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Reframing teacher empowerment: Between policy logics and professional autonomy

Summary

This study develops a framework for analysing how policy logics shape teacher empowerment by integrating two orientations – *having* (resources and competencies) versus *being* (professional agency and identity) – and two loci, *individual* versus *collective*, into a Four-Quadrant Model. The model was applied to a systematic review of 49 peer-reviewed journal articles, with multi-stage coding by four researchers ensuring reliability. Results indicate a strong predominance of collective and *having*-oriented perspectives, signalling an emphasis on compliance, standardisation, and resource alignment. While some studies demonstrated reflective or transformative shifts across quadrants, these trajectories were comparatively limited. Overall, the review reveals a structural bias that privileges resource-based framings over sustained engagement with professional agency. The study contributes by offering the Four-Quadrant Model to clarify conceptual ambiguities in empowerment discourse and by proposing a Capability Realisation Heuristic that links resource provision with the protection of professional autonomy. These tools provide a transferable lens for informing policy design, professional development, and comparative inquiry beyond Japan.

Keywords: teacher education, empowerment, Capability Realisation Heuristic, professional agency, professional autonomy, teacher policy

Introduction: Teacher empowerment in policy and research

It has been widely accepted that the success or failure of education policy ultimately depends on the quality of teachers and the teaching workforce to actively and meaningfully implement policy ideas in practice (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Fullan, 2021). Policymakers and researchers have framed teacher empowerment as a key policy lever for effectively implementing reform agendas (Schleicher, 2018),

and international organisations such as the OECD and UNESCO have issued recommendations calling for better investment in advancing teachers' professional capacity (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2016).

Teacher empowerment has been discussed in terms of professionalism, autonomy, and teacher agency (cf. Biesta, 2015; Priestley et al., 2015). Large-scale comparative studies and reports further underline this trend. OECD's TALIS surveys consistently highlight teachers' perceived autonomy and collaborative professionalism as key to both job satisfaction and retention (OECD, 2019; 2025). UNESCO has stressed teacher agency and empowerment as essential conditions for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UNESCO, 2016; 2021).

However, the discourses surrounding teacher empowerment often aim to advance the utility value of teachers as vehicles for policy implementation and educational progress, revealing inherent limitations (Boeskens et al., 2020; Day & Gu, 2014; Sahlberg, 2021). Intensifying accountability regimes (Apple, 2005; Högberg & Lindgren, 2021) and rapidly evolving curriculum mandates (Priestley & Drew, 2019) have eroded the structural and professional conditions for teachers' decision-making practice (Biesta, 2015). Consequently, policies intended to empower teachers risk inviting the contrary effect, diminishing teacher agency and undermining professional autonomy.

This paradox is not just rhetorical. It reflects a deeper tension in the conceptualisation of teacher empowerment itself. On one level, empowerment is associated with equipping teachers with competencies, knowledge, skills, and other resources for effective practice (Kennedy, 2016). This orientation has been widely justified by the increasingly complex educational landscape of the twenty-first century. On another level, empowerment is about fostering trust in teachers as professional beings, respecting their professional decisions, reinforcing their professional identity, and sustaining the intrinsic values that underpin their well-being (Aelterman et al., 2007). These orientations do not just reflect alternative perspectives on empowerment. Instead, they actively influence how empowerment is defined and pursued within policy and research contexts.

Nevertheless, in the current policy and research contexts, these two orientations are rarely integrated in a coherent manner. This separation is reinforced by governance regimes, accountability cultures, and policy logics, and it limits consideration of the institutional and political contexts in which empowerment is enacted. This paper illustrates that this distinction aligns closely with the theoretical distinction advanced by Erich Fromm (1976/2013) between the mode of *having* and *being*, which provides an analytical lens for examining how policy logics and professional cultures shape the meaning and practice of empowerment. It is the purpose of this paper to develop a framework drawing on Fromm to examine how

different orientations toward empowerment are defined, enacted, and sustained within their systemic-professional environment.

Building on this diagnosis, this study asks how teacher empowerment is conceptualised, enacted, and sustained within the interplay of policy logics and professional cultures, and examines by integrating Erich Fromm's distinction between the *modes of having* and *being* into a Four-Quadrant Model to reveal and address structural imbalances in empowerment discourses through both conceptual clarification and a capability-oriented design heuristic. In so doing, this paper aims to make three contributions. First, it introduces the Four-Quadrant Model to clarify the conceptual ambiguity of teacher empowerment. Second, it applies this model to a systematic review of literature to reveal patterns of orientation dominance and imbalance. Third, it proposes a Capability Realisation Heuristic as a design guide for aligning extrinsic functional demands with intrinsic professional engagement. Together, these contributions provide both a conceptual and pragmatic foundation for moving beyond prevailing dichotomies and towards more sustainable and mutually reinforcing approaches to empower teachers and the teaching profession.

Orientations, limitations, and the discursive positioning of empowerment in education

Contemporary discourses on teacher empowerment are structured around two predominant orientations that guide how the concept is framed across policy and research. The first is a *having*-oriented discourse that defines empowerment in terms of what teachers should possess, such as competencies, credentials, formal training, and access to resources. This view aligns with policy logics that emphasise measurable indicators of professional capacity as widely discussed in the professional development literature. The second is a *being*-oriented discourse that highlights how teachers should act – as autonomous professionals exercising judgement, embodying educational values, and sustaining professional identities and value-driven practice – a theme emphasised in wellbeing and agency-oriented research. These orientations do not simply represent alternative conceptions. Instead, they function as discursive templates that shape how empowerment is problematised, legitimised, and operationalised.

These orientations are sustained by the broader institutional and political conditions that govern teaching. Accountability regimes and standardisation pressures privilege *having*-oriented discourses by rendering empowerment legible through competencies, performance metrics, and compliance structures (Apple, 2005; Ball, 2003; Mockler, 2020). Conversely, traditions of professional trust, collegial inquiry,

and value-driven practice support *being*-oriented discourses, though these may lack the structural mechanisms required for their sustained enactment (Day & Gu, 2014; Sahlberg, 2021). Because each orientation resonates within distinct governance logics, policies invoking empowerment often diverge in their assumptions about what counts as meaningful professional practice and who holds authority to define it.

Framing empowerment as a discursive positioning process clarifies how these orientations are translated into professional roles. Through standards, curriculum frameworks, policy texts, and organisational narratives, teachers are positioned with rights, duties, and expectations. *Having*-oriented discourses typically position teachers as responsible implementers whose legitimacy derives from demonstrated competencies aligned with external demands. *Being*-oriented discourses position teachers as pedagogical agents whose authority emerges from ethical deliberation, reflective inquiry, and relational practice. These positions are embedded within broader narratives, such as performance-driven reform, collaborative professionalism, or trust-based governance, which legitimise different distributions of agency, responsibility, and evaluative authority within education systems.

The historical evolution of empowerment further complicates these dynamics. The concept entered education through social movements concerned with agency, collective participation, and challenging structural inequalities (Solomon, 1976; Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). As empowerment was incorporated into managerial and accountability-driven policy agendas, its meaning fragmented; as such, it came to denote both externally defined capacity-building and the intrinsic cultivation of (professional) agency. This fragmentation enables empowerment discourses to support divergent policy initiatives, contributing to the conceptual ambiguity noted across recent research (e.g., Boeskens et al., 2020; Ingersoll & Collins, 2018; Sachs, 2016).

Taken together, these dynamics reveal both the analytic value and the limitations of existing empowerment discourses. The *having/being* orientations illuminate dual emphases on resource provision and professional agency, yet treating them as discrete alternatives obscures the political, institutional, and discursive conditions through which empowerment is enacted. Without attention to how teachers are discursively positioned, including who defines empowerment, through which narratives, and with what institutional effects, the concept risks remaining fragmented and vulnerable to policy capture. Recognising empowerment as a discursively mediated phenomenon, therefore, provides a necessary foundation for the theoretical elaboration developed in the following section, where these orientations are situated within a more comprehensive framework for analysing the institutional and professional dynamics of empowerment.

These discursive orientations, rooted respectively in measurable competence and in value-laden professional agency, do more than describe different emphases: they represent qualitatively different ways in which teachers are positioned within educational systems. What remains underexamined, however, is the deeper conceptual logic that makes such divergent positioning possible. To clarify this distinction at a conceptual level, the next section turns to Erich Fromm's (1976/2013) modes of *having* and *being*, which offer an analytical lens for examining the qualitative foundations underpinning these divergent discourses.

Theoretical lens: the modes of *Having* and *Being*

Erich Fromm (1976/2013) conceptually distinguishes between the modes of *having* and *being* as two fundamental orientations to human existence: the former privileges possession, control, and accumulation, whereas the latter emphasises lived relatedness, activity, and self-realisation. Fromm advanced this contrast not as a personality typology but as a critical lens on modern social arrangements that valorise possession and thereby constrain human well-being. Drawing on Fromm's ontological insight, this paper applies the having/being distinction to scrutinise contemporary discourses of teacher empowerment. As illustrated in Figure 1, the modes of having and being provide two qualitatively distinct orientations relevant to teacher empowerment.

Orientations	Mode of Having	Mode of Being
Types	Extrinsically defined & measurable	Intrinsically emerged from within
Examples	Knowledge, skills, competencies, certificate, PD credit hours	Relationality to professional identity, agency, ethical responsibility, values

Figure 1. Modes of having and being adapted from E. Fromm (1976/2013).

Source: Author's own work.

In Fromm's terms, *the mode of having* refers to an orientation in which one's identity, security, and sense of worth are anchored in the possession or acquisition of properties, whether they are material goods, qualifications, or codified knowledge. In the context of teacher empowerment, the having mode aligns with strategies that prioritise the accumulation of competencies, credentials, and professional

development credit hours. Empowerment, from this perspective, is operationalised as a condition in which teachers possess the necessary tools, training, and competencies aligned with standards to perform effectively. This orientation lends itself to measurement and monitoring, making it highly compatible with policy logics grounded in accountability and performance metrics.

By contrast, *the mode of being* denotes an orientation in which one's identity and fulfilment are realised through active engagement, self-expression, and the quality of one's relationship with their environment. Applied to teacher empowerment, the being mode emphasises teachers' professional decision-making, intrinsic motivation, and the lived enactment of educational values in practice. Empowerment here is not reducible to a checklist of competencies but is sustained through processes that nurture professional identity and trusted autonomy. This orientation resists reduction to externally defined metrics, instead locating value in the depth and authenticity of teachers' professional being and practice.

Fromm's framework illuminates the qualitatively different approaches in which empowerment can be conceived, highlighting that tensions in policy and research often arise when these modes are treated as interchangeable, alternative, or are pursued in isolation. Policies grounded predominantly in *the mode of having* may secure resource provision and skill acquisition, but risk neglecting the relational, reflective, and value-based dimensions essential for sustainable professional engagement of teachers. Conversely, initiatives grounded in *the mode of being* may cultivate strong professional identity and teacher agency, but falter when the structural and material supports for their realisation or quality assurance mechanisms are absent.

While the distinction between having and being provides a valuable analytical lens for clarifying the conceptual ambiguity surrounding teacher empowerment, there are two critical limitations when applied to educational policy analysis. First, Fromm's typology is primarily concerned with the qualitative mode of existence at the individual level. As such, it does not, on its own, account for the *collective* or *organisational* loci in which teacher empowerment is defined and experienced. Second, the framework does not explicitly address the political and institutional dynamics. As such, the framework has its limitations reflecting the dynamics around the negotiation of power, professional roles, and governance structures that shape the possibilities for empowerment in practice.

These limitations are particularly salient in education systems where empowerment is both an individual and collective (and organisational) process, and where institutional arrangements, policy agendas, and professional cultures interact in complex ways. To address these gaps, Fromm's ontological distinction needs an additional complementary framework that captures the political and negotiated

dimensions of the professional life of teachers. For this purpose, this paper draws on the paradigm of professionalism from Judyth Sachs (2001) to bridge individual orientations with the collective, political, and cultural dimensions that define, enable, and sustain teacher empowerment in practice.

Theoretical lens: Democratic/Activist and performative professionalism

Judyth Sachs, with her work on teacher professionalism, provides a complementary lens that foregrounds the collective (organisational) and political terrains within which empowerment is negotiated. Writing against the backdrop of new managerialism and performativity agendas associated with the rise of New Public Management, Sachs (2001) distinguishes between *managerial professionalism* and *democratic (or activist) professionalism*.

The former, managerial professionalism, is closely aligned with what Ball (2003) and others term *performative professionalism*, which frames teachers' work around externally defined standards, audit practices, and targeted outcomes, and it often focuses on teachers as individual practitioners. Professionalism here is constructed through compliance with a set of goals, privileging technical efficiency and the demonstrable performance of competence. By contrast, democratic/activist conceives teachers as collective and political actors who build professional knowledge through collaboration, inquiry, and public engagement. Professionalism becomes a project of voice, participation, and profession-building, rather than the mere delivery of mandated reforms or performative display of individual competence in practice. These contrasting paradigms are summarised in Figure 2.

Orientations	Types	Examples of practice
Collective Democratic / Activist	Teachers as a collective & political actors	Collaborative inquiry, public engagement
Individual Managerial/Performative	Teachers as individuals & performative actors	Self-directed practice by personal commitment

Figure 2. Paradigms of professionalism adapted from J. Sachs (2001).

Source: Author's own work.

These two aspects of Sachs' argument are especially salient for empowerment. First, professionalism is inherently political and negotiated: it is shaped by struggles

over the purposes of education, the distribution of decision-making authority, and the legitimacy of different knowledge forms (e.g., hands-on and practical wisdom, community knowledge, research evidence). Second, professionalism is collective as much as individual: teacher networks, unions, professional associations, and communities of practice are not ancillary, but constitutive of teachers' capacity to act. This resonates with Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach, where individual agency is both enabled and expanded through social, institutional, and relational conditions. These emphases move analysis beyond individual attributes (skills and dispositions) toward the institutional arrangements and cultural norms of collectives that enable and constrain teachers' agency.

Through the lens presented here, empowerment strategies that emphasise standards, competencies, and performance management may strengthen teachers' collective and organisational position, yet they simultaneously tether empowerment to compliance logics. This pattern is typical of managerial/performative professionalism. Conversely, strategies that focus on teacher-led (or autonomous) inquiry, collaborative deliberation, and engagement with communities may amplify teachers' collective agency and normative purpose – hallmarks of democratic/activist professionalism. Yet, they may risk lacking the structural support, resource provision, or evaluative mechanisms necessary to ensure a holistic and sustainable impact. Notably, however, Sachs presents this framework not as static categories, but as contested discourses that are continually negotiated within and across schools and education systems.

Therefore, Sachs addresses two gaps left by the having/being distinction alone, and it makes Sachs's framework particularly valuable when the focus shifts from individual orientations to the organisational and political contexts in which empowerment is embedded. Whereas Fromm clarifies the qualitative mode of empowerment (possessing resources vs. enacting professional being), Sachs makes explicit between the collective/organisational locus of professionalism and the power-laden, negotiated character of policy-practice relations. In other words, Sachs helps explain *who* gets to define empowerment, *where* it is institutionalised, and *how* competing discourses shape teachers' possibilities to act.

The Four-Quadrant Model proposed in this paper is motivated by this complementarity. *Collective-having* configurations often map to managerial/performative professionalism (with standards, audits, resource regimes), while *collective-being* configurations resonate with democratic/activist professionalism (shared ethos, collaborative inquiry, public engagement). The *individual-having* and *individual-being* configurations capture, respectively, the personal acquisition of competencies and the development of practitioner identity grounded in the vocation of teaching.

The Four-Quadrant Model

The conceptual complementarity between Fromm's modes of *having* and *being* and Sachs' paradigms of professionalism makes it possible to map empowerment discourses along two intersecting dimensions. By cross-classifying these ontological modes (*having/being*) with the locus of professional identity (individual/performative vs. collective/activist), we arrive at a Four-Quadrant Model (Figure 3). This model enables the identification of otherwise ambiguous empowerment strategies in relation to both their qualitative mode and their organisational locus, thereby capturing dimensions that each theoretical lens alone cannot fully address.

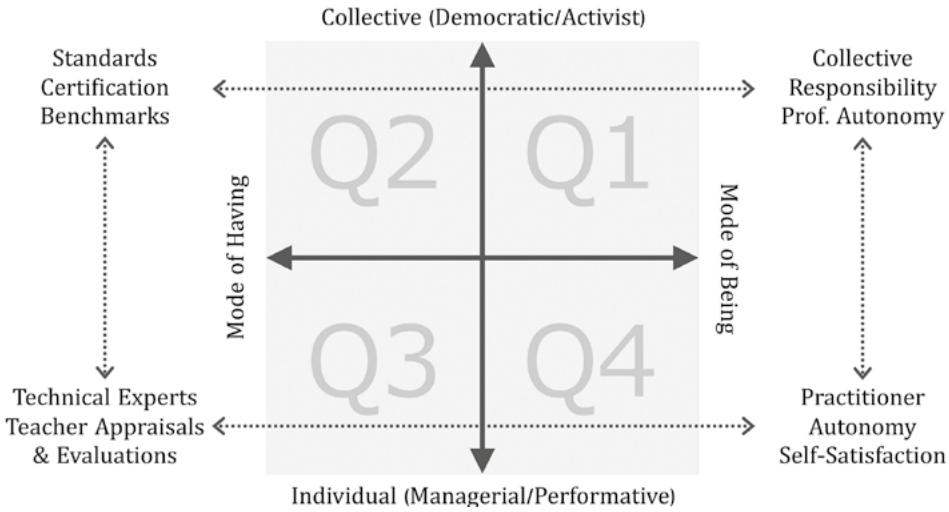


Figure 3. The Four-Quadrant Model of teacher empowerment.

Source: Author's own work.

The four quadrants can be summarised as follows, moving counterclockwise from the top-right quadrant:

- *Collective-Being*: Empowerment as the shared enactment of professional ethos, collaborative inquiry, and collective agency. Typical policy logic emphasises collegial voice, participatory governance, and profession-building. Examples include teacher-led curriculum innovation, communities of practice, and collective advocacy for educational and social equity.
- *Collective-Having*: Empowerment as organisational compliance and/or collective acquisition of competencies aligned with external standards and accountability regimes. Typical policy logic emphasises accountability regimes, standard-

isation, and resource alignment. Examples include whole-school alignment with national curriculum frameworks or collaborative pursuit of accreditation benchmarks.

- *Individual-Having*: Empowerment as the individual acquisition and demonstration of measurable competencies, certification, and the accumulation of continuing professional development credits. Typical policy logic focuses on standardised skill acquisition and human capital development. Examples include accredited training, recertification schemes tied to CPD credit accumulation.
- *Individual-Being*: Empowerment as the cultivation of personal practitioner identity, autonomy, and values-driven practice in the vocation of teaching. Typical policy logic emphasises trust, intrinsic motivation, and self-directed growth of individual teachers. Examples include reflective inquiry, values-led pedagogy, and self-guided professional growth.

These quadrants are not rigid or mutually exclusive categories; in practice, policies and professional development initiatives may combine or overlap elements from multiple quadrants or shift emphasis over time. Nevertheless, the model serves two critical functions. First, it provides a diagnostic lens for identifying prevailing orientations and their potential imbalances. Second, it offers a design heuristic for integrating the orientations of having and being in strategies at both individual and collective levels, thereby aligning resource provision with the cultivation of professional agency and identity.

Mapping of Japanese teacher education discourse

Having established the Four-Quadrant Model as a conceptual framework, it is now critical to examine its applicability through empirical mapping of existing discourses of empowerment. Given that policy discourses on empowerment are highly heterogeneous in form and origin, the following analysis will be confined to scholarly discourse, specifically peer-reviewed articles published in the flagship journal in the field of teacher education in Japan. This focus is justified by the fact that the discourse in teacher education is explicitly oriented toward the empowerment of teachers and the teaching profession, making it a coherent and relevant corpus for exploring how empowerment is framed and sustained.

Analysing the existing scholarly discourses on empowerment is essential to ensure that the Four-Quadrant Model remains not only a theoretical construct but also a pragmatic diagnostic tool. A systematic analysis of a decade of peer-reviewed scholarship in teacher education allows for the identification of prevailing orientations, the degree of balance or imbalance across quadrants, and the ways in which

these orientations are embedded in the institutional and political logics of the field. This mapping does not evaluate the merits of particular approaches; rather, it reveals the structural tendencies of the discourse itself, offering insight into how empowerment is conceptualised, operationalised, and sustained within a national research context.

Data & Method

The empirical basis for this mapping derives from a systematic review of peer-reviewed articles published between 2014 and 2023 in the flagship journal of the Japanese Society for the Studies of Teacher Education (JSSTE). This journal was selected because it is the official outlet of Japan's leading scholarly association on teacher education, providing a representative body of peer-reviewed scholarship that shapes and reflects national discourse on teacher empowerment and professional development. While limiting the review to a single journal inevitably narrows the scope, this choice ensures coherence and comparability across articles. Moreover, JSSTE is widely regarded as the central venue for scholarly debate in teacher education in Japan, and its publications are often referenced in both academic and policy circles. Hence, although not exhaustive of all Japanese scholarship, the dataset captures the core of nationally influential discourse.

The analysis targeted all peer-reviewed research articles (excluding editorials, book reviews, and non-peer-reviewed articles). Of the 52 articles identified, three articles on the historical elaboration of Japan's teacher policies were removed as they did not substantively address teacher empowerment. Thus, a final dataset of 49 articles was examined. Then, the selected articles were analysed by four researchers specialising in teacher education. To enhance reliability, all articles were independently coded by all four researchers. Whenever discrepancies arose, whether at the code level or in the quadrant assignment, the full analytical team convened deliberative meetings to review the textual evidence and decision rules, reach consensus, and revise the codebook accordingly. All affected items were then re-coded to ensure consistency with the updated scheme, and brief calibration checks were conducted at regular intervals during subsequent coding. Validity was supported through two strategies: (i) theory-driven coding explicitly aligned with Fromm's *having/being* distinction and Sachs' professionalism paradigms; and (ii) maintenance of an audit trail (coding memos and versioned codebook) to document analytic decisions and enhance transparency.

Each article was analysed in three sequential stages – *entry point*, *trajectory*, and *exit point* – designed to capture its discursive positioning within the Four-Quadrant

Model. The *entry point* denotes the initial orientation embedded in the research question or primary focus, indicating the conceptual stance from which the study approached empowerment. The *trajectory* traces the directional shifts or continuities in orientation through the argumentation, illuminating the dynamics of conceptual framing. The *exit point* identifies the concluding orientation as articulated in the discussion or implications, revealing the end-state toward which the reasoning converges.

Distribution of orientations

Figure 4 shows the main trajectory patterns observed, and it presents the distribution of research questions (entry points) across the four quadrants. The mapping indicates a marked predominance of Quadrant 2 (Collective–Having), which accounts for nearly half of all studies published during the review period. Quadrant 1 (Collective–Being) is the second most common, whereas Quadrants 3 and 4 occur far less frequently as the entry point of research discourses.

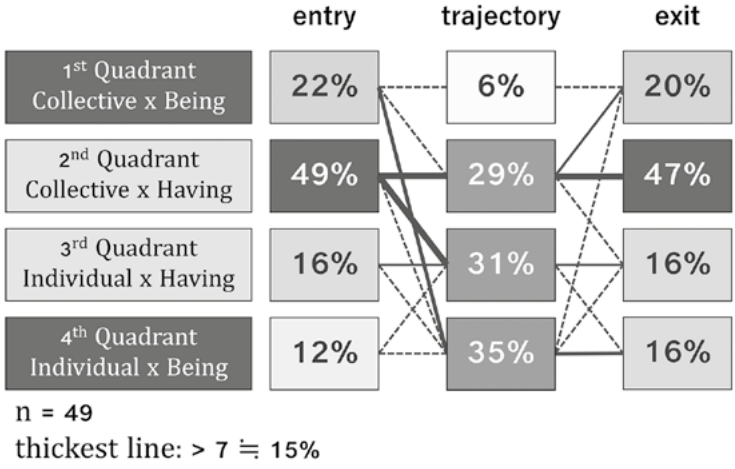


Figure 4. Trajectory patterns of teacher empowerment discourses in Japan

Source: Author's own work.

Two notable structural trends emerge from this distribution. First, 65% of all research questions fall within the *having* mode, reflecting a strong research emphasis on extrinsically defined properties for empowering teachers and the teaching profession. Second, 71% of the studies adopt a collective focus, suggesting that even when addressing themes aligned with the mode of *being*, research discourse

tends to frame empowerment at the systemic or institutional level rather than at the level of the individual.

Pattern typology

Examining the trajectories of orientation across the three analytical stages, several archetypes emerge from repeated observation across the dataset. For clarity, each pattern is expressed as a three-digit code (e.g., 222, 141, 444), where the first digit denotes the quadrant at the entry point, the second digit the quadrant during the trajectory stage, and the third digit the quadrant at the exit point. The digits correspond to the Four-Quadrant Model: from top-right moving counterclockwise, (1) Collective–Being, (2) Collective–Having, (3) Individual–Having, and (4) Individual–Being.

Normative Stability Archetype

These studies maintain the same orientation across all three stages (e.g., 222, 111, 444). In the dominant 222 pattern, the research question is framed in direct response to empowerment policies affecting the entire teaching profession, and the discussion remains anchored in a *collective–having* frame. This configuration, where arguments are kept within a *collective–having* frame, reinforces policy-driven logics centred on standardisation and resource alignment. In contrast, the 111 or 444 patterns indicate a stable focus on professional *being*, either collectively or individually.

Reflective Return Archetype

These studies start and end in the same quadrant but temporarily shift to a different orientation in the trajectory stage (e.g., 232, 141). In both cases, the overall conception of empowerment is justified and articulated through individual cases: policies in the *having* mode are addressed via specific *having*-based examples, and themes of collective professional *being* are explored through individual *being*-based cases. This pattern represents an archetype in which individual instances serve as the primary means of substantiating and legitimising broader empowerment frameworks.

Transformative Transition Archetype

These studies begin in one mode but conclude in another, marking a substantive reframing of empowerment (e.g., from *individual–having* to *collective–being*).

Such shifts often emerge when empirical findings challenge initial assumptions, or when normative arguments relocate the locus of empowerment from extrinsic provision to intrinsic agency.

Fragmented Progression Archetype

A small subset of studies shows multiple directional shifts without returning to the original quadrant (e.g., 143, 334). For example, a study might start in Quadrant 1, move to Quadrant 4, and end in Quadrant 3. This discontinuous path may reflect an intentional integration of diverse perspectives on empowerment, but it can also signal weak alignment between the study's initial problem framing, methodological execution, and concluding implications.

While the quadrant distribution at the *entry point* of research already reveals a potential structural bias in the scholarly discourse, this alone does not demonstrate the full diagnostic potential of the Four-Quadrant Model. The value of the model lies in its ability to trace orientation shifts across the full argumentative arc of a study, from its initial framing, through its methodological and analytical development, to its concluding implications.

By identifying these archetypes, the analysis moves beyond simple frequency counts to a structural mapping of discourse dynamics. This enables a more nuanced understanding of how empowerment is conceptualised, negotiated, and either reinforced or transformed in the Japanese teacher education research context. Importantly, such patterns also provide a comparative reference point: the same archetypes could be sought in other national or regional corpora, allowing for cross-contextual analysis of scholarly discourse tendencies.

In this way, the Four-Quadrant Model is not merely a classificatory scheme; it functions as an analytical sensor for detecting the movement and/or stasis of conceptual frames over the life cycle of a scholarly argument. This diagnostic capacity is central not only to the model's scholarly utility – by exposing the implicit narrative structures through which empowerment is imagined, operationalised, and sustained – but also to its policy relevance. By identifying structural imbalances and recurring archetypes, the model offers policymakers a lens for designing, implementing, and evaluating empowerment initiatives that align resource provision with the cultivation of professional agency and identity. Such dual utility strengthens the model's potential as a bridge between research-informed analysis and policy action, supporting the development of strategies that are both contextually grounded and conceptually coherent.

Furthermore, from a comparative perspective, the archetypes identified here provide a framework for investigating how different policy cultures shape scholarly orientations toward teacher empowerment. For instance, in several European contexts – where teacher unions and professional associations often exert stronger influence over policy formation – the *collective-being* quadrants may be more prevalent and sustained, reflecting an activist professionalism less constrained by managerial accountability regimes. Conversely, in systems with entrenched performance-based governance, the *collective-having* archetypes, particularly the policy-normative (*222*) type, may dominate, echoing the Japanese pattern observed here. This opens the possibility for a future research programme applying the same coding and archetype identification method to European teacher education journals, enabling a systematic comparison of how the interplay between Fromm's *having–being* modes and Sachs' professionalism paradigms manifests across diverse policy and cultural landscapes.

Applying the Capability Realisation Heuristic

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that the Four-Quadrant Model distinguishes between two fundamentally different domains of empowerment. The *mode of having* encompasses the tangible resources, institutional arrangements, and formal rights that can be directly shaped by policy intervention, such as equitable funding allocation, workload reform, professional development systems, and accountability or appraisal mechanisms. The *mode of being* reflects the lived enactment of values, commitments, and relational dispositions that necessarily reside in the agency of teachers and those in the teaching profession.

This distinction aligns closely with the capability approach advanced by Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2003). In this framework, well-being is understood not merely as the possession of resources (*having*) or the attainment of specific *functionings* (*being*), but as the *capability* – the genuine freedom – to choose and pursue valued ways of living as the state of being empowered. In educational contexts, valued *functionings* correspond directly to forms of empowerment: teachers' ability to exercise informed decision-making, enact professional values, and contribute meaningfully to educational practice and policy. Capabilities, in this sense, require both the means and the conditions for their effective use.

In the *having* quadrants (Collective–Having and Individual–Having), policy interventions can directly enhance capability sets by expanding access to resources, opportunities, and institutional supports. In the *being* quadrants (Collective–Being

and Individual–Being), however, the decisive factor is not the presence of resources or systems alone, but the freedom and agency to convert them into valued practices, whether through collaborative professional cultures, ethical pedagogical choices, or the cultivation of personal and collective goals.

For example, in the Japanese context, some municipal boards of education have implemented professional learning communities that integrate Quadrant 1 (Collective–Being) practices – such as teacher-led curriculum co-design – with Quadrant 2 (Collective–Having) resource alignment, enabling schools to meet national curriculum mandates while fostering collegial autonomy. However, due to the asymmetrical power structure between the national government and local authorities in Japan, teacher-led curriculum initiatives are often steered or constrained by centrally prescribed policies and guidelines (Cave, 2016). This structural imbalance contributes to the pronounced predominance of Quadrant 2 orientations in empowerment discourses and teacher education research in Japan, as evidenced in the review findings.

Internationally, Finland's trust-based model offers another instance in which Quadrant 4 (Individual–Being) reflective inquiry is supported by Quadrant 3 (Individual–Having) investment in advanced qualifications, ensuring that individual teachers can translate professional values into recognised competencies. Yet, even in Finland, pressures from international benchmarking (e.g., PISA performance) and national policy priorities occasionally narrow the scope of professional autonomy in ways that diverge from the ideal of trust-based professionalism (Sahlberg, 2015; Simola, 2014). These cases illustrate how the Capability Realisation Heuristic can guide policy actors to design empowerment strategies that align extrinsic functional demands with intrinsic professional engagement, not by privileging one quadrant over another, but by deliberately creating synergies between them while remaining attentive to the structural constraints that shape their realisation. *Figure 5* illustrates this alignment of capability dimensions.

Quadrant	Capability Dimensions	Policy Levers	Examples of Practices
Q1: Collective-Being	Collective realisation	Facilitative governance; participatory decision-making structures	National PD programmes, collective bargaining rights, workload reforms
Q2: Collective-Having	Structural inputs	System-wide resource allocation; institutional reforms; equitable funding	Collaborative prof. learning communities; co-designed initiatives
Q3: Individual-Having	Personal inputs	PD access; workload (re)allocation; career progression frameworks	Targeted PD grants; mentoring; flexible work arrangements
Q4: Individual-Being	Individual realisation	Protecting practitioner autonomy; reducing prescriptive control	Teacher-led inquiry; reflective practice; ethical pedagogical choices

Figure 5. Alignment of capability dimensions within the Four-Quadrant Model

Source: Author's own work.

Policy implications and theoretical integration

The Four-Quadrant Model helps recognise this boundary between direct and indirect policy influence. This recognition offers a perspective that the role of policy is not about dictating what form teachers' *being* should take, but to ensure that the conditions for its authentic emergence are robust, equitable, and sustainable. By linking resource provision (*having*) with the cultivation of professional agency and identity (*being*), the Four-Quadrant Model, situated within the capability approach, offers both a normative and operational framework for understanding where policy has direct leverage, where its influence is mediated, and how both domains interact in the pursuit of teacher well-being and the empowerment of the teaching profession.

Again, recognising the distinction between *having* and *being* reframes the scope, priorities, and evaluation of educational policy and policymaking. First, it highlights that while policy can directly shape the structural conditions of the teaching profession through equitable resourcing, workload reforms, supportive governance, and access to high-quality professional development. However, policy cannot directly legislate the relational, ethical, and identity-oriented dimensions of teachers' professional life. These aspects emerge through the agency of teachers within their professional and institutional contexts.

Second, the Four-Quadrant Model underscores that effective policy must adopt a two-pronged approach. The first dimension involves expanding capability sets by ensuring equitable access to the material, institutional, and cultural resources that enable teachers to make meaningful professional choices. The second dimension focuses on safeguarding professional agency, protecting (or promoting) the autonomy necessary for teachers to convert those capabilities into valued practices, and avoiding the narrowing of professional decision-making through over-prescriptive or compliance-driven measures.

Third, the framework invites a shift in policy evaluation metrics. Beyond measuring resource inputs or compliance rates, assessments should consider whether interventions genuinely expand teachers' *capability sets* and whether the profession's conditions allow for their authentic enactment. This shift would require moving from satisfaction or performance indicators alone to multidimensional evaluations that account for both structural provision (*having*) and realised agency (*being*).

Finally, situating policy within this dual lens supports a more sustainable vision for educational reform. It encourages policymakers to design interventions that respect the inherent limits of direct policy research, while cultivating the cultural and institutional environments that make professional empowerment possible. The application process of the Capability Realisation Heuristic is summarised in Figure 6.

In doing so, the Four Quadrant Model, when integrated with the capability approach, functions not only as an analytical tool for scholarly discourse but also as a practical guide for aligning policy intentions with the lived realities of teachers and the teaching profession.

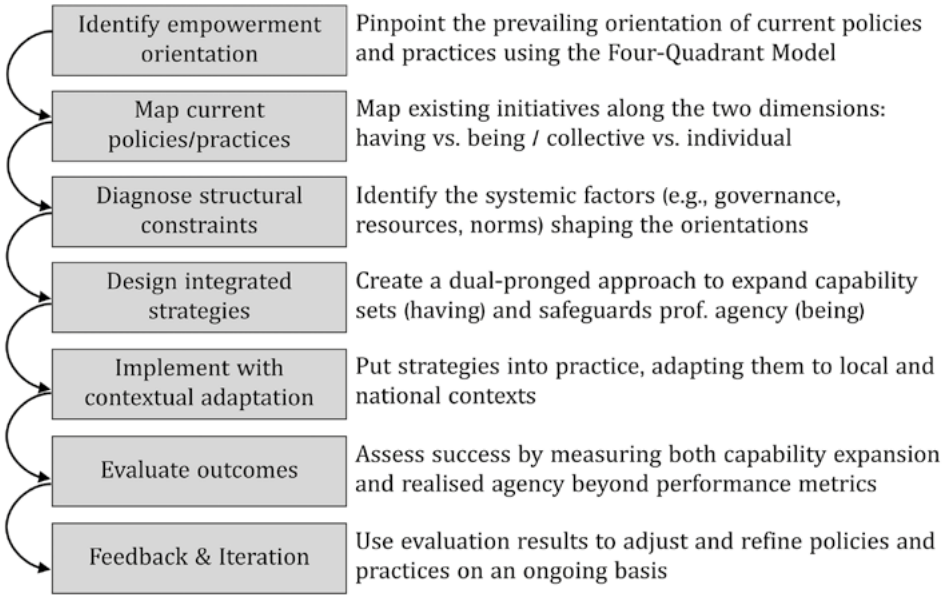


Figure 6. Application process of the Capability Realisation Heuristic in teacher professional development

Source: Author's own work.

Conclusion and Prospects

This study set out to address the conceptual ambiguity of teacher empowerment by integrating Erich Fromm's distinction between the modes of having and being with Judyth Sachs' paradigms of professionalism into a Four-Quadrant Model. Applied to a systematic review of a decade of scholarship in Japan's flagship teacher education journal, the model revealed a pronounced predominance of the Collective-Having orientation in discourse, reflecting structural and policy conditions that privilege externally defined competencies and compliance-oriented collective practices. The quadrant analysis also identified recurrent discursive archetypes, ranging from stability within a single orientation to transformative shifts between modes. Together, these findings demonstrate the model's diagnostic capacity to detect

both the overt patterns and the underlying dynamics shaping how empowerment is conceptualised, enacted, and sustained in professional and policy discourses.

By coupling the Four-Quadrant Model with the Capability Realisation Heuristic, this paper also advances a framework that is both analytically rigorous and practically applicable. The illustrative cases from Japan and Finland show how empowerment strategies can integrate having-oriented and being-oriented dimensions while remaining attentive to structural constraints such as central-local power asymmetries or the influence of international benchmarking. The proposed heuristic emphasises the importance of policies that simultaneously expand teachers' capability sets through equitable access to resources, opportunities, and institutional supports, while also safeguarding the agency required to convert these capabilities into valued professional practices. In doing so, the study contributes to the theoretical integration of diverse empowerment discourses and offers design principles for more sustainable, context-sensitive professional development and policy initiatives.

Yet, several limitations must also be acknowledged. First, the empirical mapping is based on a single national corpus, while coherent and relevant, limits the generalisability of the findings to other policy and professional contexts. Second, the analysis focuses exclusively on published scholarly discourse and does not capture how empowerment is experienced or enacted by practitioners in everyday settings. Third, the Capability Realisation Heuristic is presented primarily as a conceptual guide, and its operationalisation into concrete implementation protocols and evaluation metrics remains to be tested. These limitations suggest that while the study offers a valuable diagnostic and design framework, its conclusions should be interpreted with due regard for its contextual and methodological boundaries.

As such, further research or application could extend this framework through comparative analyses across multiple national contexts, enabling a systematic examination of how policy cultures, governance structures, and professional norms shape empowerment orientations. Empirical studies combining discourse analysis with field-based inquiry, such as ethnography, participatory action research, or large-scale surveys, would provide much richer insights into the alignment or divergence between scholarly and practitioner perspectives. In addition, pilot applications of the Capability Realisation Heuristic in policy design or teacher professional development programmes could yield concrete evidence on its feasibility, impact, and adaptability. Such work would not only refine the heuristic but also strengthen the bridge between conceptual clarity, empirical evidence, and actionable strategies for fostering more concrete teacher empowerment in diverse educational backgrounds.

Lastly, the findings and framework developed in this study hold relevance for the Polish and broader European contexts, where diverse governance traditions, varying degrees of centralisation, and the influence of European Union policy agendas shape debates over teacher professionalism and autonomy. In countries such as Poland, where curriculum reforms and accountability measures have periodically intensified, the Four-Quadrant Model can help identify whether empowerment strategies are overly weighted toward *having*-oriented provisions at the expense of sustaining *being*-oriented professional agency. At the European level, ongoing initiatives on teacher competence frameworks, professional learning, and cross-border collaboration provide fertile ground for applying the Capability Realisation Heuristic to design interventions that balance resource provision with the protection of professional autonomy. By making these dynamics visible, the framework offers policymakers, teacher educators, and professional associations in Poland and across Europe a tool for critically assessing current strategies and envisioning more integrated and sustainable approaches to teacher empowerment.

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