



## SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: THE EXERCISE OF LEGITIMATE POWER IN CAMBODIA

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### **Abstract:**

This research was undertaken in purpose of finding challenges with which the high school principals have encountered in using legitimate power, and strategies they have applied to exert it effectively. Methodologically, a holistic multiple-case design of qualitative research was employed because the study was conducted with principals and teachers who come from different schools, but the same units of analysis. 5 high school principals and 5 high school teachers from Kampong Thom province, Cambodia were purposively selected to get involved in writing answers of open-ended questions. Technically, NVivo 11 was utilized to analyse data. The results revealed that there have been a plethora of issues with which the principal have faced such as abusing power, power struggle, not obeying the rule, lack of motivation and professional consciousness, disagreement among colleagues, lax law, and low salary etc. Based on the participants' experiences, to exercise legitimate power effectively, Cambodian principals have mostly adopted soft, hard, rational and bilateral power tactic in which relationship-oriented leadership style plays key roles.

**Keywords:** abuse, challenge, power, strategy, struggle

### **1. Introduction**

Leader is not a leader if he doesn't possess power. Power is the crucial core for leading organization to achieve desirable goals. What is power in terms of leader? The definitions of powers are diverse. Different authors conceptualize differently. Weber (1947) referred to power as "probability that one actor within a social relation in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance." According to Pfeffer (1992), he defined power as ability to influence behaviour, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do

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whereas Luthans (2011) argues that power definition is intertwined with the concept of authority and influence. Relying on him, power is the ability to get an individual or group to do something to get the person or group to change in some ways. Lastly, French and Raven (1959) defined power as social influence, the ability to change the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviours of others. All in all, power is the ability which, through social relation, is able to influence others to alter their perspective, belief, and behaviour towards an action for particular goal even resistance.

Based on French and Raven (1959), the sources of leader power are classified into five distinct categories, namely, *reward power*, the leader's power depending on the ability and resources to reward subordinates; *coercive power*, leader's ability to control, to administer punishments or to threaten to the subordinates for noncompliance the orders or directives; *expert power*, the power stemming from knowledge, skills or special ability possessed by the leader which generally gained from education, training, and experiences; *referent/charismatic power*, the leader's power developed from the strength of his/her own personalities which make the followers feel admirable and affection, and *the legitimate power/position power*, power gaining from the position. These five power bases are interrelated. Exerting one can affect your ability to use another one. To change agent who use coercive power, it may lose referent power, but one can deploy legitimate power to enhance both referent power and expert power (Buchanan & Baadham, 2008).

### 1.1 The Objectives of the Research

This research was undertaken in purpose of finding out the experiences of the principals in using legitimate power. Specifically,

- What are challenges have principals encountered in exerting legitimate power? The main problems used to identify the barriers with which principals have faced to utilize legitimate power are distance power, abuse of power, lack of delegation, and power struggle.
- What strategies have principals applied to exert legitimate power effectively? It explored the resolution of those issues in particular as well as the strategies in using legitimate power effectively in general.

### 1.2 School Leadership in Cambodia

Decentralization has been seen as an effective and popular strategy employed as a tool for promoting the quality of administration. Like many other countries, Cambodia has adopted decentralization policy in public administration since the passing of the 1998 Law on Provincial and Municipal Budgets and Asset Management (ADB, 2011). Noticeably, the term has been being implemented in education since 1996 through building the first higher institution, Norton University. However, the explicit policy was seen in the EFA plan in 2003 that one of its objectives was concerned about capacity building for decentralization through enabling increased operational autonomy of all education institutions, increased delegated authority to provinces and districts in planning and managing education services and strengthened monitoring and audit

systems (MoEYS, 2003). However, traditionally, Cambodia has been a neo-patrimonial society for many centuries. The social system emphasizes social hierarchies, kinship, patronage and informal personal relations (Vimealea et al, 2009). Thus, sharing or distributed power is the new concept in the context of Cambodia.

Many social analysts as well as researchers have seen the actual implementation is still problematic. Schools have less autonomy regarding finances and control of resources because Cambodia has still retained much of the decision-making at the central government level (UNESCO, 2013). On the other hand, one of the big obstacles is lack of effective administrator and leaders in provincial and school level due to limited professional training. Based on McNamara (2015), 5916 out of 7119 Cambodian school administrators and principals haven't graduated secondary school level. Those who are highly knowledgeable and skillful have moved to the higher salary job, leaving government employment. Similarly, Thida and Joy (2012) argue that decentralization policy or school-based management is facing with the issues regarding decision making authority and school autonomy that are not clearly defined. Moreover, the knowledge gap at school levels still hamper the ability in assisting relevant stakeholders implement the program effectively. They also found that authority for decision making on personnel management and mobilization transferred to the principals remain weak. They continue that principals have not had power to recruit or fire any staff in school.

The traditional view of school directors is that they have been only managers. Their job is to implement the directives from their superiors, so ideas of leadership, self-initiative or creativity have not been expected (VOS, 2008; Morefield, 2007). Curriculum as example, Shoraku (2006) argues principals lack capacity and flexibility to adapt the national curriculum to their own goals and targets so that it leaves narrow space for demonstrating their leadership. The leadership style of school principals in Cambodia is still much more authoritative than distributed style. This style of leadership affects the teaching and learning style as well. The learning approach is in formative manner. Cambodian students are given little opportunity to think independently. They are passive learners in the sense that they just listen to the teacher, wait for the teacher to start the lesson and copy the exercises from the whiteboard. In respect to teachers, they have less chance to apply their own initiative, and their teaching style is still didactic (O'Leary & Nee, 2001). Morefield (2004) notes that, like most of Asian countries, Cambodia culturally puts a high value on hierarchy. Principals seem even more dependent on the Ministry hierarchy.

Morefield (2007) mentions one of the major challenges to educational success is the limitation of authority provision to school level, especially professional development. He states, as example, that:

*"I encouraged some principals to solicit other NGOs to help provide professional development for their teachers and was informed that they were not allowed to do that. All professional development must come through the DOE (District Office of Education). They do have permission to get NGOs help to build school buildings but not for teacher*

*training...not one principal that I asked felt that he or she had authority to do any professional development."*

It's similar to UNESCO (2015) which reports that there are limited opportunities for teachers to engage in continuous professional development programs. Where available, the providers of professional development programs are usually approved by the Ministry of Education. Thus, the power distribution is still poor in Cambodian context; especially, school leaders more dependent on their superiors' authority. Resources and professional training are strictly limited.

### **1.3 Power and Authority**

According to Bartholomew (1981), authority is the power which has been formally legitimated by the social system within which the authority is exercised. Based on him, power is viewed as illegitimate. Without legitimation, it implied that power is a first stage towards gaining authority. Most of researchers utilizes the term "legitimate power and authority" interchangeably. However, if we look deeply into the nature of power, it's the influence which is exerted by one actor over others whereas the nature of authority is the rights derived from higher up, governing boards or a superior in an organization (Snowden & Gorton, 2002). Coleman (1997) distinguishes the major differences between power and authority in the fact that power is essentially tied to the personal characteristics of individuals or groups whereas authority is always tied to social positions or roles. Weber (1947) notes power is a merely factual relation, but authority is a legitimate relation of domination and subjection. Moreover, power need not be consensual; authority must be.

To broaden the distinctions more understandably, we see power-holder as a person who has influence on other's behaviour in accordance with his own intention. Relying on Bacharach and Lawler (1980), Bush (2011) clearly distinguishes the differences between authority and influence as follows:

1. Authority is the static, structural aspect of power in organizations while influence is the dynamics, tactical element.
2. Authority is the formal aspect of power; influence is the informal aspect.
3. Authority is the formally sanctioned right to make final decision; influence is not sanctioned by organization and is, therefore, not a matter of organisational rights.
4. Authority implied involuntary submission by subordinates, but influence implied voluntary submission and does not necessarily entail a superior-subordinate relation.
5. Authority flows downward, and it is unidirectional; influence is multidirectional and can flow upward, downward, or opportunity.
6. The source of authority is solely structural; the source of influence may be personal characteristics, expertise, or opportunity.

7. Authority is circumscribed, that is the domain, scope, and legitimacy of the power are specifically and clearly delimited; influence is uncircumscribed, that is, its domain, scope, and legitimacy are typically ambiguous.

Therefore, the power and authority is conceptually distinct sense, yet both play very important role in daily leading toward stabilizing the organization. If exercising power without authority or exerting authority without power, it will cause conflict in organization. On the other hand, the power and authority must be balanced, and on behalf of a leader, he must provide the subordinates equal authority and power in purpose of letting them complete their work towards stability in organization and achieve a part of the organizational goal (Chitale et al., 2013).

#### 1.4 Legitimate Power

Legitimate power is a kind of the organization power, derived from job title, not personal power; thus, its feature is different from others (Lunenburg, 2012). There is no common consensus on its definition. Legitimate power is the legal right, obtaining from position. As Goncalves (2013) states, legitimate power refers to the authority of a formal position, stemming from the concept of ownership rights. However, Hinkin and Schriesheim (1989) defined legitimate power as the ability to make another person feel obligated or responsible. Applicably, legitimate power relays on the willingness of subordinates to comply with administrator's expectations (Snowden & Gorton, 2002). It's consistent with Fisher (1984) who states that legitimate power is based on a group's acceptance of common belief and practice. In some contexts, authority and legitimate power are used changeably (Bush, 2011; French & Raven, 1959). Totally, legitimate power is located in the intertwining influence with authority, and it's approaching to authority as showing in Figure: 1.0.

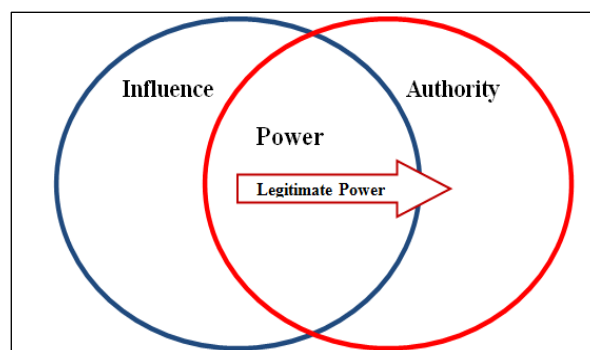


Figure 1: Legitimate power

Definitely, according to the argument above, we are able to draw a conceptual assumption. Legitimate power is the process, transforming from influence to authority. It is moving from dynamics, tactical element to be static and specific structural power. It is evolving from informal aspect of power to formal one, and it is developing from voluntary to involuntary submission, from multidirectional flow of power to unidirectional flow, from unlimited domain, scope and legitimacy of power to limited

ones. The actor who possesses high characteristics, expertise usually utilizes them to get authority.

Originally, there are three major sources from which the legitimate power is generated (Fisher, 1984). Firstly, it stems from cultural values of society, organization, or group determines what is legitimate. Secondly, occupancy of position which comes from accepted by social structure. Thirdly, legitimate power emerges from appointment or designation as a by legitimizing agents who are representative of powerful person or group leader.

### 1.5 The Exercise of Power

The goal of power use is the realization of desired changes in the behavior, attitudes, or characteristics of others or groups. Power is normally exerted in situations where goals are to be formed, resources allocated, information disseminated, assignments of staff made, and performance improved or altered (Fairholm, 2009).

Based on Chitale et al. (2013), the leader leverages his power over subordinates in various ways such as promising rewards, giving rewards, threatening to withdraw current rewards, withdrawing current rewards, threatening punishment, and punishing. To further understand the power usage, relying on Falbo and Peplau (1980); Raven et al. (1998), Forsyth (2010) classifies six main power tactics in power exercise.

- **Soft and hard.** Soft tactics exploit the relationship between the influencer and the target to extract compliance. When individuals use such methods as collaboration, socializing, friendships, personal rewards, and ingratiation they influence more indirectly and interpersonally. Hard tactics, in contrast, are often described as harsh, forcing, or direct because they rely on economic, tangible outcomes, such as impersonal rewards or threats to well-being. Hard tactic is considered as more powerful than soft tactics.
- **Rational and nonrational.** Tactics that emphasize on reasoning, logic, and wise judgment are rational tactics; bargaining and persuasion are examples. Tactics such as ingratiation and evasion are nonrational tactics of power because they rely on emotionality and misinformation.
- **Unilateral and bilateral.** Bilateral tactics are interactive, involving give-and-take on the part of both the power user and the target of the power. Such bilateral tactics include persuasion, discussion, and negotiation. Unilateral tactics, in contrast, can be enacted without the cooperation of the target of influence. Such tactics include demands, faiths accomplish, evasion, and disengagement.

Different conditions, different kinds of actor, different sexes prefer to use different tactics. In military context, commander may often use hard than soft tactics while, in educational setting, soft tactics may be used more than hard tactics. Principal tends to apply bilateral rather than unilateral tactics whereas soldier prefer unilateral to bilateral tactics. In intimate relationship, men tend to use bilateral and direct tactics whereas women report using unilateral and indirect tactics (Falbo & Peplau, 1980).

## 1.6 Issues in Exercising Legitimate Power

Generally, the use of power encounters power resistance. People resist the power tactics we use toward them by: using a countervailing power tactic; striving to destroy or limit the base or bases of power we control; seeking to wrest power bases held by us from us; and trying to disengage from the relationship, thereby destroying not only our power, but the underlying relationship itself also (Fairholm, 2009).

Resistance can result from the inability to respond appropriately; that is, others sometimes fail to respond to our power usage because they do not have the resources necessary to affect compliance, even though they want to comply. They do not have the requisite skills, time, materials, or the information needed to affect our outcome desires. Resistance also can result from an unwillingness to comply; that is, the target can but chooses not to comply with our desires. In both cases, the resistance is real and the impact on our use of power similarly. So, we must either increase the force or scope of our power use, or give up (Fairholm, 2009).

**Power distance:** it's the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2011). Power distance is a highly negative obstacle to organizational progress since it restrains the subordinates from participating in decision-making process empowered by the superior. It renders large communication gap between superiors and their subordinates because it is hard for the subordinates to air their views (Ghosh, 2011). Based on Mulder's power theory, the more powerful individual strive to maintain or to increase the power distance to the less powerful person, the stronger the striving to increase it, low power individuals will strive to reduce the power distance between themselves and more powerful others, and the smaller this distance from the more powerful person, the stronger the tendency to reduce it (Mulder, 1977).

Hofstede (2011) summarizes in a nutshell about the basic characteristics of the small and the large power distance societies in the table 1.0 below.

**Table 1:** Small and Large Power Distance Societies

No	Small Power Distance	Large Power Distance
1	Use of power should be legitimate and is subjected to criteria of good and evil.	Power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil: its legitimacy is irrelevant.
2	Parents treat children as equals.	Parents teach children obedience
3	Older people are neither respected nor feared.	Older people are both respected and feared
4	Student-centred education.	Teacher-centred education
5	Hierarchy means inequality of roles, established for convenience.	Hierarchy means existential inequality
6	Subordinates expect to be consulted.	Subordinates expect to be told what to do.
7	Pluralist governments based on majority vote and changed peacefully.	Autocratic governments based on co-optation and changed by revolution
8	Corruption rare; scandals end political careers.	Corruption frequent; scandals are covered up.
9	Income distribution in society rather even.	Income distribution in society very uneven
10	Religions stressing equality of believers.	Religions with a hierarchy of priests.

**Source:** Hofstede (2011)

Generally, in the context of most countries, especially in Asia, it's culturally accepted by subordinates as the obligation that they should respect and follow their leaders without questioning. Specifically, according to Kampuchea Time (2012), Cambodia has been regarded as a country with a large power distance culture in major contexts:

- **Social Norm: culturally, the young has to respect the older. Whenever and wherever the young meet the older, he/she has to bow the head to express respect.** In addition, showing respect appears not only in terms of age. It also happens in everyday communication between people and public authority.
- **Home and School:** At home, parents are living gods to whom we have to show respects, not only for showing gratefulness, but also for other decision-making. This can be seen in arranged marriage. At school we regard teachers as second parents. So when talking about parents, it means we have to show respect with less discussion or no question.
- **At work:** At workplace, subordinates have to respect order from their superiors. They expect to be told what to do by their superiors.
- **Politics:** At political level, high power distance can affect decision-making process. In Cambodia, centralization is still practiced even though decentralization has been introduced for few decades. So, there is less discussion on social issues at national level, and high power distance at political level can lead the country to oligarchy.

All in all, power distance is the obstacle in exerting legitimate power because it leaves the big gap in communicating between superior and subordinates in organization that leads to make low participatory decision-making manner. On the other hand, large distance power culture gives too absolute power to the leaders that, as a result, he tends to be an authoritative rather than a democratic leader (Hofstede, 2001). Conversely, Francesco and Chen (2000 cited Terzi, 2011) found that low power distance brings job satisfaction, organizational loyalty and performance to the organization.

**Abuse of power:** According to UNESCO (2015), the abuse of power in workplace both with external stakeholders and internally among staff. The effects can be damaging to morale and to working relationships. Abuse of power may take various forms including requesting staff to do personal errands or favours, pressuring staff to distort facts or break rules, interfering with the ability of a colleague to work successfully (i.e. by impeding access to information or resources), and bullying.

Bullying is a form of coercive interpersonal influence. It involves deliberately inflicting injury or discomfort on another person repeatedly through physical contact, verbal abuse, exclusion, or other negative actions (Forsyth, 2010). This kind of behaviour is most frequently occurs in organization. Laymann (2011) describes that mobbing instead of bullying in workplace as a hostile and unethical communication systematically directed by one or more individuals, mainly towards one individual, who is pushed into a helpless and defenseless position, being held by there by means of continuing mobbing activities. These so-called behaviours appear in diverse modes, including verbal aggression, criticism, rumours, humiliations, i.e., in a broad sense,



persistent acts that place the victim in a disadvantaged position and are used with the aim of persistently humiliating, intimidating, frightening or punishing the victim (Zapf & Einarsen, 2001). There are four main types of bullying. Often they are divided into two groups (Green et al., 2013):

- Overt bullying is done face-to-face includes:
  - Physical: Being physically aggressive towards others (i.e., hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging or stealing someone's property).
  - Verbal: Being verbally aggressive towards others (i.e., hurtful, teasing, insulting, humiliating or threatening someone).
- Covert bullying is not easily seen by adults and includes:
  - Social/Relational: Being socially aggressive towards others (i.e., deliberate exclusion of someone from 'the group' or from an activity, spreading rumors about someone).
  - Cyber: The use of technology to support deliberate hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.

In bullying situations, legitimate power can be used through in many forms. The subordinates are given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines; key areas of responsibility are removed or replaced with trivial or meaningless tasks; the subordinates' work is excessively monitored, and they are exposed to an unmanageable workload (SOCIOUS, 2011).

**Lack of delegation:** Delegation has been seen as a main concern of decentralization policy in current educational administration. Delegation is the empowerment to the subordinates to have right for making decision. It serves several benefits in organization process. It makes the organization responsive and flexible, motivating continuing learning, increasing initiatives, honesty and achievement, and encouraging the subordinates to be more accountable (Guptar & Murari, 1996). Delegation practice is limited in some contexts because of, according to Mullin (2007), lack of delegation results from the superior's fear. The superior may fear that the subordinate is not capable of doing a sufficiently good job. Also, the superior may fear being blamed for the subordinate's mistakes. Conversely, the superior may fear that the subordinate will do too good a job and show in a bad light. Other reason for failing of delegation is the assumptions about human nature. The theory x manager believes that people have an inherent dislike of their work, wish to avoid responsibility, and must coerced, controlled, directed and threatened with punishment in order to achieve results. Such a manager is likely; therefore, to be interested in only limited schemes of delegation. The last cause is lack of training, the superior may not have been trained themselves in the skill and art of delegation.

**Power Struggle:** it's the competition between actors to control the resources or to find dominance or influence in the relationship. As Forsyth (2010) argues power struggles are common in groups as members vie for control over leadership, status, and position, as Sculley and Jobs in Apple Company, for example. Generally, power struggle takes place between the people who have equal or nearly equal status. The

lower powerful person endeavours to compete for maximizing the control or influence in organization while the higher powerful person tries to maintain and to consolidate it.

Hobbes (1651) asserts that people are largely equal in physical and mental abilities, but tend to overvalue their own ability in comparison with the ability of others. This gives rise to a situation in which an actor will seek to use his or her abilities in order to obtain a resource he/she desires from another person. Because of the limited nature of these resources, actors begin to fear attacked by others, and seek to pre-empt an attack on their own interests and life by consolidating their power.

Remarkably, in organization, power struggle usually occurs between leader and subordinates, subordinates and subordinates, leaders and other leaders. As Machiavelli (1515; 1517 cited Fleming & Spicer, 2007) described the struggle between the Prince and his subjects, the Prince and other princes, and the Prince and other members of the nobility. He presents a world where actors are ungrateful, fickle, false, cowardly, covetous, and as long as you succeed they are yours entirely; they will offer you their blood, property, life and children, as is said above, when the need is far distant; but when it approaches they turn against you. However, if this situation lasts long without resolution, the relationship will go to the end.

## **2. Research Design**

Based on the research nature, a holistic multiple-case design of qualitative research was employed to explore the experiences from which the principals in high schools have gained in exercising legitimate power; on the other hand, since the research study was conducted with principals and teachers who come from different schools, but the same unit of analysis (Yin, 2012).

### **2.1 Data Collection**

Kampong Thom province was chosen as research field since it's the biggest and geographically located in the centre of the country. On the other hand, it's accessible for researcher's representative to collect data. According to MoEYS (2014), there are totally 22 upper secondary schools in Kampong Thom province. However, since it's a qualitative study in nature, only small sample in size will be selected (Wiersma & Jursm, 2004). Specifically, 5 principals and 5 teachers from 5 upper secondary schools were purposively selected to get involved in the study based on their experiences obtained from the list of educational staffs in Educational Directorate of Kampong Thom. A purposive sample refers to selection of units based on personal judgment rather than randomization. This judgmental sampling is in some way "representative" of the population of interest without sampling at random (ILO, 2009). One of the commonest uses of purposive sampling is the studies based on small numbers of areas or sites.

Because of financial constrain and very long distances from Turkey to Cambodia, the respondents were requested to answer the interview questions by writing the description of each the open-ended question.

**Table 2.0:** Participants' Characteristics

Code	Position	Sex	Age (year)	Experiences (year)
PA	Principal	Male	51	11-15
PB	Principal	Male	50	11-15
PC	Principal	Male	46	11-15
PD	Principal	Male	44	11-15
PE	Principal	Male	41	11-15
TA	Teacher	Male	51	Over 15
TB	Teacher	Male	46	11-15
TC	Teacher	Male	32	6-10
TD	Teacher	Female	36	6-10
TE	Teacher	Male	36	11-15

### 2.1.1 Ethical Consideration

Before sending to Cambodia, the informed consent and questionnaire were translated from English into Khmer version by the researcher. Then, pilot study was done with one teacher and one principal by sending questionnaires via e-mail to Cambodia. Research data collection proceeded from 21 to 27 April 2016. Each questionnaire was spent approximately 1 hour in writing the answers. Prior to actual data collection process, all research ethics was carefully adhered in every stage. The researcher sought permissions from national education directorate of Kampong Thom province in legal and respective way.

At school level, the researcher explained the objectives of the research study to the respondents through informed consent letter attached to questionnaire and be shortly briefed again by researcher's representative. The gathering data process was preceded unless there were voluntary agreements with the principals and teachers' signature. To be more confident in privacy assurance, the names of participants have not been released in the research. The inform consent letters were also clearly stated about the rights of informants in refusing to answer the questions which they think that it's sensitive, and they have a say to withdraw from this research at any time.

After data collection, all the collected data has been treated in a confidential manner that protects the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and organization involved in the study. The collected information has been used only for academic purposes. Finally, the data was destroyed after the article was published.

### 2.2 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability and validity, beside pilot study, triangulation was employed by asking different respondents, principals and teachers, the same questions in order to find corroboration of their view. It is a strategy which is used to establish concurrent validity in research by looking at the same issue from different perspectives. Moreover, it is a helpful strategy to check not just the validity, but also the reliability of data (Basil, 2010).

## 2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out by utilizing NVivo 11. This kind of computer program does not actually perform the analysis but facilitates and assists it. Based on this program, the analysis was carried out in six steps (Adu, 2016). First, we conducted the data cleaning by using paragraph style. It makes us easy to employ 'auto code' for grouping data according to the research questions. Second, we uploaded the data into NVivo. Third, we reorganized the data by grouping data based on the research questions. Fourth, we conducted data exploration (using "Query command") to find the words or phrases that respond to the research questions. Then, we began coding relevant information. Fifth, we generated themes to address the research questions. Finally, frequency and percentage were computed.

## 3. Findings

The findings focused on results obtained from the description written by principals and teachers responding to the two aims of the research. The first put most emphasis on the challenges faced by principals in exerting legitimate power, and the second emphasis was placed on the strategies deployed by the principals to use legitimate power effectively. The challenges of legitimate power in this study were investigated four main aspects: power distance, abuse of power, power delegation, and power struggle.

### 3.1 Challenges in Exercising Legitimate Power

The table below is the summary of issues with which the principals have faced in their legitimate power exercises, obtaining from each interview question. The focuses were put on four main groups of the questions: Distance power, abuse of power, power struggle and lack of delegation.

**Table 3: Challenges Faced in Using Legitimate Power**

Challenges	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	TA	TB	TC	TD	TE	F	%
1 Power struggle among the subordinates	√	√	√	√		√		√		√	7	70
2 Power struggles for leader position		√			√		√				3	30
3 Not obeying to the rule from subordinates			√		√						2	20
4 Low salary				√							1	10
5 Lax law				√							1	10
6 Disagreement among the colleagues						√					1	10
7 Power competition in the school.						√					1	10
8 Not being respected subordinates by superior						√					1	10
9 Assigning the subordinates to work beyond their abilities						√					1	10

10	Lack of motivation from superior		√	1	10
11	Not be accepted contradictory idea by principals		√	1	10
12	Abusing power from Subordinates	√		1	10
13	The interference from superior	√		1	10
15	Lack of professional consciousness	√		1	10
16	Assigning subordinates to do unachievable tasks		√	1	10

### 3.2 Distance Power

The questions were asked to the participants about the situation of relationship or communication between the principals and the subordinates that affects the effectiveness of daily work, especially participating in decision making. PA replied that the relationship between him and subordinates is normal, not too easy, and not too difficult. It's similar to the PC's response which stated that the relationship evolves normally and very carefully. Sometimes both of them actually utilize the letter, telephone and sometimes face to face as the mode of communication based on the real situation. Furthermore, PB, PD and PE affirmed that the relationship between them and their subordinates is good. They make friendly communication, cooperation, and are open-minded without discriminating the status. It's similar to TA, TB, TC, TD and TE who replied that the relationship between principals and them is good. *"In daily communication, I talk with the principal simply and gladly,"* TB, TC, TD and TE expressed. Most of communications are made gladly that face to face channel was mostly used in routine relation. However, it's somehow difficult for principal to accept his subordinates' dissatisfaction with him. Remarkably, *"Sometimes the leader does not accept contradictory idea even though we try to show them the reasons. He tries to win us as being principal. It seems dictatorial. This is the general leaders' mindset. But, presently such a kind of behaviour has been changed gradually,"* TA described.

In terms of obedience, PA, PB, PC, PD and PE responded that their subordinates try to fulfil their work carefully. PB stated that his subordinates obey the rule, complete their tasks carefully, well cooperate with others, and they are highly accountable. Similarly, PE replied that his subordinates complete the work with transparency and justice. Additionally, *"Sometimes subordinates express their dissatisfaction as well. It's unavoidable. As results, they give some feedback to me in purpose of criticizing for constructing,"* PA mentioned. Not being different from principals, TA, TB, TC, TD and TE also agreed that they are working hard by completing what are assigned by principals. On the other hand, to express politeness to principals, according to TA and TB, the teachers communicate with principals politely, gently and by bowing the head.

### 3.3 Abuse of Power

The questions relating to abuse of power were mainly asked to participants about the informal assignments given by principals to the subordinates. The first concern was with the unreasonable tasks. The second was about the unachievable tasks, forced by principal. The third focus was on principals' personal business, gotten the subordinates to undertake for. The fourth issue is the interference of principals in the subordinates' work. As results, PA, PB, PC, PD and PE revealed that there is no noticeable abusing power in their work setting. However, *"It seemed like abusing power (making decisions without approval from me) when someone wanted to meet me, they did not find me, but they invited the guest to meet them instead,"* PC complained. TB, TC, TD and TE replied they have never been abused their power. It's different from TA who described, *"sometimes in teaching duty, the long-term teaching course (but time is short time) such as Physics in grade 11. The principal forces the teacher to complete teaching tasks. This is unreasonable"*. In addition, he complained, *"I've ever been forced to work unachievable tasks such as science subjects that need doing experiment in some units, but they could not be finished because of time constraint"*. *"Most of cases the superior abuses the subordinates or less power holders,"* he noticed.

### 3.4 Power Delegation

The goal of power delegation questions aimed at investigating the methods employed by principals to delegate power to subordinates and the frequency of delegation. The results show that principals have ever delegated power sufficiently. PA explicitly said that he has delegated the responsibilities to the subordinates which are on the list of duty division while PC usually delivers power through giving missions to subordinates. Particularly, he transfers the administrative duty to vice principal when he is absent. Similarly, PD normally delivers power to vice principals in order to be responsible for administrative and technical tasks. According to TA, TD, TE, the responsibilities have been delegated by the principal such as technical tasks, teaching methodology, classroom, student management, rules, scoring and teaching creativities. Based on TC, the principal asks the head of technician group to inspect new teachers and the teachers to control each classroom so that the teachers and students are able to teach and to learn well. On the other hand, the principals normally assigns the vice principals to lead the staffs to conduct exams.

### 3.5 Power Struggle

The questions on power struggle were mainly asked to the participants about bargaining of principal's position and power conflict among their subordinates. PA, PB, PD and PE reveal that there is no power struggle for principal position. However, PC stated, *"Sometimes there are power struggles in my position such as making decision and signing on important and necessary documents."* Predominantly, the majority of participants, PA, PB, PC and PD, agreed that there are many cases of power struggle among their subordinates. For example, PA admitted that there are a few power struggles among my staffs in technical or in joint work. Similarly, *"There are power*

*struggles among the subordinates such as competition for teaching hour among teachers,”* PC described. *“The power struggle occurs due to the jealousy,”* PD remarked.

In contrast to PA, PB, PD and PE, TA observed that the position bargaining always happens when he has taken the principal position because he tries to keep everything as his own possession without sharing. Not being too different from TA, TC argued that the struggle for power usually occurs because of popularity competition in purpose of attracting other staffs to support him for position. Additionally, TA and TC noticed that in the light of benefits and position, there have been power struggle among the subordinates as well.

Besides all above issues, there are many other challenges which usually occur in using legitimate power. PA complained that the problem that usually happens to him in utilizing legitimate power is the interference from superior while PB complained that some staffs do not respect to the rules, some of them lack professional consciousness. PC argued that one of big problem in using power is lax law. Being different from above participants, PD stated that the cause of issue is low salary, and some staffs do not obey the law. Based on TA, one of the biggest challenges he experiences is disagreement among the colleagues. In addition, *“Competing for power, ordering the subordinates to undertake the tasks beyond their ability and being irrespective of the subordinates are challenges,”* TC remarked. Finally, *“Lack of motivation and of attracting the subordinate to get involved in cooperation are also the problem,”* TD stated.

### 3.6 Strategies for Exerting Legitimate Power Effectively

The table 4.0 below is resolutions as well as strategies that principals have used to solve each challenges and the recommendations provided by the participants for tapping legitimate power effectively. The strategies are categorized into four main themes:

- **Soft tactics:** Having good relationship with subordinates, enhancing motivation and being collaborative.
- **Hard tactics:** Following the law and training professional ethics to subordinates.
- **Rational tactics:** Being flexible, separating power clearly, reaching agreement, being just and not being nepotistic, dividing power hierarchically, knowing how to interpret the objective, explaining the subordinates about the responsibility clearly, being vigilant and a good model, adhering to transparency and accountability, practicing legitimate power regularly and obeying the time, adhering to the truth and keeping the promise, explaining the subordinate clearly about the law, not using power beyond the limitation, setting clear goal and doing for the sake of common good.
- **Bilateral tactics:** Sharing the task and being collaborative.

**Table 4:** Strategies for Using Legitimate Power

Strategies	PA	PB	PC	PD	PE	TA	TB	TC	TD	TE	F	%
1 Adhering to transparency	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		8	80
2 Adhering to accountability	√	√	√	√		√		√	√		7	70
3 Dividing power separately and the agreement should be reached	√		√		√			√			4	40
4 Being collaborative	√					√					2	20
5 Enhancing motivation						√			√		2	20
6 Following the law			√	√							2	20
7 Having good relationship with subordinates					√	√					2	20
8 Leaders should be just and not be nepotistic						√		√			2	20
9 Being flexible	√										1	10
10 Explaining the subordinates clearly about the law.				√							1	10
11 Subordinates should be trained about professional ethics				√							1	10
12 Subordinates should be patient and do the works assigned their best		√									1	10
13 Dividing power hierarchically								√			1	10
14 Not using power beyond the limitation								√			1	10
15 Practicing legitimate power regularly and obeying the time										√	1	10
16 Adhering to the truth and keeping the promise.						√					1	10
17 High ability, smartness, and be patient.						√					1	10
18 Knowing how to interpret the objective						√					1	10
19 Setting clear goal, doing for the sake of common good						√					1	10
20 Being a good model, vigilant and sharing the task									√		1	10
21 Explaining the subordinate about the responsibilities clearly						√					1	10

In order to make power distance smaller and smaller, PA, PB, PC, PD recommended that it would be better if we were neutral, not too bureaucratic, transparent, and accountable. Moreover, PE and TD recommended that we should make good and close relationship between principal and subordinates. For TA, we should continue using polite words to talk with each other and be more understandable to each other. Especially, based on TB, the principals should not fuel the violence, oppress the subordinates, being dictatorship and selfish. TC emphasized that the principal should



manage with accountability and transparency, provide right of expression for construct and be open-minded to accept the critiques. TD further recommended that the superior should assimilate to closely communicate with the subordinates, value, respect the rights and roles each other, focus on the common good, and be understandable, tolerate, helpful, sharing, united.

To solve the abuse of power issue, *“power should be divided separately and the agreement should be reached before undertaking some missions. When we divide the power clearly, there is no abusing power because the abuse of power is caused by unclear power division,”* PA and PE recommended. Similarly, PB and TB stated that the principal should give subordinates the tasks, but do not interfere their work. According to TA, to avoid abusing power, it is necessary to separately and clearly divide duties or responsibilities. The leader should shun giving tasks or ordering by mouth to mouth, but he should explain the subordinates clearly in advance. TC further recommended that the work and role should be divided separately hierarchically in school, give freedom on work, and obey labour law and the decree enacted in public staffs. *“The principal should know his/ her right and authority, follow the law and regulation, and use negotiation rather than force in using power,”* TD added.

Relying on the experiences of participants, there are some procedures for them to delegate power. Based on PA, PB and TD, to get success in delegating, we should plan, select suitable person, explain them clearly about objective, motivate them, follow up and do the evaluation. Most of all, we should be accountable and transparent. For TA, there are four main steps that the principal usually follow: putting the plan in action, implementing the work, checking up the work, admiring and completing the missing points for later work. According to TE, the principal gives advices, helps to facilitate, and motivate. PD summarizes as follows:

- Collecting information on the task size.
- Examining the staff’s ability
- Telling the objective of the mission
- Telling the responsibility
- Additionally advising
- Giving the tasks
- Following up
- Evaluating

To solve the power struggle problems among the staffs, based on his experiences, PA argued, *“The resolution is that I invite them to meet me one by one to find the cause of conflict. Then, I find the way to mediate them after that I try to mediate one by one and observe if there is positive result, finally; I will invite them to meet each other”.* PB recommended, *“We must adhere to accountability”.* Especially, PC added that the principals should divide the power clearly. For TA, the principals must be smart, and transparent. He must exhibit his attempt, accept others’ idea and explain the tasks clearly before letting the subordinates do the task; he must focus on the common good. He should convert the multiple ideas into a new collective one. TB recommended that the principal should adhere strictly to the roles and position. *“the principal should manage transparently and*

*accountably, not discriminate group or working status, give the subordinates freedom of expression for solving problem, and he should not consider himself as the biggest or the most knowledgeable in organization,"* TC advised. Moreover, TD recommended that the competition should be fair, no discrimination. And *"the principal should give the task that is parallel to the subordinate's roles,"* PE emphasized.

Strategies for effectively using in legitimate power were suggested by research participants. PA stated, *"Based on my experiences, in order to get success in exerting legitimate power, we have to adhere to transparency, accountability, cooperation and flexibility in real situation"*. PB added that the subordinates should be patient and try to do the works assigned by the superior whereas PC said that we have to do what the law allows us to do. PD tries to explain the subordinates clearly about the law of MoEYS and trains them about professional ethics and explains them to understand about the value of knowledge. PE described that the principal should have good relation with the subordinates and transparency. TA listed the attributes for effectively exercising the legitimate power as follows: High ability, adhering to the truth and respecting to the promise, smartness, motivating the staff, being well collaborative, being patient, knowing how to interpret the objective, setting clear goal, doing for the sake of common good, being accountable, being friendly and not being nepotistic.

For TC, the principal should adhere to justice and transparency in the institution and divide power hierarchically, not use his/her own power beyond the limitation. The leader should praise the subordinates who work well, no trying to look for subordinates' mistakes because of personal problems. TD recommended that the principal should be a good model, vigilant and careful for work, motivated and share the task. Finally, *"The principal should practice the power regularly and obey the time"*, TE added.

## **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

### **4.1 Challenges in Using Legitimate Power**

According to the participants' experiences as principals and teachers for many years, there have been a plethora of issues school principals have encountered in tapping legitimate power. The results show that one of those is the interference from superior as stated by PA. The inference is a common problem in leading process, particularly in power delegation. It is in line with Annan et al. (2016) who reveals that the undue interference of superior in delegated tasks negatively affects the effectiveness of delegation, but it is unavoidable even if the subordinates are knowledgeable and skillful. Similarly, the interference also generates various forms of obstacle in effective task performance (Rogger, 2014; Moya & Akodo, 2011).

Besides interference, not respecting to the rule and lack of professional consciousness among the subordinates inevitably happens in the process of using legitimate power as complained by PB. It is not different from PD who mentioned that the cause of this issue is low salary, and some staffs do not obey the law. It is parallel with the Phnom Penh Post (2012) which reports that many teachers abuse the ethical

code of profession that one of the reasons is due to economic reason. Additionally, VOS (2008) found that Cambodian teacher salary is lower than basic living need, so almost of teachers require a second job or third financial source to support their families. However, it is irrespective of Cambodian government's sub-degree on Cambodian teacher professional ethics in article 8 which has been provided that the teacher has to obey the professional consciousness (RGC, 2008). On the other hand, akin to the issue faced by principals, lax law also exists as well, pointed out by PD. Generally, lax law affects negatively leadership effectiveness. It makes abuse of power, disorder, disobedience etc. in organization, particularly in leading process.

TA describes that one of the biggest challenges is the disagreement among the colleagues. Similarly, Stojkovic et al. (2015) mention that disagreement on the assigned tasks and responsibilities of a position give rise to role conflict between leader and subordinates. According to him, role conflict causes high turnover, absenteeism and low morale. Based on TA, power competition issue also occurs in his high school. The reason behind the power competition is to control the resources and to find dominance. This power competition tends to increase conflict by pitting members against one another and power struggle, and the power struggle causes turmoil within the organization (Forsyth, 2010). With respect to the abuse of power, particularly not respecting to subordinate and assigning the subordinates to do the tasks beyond their abilities as TA states. Similarly, SOCIUS (2011) mentions asking the subordinates to work excessively beyond monitoring and exposing them to an unmanageable workload are the forms of abusing power. In the matter of respecting, the leader should value the subordinate. When the leader expresses respect to subordinates, they will become more confident (Northouse, 2015).

Lack of motivation concerned by TD is an issue. This is similar to Müller & Turner (2010) who argue that the staffs that lack motivation may not only perform below their own capacity, but also influence others negatively and team's overall performance. Another problem is that leader does not accept contradictory idea even though subordinates try to explain, complained by TA. It agrees with Hester (2003) who argues that some leaders are stubborn, hardhead, and unyielding in their approach in managing and leading others. It is inconsistent with Neary (2013) who advises that leaders must always be ready to listen to their subordinate advice and to acknowledge the importance of their support. Importantly, the issue raised by PC, *"Sometimes there are power struggles in my position such as making decision and signing on important and necessary documents."* it shows that the power is not struggled or abused by superior only, but by subordinates also. It is likely to be similar to Boulding (1962) who argues, in a situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which the party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other, the struggle also happens. Moreover, Rahim (2001) adds all situations of incompatibility lead to competition, but conflict occurs when the parties become aware of the incompatibility and wish to interfere with the attainment of each other's goal attainments.

On the other hand, two roles or more which simultaneously bring pressure and contradictory one with another in completion cause roles conflict (Alan et al., 2015). Besides power struggle between leader and subordinates, there are power struggle between subordinates and subordinates alike, as asserted by TA and TC. Such a kind of conflict occurs when the individuals perceive that there is unfair or unjust distribution of resources; specifically, conflict among subordinates revolves around the development of ideologies and belief about inequalities, the emergence of leaders to articulate grievances and the mobilization of resource materials to forge conflict in organizations (Turner, 2013).

#### **4.2 Strategies in Using Legitimate Power**

The first attributes to effectively apply legitimate power is to adhere to transparency, accountability, cooperation and flexibility in real situation as mentioned by PA and TA. Dive (2008) states that the exercise of legitimate power is the critical element of accountability. He further emphasizes that accountable leader is expected to utilize relevant and appropriate legitimate power to his position. Remarkably, in an experiment conducted by Houser et al. on "*Does transparent leadership promote cooperative groups?*" in (2014), the result reveals that subordinates were more likely to follow a leader's suggestion when the price of talk is raised by making a leader's actions transparent. Consequently, transparency leads to more cooperation and significantly higher group earnings as well as reduced dispersion in contributions among group members. More importantly, flexible leadership is essentially important when there is substantial change in situation and the leadership behaviours that are relevant for it (Yukl, 2008).

Another strategy raised by PC is that the leader has to do what the law allows us to do. Because legitimate power is a kind of position power, law is a crucial element for supporting leadership power. The leader has to follow the law to be a good model for the staff and to accomplish the organizational assignments effectively. As Whetstone (2013) states, the effective leader enhances culture that values the obedience to all laws that govern the people and activities in organization. Explaining the subordinates clearly about the law of MoEYS and trains them about professional ethics and explaining them to understand about the value of knowledge. This is the strategy exercised by PD. It is the rational tactic which is often used popularly and widely because it places an emphasis on the reason, logic and good judgment (Forsyth, 2010). Leaders who exert rational tactic gain much more favourably than those use non rational tactic from their subordinates (Stroh, 2002).

PE suggests that leaders should have good communication with the subordinates. It is similar to TA who suggests that the leader should be friendly. As England and Morgan (2012) argues, the effective leader should have good communication skills, clear and effective, active listening and giving feedback. There are four elements of communication that the leader should expertise: speaking, writing, listening, and nonverbal such as facial expression, eye movement, body posture, body movement (Van Wart, 2005). On the other hand, the leader should be just and not be

nepotistic, asserted by TA and TC. This is consistent with Sullivan and Glanz (2006), moral leader values social justice and equity to all people, so he or she will avoid from prejudicial behaviour. Besides those, the leader should divide power hierarchically and not use power beyond the limitation. It is consistent with Fitzell (2013) who argues that legitimate power is delegated from a higher level and attaches to each specific role including the role as a leader. He, furthermore, emphasizes leader who taps this power beyond the limit tends to become an authoritarian; sequentially, it usually significantly damages in the form of adverse productivity, impacting and harming to others at work.

The leader should practice legitimate power regularly and obey the time, raised by TE. It is similar to Ray and Konik (2011) who write about one of the strategies for getting success in managerial effectiveness is to exercise the legitimate power or authority regularly. Moreover, time-management skills are essential for performing management role because they enables us to ensures that management tasks are carried out successfully (Luis, 2010). The leader should be a good model, careful, vigilant and share the task with subordinates, as recommended by TD. Leader should complete the task and use his power carefully; otherwise, many issues occur. Vigilant leader is open-minded, finds diverse ideas, and listens to variety of sources and promotes broad networks both in the society and professional setting (Day & Schoemaker, 2006). Sharing the task is a form of empowerment that serves many advantages for the attainment of organization goals. It makes the organization responsive and flexible, motivating continuing learning, increasing initiatives, honesty and achievement, and encouraging the subordinates to be more accountable (Guptar & Murari, 1996).

There are many traits that enable the leader to exert the legitimate power effectively, as mentioned by TA, such as: high ability, adhering to the truth (respecting to the promise), being smart, motivating the staff, being well collaborative, being patient, knowing how to interpret the objective, setting the goal, doing for the sake of common good, being accountable, and being friendly. Generally, these are common characteristics that the leader should have. High ability is very necessary for leader in increasing productivity in the organization because it makes simply the thing happen. One does not only fosters the effective exercise of legitimate power, but also other dimensions of leadership power, expert and charismatic power (French and Raven, 1959). In addition, according to Mihelič et al. (2010), honesty is compulsory for ethical leader to gain trust and credibility among colleagues as well as subordinates. In terms of common good, Northouse (2009) states that a *leader* has an ethical obligation to *use power* for the influence of the *common good*. On the other attribute, being collaborative, Bertocci (2009) argues that transformational leader should foster collaboration by involving the people to work together towards vision's goal. Additionally, leader is a motivator. *Motivation* is the energy to make organization positively change. It is the wind in our sails (Flint, 2011). More crucially, the leader should have ability to set clear and interpret objective so that followers are able to understand what and how they should do (Brown, 2009). Leaders must be smart. *Leaders must* learn lessons from their failures and make sure that they don't repeat the same mistakes. *Leaders must* know how

to stand up and fight. But they *must* know when to quit as well. They *must* not look back and regret their failures. They must learn and move on (Rao, 2012). Lastly, the leader should explain the responsibilities to the subordinate clearly. It aligns with Sweenly and Mcfarlin (2001) who propose the tactics for using the legitimate power, such as making requests clearly and politely, not overstep authority; verify it if necessary, insisting on or compliance if necessary and being sensitive to target perceptions and concerns.

In conclusion, the challenge with which principals have predominantly faced is power struggles. This forges many forms of conflict in organization. As a leader, he or she encounters with role conflict, distrust among colleagues, diminution of effective leadership, fragility etc. Power struggle can be ensued between leader and subordinates, subordinates and subordinates and leader and other leaders. In general, power struggle takes place among the people who have equal or nearly equal status. The lower powerful actor endeavours to compete for maximizing the control or influence in organization while the higher powerful person tries to maintain and to consolidate it. In this study, the problems under the power struggle are position completion through popularity contest, struggle among subordinates that happens in technical or in joint work setting and conflict of interest.

Another challenge is the abuse of power. It is unavoidable for leaders. This is similar to power struggle. Abusing power occurs in leadership life from superintendents, subordinates, other leaders and among subordinates. The abuse of power appears in the form of inference from superiors and subordinates, assigning subordinates to do unachievable tasks and asking the subordinates to work beyond their abilities. Moreover, the subordinates do not obey the rule. Lack of motivation and professional consciousness, disagreement, lax law, and low salary are the common issues for exercising legitimate power.

There are multiple factors that contribute to push the leaders to exert legitimate power effectively according to the participants' recommendations. One of which is that the leader should strengthen the transparency and accountability, and power should be divided separately and the agreement should be reached. On the other hand, the leader should follow the law and not using the power beyond the limitation. Furthermore, there are wide array of elements that the leader should deploy: promoting collaboration, enhancing motivation, promoting and maintaining good communication with subordinates, being just and not being nepotistic.

Shortly, recently there have been no specific structural procedures to exercise legitimate power scientifically and effectively even though there have been some researchers and authors conducted many researches and wrote many articles and books about power. The reason is that legitimate power is complex abstract that demands the art of syntheses of various tactics rather than structural strategies. This is probably because legitimate power is the combination of influence and authority. Cambodian principals have mostly applied soft, hard, rational, and bilateral power tactic in which relationship-oriented leadership style serves as a core role. As recommendation, the

effectiveness, on the other hand, depends on the situational favourableness, and legitimate power needs practicing regularly.

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