
Decision–Making Competence for Effective School Administration

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Abstract

This paper is focused on decision-making competence for effective school administration. Decision-making competence is a learnable, teachable, and acquirable habit. The paper delineated the decision-making that centred on a seven-point process of administration; Planning, Organization, Staffing, Directing, Co-ordination, Reporting, Budgeting and Evaluation. It was fathomed that decision made by the principal determines the upward or downward movement of the school, hence, the need for this competence. It is suggested that, since decision-making competence is learnable, teachable, and acquirable, principals should ensure that decision-making competence is harnessed and put into good use; for every decision made, the principal ought to take lessons from its outcome to improve subsequent decisions.

Keywords: Decision-making, Educational administration, Administrative competencies, Effective management.

INTRODUCTION

In school organization, decision making is the core responsibility of the administrator and success in school administration, depends on the decision making ability of the administrator. It takes good decision to get the school actualize its educational goals. Every organizational leader has a vital responsibility of decision making. Decision making is the ability to find solutions to difficult or complex issues in an orderly manner. The administrators of schools ought to possess aptitude in regards to the decision making in the school, and are liable for carrying out the decision made, they should also to be engaged with settling on the decision made. In line with the thoughts of Nas (2006), decision making competence is a learnable, teachable, and acquirable habit.

In every stage of life, decisions are for one or by one himself. For instance, when two consenting adults come together in marriage to start a family, decisions are made on the running of their new family; home/accommodation, time of conception, how many children they would

want to have and when the children start coming, the need for decision on the choice of school, trainings etc. will surface. Decision making is an unavoidable part of all human endeavours. In making decision we rely on the resources available to us in that area of decision. To decide means to reach a conclusion, after considering duly all matters pertaining to the situation that requires the decision.

Hoy and Miskel, (2001) in Owhondah (2020), postulated decision making as the sine qua non to education administration, because a school like all other organization, is a decision making structure. Decision making in school administration is centred on a seven-point process of administration as developed by Gulick and Urwick in 1937. These seven points process are; Planning, Organization, Staffing, Directing, Co-ordination, Reporting, Budgeting and Evaluation. In a school decision making involves choosing the best/generally acceptable and workable alternative activity among different choices or elective game-plans accessible, either towards taking care of issues or meeting the educational goal of the school. Gibson and Ivancevich, (2006), portrayed decision making in the following route: establishing specific goals and objectives and measuring results, identifying problems, alternative development, evaluating the alternatives, alternative choices, implementing the decision, control and evaluation. It means that, a school principal should be able to effectively manage the school resources through good decision making which is one of the crucial competencies that ought to be possessed.

Theories of Decision Making

Theories on decision making are managerial approaches that aid managers to make decisions that are effective for more productivity in their organizations. Administrators of schools can apply the principles of these theories when making decisions on the processes of their school and achieve great results on productivity and actualization of the objectives of the school. Decision making theory is an interdisciplinary approach that helps arrive at decisions in the most advantageous way. Decision theories bring together multiple disciplines, including mathematics, psychology, statistics and philosophy, to analyse decision-making processes. Decisions are driven by the people, either through individual or group participation. Decision theories help study people's choices through a set of concepts, principles, tools and techniques. They allow decision makers to determine the best course of action among a set of alternatives. It helps in problem-solving and arriving at solutions that lead to business growth and increased profitability. It Helps pick the best possible alternative among various choices, helps calculate risks and analyze possible solutions to mitigate risks, and helps improve efficiency and achieve organizational goals in lesser time. When individuals, especially managers and team leaders, make rational choices and logical decisions, it reduces risks and positively influences organizational growth. Over time, decision making theories have come up as instrumentation for guiding choices and landing at good decisions. Below are some of these theories;

Vroom-Yetton Decision Making Theory

One of the most popular decision theories, the Vroom-Yetton Model (1973) was developed by

Victor Vroom, a business management professor, alongside another management professor, Philip Yetton. It suggests that there is no one perfect process to make decisions. Instead, your situation determines what the best process should be. It uses a 'yes or no' approach, where asking relevant questions can help you reach decisions. For example: is teamwork important for the decision? One of the biggest strengths of this decision theory approach in management is its flexibility. Anyone at any organizational level can use it to make decisions.

Scott and Bruce Approach

Scott and Bruce (1995) identified from earlier research, four decision styles and explained them in the following behavioural terms:

- Rational decision-making style: here logical methods are employed by decision makers when gathering information, determining alternatives and evaluations, and acting on the chosen decision (Yildiz, 2012).
- Intuitive decision-making style: Intuitive decision makers take ideas and events together with their relations and interactions. On account of this situation, they may lose their productivity and find trouble dealing with the system involved in the decision-making process (Yaslioglu, 2007).
- Dependent decision-making style: Dependent decision makers avoid taking responsibility and need a lot of social support (Girgin and Kocabiyik, 2003). They often require and trust the ideas of others in place of their own. Dependent Decision makers generally ask questions such as: "what do you think?"; "what should I do?"; or "if you were me what would you do?"
- Avoidant decision-making-style: when a decision maker is at the point of deciding, he/she may postpone the task, or delegate the responsibility of making a choice to someone else. If the risks are very high, and individuals need to make decisions under time pressure, they may display high stress levels (Colakkadioglu, 2013).
- Spontaneous decision-making style: impatient and indecisive people can avoid exploring alternatives, and they might settle on the most immediately pleasing choice rather than taking time to think through the process decisionmaking in a logical way (Sardogan, Karahan, and Kaygusuz, 2006).

Effective decision making is an integral part of school management. Principals, teachers and even students need to make rational and sound decisions every day. The right decisions, choices and approaches help in meeting the educational goals more efficiently. It helps the school to adopt and implement measures that optimize growth in terms of teaching and learning. In other words, decisions drive actions.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The subtopics below are concepts considered in this paper to shed light on the Principals' Decision-making Competence for Effective Administration of Secondary Schools.

Decision-Making

Decision making involves the processes of identifying opportunities or problems and taking advantage of the opportunities or finding a way to solve the problem. So in a school, the principal seeks opportunities of advantage for the furthering of the course of educational goal of the school and also identifying problems and solving them. He achieves these with the help of the educational resources available to him, especially the human resources, which are the teachers/academic staff members, non-academic staff members, pupils, parents and other stake holders of the school.

Managing education in the 21st century requires advanced knowledge in administration, making use of technologies that accommodate and enable e-learning. It is good to note that the 21st century learners are excited when their learning is package in certain ways that accommodate the frequent changing trends. This will require making discoveries on the new approaches to teaching and learning, and making decision on the best option to work with amongst several and making accurate decision on the best approach, suitable for the school based on its peculiarity and the attainment of the goal of the school. This is where decision making competence of the school administrator comes in. As the trends change, he ought to make discoveries towards change and innovation and has to make decisions on the best approach to choose for his school, in order to stay relevant in meeting the educational need and goal of the school.

Owhondah, (2020), opined that several decisions are made by managers from a certain number of factors they have considered. The reality is that, there may be many more factors unknown to them that should be put into consideration. Analysing the alternatives and taking note of possible consequences is of great importance. He emphasised that once a decision is made, it needs to be accepted by the staff members, who must first of all have the decision communicated to them. They must also be motivated to implement the decision. Applying this in the school system, the principal must critically analyse each alternative to be considered in decision making, and the outcome to choosing any of them above the others. Every stake holder of school need to be carried along in the process. This will encourage them to put in their best during the implementation stage.

In line with the thoughts of Amalia, Komariah, Sumarto and Asri (2020), the factors that sway decision making include: The Intangible and intangible; the emotional and rational things that are needed to be taken into consideration in decision making; every decision must be made tangible to achieve goals; decision are not made for personal interests, but should be concerned with the group interests; decision making is a mental action, and must be translated into physical action; effective decision making requires a long time; decision making must be practical in order to get better results; Every decision should be institutionalized so that the decision is made known; Each decision is the initial action of a series of activities in the next chain.

School Administrators' Decision-making Competencies

Competencies are the ability to do something successfully or efficiently. Decision-making is one of the competencies a school administrators need to possess in order to function efficiently

in the actualization of the educational goal of the school. Abbot (1974) in Peretomode (2014), spots out five decision making competencies that enable the school administrator function effectively; 1. Competent in differentiating the different types of decisions, 2. Competent in determining the amount of information needed to reach a decision, 3. Competent in determining the appropriate involvement of other people in reaching decisions, 4. Competent in establishing priorities for action and, 5. Competent in anticipating both intended and unintended consequences of decisions.

Reasons for Decision-Making in a School

Just like in every other organization, decision-making is a vital aspect of the administrative processes in a school. Agabi, (2020), stated that decision-making enables the school administrator to coordinate activities of various departments in a school for optimal actualization of the educational goals of the school. For effective administration of the school decisions are to made in the following areas; Curriculum implementation, Implementation of educational laws and policies, Maintenance of administrative control, Sustenance of positive relationship among workers, Sustenance of quality of teachers, and maintenance of school community relations. She further stated the different areas in the school that need decision making, they are; the use of time, distribution of teachers, distribution of resources, use of resources, infrastructural development, plant maintenance, and fund management. Basically, the school system runs on decision making in every sense.

Areas that Require Administrative Decision-making Competence in the School

There are sensitive areas that critically need the school administrators to display expertise in decision-making. Incompetence in decision-making in these areas will have adverse effects that will affect other areas of the school. It is imperative that school administrators possess or endeavour to acquire knowledge that will equip them to be effective in adequate management of their schools through decision-making. These areas are;

Human Resource Managements

The school administrators' human resource management comprise of important areas such as recruitments and selection of teaching staff and non-teaching staff. They identify the specific job requirements for the particular position to which the teacher is going to be deployed, either as a class teacher, subject teacher or duty post officer, as the case may be. Human resource management being one of the crucial departments within the education history is concerned with the development and application of policies governing manpower planning, placement, training, working conditions and employment services. Staff projection is one of the important aspect of human resource management. The principal is expected to design and develop strategies to enhance interrelationship among groups, staff projection and the projection of various department in the school. Ololube (2019), opined that human resources are the human beings, workers, labourers, human agents, workers in firms, industries, factories, offices, harbours, ports, schools, colleges, ships, etc.

Time Management

One of the greatest assets of any organization is time and it is of essence for school administrators to be competent in its management. Competence is required for the identification of various activities to be carried out in the school, making appropriate plans and decision towards them and placing them in order of priority within the right time frame available. The activities of the school administrators on a given day may be determined in part by advanced planning and scheduled routine obligations, however there other factors that play major roles in influencing the administrators' time management practices, such include; unplanned events, inadequate resources, fear, ignorance and others.

School Plant Management

An essential factor to actualization of the educational goal of the school is the school plant. It contributes to the teaching and learning input and out of the school, hence, the need for constant upgrading to avoid going into obsolesce. In the delivering education in the 21st century, certain conditions have to be critically considered when putting up or upgrading the school. Most school plants in the state have existed in the past centuries and need to be upgraded to meet the educational needs dynamics of the present century. It's quite unfortunate that, this in most cases are not considered very important when planning education in most public schools. To this note, school administrators ought to be enlightened and competent with modern facilities and processes of education in the 21st century. This will propel them to seek for ways to get their schools get on point as regards to effective and efficient delivering education services for the now and have the competitive power among their counterparts all over the world. Research findings support the contention that a strong relationship exists between the quality of a school plant and the academic achievement of students (Ololube, 2019).

Financial Resource Management

One of the school administrator's basic role is financial management. Essentially, the principal's ability to effectively manage the school depends on the amount of funds made available to him or provisions made towards that and what he is able to generate within the school. Good financing is needed in manage the school to the point of good productivity actualization of the goals of the school. This is achieved through the provisions of adequate infrastructure, staffing, purchase and maintenance of equipment, creating enabling and stimulating teaching and learning environment. All these afore mentioned require good funding. The financial plan made by the principal must be free of any form of ambiguity. Clearly stating how to meet the cost of services needed for the educational programmes in the school. This accountability must be on both the internally and externally generated funds for the running of the school. Education as a social service is expensive to run and maintain and as such requires the financial support of all tiers of government (Robert-Okah, 2014).

Stages in Decision Making

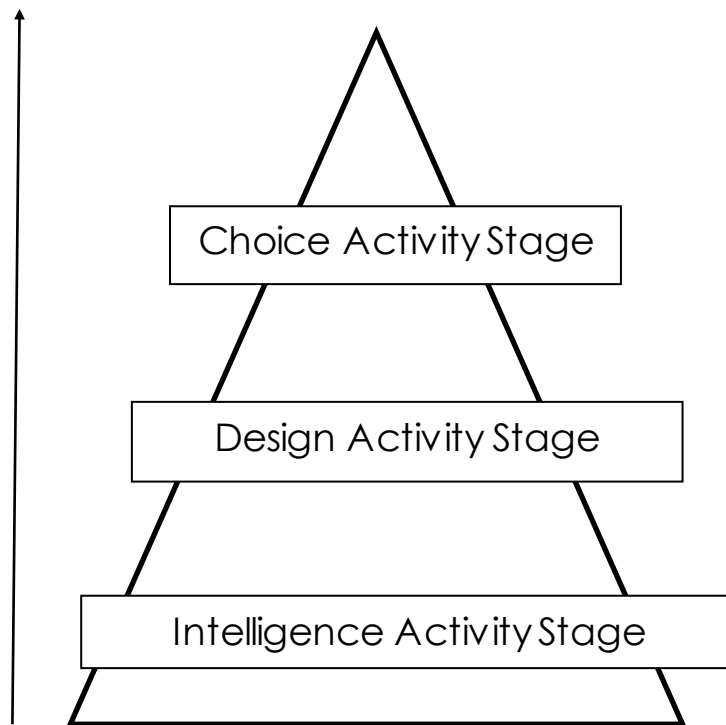


Figure 1: Stages in Decision Making

Source: Writer's Illustration of Harbert A. Simon's Opinion on Decision-making.

There are three stages in decision making discovered by Harbert A. Simon in 1947. They are; Intelligence Activity Stage: At this stage, people identify the problems in an organization and the upper management analyzes the organizational environment to work toward a solution.

Design Activity Stage: In order to identify possible solutions to problems, the upper management looks for suitable strategies. They further analyze the merits and demerits to select a particular course of action.

Choice Activity Stage: After making a list of alternatives, the choice activity stage begins. It critically examines and evaluates the various consequences of all alternatives and the most suitable course of action is selected. This stage requires creativity, judgment and quantitative analysis skills.

Types of Decisions

Simon (1960) in Peretomode (2014), distinguished decision into; Programmed and Non-programmed decision, based on the type of problem.

Programmed Decision: Programmed decision are those decisions that as of now have an arrangement or rule set up and is utilized to arrive at an answer or resolution. In other words,

managers have already made such decisions before and it's a repetitive and routine process. Programme decision is also known as generic or routine decision. So in a secondary school, decisions on how many students the school can admit in a session is programmed based on the number of classrooms available and the work force on ground. The choice of textbooks will be based on subjects being offered in the school.

Non-Programmed Decision: Non-programmed decisions are single shot choices/ decisions. Taken care of by procedures like judgment, instinct, and imagination. A logical approach to deal with extraordinary, unexpected, and unique problems. Administrators adopt heuristic critical thinking strategies in which rationale; good judgment and experimentation are utilized.

Elements of Decision-Making

These are the features of decision making process. In school management these decision making features are; Problems, Objectives, Alternatives, and Choices.

Problems: are situations needing to be dealt with and overcome. Problems bring about inquiry starting from given conditions to investigate or demonstrate a fact. This fact could be a result, or law. In school administration, the need for decision making arises when there is a problem at hand or an envisaged problem. The decision is mostly to discover the cause of the problem, solution to the problem, prevention of the reoccurrence of the problem or averting its occurrence.

Objectives: This aspect of decision making is not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice; it is based on facts; and unbiased. Giving specifications on objectives of decision making aids the school administrator to figure out all possible modes of action, the reason for the decision, and best option to be chosen to arrive to a favourable decision in a particular situation.

Alternatives: There can only be choices when there are alternatives. Agabi (2020), opined that the existence of alternatives is an indication that more than one course of action exists.

Choices: Choices are range of possibilities from which one or more may be chosen. In school administration, the principal ought to make choices in the right direction for the achievement of the educational goals of the school. Actualization of specific objectives requires consideration of the best course of action.

Styles of Decision-Making

There are four styles of decision-making according to Career Foresight Coaching (2019). Analytical, Directive, Conceptual and Behavioural.

Analytical: here the decision maker is logical in reasoning, committed to finding best answers, derives pleasure in solving problems, works comfortably with large quantity of information and

data, will tarry until best option is found, is innovative and accommodates varieties and new challenges. **While making responsible decisions is a strength** of analytical style decision-makers, **their weaknesses tend to be making timely decisions, communicating with others and managing stress during the decision-making period.**

Directive: the decision maker here direct, guide, and usually impel toward an action or goal, result oriented, depends basically on rules of procedure, is aggressive in operations, intuitive in nature, will rather make decisions alone, excellent in verbal communication, spontaneous in response, informs people once a decision has been made and very open-minded. However, **directive style decision-makers tend to struggle with receiving advice, responding to differing opinions and creating a plan in new or uncertain situations.**

Conceptual: based on mental concepts, this decision maker is creative, considerate, especially on how his decisions will affect others, is a great achiever, can handle 'What Ifs', always comes up with new ideas, has foresight, **but many conceptual style decision-makers find their weaknesses tend to be taking action on a decision, adequately planning for what a choice will involve and follow-through.**

Behavioural: this decision maker is a team player, seeks others opinions and advice, a good communicator, empathic, manages well all the stakeholders, persuasive in nature and relies on implied data. However, **their weaknesses are not trusting themselves and difficulty dealing with conflict.** Behavioural style decision-makers can easily lose themselves in the advice and opinions of others. They may be called "people pleasers". **Conflict is challenging for them to manage. To avoid it, they sometimes take on unnecessary amounts of responsibility and stress.**

CONCLUSION

Every step taken in school administration requires a decision or decisions to be made. Decision making has ripple effects, and should be done carefully, having all the necessary information needed. Good or bad decision, will lead to another good or bad decision to be made. For the school to be effectively managed, the administrator needs to possess certain competencies which decision making ability is one of. Decision-making entails establishing specific goals and objectives and measuring results, identifying problems, alternative development, evaluating the alternatives, alternative choices, implementing the decision, control and evaluation.

SUGGESTIONS

1. School administrators should pay great attention to the importance and effect of decision-making in their administrative roles.
2. Since decision-making competence is learnable, teachable, and acquirable, the Administrators of schools should ensure his decision-making competence is harnessed and put into good use.

3. For every decision made, the School administrator ought to take lessons from its outcome to improve the subsequent decisions to be made.
4. School administrators should of necessity be exposed to trainings, seminars, further studies that will improve their decision making competence and the implementation of these exposures be required of them in their administrative roles.
5. Decision making competence amongst other administrative competencies should be a prerequisite for giving one the role and position as a secondary school principal, hence, aptitude test and appraisal be done at every level of school administration.

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