

Educational Leadership and Group Decision Making

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ABSTRACT

In an organization that consists of variety of human resources with a different expertise background, it can create a dynamic atmosphere. It certainly can be an advantage. However, if the leader cannot managed properly, the diversity can be a conflict, especially in group decision-making context. Every individual has his own preferences based on their knowledge. Some of them can provide shared information, but there are who have unshared information that held by just one member. Such conditions led the decision making process was not optimal. These problems need the leader's attention. This research was an analytical study to analyze the factors that most affect to the quality of the group's decision. Finally, this study shows that factors such as leadership style, knowledge of leader and leadership experience have a considerable influence on the quality of group decisions.

Keywords: Leadership, Leaders, Group Decision Making

Introduction

Group decision making is a participative process where a group of individuals collectively analyze an issue or situation, consider and evaluate alternative solutions, and select the best alternative solution. The number of individuals engaged in the group decision making process varies. In schools, some time ago, decision making was made by school committees. However, with the increased complexity requiring special knowledge in various sectors which commonly is not possessed by one individual only, group decision making is increasingly needed. This group decision making approach in the end must be taken as decisions made must be accepted and applied by various groups and areas.

Group Decision Making Methods

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is useful in finding numbers of alternative and varied solutions where great ideas are required (Proctor, 2003). Brainstorming activity involves group members to present ideas or initiatives verbally. The task of such group is to collect a number of initiatives from all group members. After ideas from all groups have been exhausted, the process of alternative evaluation from all incoming ideas starts. In line with technological advancement, brainstorming process no longer requires group members to be present in

one room. The submission of ideas and alternative solutions can be done through email or other media, such as online group discussions.

Nominal Group Technique

Nominal group technique is a structured brainstorming technique applied to generate great ideas related to issues and to ensure that all group members share equal participation in ideas development (Madi & Islam, 2011). According to MacPhail (2001), nominal group technique is an interview technique where participants face each other and write down their ideas independently. This technique not only produce great ideas, but also capable of identifying consequences from such ideas. Written and independent submission holds its own benefits, resulting in an open and honest discussion. The position of a leader in this method is to act as facilitator to ensure efficient flow of information traffic and discussion taking place in the forum. In this group decision making, there are definitely individuals who are in conflict from the outset. Independent submission will make them present what they feel so that a leader must be able to position itself as an intermediary and to create a conducive discussion environment.

Delphi Technique

Delphi technique was developed by Dalkey and Helmer widely used to achieve convergence in opinion about knowledge in real condition where such opinion is requested from experts in certain (Hsu dan Stanford, 2007). Delphi method stems on the statement that "two is better than one" (Dalkey, 1972). The Delphi Technique is designed as a group communication process to analyze in detail and discuss certain issues in order to set objective, policy investigation, and future prediction (Ludwig, 1997). The Delphi Technique is used to settle "what can/must" (Miller, 2006). With the Delphi Technique, where most participants are subject experts, a leader may not position itself as a determining factor. A leader must be able to act as good listener, capture brilliant ideas and translate them into problem solving measures in order to find the best solution.

Advantages of Group Decision Making

In the group decision making process, the leader may not be the smartest and most knowledgeable individual. The leader is more like a partner able to listen well, provide in-depth responses to exhaust greater ideas and able to record great ideas to be the best solution, and to collectively predict what will happen in the future. According to Gunnarsson (2010) and Proctor (2011), group decision making has several advantages.

More Knowledge

When a lot of individuals are involved in decision making, there is an accumulation of information and knowledge as compared to one individual only. The gap will be closed by other individuals, and so on.

More Alternative Ideas

With the abundant information and knowledge, there will be more alternative ideas pouring in. By listening to initiatives from other individuals, other members can combine them with their own ideas resulting in a more unique solution.

Greater Acceptance of Decision Taken

Through joint decision making, personal egos will be set aside and accept decision jointly taken. As such, decision taken can be more accepted and successful when applied.

Greater Understanding on Issues and Decision

By being engaged in decision making process, members will understand and comprehend issues occurring and the decision taken.

Disadvantages of Group Decision Making

Aside from its advantages, there are several flaws in group decision making according to Gunnarsson (2010) and Schoenfeld (2011).

Groupthink

Groupthink emerges when the desire for solidarity and consensus is stronger than the desire to achieve the best solution (Schafer, 2011). As individuals are reluctant to be branded as non-cooperative by other members, he or she is forced to be just like other members..

Conflicting Secondary Goal

Many members try to position themselves as more important and smarter in making decision. Too much energy is taken to maneuver and argue leaving little time to reach a quality decision. (Lunenburg, 2010).

Ambiguity in Accountability

Who is accountable for the final result? Every member involved in the decision making, spreading accountability to all members. But, who is really accountable?

Time

Group decision making process requires more time as compared to making individual decision. It takes time to establish a group, and build interactions among members. Occasionally, time for individual arguments takes longer compared to the time to reach a decision.

Group decision making is a fact in an organization's journey as there are a lot of individuals involved in making group decisions.

Leader's Position in Group Decision Making

A leader must have an accurate way of thinking in order to make a group decision. A leader must evaluate whether it is necessary to initiate a group decision making process. However, if school principals intend to operate as a learning organization, they have to engage followers in the group decision making process (Senge, 2006).

According to Corey (2011), Isaksen (2011), Jonassen (2011), and Schoenfeld (2011), there are several suggestions to achieve effective results from group decision making.

- School principals must write down unwritten norms.
 Norms will be important to ensure that all members work well.
- A leader must know its group's respective demography.
 Acceptance and respect to diverse opinions.
- School principals must determine the group's strength and future training needs.
- Provide training in certain subject matter based on their capabilities.
- School principals must avoid making premature decision making.
 Leaders can apply various methods, such as, brainstorming, nominal group technique, and Delphi technique.
- School principals must set limits.
 Seek agreement on fair conflict boundaries.
- School principals must accept that conflict can be a healthy change tool/factor.
 Use consensus model to settle conflicts.
- School principals must keep their focus on practical issues.
 Engage in substantive discussion group.
- School principal must show tangible results
 Elevate group's commitment to act.

Conclusion

There are many advantages in group decision making. But on the other hand, there are also disadvantages as consequences to be faced. In particular, there are some measures to be taken by school to make group decision making become effective. The measures/steps are not given to eliminate disadvantages as such are existing fact. The steps given to school principals are to maximize existing advantages and minimize disadvantages, in addition, with the steps given leaders are expected to lead group discussions to stay focus on its objective and produce quality decisions instead of being trapped in individual arguments which ultimately could degrade the quality of decisions made.

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