THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATORY DECISION MAKING IN ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Many studies have been conducted on decision making, but little has been known about participatory decision making as an essential ingredient in the quest for better organizational management. Research has shown that participatory decision making contributes to better decisions and strategies. Thus, this paper is an attempt to investigate the influence of participatory decision making in organizational management in some selected schools in Katsina State in the Northern part of Nigeria. The subordinate aims of this paper is to describe the factors promoting participatory decision making and factors hindering it, and introduce a simple mechanism for making good decision in organization when everybody is carried along from Islamic perspective. Finally, the paper also highlights advantages and disadvantages of participatory decision-making in organizational management and the author gives suggestion for future investigation on impact of this subject matter, especially from Islamic approach

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Introduction

Practicing participatory decision making has been long acknowledged as an essential ingredient in the quest for better organizational management such as schools. Before delving in the subject matter as identified above, it is good to define the components that constitute this topic of interest.

Based on this, participation is a word showing democratic practice in educational management but it is still a rare occurrence in practice (Bonner, 1974, Padley, 1974). Also, there are various definitions to decision making, Collins (1999) defines decision as the act of making up one's mind by collecting, sharing and gathering significant ideas from different sources. Moreover, Longman (2000) defines that "decision as a choice or judgment that you make after a period of discussion or thought". Additionally, Fullan (1982) asserts that decision-making is the process of identifying and choosing alternative courses of action in a manner appropriate to the demand of the situation. However, Ogunsunji (1990) shares the same view noting that "decision making is selection among several alternatives, making a course of action". Another author suggests that, decision-making is to make a choice or judgment about something, especially after a period of not knowing what to do or in way that ends in disagreement (Alam 2008).

In a nut shell, decision-making is a process of deciding. The act of choosing implies that alternative courses of action must be weighed and weeded by sharing.

From these abovementioned definitions, participation in decision-making may refer to a situation where the head seeks others' opinions and recommendations on an issue but finally makes his/her own decision (Edmondson et al., 2003).

So there is a very strong relationship between decision-making and participation as asserted by Alam (2008). Kreitner (1999) believes that good management can be defined in terms of good

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coordination of an organization's employees. Mullins (2000), Moorhead and Griffin (2000) posit that decision making is one of the first and a crucial step in management.

Recently, scholars suggest that there are two approaches which can have impact on organizational management namely; the universal and the participatory based management models (Mullins, 2000; Miller, 1995; Weaver, 1974).

Participatory decision making is thus expected to lead to better decisions and strategies, as well as to reduce conflicts and facilitate enforcement in organization. So to say, decision making is one of every day pre-occupation of secondary school principals, especially those concerned with solving disciplinary problems and other vital issues. Hence decision may be quite complex involving a number of people, training, knowledge and factual input probably in an organizational setting like school. Decision-making in this area requires a considerable amount of training and accumulation of data and knowledge based on the part of the administrator. This makes participative decision very vital in application of management or administration of secondary schools. As such several authors have recently suggested that participation in decision making is an expression of "normative consideration for the democratic principle" (Stirling, 2006), that is, a "combination of deliberation and equitable involvement of parties" (Renn, 2006) in an organization as opposed to the traditional view of representative command and control management (Sgobbi et al.,2004).

Participatory decision making leads to problem solving and decision making. The problem solving is that those involve in shared decision making incorporate their judgment to determine appropriate treatment options and that decision making involves individuals solving a certain problem to determine which treatment options best satisfy everybody therein.

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Thus, this paper refers to the involvement of various stakeholders in the management of organization and the influence their decision will have on such organization.

Aims and objectives

The central objective of this paper is to analyze the impact of participatory decision making, concept and need for individual involvement in decision making for the effectiveness of management of any given organization.

The subordinate aims of this paper is to investigate about individuals to be involved in participatory decision making in organization, describe the factors promoting participatory decision making and factors hindering it, and introduce a simple mechanism for making good decision in organization when everybody is carried along from Islamic perspective.

Problems

Participatory decision-making approach plays a vital role in organization, however, very little is known about how decision is made amongst the stakeholders in organization, the processes that lead to it, and its practicability in the real sense is often lacking in organizational management. Particularly, the issue of the bureaucracy model of management which fails to ensure a 'management of accountability' because of corruption, lack of inter departmental coordination and weak organizational culture (Hashim et al., 2010).

Halliday (1993) observes that, many teachers in most sub Saharan African countries lack self-esteem and commitment to their profession which he attributes partly to lack of participatory decision management styles, suggesting that participatory decision making in those countries is poorly understood or applied.

Based on little research works on the good impact of participatory decision making in managing the organization, the World Bank's governance model has been widely criticized as

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being inconsistent with the basic tenets of democratic and accountable decision-making, and therefore inappropriate for a public development institution. Many critics have argued to mention but a few that the Bank is not sufficiently representative, transparent, open to public participation, or directly accountable to those who are affected by its operations (World Bank, 2005).

Apart from that, more recent studies show a lack of patients' involvement in decisions making in the treatment and physicians have been encouraged to adopt a more participatory style to improve the situation (Shields et al., 2005), since the treatment is mostly likely related to the patients rather than the physicians. While, participatory decision making is probably most closely related to a deliberative model in which physicians elicit and respect patients' values, but physicians will also offer expertise and recommendations, sometimes using persuasion to adopt healthier options if initial consensus could not be reached.

Literature

In emphasizing participatory decision making in organizational management, a volume of studies suggests that most of the innovations are being introduced in the field of educational management to encourage decentralization and implementation of collaborative school governance (Anderson, 1998; Chan and Chui, 1997; Walker and Dimmock, 2000), the shared school governance leads to a more democratic administrative approach in which planning and decision making are devolved to the individual school (Doran, 1999), and that, frequently groups, rather than individuals, make decisions in school organizations (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008).

In characterizing successful schools, researchers commonly list five school-level factors, which include collaborative planning/collegial work and parental/community participation

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(Creemers, 1994; Edmonds, 1979; Joyce, 1991; Marzano, 2003; Purkey& Smith, 1983). Golarz and Golarz (1995) assert that "high levels of parental involvement and support, collaborative collegial instructional planning, individual school autonomy and the resulting flexibility" (p. 3) are effective school characteristics that justify the implementation of participatory governance. In fact, Cheng and Cheung (2003) have observed that efforts to enhance organizational effectiveness since 1990s have featured participative management. As such, Caldwell and Spinks (1992) point out that, securing a "synergy of communities" (p. 131) is the key to attainment of educational benefits. It should be noted, however, that attempts to involve stakeholders should be geared beyond mere participation but towards meaningful involvement (Waters, Marzano,& McNulty, 2003).

Moreover, research carried out on teachers-parental involvement in school administration show that, allowing teachers and stakeholders to take part in decision-making yields salutary results. Furthermore, employee satisfaction, motivation, morale and self-esteem are suggested to affect positively by involvement in decision-making and implementation (Chapman & Boyd, 1986; Doyle & Wells, 1996; Driscoll, 1978; English, 1979; Gamage& Pang, 2003; Hargreaves& Hopkins, 1991; Hunton, Hall, & Price, 1998; Jenkins Jr.& Lawler III, 1981; Lawler III, Mohrman, & Ledford Jr., 1992; Lindelow& Bentley, 1989; Locke &Schweiger, 1979; Vroom, 1960; Watkins, 1985).

Interestingly, researchers claim that better decisions and greater efficiency are reached in organization since issues are discussed extensively via open communication among people having varying viewpoints involved in participative set-ups (Connors, 1978; Dachler&Wilpert, 1978; Fidler& Bowles, 1989; Gamage, 1996b; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Hoy & Tarter,

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1993; Likert, 1967; Lindelow& Bentley, 1989; Lindelow, Coursen, Mazzarella, Heynderickx, & Smith, 1989; Locke &Schweiger, 1979; Owens, 1998; Powers & Powers, 1983; Rosener, 1990).

Another noteworthy impact of participatory management is that participants tend to have a sense of ownership of change initiatives and eventually extend stronger support to realize the goals of such efforts (Duke, Showers, &Imber, 1980; Gamage, 1996c; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Kefford, 1985; Lindelow& Bentley, 1989; Melcher, 1976) and implementing participative management practices is also known to yield the following benefits: heads cannot easily manipulate people (Watkins, 1985); and additional resources become available to the organization (Gamage, Sipple, & Partridge, 1996; King & Swanson, 1990; Lienhart&Willert, 2002) as Driscoll (1978) argues that when people have stronger trust in the organization's decision makers, they tend to be more satisfied with their level of participation because it is on everybody's decision, even if everybody is not included.

Also, Hashim et al., (2010) assert that, even there are demerits in participation in decision-making, it enlivens all the members of an organization or institution and when all the members are enlivened, it becomes easier for the heads to run the institution smoothly.

Advantages of Participatory Decision-Making and Its Impact on Organizational Management

As Hashim et al., (2010) suggests, there are many merits and demerits in using participatory decision making model in the administration of organization, such merits based on studies are;

According to Shields et al., (2005), participatory decision making has been reported to affect health outcomes, including control of chronic disease and functional outcomes in medicine. To put it differently, Hashim et al., (2010) advocate that, the real implementers of a decision are workers and various levels of employees; as such the participatory model not only facilitate in

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the implementation of decisions but also help in making communication among those involved in the process easier.

It is also said that when people participate in decision-making process they enjoy many advantages such as; 'greater pool of knowledge', 'different perspectives', and 'greater comprehension' 'increased acceptance and motivation', 'training ground' and 'empowerment'. Kreitner (1999) believes that, good management can be defined in terms of good coordination of an organization's employees. Mullins (2000), Moorhead and Griffin (2000) posit that decision making is one of the first and a crucial step in management.

Participation can improve the quality and legitimacy of decision making processes and can build the capacity of participants to engage in the policy process (Dietz and Stern 2008), lead to more just decisions (Baiocchi 2003, Meadowcroft 2004, Fung 2006), possibly redistribute resources (Baiocchi 2003), brings about greater acceptance of decisions, transparency in government, increased democracy, as well as environmentally and economically sustainable management and social learning (Mostert 2003).

According to many studies, participation strengthens relationships among individuals and builds capacity of the groups who participate (Fung and Wright 2003), helps citizens come to understand their interests in the first place and how those interests relate to and depend on those of other citizens (Dietz and Stern 2008).

Levine (1973) found that, the equality of power distribution called participation in the egalitarian groups was a crucial key to the improved problem solving performance. It has been argued that, every human being has the right to participate in decisions that define her or his life. This right is the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision-making among women and men. Women should participate equally with men to have their perspective effectively

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incorporated at all levels of decision-making, from the private to the public spheres of their lives, from the local to the global (Miranda, 2005).

Different writers have argued in favor of participatory decision-making. Bachelor (1980), Armstrong (1984), Dwivedi (1988) and Maritim (1988), observe that involving subordinates in decision making improves the quality of the decision and the effectiveness of the organization which leads to achievement of the organizational goals.

Tyree (1969) arguing in support of teachers' involvement in decision making says:

"if we accept the tenet that in a democracy those who are affected by decisions should participate in making decisions, the demands of the professional staff form a significant part in the decision making process in the school system… The days of the head teachers' paternalism are fast coming to an end and in a democracy the school, like government, is of the people and by the people (p.35)."

Some other benefits participatory decision making approaches can yield when utilized in organization in accordance to many extant literature (Habitat, 2009; World Bank, 2005) are given below:

1. Quick decisions
2. Enhanced quality of decisions
3. Increased responsibility and accountability
4. Enhanced commitment of members
5. Enhanced self confidence
6. Increased transparency in working
7. Enhanced co-ordination and co-operation among members
8. Improved quality of work
9. Time savings
10. Increased flexibility in working
11. Training and education of members
12. Improved performance
13. Healthy environment
14. Creative problem solving

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15. Enhanced trust among members
16. Shared /collective responsibility
17. Distributed work
18. Risk factors lowered down
19. Ready to face the challenges
20. Sustained interest in work
21. Work does not suffer
22. Quick implementation of decisions
23. Less conflict
24. Effective utilization of resources
25. Effective communication at all levels
26. Good interpersonal relationship
27. Member's satisfactions
28. Good discipline
29. Amicable settlement of disputes
30. Reduced power inequality
31. Desired change in behavior
32. Acceptance of change
33. Establishment of democratic values
34. Motivation to contribute for situation
35. Preparation of employees for higher job

Disadvantages of Participatory Decision Making and Its Impact on Organizational Management

It is also has to be note that, everything that is good also equally has a number of disadvantages. This situation does apply on participatory decision making.

A number of scientific works show that, making decision through participatory procedure can lead to 'lack of accountability' (Handy, 1993, Kreitner, 1999), 'social pressure' (Kreitner, 1999), 'domination by a vocal few' (Morgan, 1986), 'goal displacement' (Handy, 1993), 'groupthink', (Miller, 1995) among others.

In some instances, even if there is a very strong relationship between decision-making and participation, it has been noted that the participation approach in decision making ensure

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ostensible democratizing that results in a decision that is detrimental to the organization (Alam, 2003).

Organizational Chart of Decision-Making Process and Its Ingredients

The participatory decision-making process could be described through the following graph of Activities according to Habitat (2009):
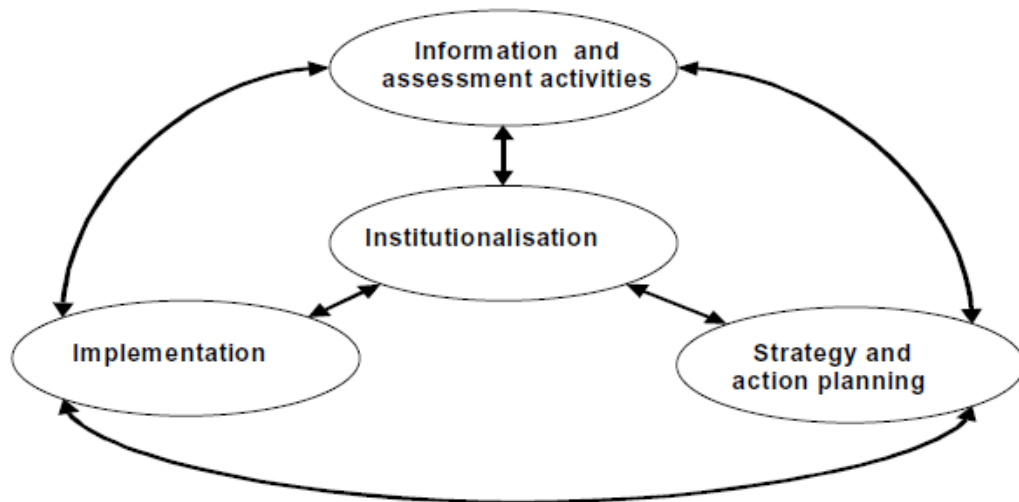
This chart is a simple process; it is called "three-plus-one" activities:

(1) Information and Assessment Activities: this is a situation whereby decision is assessed continuously and relevant information is gathered on an ongoing basis. At this stage, the most relevant information and assessment must be made while gathering and analyzing the data.

(2) Strategy and Action Planning: This is a situation whereby strategies and action plans are drawn up jointly and agreed upon by all stakeholders in the organization. At this stage, priority issues should be addressed though strategy and action planning. Resources available

among stakeholders have to be identified and mobilized. All concerned stakeholders should

agree upon realistic strategies and action plans based on available resources.

(3) Implementation: This is a situation whereby strategies and action plans are implemented by the heads or their deputies. All the involved stakeholders must be fully committed and the tasks ahead of them be clearly defined. If such a decision-making process is to be improved and consolidated on a continuing basis, it is crucial that good practices will reach the last stage ''institutionalization'.

(4) Institutionalization: This is situation whereby throughout the process, participatory capacities will be built and arrangements for a sustainable decision-making process will be institutionalized.

The Decision Making-Pattern Choice Model

Another approach to shared decision making in organizational management, developed by Robert Tannenbaum and Warren Schmidt (2010) specifying circumstances under which participation should be used is as shown below. The authors of this model posited seven different decisions making patterns, ranging on a continuum from what they call "boss-centered decision making" to "subordinate-centered decision making."
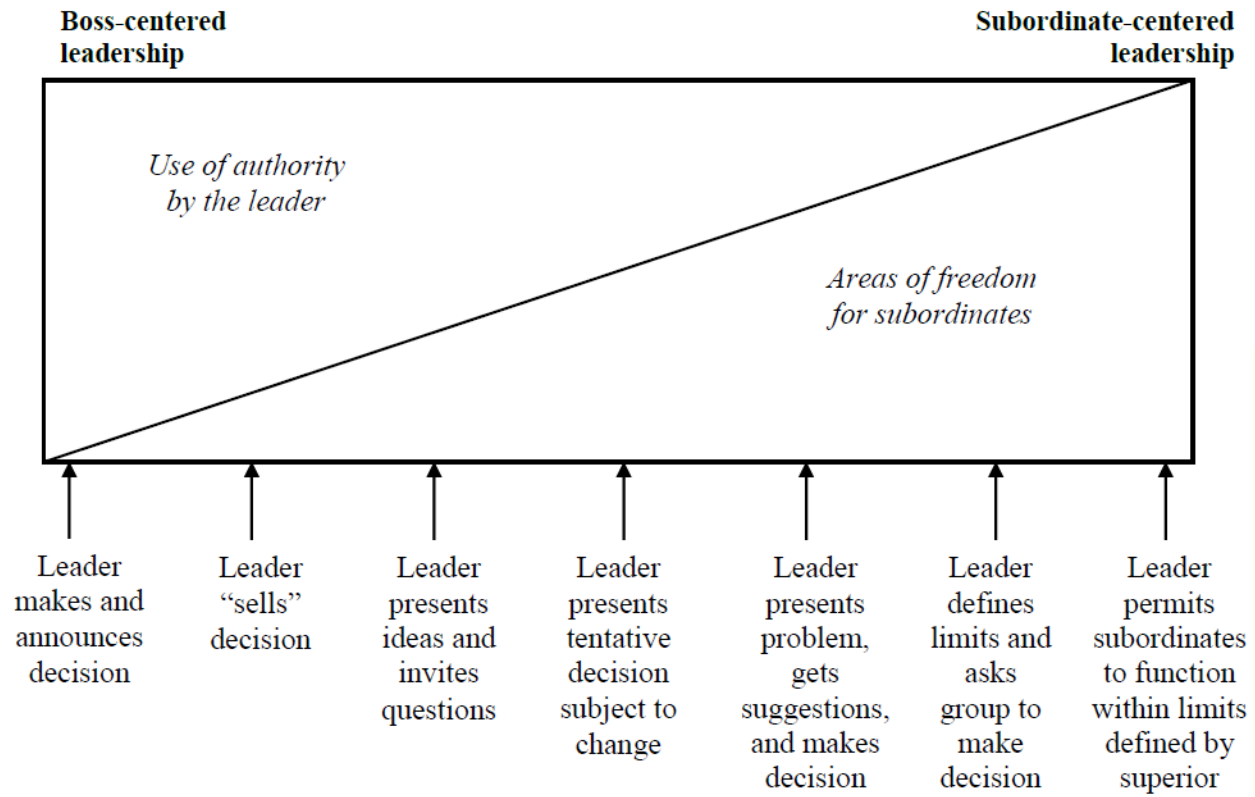
According to Vroom-Yetton-Jago (1988) the level of group involvement in the decision-making process requires the leader to diagnose a problem situation and the effect participation the group will have on the quality of the decision, level of staff members' acceptance, and the time available to make the decision.

Looking at this model, participatory decision making starts to take hold at the forth level of the rectangle that is, when the leader presents tentative decision subject to changes.

Levels and Forms of Participation in Decision Making

Having defined participation in terms of boss and subordinates in decision making, it becomes also necessary to showcase that participation can be classified into:

A- Local participation

Local participation involves decision-making at the lowest levels in an organizational hierarchy. This would concern decisions about how the work is to be carried out, how tasks are to be scheduled, and how duties are allocated amongst available employees. Such participation would involve either single employee or his/her immediate administrator or, at most, small numbers of individuals. This kind of participation in decision making could also large depends on the situation.

B- International participation

This is broad range of decision-making activities which includes decision making from all stake holders from all aspect of organization, those who are local and internationally based. This type of participatory in decision making also may be large or limited to the number of people concerned.

Participatory decision making in Islamic perspectives

The shura concept is always emphasized in Islam and encouraged. The Prophet (may the mercy of Allah be upon him) used consultation as well as consensus when making decisions, whereby he uses dialogue, halaqah, mujadala and many other aspects. In most cases, Quran enlightens us to seek other people's suggestions while making decision because, one person cannot make a country and one tree cannot make a forest.

Methodology

However seventy (70) participants among the lower level staff will be randomly selected from selected secondary schools in Katsina State in the Northern part of Nigeria. Those selected will be administered a survey questionnaire asking about how they were allowed to participate in the administration of their schools. Also, the researcher will interview seven (7) principals, one from

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each of the seven zonal directorates of education in the state namely Katsina, Mani, Kankia, Malumfashi, Funtua, Daura and Dutsin-ma, amongst those selected schools to know their views on what they feel when staff suggest for them how the school should be managed and what would be their response to such situation. The results from the seventy (70) staff will be later analyzed using SPSS. Independent Sample T-test will be run to show how far male staff differs from female staff in terms to participatory decision making, also the views of the seven (7) informants (principals) will be transcribed and analyzed thematically.

Recommendation & conclusion

This opinion paper suggests that, there is a need for participatory decision making in many areas such as:

A situation whereby an administrator does not have adequate information about the situation which is to be resolved and employees or other significant person possesses the information. A situation whereby employees have high level of security, social, esteem and self-fulfillment needs. These include: a situation whereby human values at work are important and need to be enhanced; a technical situation in which an administrator lacks knowledge, skills, experience, and expertise to take decision; and a situation in which the commitment level of employee is low.

Most of the organizations should increase participation in their decision-making at each stage of the project/policy cycle. They should establish mandatory minimum standards for consultation and participation.

The organizations should improve the transparency of their governance and operations. The Bank should respect, and proactively seek to expand and protect, political space for democratic and participatory decision-making in national political processes. The task of the

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school executive is to make subordinates know that they are useful and important members of the team; to explain his/her decisions and to discuss subordinates' objections to his/her plans. On routine matters, the head should encourage his/her subordinates in planning and in decision making. And members of a department should be allowed to exercise self-direction and self-control in carrying out plans.

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