

## The Relationship between Teacher Empowerment and Organizational Commitment

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment in selected high schools and branch high schools. The subjects of this study consisted of all teachers who had at least one year of service at current schools. Quantitative descriptive research method was utilized for this study. As instruments, School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) developed by Short and Rinehart (1992, cited in Kirika, 2011), and Organizational Commitment Questionnaires (OCQ) developed by Mowday *et al.* (1979, cited in Kirika, 2011) were used. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Software) was used to analyze the obtained data. School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) was measured by six dimensions: decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. Descriptive statistics revealed that teachers from all selected high schools and branch high schools possessed high levels of teacher empowerment. Descriptive statistics revealed that there were high levels of organizational commitment in selected schools. According to the results, all teachers from selected high schools and branch high schools perceived that they had high level of organizational commitment. Pearson correlation ( $r$ ) described a statistically significant, positive relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Organizational Commitment, Self-efficacy, Autonomy, Impact

### Introduction

Education is an indispensable thing for the attainment of aspired goal for a modern nation. The prosperity of a nation can also be measured by its educational system. The quality of educational system reflects quality of human resources and economic development. "In any attempt to improve education, teachers are central" (Frymier, 1987, cited in Kirika, 2011).

Empowerment is defined as the opportunities an individual has for autonomy, choice, responsibility, and participation in decision making in organizations (Short & Rinehart, 1992). Empowerment is a feeling of enablement (Janssen, 2004). Moreover, teacher empowerment is a key element for enhancing school improvement. Empowerment, as a critical domain to teachers' working conditions, implies that teachers desire a major voice in school improvement.

When power goes to employees, it is the time to occur empowerment and those employees will experience a sense of ownership and can control over their jobs. Byham and Cox (1992, cited in Kirika, 2011) stated that empowering employees involves helping them take ownership and control of their jobs so that they take personal interest in improving the performance of the organization.

Teachers' commitment to the organization – the school – has been found to predict school effectiveness (Howell & Dorfman, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1991, cited in Spreitzer, 1996). Mowday *et al.* (1974) defined organizational commitment in terms of the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. The empowerment feeling of being able to make a difference in the workplace facilitates a worker's commitment to the organization (Locke & Schweiger, 1979; cited in Spreitzer, 1996).

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### **Significance of the Study**

Empowerment is a dominant theme in all types of organizations including business, education, industry and service organizations. According to Short and Johnson (1994), teacher empowerment is important in educational reform. Riley (1995) indicated that teachers are the most important resources in the school restructuring processes. Maeroff (1988) argued that teacher empowerment is a critical issue that is conducive to schools' efficiency. The focus has been on teachers to have more opportunity to participate in school level decision making and to utilize greater professional judgment in curriculum and instructional issues.

The strength of any profession depends upon the degree of commitment of its members. Commitment is a key factor that influences teachers' work and student performance in schools. Teacher commitment and engagement has been identified as one of the most critical factors in the success and future of education (Huberman, 1993; Nias, 1981, cited in Mart, 2013). Similarly, Crosswell (2006, cited in Mart, 2013) has the opinion that teacher commitment is one of the major professional characteristics that influence an educator' success. Teachers with high levels of commitment work harder, are emotionally attached to their schools, and make more effort to carry out the goals of teaching.

Therefore, exploring the relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment is taken into consideration of crucial importance for schools.

### **Research Objectives**

The main aim is to study the relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment at selected Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To find out the teachers' perceptions of empowerment at Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township.
- To find out the level of teachers' organizational commitment at Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township, and
- To examine the relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment at Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township.

### **Research Questions**

- To what extent do teachers perceive their empowerment at Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township?
- To what extent do teachers perceive their commitment to their organization at Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township?
- Is there any significant relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment at Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Short and Rinehart (1992) identified six dimensions of teacher empowerment: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. In a study devoted to the concept of teacher empowerment, Short (1994) described the six dimensions in details.

Allen and Meyer (1984) initially viewed organizational commitment as two-dimensional namely, affective and continuance. After further research, Allen and Meyer (1990) added a third dimension, namely normative commitment. Allen and Meyer (1990) define normative commitment as "the employee's feelings of obligation to remain with the organization". Consequently, the concept organizational commitment is described as a tri-dimensional concept, characterized by the affective, continuance and normative dimensions

(Allen & Meyer, 1991). According to Allen and Meyer (1996), affective commitment is “the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization”.

### **Related Literature Review**

In this study, there were six dimensions of teacher empowerment identified by Short and Rinehart (1992). They are decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. The six dimensions provide a theoretical foundation for examining teacher empowerment.

#### **(i) Decision Making**

This dimension of empowerment relates to the participation of teachers in critical decisions that directly affect their work. In many cases, this means participation in and responsibility for decisions involving budgets, teacher selection, scheduling, curriculum, and other programmatic areas. Providing teachers with a significant role in school decision making is a key element in empowerment (Short & Greer, 1989, cited in Short, 1992).

#### **(ii) Professional Growth**

As a dimension of empowerment, professional growth refers to teachers' perceptions that the school in which they work provide them with opportunities to grow and develop professionally, to learn continuously, and to expand one's own skills through the work life of the school. Glenn (1990) suggests that the real power behind the concept of empowerment is authority derived from command of the subject matter and essential teaching skills. Firestone (1993) suggests that efforts to professionalize teachers (empower) builds teacher commitment and improves instruction through increased teacher skill (cited in Short, 1992).

#### **(iii) Status**

Status as a dimension of empowerment refers to teacher perceptions that they have professional respect and admiration from colleagues. In addition, teachers believe that they have colleague support. Teachers also feel that others respect their knowledge and expertise. Therefore, it is important for the status of the profession to be improved and this can be done through empowering teachers to make decision affecting their careers (Whitaker & Moses, 1990, cited in Squire-Kelly, 2012).

#### **(iv) Self-Efficacy**

Self- Efficacy refers to teachers’ perceptions that they have the skills and ability to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, and can affect changes in student learning. Self-efficacy develops as an individual acquires self-knowledge and the belief that they are personally competent and has mastered skills necessary to affect desired outcomes. Rosenholtz (1985, cited in Short, 1992) states that teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and professional certainty relates to teachers’ subsequent decisions to remain in teaching (Rosenholtz, 1985, cited in Short, 1992).

#### **(v) Autonomy**

Autonomy, as a dimension of empowerment, refers to teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life. This may be control over scheduling, curriculum, textbooks, and instructional planning. The hallmark of autonomy is the sense of freedom to make certain decisions. Therefore, autonomy provides for growth and renewal which is essential to success. White (1992, cited in Squire-Kelly, 2012) also finds that autonomy creates a greater interest in teaching, increases collaboration, and increases self-esteem.

#### **(vi) Impact**

The final dimension of teacher empowerment is impact. Impact refers to teachers’ perceptions that they have an effect and influence on school life. Ashton and Webb (1986, cited in Short, 1992) posit that teachers’ self-esteem grows when they feel that they are doing

something worthwhile, that they are doing it in a competent manner, and that they are recognized for their accomplishments.

Allen and Meyer (1996) used the tri-dimensional model to conceptualize organizational commitment in three dimensions namely, affective, continuance and normative commitments. These dimensions are described in details as follows:

**(i) Affective commitment dimension**

The first dimension of organizational commitment in the model is affective commitment, which represents the individual's emotional attachment to the organization. According to Allen and Meyer (1996) affective commitment is "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization". The organizational commitment model of Allen and Meyer (1996) indicates that affective commitment is influenced by factors such as job challenge, role clarity, goal clarity, and goal difficulty, receptiveness by management, peer cohesion, equity, personal importance, feedback, participation, and dependability.

**(ii) Continuance commitment dimension**

The second dimension of the tri-dimensional model of organizational commitment is continuance commitment. Allen and Meyer (1996) define continuance commitment as "awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization". The strength of continuance commitment, which implies the need to stay, is determined by the perceived costs of leaving the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1984). Best (1994, cited in Allen and Meyer, 1996) indicates that "continuance organizational commitment will therefore be the strongest when availability of alternatives are few and the number of investments are high".

**(iii) Normative commitment dimension**

The last dimension of the organizational commitment model is normative commitment. Allen and Meyer (1996) define normative commitment as "a feeling of obligation to continue employment". Internalized normative beliefs of duty and obligation make individuals obliged to sustain membership in the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990). According to Allen and Meyer (1991) "employees with normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization". The strength of normative organizational commitment is influenced by accepted rules about reciprocal obligation between the organization and its members.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive research and questionnaire survey method was used in this study. Primary, junior and senior teachers (N=285) at Selected Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township participated in this study.

### **Instrumentation**

Two questionnaires for the teachers were used in this study. Questionnaire 1 was developed based on School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) by Short and Rinehart (1992), and Questionnaire 2 was developed based on Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) by Mowday *et al.* (1979) to obtain necessary information for the study. The Questionnaire 1 consists of 38-items and contains six dimensions of teacher empowerment level. Questionnaire 2 consists of information about organizational commitment. It is composed of 15 survey questions. Additionally, five items are reverse scored.

Moreover, it can be interpreted as low level for the mean scores between 1.00 and 2.49, moderate level for the mean scores between 2.50 and 3.49, and high level for the mean scores between 3.50 and 5.00 (Adaptation from Wierma, 2000, cited in Heong, 2010).

### Internal Reliability

To test the reliability of questionnaire items, pilot study was conducted. To have adequate reliability, all dimensions from the pilot study were judged using Cronbach's alpha. From the result of this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.747 ( $\alpha = 0.747$ ) for teacher empowerment and 0.761 ( $\alpha = 0.761$ ) for organizational commitment respectively.

### Research Findings

The first section was the result of School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) related to teachers' perceptions of empowerment. The second section was the result of Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) related to teachers' commitment to their schools. The third section was an analysis of the relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment at selected high schools and branch high schools.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Empowerment in Selected Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township**

Schools	Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment						Overall
	DM	PG	Status	Self-Efficacy	Autonomy	Impact	
H 1	3.88	3.96	4.36	<b>4.55</b>	4.40	4.25	4.23
H 2	3.64	3.67	4.02	<b>4.07</b>	4.06	3.97	3.91
H 3	3.50	4.09	4.13	<b>4.28</b>	4.16	4.07	4.04
H 4	3.95	4.06	4.25	<b>4.28</b>	4.18	4.16	4.15
BH 1	3.76	3.93	4.09	4.16	<b>4.28</b>	3.89	4.02
BH 2	4.12	3.91	<b>4.73</b>	4.68	<b>4.73</b>	4.46	4.44
BH 3	3.94	4.34	<b>4.45</b>	4.32	4.12	4.11	4.21
BH 4	3.50	3.82	4.08	<b>4.18</b>	4.16	3.97	3.95
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>3.71</b>	3.95	4.19	<b>4.27</b>	4.21	4.08	4.07
<b>Level</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>

1.00 – 2.49 = Low level      2.5 – 3.49 = Moderate level      3.5 – 5.00 = High level

**Note:** DM = Decision Making

PG = Professional Growth

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for teacher empowerment in selected Basic Education High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township. According to Table 1, it was found that teachers from School H 1, H 2, H 3, H4 and BH 4 perceived that the subscale of "Self-Efficacy" was the highest in their empowerment, teachers from School BH 3 perceived that "Status" was the highest in their empowerment, teachers from School BH 2 perceived that two subscales of "Status" and "Autonomy" were the highest in their empowerment and teachers from School BH 1 perceived that the subscale of "Autonomy" was the highest in their empowerment. Similarly, teachers from all selected high schools and branch high schools perceived that "Self-Efficacy" was the highest in their empowerment and "Decision Making" was the lowest in their empowerment. However, teachers from selected high schools and branch high schools perceived that they had high level of teacher empowerment.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Organizational Commitment in Selected High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township**

Schools	Organizational Commitment		Level
	Mean	SD	
<b>H 1</b> (n1= 23)	4.12	0.59	High
<b>H 2</b> (n2= 62)	3.95	0.42	High
<b>H 3</b> (n3= 78)	4.09	0.46	High
<b>H 4</b> (n4= 37)	3.96	0.38	High
<b>BH 1</b> (n5= 16)	3.93	0.30	High
<b>BH 2</b> (n6= 20)	3.83	0.41	High
<b>BH 3</b> (n7= 19)	<b>4.35</b>	0.31	High
<b>BH 4</b> (n8= 30)	3.75	0.55	High
<b>All Schools</b> <b>(N= 285)</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>High</b>

1.00 – 2.49 = Low level      2.5 – 3.49 = Moderate level      3.5 – 5.00 = High level

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for organizational commitment in Selected High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township. When the perceptions of teachers on their organizational commitment were examined in all schools, mean values of organizational commitment in all schools were high levels. In other words, teachers from all High Schools and Branch High Schools perceived that they had high level of organizational commitment.

**Table 3. Comparison of Mean and Standard Deviations for Teacher Empowerment by Teachers' Positions**

Positions	N	Teacher Empowerment	
		Mean	SD
<b>STs</b>	74	3.99	0.45
<b>JTs</b>	173	4.10	0.41
<b>PTs</b>	38	4.05	0.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>0.43</b>

According to Table 3, junior teachers perceived that they had the highest of teacher empowerment ( $\bar{X}$ =4.10). Thus, senior teachers perceived that they had the lowest of teacher empowerment ( $\bar{X}$ =3.99) based on the responses of the teachers at different levels.

**Table 4. Comparison of Mean and Standard Deviations for Teacher Organizational Commitment by Teachers' Positions**

Positions	N	Organizational Commitment	
		Mean	SD
STs	74	3.88	0.50
JTs	173	4.08	0.44
PTs	38	3.88	0.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.46</b>

According to Table 4, organizational commitment of junior teachers was the highest ( $\bar{X}$ =4.08) among all teachers. Thus, senior and primary teachers possessed the lowest of organizational commitment ( $\bar{X}$ =3.88) among all teachers based on the responses of the teachers at different levels.

**Table 5. One-Way ANOVA Results Showing Mean Values of Organizational Commitment by Teachers' Positions**

Variable	Group	N	Mean (SD)	F	P
Organizational Commitment	STs	74	3.88 (0.50)	6.516	.002**
	JTs	173	4.08 (0.44)		
	PTs	38	3.88 (0.41)		

Table 5 presents organizational commitment by teachers' positions in selected high schools and branch high schools. As shown in Table 5, there was statistically significant difference among teachers' positions from selected high schools and branch high schools.

**Table 6. Comparison of Mean and Standard Deviations for Teacher Empowerment by Teachers' Service at the current school**

Teachers' Service	N	Teacher Empowerment	
		Mean	SD
Below 5	163	4.06	0.43
6-10	45	4.08	0.49
11-15	25	<b>3.96</b>	0.37
16-20	23	4.14	0.38
21-25	12	<b>4.18</b>	0.45
Above 26	17	4.12	0.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>0.43</b>

Table 6 shows that teachers who had 21-25 years of teaching service at the current school had the highest of teacher empowerment ( $\bar{X}$ =4.18). And, teachers who had 11-15 years of teaching service at the current school perceived that they had the lowest of teacher empowerment ( $\bar{X}$ =3.96).

**Table 7. Comparison of Mean and Standard Deviations for Teacher Organizational Commitment by Teachers' Service at the current school**

Teachers' Service	N	Organizational Commitment	
		Mean	SD
Below 5	163	<b>3.93</b>	0.48
5-10	45	4.03	0.52
11-15	25	4.06	0.41
16-20	23	4.15	0.35
21-25	12	<b>4.19</b>	0.37
Above 26	17	4.13	0.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.46</b>

According to Table 7, teachers who had 21-25 years of teaching service at the current school had the highest of organizational commitment ( $\bar{X}=4.19$ ). And, teachers who had below 5 years of teaching service at the current school possessed the lowest of organizational commitment ( $\bar{X}=3.93$ ).

**Table 8. Correlations between Teacher Empowerment and Organizational Commitment in All Selected High Schools and Branch High Schools in Myittha Township**

Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment	Organizational Commitment
Decision Making	.321**
Professional Growth	.594**
Status	.556**
Self-Efficacy	.603**
Autonomy	.420**
Impact	.533**
<b>Teacher Empowerment</b>	<b>.651**</b>

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 8 shows that there was a significant positive correlation between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment. In this case, the correlation effect size ( $r=.651$ ,  $p=0.01$ ) means that the correlation is large or larger than typical according to Cohen's guide line (1988).

### Discussion and Conclusion

Analysis of quantitative data collected from the study attempted to answer the three research questions. Research question one evaluated the level of teacher empowerment in high schools and branch high schools perceived by teachers. When examining the teachers' empowerment perceived by teachers from 4 selected high schools and 4 branch high schools, the results showed that teachers from School H 1, H 2, H 3, H 4 and BH 4 perceived that the subscale of "Self-efficacy" was the highest in their empowerment, teachers from School BH

1 perceived that the subscale of “Autonomy” was the highest in their empowerment, teachers from School BH 2 perceived that two subscales of “Status” and “Autonomy” were the highest in their empowerment and teachers from School BH 3 perceived that the subscale of “Status” was the highest in their empowerment.

In other words, teachers from selected high schools and branch high schools got the opportunity from their schools to grow and develop their teaching profession, and to expand their skills during working in school. So, they had confidence in their ability, knowledge and skills in modifying student learning. They also felt that they have an influence on the teaching and learning process in their schools. They were also given autonomy to participate with, learn from and share with others over various aspects of their working life. They also perceived that they have professional respect and admiration from their students, colleagues and parents.

Again, research question two examined the level of teachers’ organizational commitment in selected high schools and branch high schools perceived by teachers. When investigating the teachers’ perceptions of organizational, it was found that teachers from School BH 3 had the highest level and teachers from School BH 4 had the lowest level of organizational commitment. However, teachers from all selected high schools and branch high schools perceived that they had high level of organizational commitment.

In other words, teachers perceived that their personal employment relationships are congruent to the goals and values of their school. Also, teachers with high levels of commitment work harder, are emotionally attached to their schools, and make more effort to carry out the goals of teaching. Therefore, teachers with high level of commitment are more loyal to schools where they work; similarly, teachers with high level of commitment can contribute students’ achievement affectively. Thus, teachers’ commitment to the organization-the-school- can produce school effectiveness.

Research question three investigated the relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment. Based on the research findings, five subscales of teacher empowerment were positively and moderately correlated with organizational commitment and “Decision Making” ( $r = 0.321$ ) was a low correlation with organizational commitment. According to these findings, if teachers are given empowerment on school matters, they will have high level of commitment to the school.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Like this research, further study is needed to be expended the relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational commitment in other Townships or Regions in Myanmar. Then, a large sample size should be considered so that many results or reasons could produce to have a high level of teacher empowerment and organizational commitment. Further study should take into account the influence of teacher empowerment on professional commitment or organizational citizenship behavior in schools.

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