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Effective Management Decision Making and Organisational Excellence: A Theoretical Review

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Abstract:

Studies have shown that decision making is considered germane for productive daily existence. Putatively too, innovative management decision making is deemed central to organizational success. However, there is an on-going debate as to the extent to which organizations can effectively turn their everyday managerial decision making to engender organizational excellence in the face of challenging business environment characterized by frequent economic fluctuations, technological advancements, and rapid pace of industrialization. Consequently, this study examined the relationship subsisting between effective management decision making and organizational excellence. Content analysis research approach involving the review of previous scholarly works was employed for the study. Findings from the study indicate that for managerial decision making to stimulate organizational excellence, practitioners must avoid decision traps while also putting into proper focus the place of team and collaborative efforts in their respective organisation. The study therefore concluded that effective decision making is a sine qua non requirement for organizations desirous of outperforming global competition as well as maintaining interactive relationships with customers and other relevant stakeholders. It is therefore recommended that managers should continuously embrace innovative ideas so as to constantly enhance their organizational excellence against all business odds.

Keywords: Management decision making, organizational excellence, business environment, innovative ideas

1. Introduction

Decision making is an age-old venture undertaken by private or public persons either in their individual capacities or at leadership positions in organizations. When properly taken, it is often the difference between a successful organization and a less than successful one. Nations have also risen or fallen based on the quality of decisions taken by its leaders. This has sometimes been argued as a contributory factor for the current classification of nation states between developed, developing and undeveloped countries. The subject of effective management decision making and its impact on the wellbeing of organizations have therefore continued to engage the attention of several scholars over the years due to its overwhelming importance (Nelson & Quick 2003, Ugoani, 2018).

Innovative decision making is vital for organizational success (Oliveira *et al.*, 2015). As organizations continue to embrace the centrality of creativity, research and development to keep pace with the competitive world, the necessity of making prudent and productive decisions based on such efforts have become more challenging. Although several theorists have developed various approaches to address the enormous task of taking productive decisions to stimulate organizational performance, choosing the optimum approach given scarce time, competitive demands and situational challenges have remained a tough riddle for business leaders to unravel. Furthermore, the rapid pace of industrialization, frequent economic fluctuations, heightened technological advancements coupled with the deployment of artificial intelligence have all compounded in no small measure the heavy consequences of defective decisions taken at strategic management levels. This has therefore made the need for a study of effective management decision making as a panacea for organizational survival very vital. While a number of literatures have examined the relationship between decision making and various indices of organizational performance such as operational effectiveness (Mohammed 1992), customer focus and orientation (Best 2004, Jaworksi & Kohli, 1993) and innovation (Aaker, 2001, Hamel, 2002), there is however a dearth of available research that have investigated the linkage between effective management decision making and

organizational excellence particularly from the perspective of developing economies. The main objective of this paper consequently will be to establish the nexus between effective management decision making and organizational excellence with a view to also providing groundwork for future research in this area.

2. Review of Extant Literature

2.1. Effective Management Decision Making

According to Buchanan and Connell (2006), the use of the term 'decision making' in the business world owes its origin to Chester Barnard (a retired telephone executive) who thought it as a better-balanced concept to guide managers rather than other narrower concepts such as policy making or resource allocation. These narrower concepts were considered not fully representative of the task involved in taking action that will engender a positive change in the course of an organization's life. Decisions play pivotal roles in the sustenance of organizations. It is often the link between an organization's expressed strategic dreams and accomplishment of the strategic expectations. According to Kreitner (2007), decisions made largely by firms can be classified into eight broad types with each type portraying the nature, significance or period of each decision. These eight types of decision include: Programmed decision, non-programmed decision, minor decision, major decision, routine decision, strategic decision, individual decision and group decision.

Decision making is not only an art or activity carried out by organizations but one done also by individuals. While the approach, time scale or format may differ from one economic agent to another, the ultimate objective remains the same, which is to stimulate positive change or action. In the view of Tohidi and Jabbari (2011), decision making involves the interplay of three elements: human instinct, conscious rationality and subconscious emotional intuition. Human instinct in this case is a function of previous built-up experience. Intuition leans towards unconscious actions while rationality adopts structured, logical reasoning to still generate the same desired results. Intuition is often perceived by individuals as an impulsive mindfulness of information and also provides the decision-makers with associations and evidences without understanding why such associations or evidences existed (Sauter, 1999). Rationality on the other hand, forces logical critical assessment of alternatives in a decision scenario (Busari & Spicer, 2015). These two elements have been used as a basis to differentiate between the key decision-making styles (Harren, 1979). Rational (normative) decision making styles seek to optimize outcomes while intuitive (descriptive) decision making styles have at their core the infusion of psychological elements in decision making and basically set out how individuals actually make decisions (Martins et al 2005). The managerial decision-making process finds expression either in structured or unstructured circumstances. Structured situations include strategy development sessions, operational review meetings and tactical level activities. Unstructured situations on the other hand involve everyday shop floor activities. While structured decisions are usually made under conditions of risk and uncertainty, unstructured, everyday decisions are made on fairly certain conditions (Robbins & Coulter 2012).

Managerial decision making encompasses continuous use of past experience gained to make better decisions in the future. The interchange between power politics, behavioral considerations and use of logical thinking process are all fundamental elements of the decision-making apparatus. Obi and Agwu (2017) regarded them as action road maps focused on aiding managerial decision making. The regular job routine of managers involving strategy development, information management, people and shop-floor management are all decision-making activities (Ireland and Miller 2004). This view is corroborated by Cyert et al (1956) and Mintzberg (1973) who affirm that the informational role is at the heart of managerial executive decision making. The ability to properly distill and synthesize provided information is very germane to effective managerial decision making and is often a major differentiating factor between successful executives and less than successful ones. As organizations strive for business excellence through effective managerial decisions, efforts must be made to avoid certain pitfalls in decision making classified as decision traps (Hammond 2007). These include among others the tendencies to be overconfident (overconfidence trap), overreliance on past judgments' or estimates (anchor trap), propensity to stick to the status quo irrespective of changing circumstances (status quo trap), extreme aversion for losses (sunk cost trap) and refusing to abandon one's echo chambers (the echo chamber effect). The managerial decision-making process thus described above is as represented in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1: Managerial Decision-Making Process Overview
Source: Adapted from Robbin & Coulter (2012)

2.2. Organisational Excellence

Organisational excellence is an important offshoot of the concept of excellence. Excellence as a tool to drive organizational performance has being defined in various ways by different scholars. Spady (1986) opined that the renewed focus on organizational excellence marks a paradigm shift in the thinking of management scholars. According to Moullin (2007), it is the sum total of exceptional practices undertaken by managers that result in optimal outcomes for their respective stakeholders. The drive for organizational excellence is one of the keys focuses for every forward thinking 21st century organization (Al-Dhaafri, Yusoff, & Al-Swidi, 2013). Gilgeous (1997) categorized such forward-thinking organizations as entities that constantly outperform global best practices benchmarks and maintain exceptional interactive relationships with their customers and various stakeholders. Katzon and John (2002) on the other hand viewed it as simply peak performance, which is better than the normal, the expected and the direct competition faced by the organization.

In the views of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), it is the sum total of exceptional practices encompassing nine primary elements: management by process and facts, continuous learning, customer focus, partnership development and public responsibility, result orientation, leadership and constancy of purpose, people development and involvement, and innovation and improvement (EFQM guidelines, 1999). Eisakhani (2008) corroborated this view by abridging the elements to consist of seven attributes namely the existence of perception and mission, organization planning, processes, ambition purposes, strategic thinking, leadership, and technology. Irrespective of the constituent elements agreed on, organizational excellence has remained an output that is sustained extensively via team work and collaborative initiatives (Isaac & Bhaumik 2019). Harrington (2017) via his ground breaking book titled 'the five pillars of organizational excellence' which has come to be known as the building blocks for organizations interested in surpassing stakeholders' expectations. These are Process management; Project management; Change management; Knowledge management and Resource management. These building blocks must be carefully managed by the leader or manager to achieve the desired results.

Consequently, leadership or managerial effectiveness has emerged as a key pivot for attaining the feat of exceptional organizational performance (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Although some scholars have disputed this by insisting that other elements such as innovation, customer care and focus and qualitative personnel rank higher in preference (Shapiro, 1998; Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000; Aaker, 2001). However, Darling and Nurmi (1995) have through their works provided empirical evidence to support the view that managerial effectiveness is capable of acting as the glue energizing the other elements to work in sync such that the desired goal of organizational excellence is attained. This view is therefore sustained by the researchers of this work.

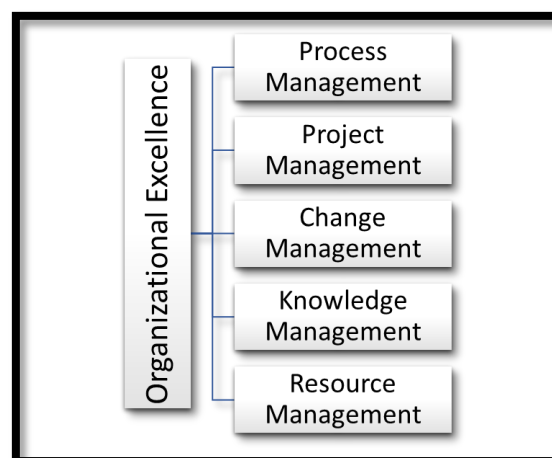


Figure 2: Five Pillars of Organizational Excellence
Source: Adapted from Harrington (2017)

2.2. Theoretical Review

2.2.1. Game Theory

Game theory is one of the most indispensable tools aiding effective decision making. As a theory, it owes its origin to the pioneering works of John von Neuman and Oskar Morgenstern (1944). It is a standard tool of analysis for professionals working in diverse fields of human endeavor and provides a veritable platform for interpreting different competitive interactions and possible results. Although criticized for its heavy dependence on complex mathematical calculations and estimations (Harsanyi 1982), it nevertheless is a fundamental theoretical framework capable of interpreting social situations while aiding the production of optimal decision-making among independent and competing actors in a strategic setting. Game theory is viewed as an interactive decision-making theory possessing the unique qualities of being able to properly situate the conflict and cooperation between intelligent rational decision makers.

One of the main assumptions of the proponents of the theory therefore is the rationality of economic agents. This position is corroborated by Friedman (1953) who asserted that economic agents will only take decisions from the prism of their status as economic individuals completely stripped of extenuating factors as emotions and other psychological

impulses which breeds irrationality. This study is therefore anchored on this theory because of its ability to recognize the complexity of today's business world under which managers are expected to take barrier breaking decisions.

2.3. Empirical Review

Denis and Rodney (2002) examined management thinking and ways in which BEM (business excellence model) is applied within the organization. Grounded theory research methodology was employed to assist managers' channel their thinking towards the model using BEM. Findings from the study clarified different aspect of BEM operational role but left unresolved the impact of other socio-cultural elements on organizational success.

Saeed, Amiya and Ali (2019) explored the impact of transactional and transformational leadership on organization excellence. Numerical data was collected from 218 contacts in Fujairah using random sampling technique. Questionnaires were analyzed using partial least square (PLS). Findings from study showed that transactional and transformational leadership was positive and attested to be notable predictors of organizational excellence.

Saeed, Amiya and Ali (2019) examined the factors influencing organizational excellence within Fujairah municipalities. Random sampling technique was adopted for data collection while partial least square was employed for analysis. Findings from the study showed that strategic management and organizational culture are positive and is significant predictors of organizational excellence. Study recommended research findings to countries such as UAE as additional insights into productive strategies to attain organizational excellence.

Ershadi and Eskandari (2019) investigated the role played by the concept of organizational forgetting on the drive to achieve organizational excellence. Structural equation model incorporating strategic thinking measure, organization forgetting factors and key parts of business excellence was developed as proxies for organizational excellence. 297 Iranian companies that has fully adopted organizational excellence model was selected for close investigation. The research result confirmed the role of organizational obsessive mediators in the creation of and sustenance of the organizational excellence model.

Atallah (2013) assessed the reality of knowledge management at the University of Al-Taif and its impact on increasing excellence of its employees. A random sampling of 126 employees from different departments and colleges of the university branch with varying specialties, administrative and functional ranks were conducted. Analysis of variance, descriptive and regression analysis was adopted. Study found that the knowledge of management dimensions on the dimensions of organizational excellence among the staff of Al-Taif University has a statistically significant impact and statistically significant difference on the sampled individuals, which can be ascribed to their practical and unique socio-cultural characteristics. Study recommended that, focus should be given to improving the capacities and training of the working staff level using scientific plans and programs. Also, the promotion of organizational confidence among staff by increasing the awareness of cultural knowledge was advised and lastly, favoritism should be discouraged while staff are carried along in every policy and decision-making process to create confidence in them and create an environment based on mutual trust.

Hassan, Abdullah and Ali (2016) examined the effect of organizational excellence on organization performance. The study employed the use of a structured questionnaire survey administered to a population size of 250 respondents out of which 175 persons representing 70% of the sampled population returned the completed forms. Partial least square equation modeling was adopted for analysis of the extracted data. Findings from the study cited theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study bridges the gaps in previous literature while few studies examined empirically the causal effect of organizational excellence on organizational performance in public organization. Generally, study increased the awareness on managers, decision makers, and practitioners about the significance of excellence when implementing their strategies and practices.

Tzvetana and ivaylo (2017) identified ways to increase employee engagement in Bulgarian business organizations and how such employee engagement affects employee and company performance. Employee engagement methodologies applied by prominent companies such as Gallup HCM Advisory Group, Deloitte and Aon Hewitt was evaluated. Results revealed the factors influencing employee engagement of Bulgarian companies which resulted in improved organizational performance. These include creativity and productivity. Recommendation was centered on the application of the research findings to strengthen the already-significant role played by management.

Naser and Shobaski (2017) investigated the relationship between university administration and organizational excellence using Palestinian universities as a benchmark. Data was extracted from structured questionnaire administered to 235 academics with a response rate of 70%. Data analysis was undertaken using the SPSS package. The research results showed that key elements of organizational excellence included service excellence, leadership and cognitive excellence. The study recommended that for organizational excellence to be attained and sustained university administrators must decide to give innovation, creativity and continuous learning opportunities must be given its pride of place.

Alrayes (2006) examined the linkage between organizational excellence and the performance of some selected Banks. The research found that a nexus exists between strong adherences to set standards of organizational excellence and the overall performances of the Banks. These standards included strong affinity with vision, values and organizational culture.

Al-Hilali and Ghabor (2003) evaluated the relationship between effective management of higher education outfits and organizational excellence. The research found that effective leadership underpinned by efficient decision-making ranks highest in terms of importance in guaranteeing organizational survival. The study further found that there is a statistically difference in terms of the degree of availability between leadership effectiveness and other factors such as customer focus, employee involvement and knowledge management.

Ugoani (2018) assessed the impact of effective management decision making on the operational effectiveness of organizations using Nigeria as a benchmark. The study employed the exploratory research approach and data was extracted from 110 respondents drawn from the Southern geopolitical zone using the stratified sampling method. Data obtained was analyzed using descriptive regression tools. The study found that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between effective management decision making and operational effectiveness of firms operating in Nigeria.

3. Discussion of Findings

It is observable from the review of extant literature that innovative decisions play paramount roles in the sustenance of organizations, and is adjudged as the link between organizations expressed strategic dreams and accomplishment of the strategic expectations. As earlier mentioned, decision making involves the interplay of human instinct; conscious rationality and subconscious emotional intuition, and all these three elements are actively required for cutting edge management decision making to strategically position organizations for excellence. More so, without prejudice to the interplay between power politics, behavioral considerations and use of logical thinking process as fundamental elements of decision making, it is imperative that managerial decision-making process finds expression and cooperation both at structured and unstructured circumstances, so as to achieve organizational excellence, since team and collaborative effort is practically required from every member of the organization to achieve set goals. However, as organizations strive for excellence through effective managerial decisions, likely decision traps should be avoided, and efforts must be made to constantly evolve with innovative ideas that engender organizational excellence.

Furthermore, Saeed et al (2019) found that customer focus affects organizational excellence, and as such, effort to continuously achieve customer satisfaction as well as other relevant stakeholder continuous commitment should be accorded its utmost consideration in the process of organizational decision making so as to achieve and sustain organizational excellence. Therefore, the tasks of qualitative management decision making and progressive leadership rests on the shoulders of managers to drive their respective organizations towards organizational excellence. This is in tandem with the findings of Gomez-Mejia and Balkin (2002) who equally affirmed that effective decision making with cutting edge knowledge of modern information technology and accessible relevant data aids in achieving desired organizational goals and that the long-term survival of organizations hinges on the quality of decisions taken. Furthermore, regardless of the constituent elements agreed on, organizational excellence has remained an output that is sustained extensively through team work and collaborative initiatives (Isaac & Bhaumik, 2019).

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study set out with the primary objective of assessing the nexus between effective management decision making and organizational excellence with a view to also provide groundwork for future research on the discourse. Stemming from the literature review, this study maintains that innovative management decision making is imperative for business organizations who aspire to constantly outperform global competition as well as to maintain exceptional interactive relationships with their customers and other relevant stakeholders. The study unequivocally concludes that effective management decision making is imperative to organizational excellence and sustenance in the face of grappling challenges and volatile business environment that characterizes our contemporary business world.

It is therefore recommended that managers should continually embrace innovative ideas by all means, so as to constantly enhance their organisational excellence against all business odds. Furthermore, continuous customer satisfaction and collaborative effort of all relevant stakeholders should continually be focused on so as to always achieve better organisational excellence. It is imperative to note that while this study focused on a review of extant and relevant literature on the interplay between the twin subjects of effective management decision making and organizational excellence, future studies can be conducted on this discourse with the use of verifiable empirical data to further broaden the scope of this study.

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