

1 **Managerial Cognitive Capability, Emotional Intelligence, Cognitive Bias Awareness,**
2 **Analytical Reasoning Competence, and Experience Depth as Predictors of Strategic**
3 **Decision-Making Effectiveness in the Ghana Education Service.**

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6
7 **Abstract**

8 Strategic decision-making in the Ghana Education Service requires more than formal
9 authority. It depends on how leaders interpret evidence, regulate emotion, recognise bias,
10 reason analytically, and draw on experience in complex school and administrative settings.
11 This article presents a structured conceptual review of recent peer-reviewed and policy
12 literature published between 2021 and 2026 to examine how managerial cognitive capability,
13 emotional intelligence, cognitive bias awareness, analytical reasoning competence, and
14 experience depth shape strategic decision-making effectiveness in the Ghana Education
15 Service. The review shows that stronger decisions emerge when leaders combine evidence
16 processing with emotional regulation, reflective judgement, and context-sensitive reasoning.
17 It also shows that leadership quality weakens when cognitive overload, unexamined bias,
18 weak data use, and routine-based experience replace disciplined judgement. The article
19 argues that these five capabilities are complementary rather than interchangeable and
20 proposes a Ghana Education Service capability model that links them to decision quality,
21 implementation credibility, and institutional trust. The paper concludes that promotion
22 systems, leadership preparation, and continuing professional development in the Ghana
23 Education Service should move beyond procedural compliance and deliberately cultivate
24 decision capability.

25
26 **Keywords:** managerial cognitive capability, emotional intelligence, cognitive bias
27 awareness, analytical reasoning competence, strategic decision-making effectiveness, Ghana
28 Education Service

29
30 **1. Introduction**

31 Educational leadership in Ghana increasingly takes place under conditions of pressure,
32 uneven resourcing, public accountability, and considerable variation across districts and
33 schools. In such an environment, decision quality matters as much as decision speed. Recent
34 scholarship shows that effective school and system leadership is strengthened when decisions
35 are informed, participatory, evidence-aware, and relationally competent rather than driven by
36 hierarchy alone (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023; Dare et al., 2025; Yahuza
37 et al., 2025). In the Ghana Education Service, these issues are especially important because
38 leaders are expected to make decisions on staffing, deployment, supervision, school
39 improvement, and teacher support in settings that are often resource-constrained and
40 administratively demanding.

41 This article addresses a straightforward but important question: how do managerial cognitive
42 capability, emotional intelligence, cognitive bias awareness, analytical reasoning competence,
43 and experience depth interact to shape strategic decision-making effectiveness in the Ghana
44 Education Service? This question matters because educational decisions are rarely made in

45 neutral conditions. They are made in social, organisational, and emotionally charged contexts
46 in which leaders must process information, interpret competing interests, communicate
47 difficult choices, and sustain trust while acting under uncertainty. Recent research suggests
48 that the most effective leadership in such settings is best understood not as a single trait, but
49 as a combination of interrelated capabilities that influence how leaders interpret evidence,
50 regulate emotion, recognise bias, and respond to complexity (Coronado-Maldonado &
51 Benítez-Márquez, 2023; Lee et al., 2024; Fasolo et al., 2025; Hansen, 2025).

52 The central argument of this article is that strategic decision-making effectiveness in the
53 Ghana Education Service is best explained through an integrated capability perspective.
54 Managerial cognitive capability helps leaders process complexity and prioritise action.
55 Emotional intelligence improves conflict management, relationship quality, and decision
56 acceptance. Cognitive bias awareness reduces preventable errors in judgement. Analytical
57 reasoning competence strengthens evidence use and data interpretation. Experience depth
58 contributes contextual judgement, but only when it is reflective rather than habitual. These
59 capabilities are therefore treated in this paper as complementary and mutually reinforcing
60 contributors to better strategic judgement.

61 The article makes three contributions. First, it reorganises a scattered body of literature into a
62 coherent capability-based explanation of decision-making effectiveness in the Ghana
63 Education Service. Second, it moves beyond descriptive discussion by synthesising how the
64 five focal capabilities interact rather than treating them as isolated attributes. Third, it
65 proposes a Ghana Education Service-focused capability model that links leadership capability
66 to decision quality, implementation credibility, and system trust. The rest of the paper
67 proceeds in six sections. Section 2 explains the Ghana Education Service decision context.
68 Section 3 reviews the literature and analytical frame. Section 4 outlines the review
69 methodology. Section 5 presents the synthesised findings. Section 6 discusses the
70 implications of the synthesis and develops the integrated model. Section 7 concludes the
71 article.

72

73 **2. Background: The Ghana Education Service Decision Context**

74 The Ghana Education Service is mandated to implement pre-tertiary education policy,
75 manage staffing and posting, uphold professionalism, and improve service delivery across the
76 school system. The 2025 Right to Information Manual also indicates continuing efforts to
77 clarify institutional functions and improve internal administrative coherence within the
78 Service. These features make leadership judgement especially important because policy
79 execution in the Ghana Education Service depends not only on formal directives but also on
80 how leaders interpret, prioritise, and implement those directives across different institutional
81 levels (Ghana Education Service, 2025). Recent government reforms also signal a shift
82 towards more standardised personnel processes. For example, the 2022 Budget Statement
83 reported the introduction of aptitude testing in promotion processes, with 46,273 candidates
84 sitting the test and 29,465 passing, indicating growing reliance on structured screening in
85 leadership advancement (Ministry of Finance, Ghana, 2022).

86 Even so, the quality of decisions in the Ghana Education Service cannot be understood
87 through formal procedures alone. Ghana-based research shows that school and district leaders
88 continue to work under conditions marked by scarce resources, stakeholder pressures,
89 implementation gaps, and uneven access to professional development. Studies of headteacher
90 leadership in Ghana show that decision-making at school level is deeply shaped by
91 communication demands, community expectations, administrative constraints, and the need

92 to balance accountability with practical judgement (Dare et al., 2025; Yahuza et al., 2025).
93 UNESCO's Ghana spotlight brief similarly emphasises the importance of leadership
94 development, local accountability, coordination, and the communication of clear performance
95 expectations as key levers for improving educational outcomes (UNESCO, 2023).

96 These realities make the Ghana Education Service an appropriate context for a capability-
97 based discussion of strategic decision-making. Formal authority remains necessary, but it is
98 not sufficient. Leaders must also be able to interpret policy in context, manage relationships,
99 evaluate evidence, check bias, and adapt past experience to new circumstances. The need is
100 therefore not only for more procedures, but for better judgement within procedure. This is the
101 gap the present review addresses.

102

103 **3. Literature Review and Analytical Frame**

104 3.1 Analytical frame

105 This article adopts an integrated capability perspective. The core idea is that decision-making
106 effectiveness in complex public organisations is not produced by one attribute alone, but by
107 the interaction of several capabilities that together shape judgement quality. Recent guidance
108 on conceptual and review articles stresses that literature reviews should do more than
109 summarise prior studies. They should explain relationships among concepts, show where the
110 literature converges or diverges, and build a more coherent explanatory frame from dispersed
111 evidence (Schreiber & Cramer, 2024; Snyder, 2024). In this article, the integrated capability
112 perspective serves that purpose.

113 The five focal capabilities were selected because recent literature repeatedly connects them to
114 decision quality in educational, organisational, and public leadership settings. Managerial
115 cognitive capability concerns information processing, complexity handling, and judgement
116 under uncertainty. Emotional intelligence concerns emotional regulation, empathy, and the
117 relational conditions that influence decision acceptance. Cognitive bias awareness concerns
118 the recognition and mitigation of systematic judgement errors. Analytical reasoning
119 competence concerns evidence use, data interpretation, and structured reasoning. Experience
120 depth concerns the contextual learning that develops over time through reflective leadership
121 practice. The argument of this article is that these five capabilities should be treated as
122 mutually reinforcing rather than as separate explanatory variables.

123 3.2 Managerial cognitive capability

124 Managerial cognitive capability refers to a leader's capacity to interpret complex information,
125 weigh competing priorities, and select a defensible course of action under uncertainty. In
126 school and system leadership, this capability matters because leaders routinely confront
127 multi-variable problems involving staffing, student performance, school improvement,
128 stakeholder pressure, and policy implementation. Recent work on principals' data literacy
129 shows that educational decision-making increasingly depends on leaders' ability to interpret
130 evidence and translate that evidence into coherent action (Lee et al., 2024). Related work on
131 data systems for teacher data use similarly indicates that leaders require stronger cognitive
132 and interpretive competence if data are to inform practice rather than remain procedural
133 (Alonzo et al., 2024).

134 This capability is particularly relevant to the Ghana Education Service because leaders
135 operate across interconnected administrative and school-level demands. Recent Ghanaian
136 leadership research suggests that headteachers often work in contexts where organisational
137 expectations are high but support systems are uneven, making cognitive clarity and

138 judgement especially important (Dare et al., 2025; Yahuza et al., 2025). Managerial cognitive
139 capability therefore forms the anchor of the present framework. Without it, leaders may
140 struggle to integrate information, prioritise action, or make consistent decisions across
141 complex settings.

142 3.3 Emotional intelligence

143 Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognise, regulate, and use emotions
144 effectively in oneself and in others. In leadership settings, this capability matters because
145 difficult decisions are not implemented in emotionally neutral environments. Decisions affect
146 morale, trust, conflict, and perceptions of fairness. A recent hybrid review of emotional
147 intelligence, leadership, and work teams concluded that emotional intelligence contributes to
148 stronger leadership effectiveness, teamwork, and organisational outcomes, especially in
149 contexts where leaders must manage people as well as tasks (Coronado-Maldonado &
150 Benítez-Márquez, 2023). Ghana-based evidence also suggests that relational leadership and
151 wellbeing are significantly connected to teacher professional commitment, which reinforces
152 the importance of emotionally intelligent leadership behaviour in educational settings
153 (Hansen, 2025).

154 For the Ghana Education Service, emotional intelligence matters because strategic decisions
155 often require leaders to communicate difficult choices, manage resistance, and maintain
156 commitment in constrained environments. Emotional intelligence does not replace analysis.
157 Rather, it improves the social quality and practical acceptability of decisions. Leaders who
158 can regulate their own responses, read stakeholder emotions, and sustain constructive
159 relationships are better positioned to implement decisions effectively and maintain
160 institutional trust.

161 3.4 Cognitive bias awareness

162 Cognitive bias awareness refers to the capacity to recognise and reduce systematic judgement
163 errors such as overconfidence, confirmation bias, anchoring, and habitual inference. This
164 capability is increasingly important in leadership research because complex decisions are
165 often distorted not only by lack of information, but by flawed interpretation of available
166 information. Recent work shows that cognitive biases interrupt evidence-based decision-
167 making and can redirect judgement away from balanced evaluation towards shortcuts and
168 unexamined assumptions (Eldredge & Hill, 2025). Recent integrative review work in
169 management also argues that bias mitigation should be treated as a central organisational
170 issue because bias affects both decision quality and institutional performance (Fasolo et al.,
171 2025).

172 This issue is especially relevant in the Ghana Education Service where promotion,
173 deployment, supervision, and disciplinary decisions may be influenced by familiarity, routine
174 expectation, or incomplete evidence. Cognitive bias awareness is therefore not an optional
175 leadership extra. It is part of disciplined judgement. Leaders who can question first
176 impressions, test assumptions, and resist automatic interpretations are more likely to produce
177 fairer and more defensible decisions.

178 3.5 Analytical reasoning competence

179 Analytical reasoning competence refers to the ability to interpret evidence, compare
180 alternatives, evaluate probable consequences, and use data in a structured way. Educational
181 leadership literature increasingly identifies this competence as fundamental rather than
182 technical. A systematic review of principals' data literacy shows that leaders need stronger
183 capacities in data interpretation, evidence use, and reasoning if school decisions are to
184 become genuinely data informed (Lee et al., 2024). Recent evidence also shows that data-

185 informed decision-making by school leaders is shaped by both school context and the quality
186 of leaders' evidence use, suggesting that data competence matters for school improvement
187 and not only for compliance (Lee et al., 2025). Work on ICT-based data systems further
188 shows that data use is strengthened when leaders can interpret information in ways that are
189 pedagogically meaningful rather than mechanically procedural (Alonzo et al., 2024).

190 For the Ghana Education Service, analytical reasoning competence is increasingly relevant
191 because administrative reform is moving towards more formalised and evidence-based
192 procedures. If leaders lack the ability to interpret staffing data, performance indicators, or
193 school-level evidence, formal administrative reforms may not translate into better judgement.
194 Analytical reasoning therefore strengthens decision quality by helping leaders move beyond
195 impressionistic decision-making towards more transparent and defensible choices.

196 3.6 Experience depth

197 Experience depth refers to the practical wisdom that emerges from accumulated exposure to
198 complex situations, provided that such experience is reflective rather than merely repetitive.
199 Experience matters because it helps leaders recognise patterns, anticipate implementation
200 barriers, and adapt to context. Yet recent literature suggests that experience is not
201 automatically beneficial. It contributes positively when leaders learn from prior situations and
202 remain open to adjustment rather than relying on habit alone (Dare et al., 2025; Hansen,
203 2025). Ghanaian work on headteacher leadership challenges further shows that effective
204 leadership in context depends on how leaders interpret and respond to recurring but changing
205 constraints rather than simply on years served in position (Yahuza et al., 2025).

206 In the Ghana Education Service, experience depth is valuable because leaders often face
207 recurring challenges in resourcing, stakeholder coordination, staffing, and implementation.
208 However, experience becomes truly useful only when joined to reflection, openness, and
209 willingness to revise practice. Experience without reflection can stabilise routine. Experience
210 with reflection can improve judgement.

211 3.7 Synthesis and review gap

212 Taken together, the literature suggests that strategic decision-making effectiveness in
213 educational leadership is shaped by a capability bundle rather than a single competency. The
214 strongest decisions emerge when leaders can process complexity, regulate emotion, detect
215 bias, interpret evidence, and learn from experience in an integrated manner. Yet the literature
216 also remains fragmented. Emotional intelligence studies often emphasise relational quality
217 but pay less attention to evidence use. Data literacy studies often stress evidence use but give
218 less attention to emotional regulation and bias. Ghana-specific studies provide valuable
219 contextual insight, but they do not yet bring these capabilities together into a single
220 explanation of decision quality in the Ghana Education Service (Dare et al., 2025; Yahuza et
221 al., 2025).

222 This gap justifies the present review. The article therefore synthesises the five capabilities
223 into a single decision-quality framework for the Ghana Education Service. The aim is not
224 merely to describe each construct, but to show how they intersect in real leadership situations
225 and why they should be developed together.

226

227 4. Methodology

228 This article uses a structured conceptual review design. The purpose is not to present primary
229 field data from the Ghana Education Service, but to synthesise recent peer-reviewed and
230 policy literature into a coherent explanation of strategic decision-making effectiveness in the

231 Ghana Education Service. Review-based studies are especially valuable when the literature is
232 dispersed across different fields and when a stronger conceptual integration is needed to
233 clarify how key constructs relate to one another (Schreiber & Cramer, 2024; Snyder, 2024).
234 That is the situation in the present study, where relevant evidence is spread across educational
235 leadership, organisational behaviour, decision science, and Ghana-specific policy and school
236 leadership literature.

237 The review focused primarily on literature published between 2021 and 2026. Searches were
238 conducted across Google Scholar, ERIC, and Web of Science using combinations of the
239 following terms: educational leadership decision-making, school leadership emotional
240 intelligence, cognitive bias in management, principals' data literacy, evidence-based school
241 leadership, Ghana Education Service leadership, headteacher leadership Ghana, and
242 participatory school decision-making Ghana. Official Ghana Education Service, Ministry of
243 Finance, and UNESCO documents were included only where they were necessary to
244 establish the institutional and reform context of the Ghana Education Service. Peer-reviewed
245 studies were prioritised for the substantive analysis.

246 Sources were retained using four criteria. First, the source had to address at least one of the
247 five focal capabilities or a closely related decision-quality construct. Second, it had to
248 contribute conceptually, empirically, or contextually to understanding leadership judgement
249 in education or public administration. Third, Ghana-specific studies were prioritised where
250 available in order to ground the argument in the national context. Fourth, the final source set
251 had to support synthesis across the five focal capabilities rather than only isolated description
252 of a single variable. The analysis proceeded through thematic synthesis. The selected studies
253 were read comparatively and organised around the five capabilities, the institutional context
254 of Ghana Education Service decision-making, and the interaction effects among capabilities.
255 This method made it possible to move beyond a descriptive review towards an integrated
256 explanatory model of decision-making effectiveness.

257

258 **5. Synthesised Findings**

259 5.1 Managerial cognitive capability is the anchor capability

260 Across the reviewed literature, managerial cognitive capability appears as the anchor
261 capability because it supports the interpretation of multiple variables, prioritisation under
262 pressure, and coherent action in uncertain settings. Leaders who cannot process competing
263 demands effectively are less likely to make defensible decisions on staffing, school
264 improvement, monitoring, or policy implementation. Evidence from data literacy and school
265 leadership studies shows that stronger educational decisions depend on leaders' capacity to
266 interpret evidence, connect it to operational priorities, and respond coherently rather than
267 reactively (Lee et al., 2024; Alonzo et al., 2024). In the Ghana Education Service, where
268 leaders routinely work across administrative and school-level pressures, this capability
269 underpins judgement quality.

270 5.2 Emotional intelligence improves the social quality of decisions

271 The reviewed literature does not suggest that emotion replaces analysis. Rather, it shows that
272 emotional intelligence improves how decisions are communicated, received, and sustained.
273 Leaders with stronger emotional intelligence are better able to regulate stress, manage
274 conflict, read stakeholder reactions, and maintain commitment when difficult choices have to
275 be implemented. This matters because the quality of a decision is not determined only at the
276 moment of selection. It is also shaped by whether the decision can be communicated credibly
277 and enacted without avoidable breakdown in trust. Emotional intelligence therefore improves

278 the social quality and practical workability of strategic decisions (Coronado-Maldonado &
279 Benítez-Márquez, 2023; Hansen, 2025).

280 5.3 Cognitive bias awareness reduces preventable judgement error

281 A strong theme in the reviewed literature is that leaders frequently misread evidence when
282 they rely too heavily on shortcuts, assumptions, or familiar routines. Bias awareness therefore
283 functions as a corrective capability. It encourages leaders to question assumptions, revisit first
284 impressions, and test whether the evidence truly supports the preferred course of action. In
285 settings such as the Ghana Education Service, this matters for promotion, deployment,
286 supervision, and performance review, where decisions may be shaped by familiarity, routine
287 expectation, or incomplete information. The evidence suggests that bias awareness should be
288 developed as part of leadership preparation rather than treated as a secondary ethical concern
289 (Eldredge & Hill, 2025; Fasolo et al., 2025).

290 5.4 Analytical reasoning competence turns information into judgement

291 Another major finding is that analytical reasoning competence is no longer a technical extra.
292 It is becoming a basic leadership requirement in evidence-aware education systems. Leaders
293 are now increasingly expected to interpret performance trends, staffing patterns, school-level
294 indicators, and administrative data. Where leaders lack this competence, formal moves
295 towards evidence-based administration may remain superficial. Recent work on school
296 leaders' data-informed decision-making shows that evidence use is most effective when
297 leaders can interpret data in context rather than simply comply with reporting demands (Lee
298 et al., 2025). In the Ghana Education Service, this capability is especially relevant because
299 standardised processes such as aptitude-based promotion and administrative streamlining
300 imply a stronger evidence culture, but such a culture will only improve judgement if leaders
301 can reason analytically with the information available.

302 5.5 Experience depth matters when it is reflective

303 The literature consistently treats experience as important, but not automatically beneficial.
304 Experience contributes to decision quality when it deepens contextual understanding, helps
305 leaders anticipate implementation barriers, and sharpens practical judgement. However,
306 experience can also reinforce routine if it is not reflective. The most useful experience is
307 therefore reflective experience. This matters in the Ghana Education Service because many
308 leadership problems are recurrent but not identical. Leaders must draw on prior knowledge
309 while remaining open to changing conditions, new evidence, and stakeholder feedback. The
310 reviewed literature suggests that experienced leaders are most effective when they combine
311 practical familiarity with openness, cooperation, and continued learning (Dare et al., 2025;
312 Hansen, 2025; Yahuza et al., 2025).

313 5.6 Integrated pattern across the five capabilities

314 The synthesis shows that the five capabilities do not work as substitutes. They work as
315 complements. A leader may be experienced but analytically weak, emotionally warm but
316 cognitively disorganised, or evidence-oriented but blind to bias. Strategic decision-making
317 effectiveness in the Ghana Education Service is therefore best understood as the result of
318 capability interaction. Managerial cognitive capability provides structure to judgement.
319 Emotional intelligence improves relational acceptance. Cognitive bias awareness protects
320 against avoidable error. Analytical reasoning converts information into defensible choice.
321 Experience depth adds contextual wisdom when it is reflective. This integrated pattern is the
322 key finding of the review.

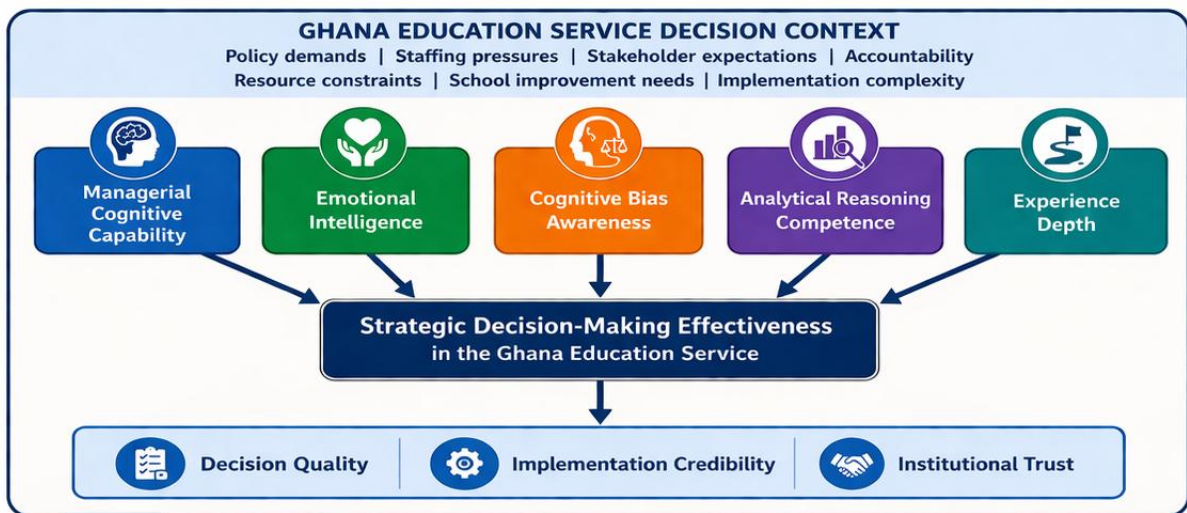
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324 **6. Discussion and Integrated Model**

325 The central implication of the review is that strategic decision-making effectiveness in the
326 Ghana Education Service should not be treated as a personality trait or a simple
327 administrative competence. It is better understood as a system of interacting leadership
328 capabilities. This interpretation matters because many reform discussions in education still
329 focus on rules, structures, and promotion procedures while paying less attention to the
330 capability profile required for good judgement after leaders are appointed. The evidence
331 reviewed here suggests that appointment, promotion, and leadership support systems in the
332 Ghana Education Service need to move from a procedural view of leadership readiness to a
333 capability view of leadership readiness.

334 The review also suggests that managerial cognitive capability and analytical reasoning
335 competence should be treated as foundational for judgement quality, while emotional
336 intelligence, bias awareness, and reflective experience improve the legitimacy, fairness, and
337 practical success of decisions. This does not imply a rigid hierarchy among the five
338 capabilities. Rather, it indicates that strong decisions usually require both cognitive rigour
339 and relational discipline. Leaders who interpret evidence well but mismanage people may
340 weaken implementation. Leaders who communicate warmly but reason weakly may produce
341 decisions that are accepted in the short term but ineffective in substance. The most useful
342 leadership profile in the Ghana Education Service is therefore a balanced one.

343 Figure 1 presents the integrated capability model proposed in this article. The model positions
344 strategic decision-making effectiveness in the Ghana Education Service as the outcome of
345 interaction among managerial cognitive capability, emotional intelligence, cognitive bias
346 awareness, analytical reasoning competence, and reflective experience, all operating within
347 institutional and stakeholder pressures.



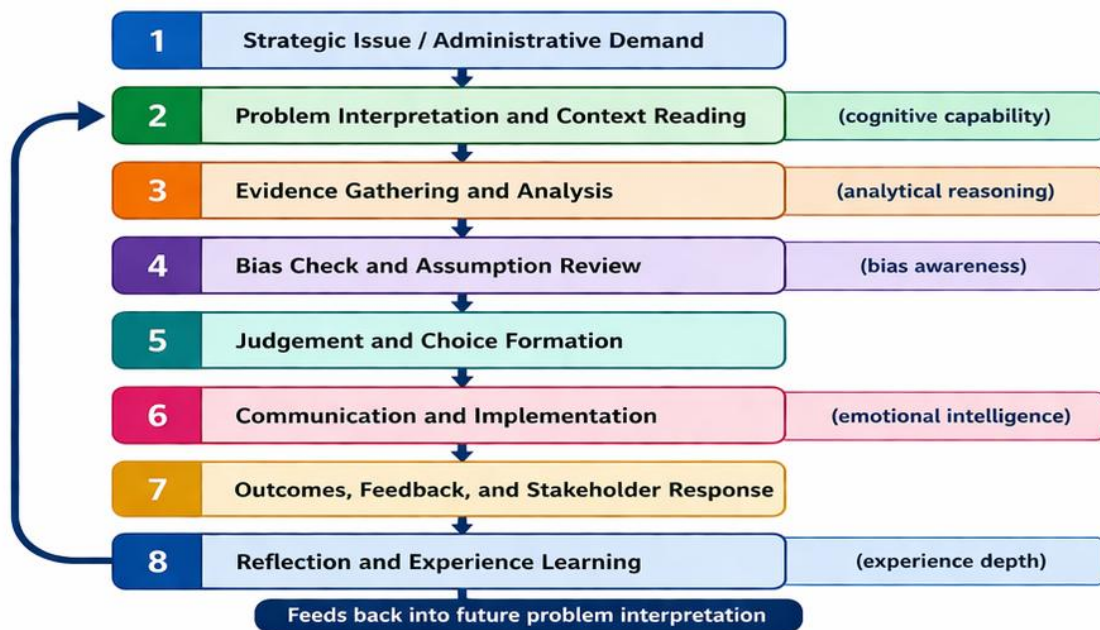
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349 **Figure 1.** *Integrated capability model of strategic decision-making effectiveness in the Ghana*
350 *Education Service.*

351 The model is cyclical rather than linear. Decision quality is shaped by how leaders process
352 complexity, regulate emotion, test assumptions, interpret evidence, and learn from prior
353 action. Experience therefore appears in the model not merely as an input, but also as a
354 feedback mechanism that influences future judgement. This cyclical structure is especially
355 relevant to the Ghana Education Service because leaders repeatedly confront related problems
356 in changing local circumstances, making reflective learning a central part of strategic
357 capability.

358 The review also has a practical implication for policy. The Ghana Education Service has
 359 already signalled movement towards more standardised personnel processes, including
 360 aptitude testing and clearer administrative structures. These are important steps, but the
 361 review suggests that they will yield stronger results only when combined with leadership
 362 development that builds judgement quality after promotion as well as screening before
 363 promotion. In other words, the system should not only select for advancement. It should also
 364 build the decision capabilities that advancement requires. That means leadership development
 365 should include evidence interpretation, bias checking, emotionally intelligent communication,
 366 and structured reflective practice.

367 A second practical implication concerns school-level leadership. Ghanaian studies show that
 368 headteachers work within complex stakeholder environments in which communication,
 369 participation, and contextual responsiveness remain central to effective leadership (Dare et
 370 al., 2025; Yahuza et al., 2025). This suggests that centralised authority in the Ghana
 371 Education Service should be balanced with stronger support for district and school-level
 372 judgement. Decision quality improves when leaders are equipped not only to comply with
 373 policy but also to interpret policy intelligently in local conditions.

374 Figure 2 translates the review synthesis into a practical decision process model for
 375 educational leaders in the Ghana Education Service. It shows how cognitive processing,
 376 emotional regulation, bias checking, analytical reasoning, and reflective experience interact
 377 across the stages of strategic judgement, implementation, and feedback.



378
 379 **Figure 2.** *Integrated decision process model for educational leaders in the Ghana Education*
 380 *Service.*

381 *A concise Ghana Education Service decision-quality profile:* The synthesis suggests that
 382 managerial cognitive capability is moderately visible in the Ghana Education Service through
 383 formal administrative procedures and increasingly standardised promotion processes.
 384 However, emotional intelligence, bias awareness, and analytical reasoning competence
 385 appear more uneven and require stronger intentional development. The system is also likely
 386 to contain substantial experience depth, but experience is not always translated into reflective
 387 leadership. The most urgent priority is therefore not simply to recruit more experienced
 388 leaders, but to develop leaders who can think clearly, regulate emotion, question assumptions,

389 use evidence responsibly, and adapt judgement to changing institutional conditions
390 (UNESCO, 2023; Lee et al., 2024; Hansen, 2025).

391

392 **7. Implications for Policy and Practice**

393 The review has clear implications for policy and practice in the Ghana Education Service.
394 The Service has already signalled movement towards more standardised personnel processes,
395 including aptitude testing and clearer administrative structures. These are important steps, but
396 the review suggests that they will yield stronger results only when combined with leadership
397 development that builds judgement quality after promotion as well as screening before
398 promotion. In other words, the system should not only select for advancement. It should also
399 build the decision capabilities that advancement requires. That means leadership development
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403 headteachers work within complex stakeholder environments in which communication,
404 participation, and contextual responsiveness remain central to effective leadership. This
405 suggests that centralised authority in the Ghana Education Service should be balanced with
406 stronger support for district- and school-level judgement. Decision quality improves when
407 leaders are equipped not only to comply with policy but also to interpret policy intelligently
408 in local conditions.

409 The synthesis also points to a practical Ghana Education Service decision-quality profile.
410 Managerial cognitive capability is moderately visible in the system through formal
411 administrative procedures and increasingly standardised promotion processes. However,
412 emotional intelligence, bias awareness, and analytical reasoning competence appear more
413 uneven and require stronger intentional development. The system is also likely to contain
414 substantial experience depth, but experience is not always translated into reflective
415 leadership. The most urgent priority is therefore not simply to recruit more experienced
416 leaders, but to develop leaders who can think clearly, regulate emotion, question assumptions,
417 use evidence responsibly, and adapt judgement to changing institutional conditions.

418

419 **8. Conclusion**

420 This article has argued that strategic decision-making effectiveness in the Ghana Education
421 Service is best understood as the product of five overlapping and mutually reinforcing
422 capabilities: managerial cognitive capability, emotional intelligence, cognitive bias
423 awareness, analytical reasoning competence, and experience depth. The review shows that
424 strong decisions do not emerge from authority alone. They emerge when leaders can process
425 complexity, regulate emotion, challenge assumptions, interpret evidence, and learn
426 reflectively from experience.

427 The article's main contribution is the development of an integrated capability perspective for
428 understanding decision quality in the Ghana Education Service. Rather than treating
429 leadership effectiveness as a single trait or a purely procedural matter, the review shows that
430 judgement quality is shaped by a capability bundle that affects both the quality of decisions
431 and the credibility of their implementation. This perspective helps explain why standardised
432 administrative reforms may still produce uneven outcomes if leaders are not supported to
433 think, interpret, and act well in context.

434 The policy implication is clear. The Ghana Education Service should strengthen leadership
435 selection, preparation, and professional development around decision capability rather than
436 procedural compliance alone. Promotion systems remain important, but they should be
437 complemented by deliberate support for evidence use, emotional regulation, bias awareness,
438 reflective practice, and stakeholder-sensitive judgement. Future research can test the
439 integrated capability model empirically across district, circuit, and school leadership levels in
440 Ghana.

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