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## Approaches to Decision–Making for Effective Administration of Secondary Schools in Nigeria

JOSHUA-KIO NGOWARI HELEN

[helenki1970@gmail.com](mailto:helenki1970@gmail.com)

NWANYANWU LUCKY

[Luckynwanyanwu@gmail.com](mailto:Luckynwanyanwu@gmail.com)

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,  
Faculty of Education,  
Department of Educational Management  
P.M.B. 5047, Rumuolumeni Port Harcourt  
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### Abstract

The paper examined approaches to decision-making for effective administration of secondary schools in Nigeria. Decision-making is the act of choosing between two or more courses of action. In the wider process of problem-solving, decision-making involves choosing between possible solutions to a problem. Decisions can be made with anchor on some approaches which includes; the rational Approach, the Behavioural Approach, the conflict Approach and the bounded Rationality. The paper also examined measures of effective decision making in schools which includes effective principals' administrative role in decision making, teachers' participation in decision making, and parental involvement in decision making. Teachers are considered as the most important factor in student learning, a bridge between students and quality. Involving teachers in decision making can ease the school heads mounting problems as many heads will be put together to intellectually solve problems that could have remained unsolved by the principal alone. The paper went further to elucidate on the factors that can help decision makers successfully navigate through difficult decision-making terrains. The paper concluded that a decision is a commitment to action which is risky and therefore demands that the managers and stakeholder should be very careful and meticulous in makings decision that will grow the organization. The paper suggested that the managers should develop managerial skills that will enhance effective participation of other stakeholders for enough reliable information before making decision.

**Keywords:** Decision, approaches, measures, factors, rational, conflict, behavioural.

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### INTRODUCTION

Think about the difficulties involved in making individual decisions in your own personal life. Thus, you can appreciate how complicated—and important—the process of decision making can

be in organizations, where the stakes are considerable and the impact is widespread (Greenberg, 2011). Decision making may be defined as the process of making choices from among alternatives (March, 2010). Management theorists agree that decision making is one of the most important—if not the most important—of all management activities (Drucker, 2010).

The fact that people often have problems making decisions was early noted within a wide range of areas, and decision making has been an issue of concern for quite some time. During the last few decades, research has increased significantly and has shown that the cognitive limitations of the human mind make it difficult to process the complex, large amounts of information intrinsic in many decision making situations. In fact, people seldom talk about possibilities when speaking about decisions to be made, but more or less always use the term decision problem. Much of the work that steers progress within organizations relates to decision making and problem solving (Hargraves, 2020), and consequently, there is a great interest in how decisions are made in these settings. Within organization theory, especially strategic management decision making is central, and the tradition of rationality is especially considered important in systematic approaches to management, such as, e.g., planning and processing. In a broad sense of the term, rational behaviour has to do with reasonable and consistent acts, whereas its meaning in the classical economic literature is to maximize and choose the optimal. Within research, theoretical developments However, even though rationality is a desirable trait, the rational model has often been criticized over the years in the behavioural literature concerning its inherent assumptions on cognitive and motivational assumptions. As a consequence, the descriptive discipline has evolved, where models describing how people actually *do* make decisions are in focus. Within organizational settings, this has led to the development of other models, where organizational characteristics, like, e.g., context, societal structures, organization, conflicting or unclear goals, and political activities (Within organizational settings, this has led to the development of other models. where organizational characteristics, like, e.g., context, societal structures, organization, conflicting or unclear goals, and political activities. Looking at the educational system, at every point in time, the subordinates and other stakeholders of education expect the school administrators to make good decisions. A good decision is one that is made deliberately and thoughtfully which considers and includes all relevant factors and is consistent with the individual's organization's philosophy and values, and can be explained clearly.

### **Approaches to Decision Making in Secondary Schools**

Approaches to decision-making implies how decision-making is conceptualized by those who make decisions such as managers, heads of schools or other organizations. Due to the conceptualization of how decision should be made, daft (2003) and Jones and George (2003) categorized decision-making into:

1. The rational Approach (Classic Model)
2. Behavioural Approach (Administrative Model)
3. Conflict Approach (Political Model)
4. Bounded Rationality

### **The rational Approach (Classic Model)**

Rationality in relation to decision making refers to a process that is perfectly logical and objective, whereby managers gather information objectively, evaluate available evidence, consider all alternatives and eventually make choices that will lead to the best outcomes for the organization. The rational approach to decision making has its foundations in traditional economic theory, which argues that managers attempt to maximize benefits and have the capacity to make complex decisions quickly (Klein & Kumar, 2016). Such a rational approach to decision making assumes that four conditions are fulfilled:

1. There is perfect knowledge of all the available alternatives.
2. There is perfect knowledge of all of the consequences of the available alternatives.
3. Managers have the capacity to objectively evaluate the consequences of the available alternatives.
4. Managers have a well-structured and definite set of procedures to allow them to make optimum decisions. Although managers rarely have total control over all of the factors that determine how successful decisions will be, they can ensure a degree of control over the process that they use for making decisions. It is increasingly clear that few managerial decisions are taken in a completely rational manner. Indeed, some of the most effective and innovative decisions used little in the way of rational guidelines.

### **Implication of the rational Approach to school administration**

- Because the school manager wants to accomplish the goals they know and accept, therefore, they must look at the problems that may arise in the process of achieving that goal.
- The school administrator must also gather information on other ways of achieving that goal.
- The school administrator is now in a position to choose the best alternative in achieving the goal of the institution.

### **Behavioural Approach (Administrative Model)**

This is a description of how actually decisions are made in difficult situations arising from undefined ways of reaching solutions, uncertainty and confused or ambiguous situations (Agi & Adiele, 2011). This approach was developed by James March and Herbert Simon in disagreement to the assumptions of the classical rational approach that managers have all the information needed before they reach a rational decision (Jones & George). They argued that managers lack the mental or psychological ability to make decisions that satisfy organizations requirements at all times.

### **Implications of Behavioural Aspect of Decision Making:**

- School heads take decisions out of the few information they have.
- School heads cannot have all the information they need to make decisions.
- Decisions made by school heads are just temporary.
- The decision cannot guarantee long lasting solutions.

## **Bounded rationality**

As we have seen, decisions are made under varying conditions ranging from certainty and risk to uncertainty. In the current environment managers seldom make decisions under the conditions of certainty that would be needed to apply a completely rational model. Sebbane (2014) submits that for many managers today the rational approach represents an ideal approach, but one that is simply not attainable under current conditions of risk and uncertainty.

Given the fact that managers cannot always make decisions under certainty conditions, and in a rational manner, they have to apply a less than perfect form of rationality. Herbert Simon called this 'bounded rationality', and argued that decisions taken by managers are bounded by limited mental capacity and emotions, and by environmental factors over which they have no control. Due to these limitations managers rarely maximize or take ideal decisions with the best possible outcomes. Intuition and judgment are therefore used by the manager to solve problems and make decisions. Taking a rational approach to problem solving and decision making involves clear identification of goals, objectives, alternatives, potential consequences and their outcomes (Elele & Fields, 2010). Each of these is in turn evaluated in terms of contribution to the overall aim. In judgmental decision making, the response to the need for a decision is usually rapid – too rapid to allow for an orderly sequential analysis of the situation – and the decision maker cannot usually give a veridical account of either the process by which the decision was reached or the grounds for judging it correct. As opined by Noah, (2008), psychological biases can influence judgment. For example, a manager might have to make a decision about where to establish a subsidiary office of the organisation. When making the decision the manager could be influenced by personal opinions, emotions and personal bias in favour of one location over another. This might be particularly noticeable if the manager is subsequently going to work in the office, as the choice might be heavily influenced by his/her desire to live in one location. In this way, total rationality is not applied as the manager may choose a location that s/he favours and this will not necessarily be the most rational choice. Another integral part of the bounded rationality approach is the notion that managers seek to *satisfice*, that is, settle for an alternative which is satisfactory, rather than continuing to search for the optimal solution. Satisficing may occur because the manager tires of the decision-making process and seeks to resolve the problem quickly with the first minimally acceptable solution rather than searching further for a better one.

Managers may also be unable to handle large amounts of complex information (Atulomah, 2011). Bounded rationality also recognized that managers may not have full and complete information and may experience problems processing information, which clearly affects a manager's ability to make optimal decisions. Decisions made under bounded rationality may not always be the best; however, on occasion good decisions have been made on the basis of judgment and gut feeling. Therefore, the rational approach associated with traditional economic theory proposes that managers seek to maximize benefits and in this sense outlines how managers should behave.

Bounded rationality, however, concentrates on how managers actually behave in practice when making decisions, and argues that limitations placed on managers mean that they will seek to *satisfice* rather than maximize.

### **The Conflict Approach (Political Model) developed by Karl Marx in 1848.**

While the previous approaches have concentrated on the role played by rationality in the decision-making process, the political model concentrates on the impact of organizational politics on decision making. Inamete, (2001) posited that power and politics play an important role in the decision-making process. Power is the ability to influence others. In the context of an organization power can be viewed as the ability to exert influence over individuals, work groups or departments. There are five main types of power found in the organizational setting:

1. **Legitimate** power originates from the manager's position within the organization's hierarchy. The power is inherent in the hierarchical position the manager occupies.
2. **Reward** power originates from the manager's ability to withhold rewards from others.
3. **Expert** power derives from the expert knowledge and information that an individual/manager has amassed.
4. **Referent** power originates from the charisma or identification that a manager has developed.
5. **Coercive** power is associated with emotional or physical threats to ensure compliance. In the decision-making process those who possess power are clearly an important dynamic. Political decision processes are used in situations where uncertainty, disagreement and lack of information are common. Within organizations it is common to find different coalitions, all of which possess varying degrees of power depending on the situation. Coalitions can be formed by particular work groups, teams, managers, functional specialists, external stakeholders and trade unions. Each group brings with it certain ideas and values, coupled with power, in relation to the decision under discussion. It is common for each coalition to defend its own territory and to ensure that any decisions made do not negatively impact on its members (both formal and informal). The presence of coalitions therefore adds an important ingredient to the decision-making process.

Different coalitions are likely to possess different and conflicting objectives. Depending on the relative power of each coalition, negotiation and compromise will feature strongly. In some cases the compromise and outcome will be a win-lose situation, which means that one coalition's gain is another's loss. In other cases a win-win situation can be generated. Oyebamiji, (2018) is of the view that the political model recognized that, apart from actually making the decision, many other factors are at work, including. Negotiation, compromise and power struggles. The presence of political forces can be beneficial to the decision-making process if it means that a wider range of issues is considered and greater input and commitment is achieved. On the other hand, power struggles may lead to a lack of focus on key issues and produce narrowly defined decisions largely following the self-interest of particular groups.

### **Implications of the Political Model in School Administration**

- The school managers do not engage in top level decision-making as managers in large corporations.
- They are expected to influence policy direction as practitioners in the field.
- For school managers to make their views receive attention, they should engage both themselves and other stakeholders in coalition or alliances.
- The staff in the school have and pursue different interests, goals, and therefore, disagreement is inevitable.
- The school administrator don't have all the information needed to make decision, therefore he has to select any option he feels is the best.
- Limited resources and skills of the school heads pose a lot of problem in making decisions.
- The school consults other teachers for to get more information in reaching decisions.

### **MEASURES OF EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOLS**

#### **Effective Principals' Administrative Role in Decision Making**

The administrative role of principals in secondary school today has made their responsibilities much more crucial than before, because of the complexities of the secondary school system and its administration. According to Blaise (2012), and other scholars, the roles of principals have moved from the use of power and formal authority to a more enabling leader. Again, Blaise (2012), and other scholars, identified the major functions of principal in decision making as: supervision of instruction and curriculum planning, students' personnel services decision, school discipline, and students' academic performance decision making Gemechu, (2014); and Ayeni, (2018). This implies that decision making is a vital aspect of the school system, such as staff and student discipline, which constitute a significant indicator of school effectiveness. Oloyede (2018), and other scholars, concluded that students' academic performance does not only enhance a school reputation by attracting new students for admission, but also serves as a full proof for justifying or determining the extent to which human resources have been committed to teaching and learning. The implication of this assertion is that students' academic performance has become a key to the gateway of functional school programme in measuring the principals' administrative effectiveness (Baker et al., 2010; and Tijani, 2020). One way of involving all stakeholders at a time in decision making process in the school is to bring them under one roof. Therefore, principal is seen as that of coordinator who make sure individuals' opinion count; moderator who ensure peaceful deliberation; and manager who delegate duties. The principal must be aware of individual difference that may come up within the group as well as that existence of social class. To this end, the principal must be tactful in dealing with individual member of the group to avoid any form of conflict (Mori, 2010; and Usman, 2016).

#### **Teachers' Participation in Decision Making**

There is a common view that schools will be more effective, if they are given more autonomy; and teachers are involved in the decision making of the school. In this context, Blaise (2012),

and other scholars, also confirmed the importance of teachers' involvement in decision making, when stated that high level of teachers' participation in decision-making would improve educational institutions. Teachers can take a greater role in the overall success of the school, when they commit to being active participants in the decision making process.

Also, Abahumna (2010), and other scholars, stated that an institution cannot really take stock of its efforts without informing its teachers. So, Abahumna (2010), and other scholars, added that teachers are interested not only in those policies which affect their personnel practices, but they have much to do and, hence, to say about the daily procedures of the institution (Okeke & Adedoyin). And perhaps, teachers are considered as curriculum implementer, they confront with daily challenges of teaching-learning. Therefore, in decision making process, teacher serves as a resources person that provides information to most problems in the school (Ijaiya, 2014).

### **Parental Involvement in Decision Making**

When infants are born into the world, their first place of contact is the family. Family is the first agent of socialization. It plays a major role in shaping the life of the child. Therefore, parental involvement in decision making is a necessary element of today's education in other to meet with diverse and constantly changing communities and culture; parent voices are essential to creating schools that can nurture and develop our students (Clutter, 2010: and Umeana, 2017). According to Miquel (2014), and other scholars, parent involvement can be described as the participation of parents in every facet of children's education and development from birth to adulthood; recognizing that parents are the primary influence in children's lives (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010).

Parent involvement, still according to Miquel (2014), and other scholars, take many forms, including: (1) Two-way communication between parents and schools; (2) Supporting parents as children's primary educators and integral to their learning; (3) Encouraging parents to participate in volunteer work; (4) Sharing responsibility for decision making about children's education, health, and well-being; and (5) Collaborating with community organizations that reflect schools' aspirations for all children (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). Adeyemo (2015), and other scholars, indicated that when parents are participating in their children's' education, there would be increase in their achievement (Ebuta & EkpoEloma, 2014). Oloyede (2018), and other scholars, also posited that parents who insist on checking student's school assignments at home tend to produce students with better academic performance than parents with careless attitudes towards their children school work (Ugwuegbulem, 2018). Parents can support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations, for example PTA (Parent-Teacher Association). They can become more involved in helping their children improve their schoolwork, providing encouragement, arranging for appropriate study time and space, modeling desired behavior (such as reading for pleasure), monitoring homework, and actively tutoring their children at home. Outside the home, parents can serve as advocates for the school; they can volunteer to help out with school activities or work in the classroom; or they can take an active role in the governance and decision making necessary for planning, developing, and providing an education for the community's children (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017). McNair et al.,

(2020) asserted that parents' participation requires going far beyond traditional notion of how families connect to their children's schools. The role of parents is no longer just that of supporters, but a collaborators and decision makers. As noted earlier, parents form part of school decision makers. Parents are the secondary evaluators (after the school) of the success of their children. So, parents' position in decision making process is as important as other stakeholders. They are in possession of community resources, which may be beneficiary to the school to achieve its goals and objectives (El-Nokali, et al., 2010).

### **Factors to Consider While Making Decision in School Administration**

Knowledge of the following factors contributing to decision complexities can help decision makers successfully navigate through difficult decision-making terrains:

**(a) Multiple criteria:** Typically, a decision must satisfy a number of criteria. These criteria include representing the interest of different groups, identifying stakeholders and balancing their conflicting interests and representing the interest of customers to retain their patronage. The issue of managing multiple interfaces of conflicting demands and interests is a nightmare for today's decision makers (Hammond, 2006).

**(b) Dealing with Intangibles:** Intangible factors such as customer goodwill, employee morale, and increasing bureaucracy often determine decision alternatives. Because these factors are intangible, they demand careful thought, tact and diplomacy to navigate through them successfully.

**(c) Long-term Implications:** Major decisions generally have ripple effect, with one decision taken today and then creating the need for subsequent decision tomorrow. For example, if an organization takes a decision to open a bank account with a view to obtaining future credit facilities, chances are that, a meeting has to be called again at a later date to decide on the choice of bank after the Financial Controller would have obtained full information on the facilities obtainable from different accessible banks.

**(d) Inter-disciplinary Input:** Decision complexity is greatly increased when specialists such as lawyers, customer advocates, tax advisers, accountants, engineers, and production and marketing experts are to be part of the decision-making team. The views and fears of different experts have to be weighed and analyzed before a decision is taken. It is a bit difficult to harmonize the views and expectations of experts in different fields into one decision-making opinion. Some executives question the idea of bringing-in many experts from different fields to make a decision since too many cooks could spoil the broth.

**(e) Pooled Decision-Making:** Rarely is a single manager totally responsible for the entire decision process. This is why we have board of directors, management team, and various committees to look at specific issues in an organization. This can be explained in the common

saying that “two good heads are better than one.” The various groups would meet, brainstorm and share best practices aimed at producing better outcome.

**(f) Rick and Uncertainty:** Along with every decision alternative is the chance that it may fail in some way. Poor choices can prove costly. Yet the right decision can open up new vista of opportunities. Moreover, Managers of business organizations today make decisions under two conditions. These are; conditions of certainty and uncertainty. A condition of certainty exists when there is no doubt about the factual basis of a particular decision, and its outcome can be predicted with a fair degree of accuracy. The concept of certainty is useful mainly as a theoretical anchor point on a continuum of likely and unlikely events. In a world filled with uncertainties, certainty can only be relative rather than absolute. Condition of uncertainty exists when little or no reliable factual information is available. Decision-making under conditions of uncertainty is a great headache for managers. A manager is forced to decide on some future event whose outcome cannot be predicted.

**(g) Frankenstein Monster Effect in Decision-Making:** The law of unintended consequences, according to experts on the subject states that “you cannot always predict the results of purposeful action.” Although, unintended consequences can be positive or negative, it is the negative ones that are really troublesome and they have been called the “Frankenstein Monster Effect.” This is a situation where an invention goes out of control to harm the inventor. Some decision-makers give little or no consideration to the full range of likely consequences of their decisions. Although, unintended consequences cannot be altogether eliminated in today’s complex world of decision-making, they can be moderated, to some extent, through creative thinking and careful consideration when making important decisions (Kreitner, 2007).

## CONCLUSION

Decision-making involves choice from a basket of alternatives. It is the process of identifying and choosing among alternative courses of action. A decision is a commitment to action. Every decision is risky. It is the commitment of present resources to an uncertain and unknown future. Experienced executives diagnose road-blocks to effective decision-making and choose approaches to overcome them. Effective decision-making demands precise and accurate strategies that would produce the desired results. Effective decision-making demands precise and accurate strategies that would produce maximum success. Some of the strategies that can be used in decision-making include; Decision making has never been easy. It is especially challenging for today’s school administrators. In an era of accelerating changes, the pace of decision making also has accelerated. In addition to having to cope with this acceleration, today’s decision makers face a host of tough challenges. These challenges include a situation where they have to make complex streams of decisions, and making decisions on the face of uncertainties.

On the other hand it can be concluded that rational decision making play a pivotal role in the administration of the school. Involving all the stakeholders of the school in decision making will enable the principal to see other stakeholders as resources from which he/she can tap their

knowledge and experience to bring about school effectiveness. Teachers as a curriculum implementer and parents (the host community) play important roles in decision making process. Also, as this adage goes, “no man is an island of body of knowledge” and another adage say “two good heads are better than one”, this implies that ideas can be shared among stakeholders in the school, which can bring about good decisions that can in turn leads to improved students’ academic performance, which is the measure of school effectiveness.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on this study, the following suggestions were made for improvement:

- 1 The managers should develop managerial skills that will enhance effective participation of other stakeholders for enough reliable information before making decision.
- 2 The principal should create an interactive environment for teachers’ and parents’ involvement in school decision making process;
- 3 Effort must be made by the principals to evaluate and compare alternatives before final decision is made; and
- 4 Finally, to ensure school effectiveness, principal should make sure implementation stage are followed accordingly as agreed by the stakeholders involved in that decision. This will enable each of them to see the project as their own.

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