making. Human factors emerged as the most prominent determinant of decision-making, while responsiveness to supervisory direction was the most frequently practiced leadership role, underscoring the importance of people-centered decision-making combined with organizational accountability. The absence of significant differences between educational specialists' and teachers' assessments further indicates generally consistent perceptions of both decision-making determinants and leadership practices across the two respondent groups. Moreover, the reported correlation indicates a moderate positive relationship between decision-making determinants and leadership roles, suggesting that stronger decision-making conditions tend to coexist with stronger leadership practices. Overall, the findings emphasize the value of developing educational specialists who combine systematic and human-centered decision-making with collaborative, responsive, developmental, and innovation-oriented leadership to support teachers and advance organizational and instructional improvement.

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