



PRINCIPALS' PARTICIPATORY AND INTUITIVE DECISION-MAKING STYLES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON TEACHERS' WORK MOTIVATION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAIKIPIA COUNTY, KENYA

Lizz Murugi Mwangi¹ⁱ,

Joseph Mungai²,

Hellen Kiende³

¹Postgraduate Student,

Department of Educational, Management,
Policy and Curriculum Studies,
Kenyatta University, Kenya

²Senior Lecturer, Dr.,

Department of Educational, Management,
Policy and Curriculum Studies,
Kenyatta University, Kenya

³Senior Lecturer, Dr.,

Department of Educational, Management,
Policy and Curriculum Studies,
Kenyatta University, Kenya

Abstract:

Public secondary school teachers' work motivation has been significantly low in Laikipia County, Kenya. This study examined the principals' participatory and intuitive decision-making styles and their influence on teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in the County. The decision-making model of Scott and Bruce (1995) anchored the study. A descriptive research design was employed with 13 principals and 261 teachers constituting the sample size of 274 respondents. Interview schedules for principals and the Decision-Making Styles Questionnaire (DMSQ) for teachers were used to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential techniques with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 6. The findings showed that teacher job motivation was positively and significantly correlated with participatory decision-making style ($\beta=.299$, $p<.05$). Teacher job motivation was also positively and significantly correlated with intuitive decision-making style ($\beta=.362$, $p<.05$). The study concluded that principal's adoption of participatory decision-making style was crucial for motivation of teachers in public secondary schools in Laikipia County. Adoption of an intuitive decision-making style by principals had a significant influence on teacher

ⁱ Correspondence: email lizzmurugi7@gmail.com

work motivation. The study recommended that the Ministry should encourage participatory leadership and offer workshops to enhance intuitive decision-making in key school management areas.

Keywords: principals, participatory, intuitive, decision-making styles, teachers' work motivation

1. Introduction

School principals have historically held central roles in decision-making within education. Schildkamp (2019) describes this process as adaptable, allowing varied responses to similar scenarios. Principals apply different decision-making approaches tailored to the context. Pacheto and Webber (2016) emphasize that principals intentionally explore multiple options to meet school goals. This strategic use of decision-making is vital for maintaining effective school management and promoting institutional success. Together, these insights highlight the complexity and importance of principal-led decisions in shaping school outcomes and sustaining academic achievement.

Across the U.S., U.K., and India, research highlights that teachers' motivation and job satisfaction are strongly influenced by principals' decision-making styles, especially participatory and intuitive methods. Ingersoll and May (2016) emphasize that in the U.S., teacher motivation flourishes under participatory leadership. Similarly, Agasisti, Bowers, and Soncin (2019) observe that U.K. schools foster teacher leadership through inclusive decision-making practices. In India, Iqbal, Akhtar, and Saleem (2020) report that school managers use diverse but notably participatory approaches to inspire teacher engagement and improve performance. Ultimately, across all three countries, encouraging teachers to actively engage in school leadership and decision-making processes strengthens their motivation, cultivates leadership skills, and enhances overall school outcomes.

When issues in the school are more complex, organizational leaders, like principals of schools, tend to value intuitive decision-making more than logical ones (Sadler-Smith & Hodgkinson, 2016). The general focus of intuitive leaders, such as principals, is to focus on the total conception of the risk accruing in the school without consideration of the elements of decision-making only (Uzelac, 2018). Furthermore, Sadler-Smith (2020) revealed that the intuitive decision-making approach relies heavily on the school principals' emotional awareness as the foundation for decision-making, low expectations for the future, and less information gathering and rational option weighing.

For the principals employing an intuitive decision-making style, they have to mostly rely on their instincts, gut feelings, inner feelings and reactions to opt for desirable options to school problems (Biscak, 2020).

Schildkamp (2019) emphasizes that participatory and intuitive decision-making energizes teachers, recognizing their deep expertise as crucial to school success. When teachers are engaged in decision-making, their motivation rises, boosting overall

academic performance. Muhwava (2022) adds that in South Africa, involving teachers in collective decision-making inspires staff-wide dedication to achieving school goals. Altogether, these insights underscore the vital role of teachers' involvement in creating motivated, high-performing school environments.

Studies show that Kenyan teachers feel more motivated and perform better when actively engaged in school decision-making. Shikokoti, Okoth, and Chepkonga (2023) highlight that such involvement leads to increased job satisfaction and productivity, although specific decision-making styles remain unidentified. Kiprop-Marakis (2021) observes that principals often dominate decisions, with minimal teacher input. Han and Yin (2016) emphasize that teacher motivation is fueled by intrinsic factors like self-worth, recognition, expertise, and a sense of purpose, more than financial rewards. Collectively, the findings suggest that intuitive and participatory decision-making approaches are crucial for enhancing teacher motivation, yet many teachers continue to feel excluded from meaningful school governance roles.

In Laikipia County, principals rarely involve teachers in school decisions, leading to a perception of autocratic leadership. This exclusion contributes to teacher demotivation, disinterest, and reduced commitment to school tasks. Mugwimi, Njoki, and Ndung'u (2020), along with Gachau and Mutua (2018), highlight that many teachers feel ignored and marginalized. A 2023 KUPPET poll reveals that over 68% of secondary school teachers report feeling demoralized, largely due to a lack of motivation. This decline in morale has serious consequences, including increased indiscipline, negligence, and a passive approach to teaching. As a result, students' academic performance and the overall quality of education have suffered. Addressing these issues calls for a shift toward participatory and intuitive decision-making styles to restore teacher motivation, engagement, and improve outcomes.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In Laikipia County, principals' decision-making styles, particularly participatory and intuitive, play a crucial role in shaping teacher motivation. While school principals are charged with advancing educational objectives, their dominant decision-making approaches often exclude teachers from vital school choices. This lack of involvement has contributed to widespread demotivation, affecting teachers' job satisfaction and school performance. Participatory decision-making is crucial since it fosters collaboration and enhances teachers' intrinsic motivation, while intuitive decision-making empowers teachers by recognizing their experience and insights. However, these styles are not consistently practiced, leaving many teachers feeling sidelined. As a result, student achievement has drastically suffered. It is important to consider teachers as valuable stakeholders. Understanding the influence of participatory and intuitive decision-making approaches on teacher motivation could provide practical solutions for improving both teacher engagement and educational outcomes in public secondary schools across Laikipia County.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the principals' participatory and intuitive decision-making styles and their influence on teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Laikipia County, Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at achieving the following objectives

- 1) To determine the influence of principals' participatory decision-making style on teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Laikipia County, Kenya.
- 2) To establish the influence of principals' intuitive decision-making style on teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Laikipia County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Principals' Participatory Decision-Making and Teachers' Work Motivation

Participatory leadership has emerged as a vital strategy in enhancing teacher work motivation and overall school performance. Rooted in democratic and collaborative leadership philosophies, it involves key stakeholders, especially teachers, in decisions related to curriculum development, staff management, disciplinary policies, and resource allocation. Scholars such as Schildkamp (2019) and Ingersoll *et al.* (2018) affirm that when teachers are part of decision-making processes, their motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction significantly improve. This empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and respect, which not only boosts morale but also enriches the learning environment and student outcomes.

Principals who adopt participatory decision-making styles are seen as leveraging teachers' expertise and firsthand classroom experience to inform school governance. Senaya (2018) and Salim (2016) argue that engaging teachers in decisions enhances performance, collaboration, and organizational capacity. It also builds leadership potential among teachers, further contributing to shared responsibility in academic and administrative processes.

Research conducted across Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia reveals a strong link between participatory decision-making by school principals and enhanced teacher work motivation. Wasserman *et al.* (2016) found that shared leadership styles among Israeli principals positively correlated with teachers' desire and commitment to teaching, though the qualitative nature of the study and its setting in a developed nation highlight methodological and contextual differences compared to Kenya.

In Egypt, Aboudahr and Olowoselu (2018) used quantitative surveys to show that shared decision-making substantially improved teacher motivation and performance. Similarly, Salim (2018) in Pakistan discovered community institutions favored collaborative approaches, driven by both internal and external school dynamics. His qualitative research emphasized recurring patterns of teacher involvement through interviews and surveys.

In Saudi Arabia, Alamri (2021) synthesized reports and studies using a mixed methods approach and determined that participatory decision-making was ideal for schools. They advocated delegating authority to teachers as a way to enhance motivation and institutional effectiveness. Collectively, these studies underscore the consistent benefits of participatory decision-making in creating motivated and committed teaching staff across diverse educational systems.

2.2 Principals' Intuitive Decision-making Style and Teachers' Work Motivation

Intuitive decision-making, characterized by rapid judgments based on instinct, experience, and limited information, plays a vital role in school leadership, especially under complex and unpredictable circumstances. According to Uzelac (2018), this approach involves unconscious processes and draws on personal knowledge rather than methodical analysis. Biscak (2020) conceptualizes intuition as a two-stage mechanism that assigns emotional value to past experiences, which then influences current decisions. Emotional awareness and gut feelings drive the principal's choices more than logic, especially when time-sensitive or uncertain situations arise (Sadler-Smith & Hodgkinson, 2016). Grant, Nilsson, and Nordvall (2020) describe three sources of intuition: innate reactions, accumulated experience, and focused learning habits. These components combine to help principals respond effectively to evolving school challenges. While intuition may lack concrete analysis, it benefits from subconscious insight and emotional intelligence, providing quick and adaptive problem-solving.

Research shows that when principals employ intuitive decision-making, teachers often experience higher autonomy and motivation. Vanlommel *et al.* (2016) surveyed 408 primary school instructors in Belgium and found that intuitive leadership fostered greater independent motivation among teachers compared to more controlling environments. Despite the contextual gap with Kenya and emphasis on data usage, the findings underscore how intuitive leadership may enhance teacher agency.

In the Netherlands, Prenger and Schildkamp (2018) explored psychological factors that influence teacher decision-making and information utilization. These included self-efficacy, teamwork, cultural norms, and perceived impact. Their quantitative analysis demonstrated that data-supported intuitive decisions improved teacher motivation. However, the study highlighted a conceptual gap in understanding how psychological factors are applied practically by teachers.

Koutouzis and Malliara (2017) examined Greek teachers' job satisfaction and found a positive correlation between intuitive leadership and professional fulfilment. Using comprehensive surveys and decision-style instruments, the study revealed that when principals led with instinct and emotional understanding, teachers felt more satisfied with their roles. Although contextually based in Greece, the results parallel global patterns linking intuitive leadership to staff morale.

In Turkey, Kurban and Yasar (2017) investigated decision-making philosophies among 410 principals and their effects on teacher motivation. The research spotlighted intuitive, participatory, and avoidant styles, concluding that intuitive decision-making

was significantly associated with enhanced teacher motivation. While the scope narrowed to three styles, the findings reinforce the value of an intuitive decision-making approach as an effective strategy. These studies illustrate that intuitive decision-making has substantial positive effects on teacher motivation.

3. Material and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The sample size was 274 respondents and comprised 261 teachers and 13 principals. Data collection was through Decision-making Styles Questionnaire (DMSQ) for teachers and interview schedules for principals. The pilot test comprised a total of 28 respondents, constituting 2 principals and 26 teachers. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to determine reliability. The reliability for all the variables was above 0.7 and was deemed satisfactory. Validity was ascertained through the expert review and checks from supervisors and experts in educational management from Kenyatta University. The data collected was analyzed descriptively in the form of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations and inferentially in the form of correlation and regression analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 software aided data analysis. Data generated from open-ended questions and interviews was analyzed qualitatively through content analysis and presented in themes and verbatim.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Principals' Participatory Decision-Making Style and Teachers' Work Motivation

Table 1 shows how the participatory decision-making style of the principal influenced the motivation of teachers. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 denoting strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree, participants were prompted to score the participatory decision-making style of the principal on teacher job motivation.

Table 1: Participatory decision-making style

Participatory	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	Std. Deviation
My principal relies on teachers while making important decisions	5	6	12	54	23	3.84	1.014
My principal rarely makes important decisions without consulting teachers	14	17	17	45	6	3.12	1.192
My principal often considers/incorporates teachers' input while making important decisions	2	6	19	51	22	3.85	0.894
Whenever my principal has the support of teachers, s/he easily makes important decisions	2	6	20	51	21	3.84	0.880
The principal involves teachers in making critical decisions that ensure the school attains its stated objectives	0	6	16	56	22	3.93	0.794
Composite						3.72	0.95

The study revealed that principals' participatory decision-making style positively influenced teacher work motivation, reflected by an overall mean score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.95, indicating consistent views among teachers. Teachers strongly agreed (mean = 3.95, SD = 0.794) that being involved in critical decisions enhances school goal achievement. However, opinions were more neutral (mean = 3.12, SD = 1.192) regarding principals consistently consulting teachers, with notable variation in experiences. These findings align with Aboudahr and Olowoselu (2018), who emphasized the motivational impact of shared decision-making, and support Alamri (2021), who advocated participatory leadership as the most effective style in Saudi schools.

4.2 Principals' Intuitive Decision-Making Style and Teachers' Work Motivation

Table 2 shows the influence of principals' intuitive decision-making style on teachers' work motivation. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 denoting strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree, participants were prompted to score the intuitive decision-making style of the principal on teacher job motivation.

Table 2: Intuitive decision-making style

Intuitive	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	Mean	Std. Deviation
My principal makes school decisions based on inner feelings and reactions	15	24	33	28	0	2.74	1.031
My principal takes into consideration their instincts before making decisions	6	11	45	34	3	3.16	0.906
My principal often uses intuitions while making tough decisions on teachers' issues	10	10	44	36	0	3.07	0.921
My principal often inquires before making decisions on school issues	0	9	25	55	11	3.67	0.790
My principal usually makes decisions that feel right to them on teachers' issues.	9	14	21	45	11	3.35	1.132
Composite						3.20	0.956

The overall mean score of 3.20 (SD = 0.956) suggests that teachers have a generally moderate perception of principals' intuitive decision-making and its effect on their motivation, with notable variability in responses. Teachers moderately agreed (mean = 3.67, SD = 0.790) that principals who inquired before making decisions fostered a more trusted and collaborative school climate. This practice seems positively received and enhances teamwork. However, when principals relied solely on gut feelings or emotional reactions (mean = 2.74, SD = 1.031), teachers tended to view this approach negatively, showing substantial disagreement and diverse opinions.

These findings reveal that while intuitive decision-making can support relational leadership when combined with inquiry and consultation, relying too heavily on emotional instincts may undermine trust and motivation. The mixed reactions highlight that the intuitive style's effectiveness depends largely on how principals implement it,

and balancing instinct with stakeholder input improves its impact on teacher morale and school cohesion. Research findings align with Vanlommel *et al.* (2016), Koutouzis and Malliara (2017), and Kurban and Yasar (2017), showing that principals' intuitive decision-making style positively correlates with higher teacher motivation and autonomy.

4.3 Teachers' Work Motivation in Relation to Intuitive Decision-making Strategy

Table 3 indicates the nature of teachers' work motivation in relation to intuitive decision-making style in their profession. This was on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 denoting Very Unmotivated (VUM), 2 denoting Unmotivated (UM), 3 denoting Moderately Motivated (MM), 4 denoting Motivated (M), and 5 denoting Very Motivated (VM).

Table 3: Teachers' work motivation

Status of Teachers' Work Motivation	VUM %	UM %	MM %	M %	VM %	Mean	SD
I am motivated since my principal involves teachers in logical decision making	6	3	25	53	12	3.62	0.972
I am motivated since my principal has a logical way of decision making	0	6	23	59	11	3.75	0.734
I am motivated since my principal makes school decisions based on prior inquiry	6	21	39	31	3	3.03	0.932
My principal avoids inquiry-based decisions while making critical school activities	12	22	31	28	6	2.93	1.113
I am overly motivated by the way my principal having options in critical school decisions	2	5	20	59	14	3.79	0.801
Composite						3.42	0.91

With SD=0.91, the total mean score for teachers' motivation at work was 3.42. With an average score of 3.42, instructors appear to be generally moderately motivated at work. With a standard deviation of 0.91, there is visible variation in the motivational state of teachers, which may be impacted by a range of circumstances or the working environment in their schools.

The average mean score for the statement "I am overly motivated by the way my principal has options in critical school decisions" was 3.79 with a standard deviation of 0.801. Teachers moderately believe that they are strongly inspired by their principal's school decisions, according to a mean score of 3.79. The standard deviation of 0.801 reflects moderate consistency, suggesting limited variation in how teachers perceive this motivational influence. With a mean score of 2.93 and an SD of 1.113, the statement "My principal avoids inquiry-based decisions while making critical school activities" had a lower mean score. Teachers largely disagree or hold a negative opinion of principals, avoiding providing assistance in important choices, according to a mean score of 2.93. The standard deviation of 1.113 indicates noticeable variability in teacher experiences.

The results align with Vanlommel *et al.* (2016), who found intuitive principal leadership fosters teacher autonomy. Prenger and Schildkamp (2018) confirmed that psychological factors enhance motivation when paired with data use. Koutouzis and

Malliara (2017) linked intuitive leadership to job satisfaction, while Kurban and Yasar (2017) emphasized intuition's motivational impact.

4.4 Correlation Matrix

Table 4 shows the Pearson Correlation Coefficients used to evaluate the degree of a linear relationship between the research variables.

Table 4: Correlation matrix

		Teacher work Motivation	Participatory	Intuitive
Teacher work motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.597**	.675**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	185	185	185
Participatory	Pearson Correlation	.597**	1	.379**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
	N	185	185	185
Intuitive	Pearson Correlation	.675**	.379**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	185	185	185

The findings reveal strong positive correlations between participatory ($r=0.597$) and intuitive ($r=0.675$) decision-making styles and teachers' work motivation. The strongest link ($r=0.675$, $p<0.05$) underscores the intuitive decision-making style's influence. These results support Muhwava's (2022) assertion that inclusive strategies involving teachers enhance collective motivation, driving staff to pursue school goals more effectively through shared decision-making.

4.6 Coefficients Analysis

Table 5 presents the regression coefficients analysis of the study variables.

Table 5: Regression results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.537	.259		2.071	.040
	Participatory	.299	.045	.317	6.639	.000
	Intuitive	.362	.053	.360	6.837	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Teacher work motivation						

Teacher work motivation = $0.537 + 0.299 \text{ Participatory} + 0.362 \text{ Intuitive} + \text{error}$

The study found that both participatory and intuitive decision-making styles had significant positive effects on teachers' work motivation. Participatory style contributed 29.9% ($\beta = .299$, $p < .05$), aligning with Schildkamp (2019) and Salim (2018), who emphasized teacher involvement and experience as key motivators. Intuitive style showed a stronger impact, contributing 36.2% ($\beta = .362$, $p < .05$), and was supported by

studies from Koutouzis and Malliara (2017) and Kurban and Yasar (2017), highlighting the link between intuitive leadership and teacher satisfaction. Intuitive decision-making emerged as the best predictor of teacher motivation ($\beta = .360$), followed by participatory style ($\beta = .317$), reinforcing Sadler-Smith and Hodgkinson's (2016) argument that complex school issues often require instinctive decisions. Overall, intuitive and participatory approaches are most effective for motivating teachers.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that both participatory and intuitive decision-making styles significantly boost teacher motivation in Laikipia County's public secondary schools. Participatory leadership fosters involvement and unity, while intuitive decisions effectively address school operations, welfare, and discipline-related matters. These approaches enhance teamwork, commitment, and responsiveness, positioning principals as vital influencers in shaping productive and motivated learning environments.

6. Recommendation

The paper recommends that the Ministry of Education should promote participatory leadership to enhance teacher motivation while organizing workshops that foster intuitive decision-making in managing critical areas such as health, welfare, and maintenance.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author(s) declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

About the Author

Lizz Mwangi is a Master of Education (MED) candidate in the school of education and lifelong learning of Kenyatta University. She is specializing in education administration. She has an interest in the integration of decision-making styles in enhancing motivation of teachers in educational practices. She is an active member of academic networks, contributing to discussions on educational leadership and administration.

Dr. Joseph Mungai is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies at Kenyatta University. He specializes in educational leadership, policy development, and school administration. With extensive experience in mentoring postgraduate students, Dr. Mungai contributes to research on decision-making, school governance, and teacher development in Kenya and beyond.

Dr. Hellen Kiende is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies at Kenyatta University. Her academic interests include curriculum implementation, educational planning, and teacher motivation. She has

published widely in the field of education and is actively involved in capacity-building initiatives for school leaders and educators.

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