"The Demands of Decentralization: Skills and Knowledge for

Leaders in Restructured Schools"

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most visible and widespread of the current educational reforms is the attempt to decentralize authority to schools and to involve teachers and others in shared decision making. Often occurring together as site-based shared decision making (SBDM), this reform is turning out to be more difficult to implement than once thought. Few noted the complexities in skills and knowledge necessary to implement SBDM successfully. This reform changes the nature of teachers and principals' work in important ways, requires new structures and processes for finding and using information in decision making and demands new and more skills in decision making and teamwork.

Fortunately, considerable research and writing about team decision making exists. In this paper we will review some of this literature and suggest skills, processes, and knowledge that can inform and assist site based decision making teams and team leaders.

While there may be many new skills that are necessary, three groups of skills and knowledge seem to be especially important. These skills and knowledge relate to: (1) team building skills and knowledge, (2) dealing with conflict and school micro-politics, and (3) decision making skills and knowledge.

Developing skills and gaining knowledge in these areas is complex and difficult. For school leaders there is little time in day for reflection and reading, district staff development opportunities are often weak, fragmented or unavailable, and the skills and ideas themselves are quite complex. Descriptions of needed skills or knowledge have seldom used current knowledge in the education, business and organizational literature. Thus, we provide a review some of this literature that could be of use in the training and preparation of leaders in restructured schools.

The first area focuses on the demands on teachers and leaders to work together as a team. Working on teams in schools requires a wide set of skills and can be aided with an in-depth knowledge of how teams function. The following section notes some of the skills and knowledge from research and theory that can inform school leaders involved in SBDM.

A. TEAM BUILDING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

1. Knowing the Features of Effective Teams.

The literature of organizational behavior and small groups produced a detailed prescription of how the teams should be designed to function effectively. In this regard, we consider it important to review and compile the suggestions made by the scholars on group and team management.

1. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) state that individual accountability should be clearly defined in the team process.

2. Bassin (1988) points to the importance of ownership and high involvement by all the team members.

3. Katzenbach and Smith (1993), Bolman and Deal (1992), Bassin (1988), Sundstrom et. al. (1990), Vaill (1982) all emphasize that team's goals should be clearly articulated, tightly linked to the mission of the organization, and that all team participants should have stake and interest in achieving those goals.

4. Smith and Katzenbach (1993) suggest that each member should have three domains of skills to effectively carry out his/her roles. These are: (a) technical and functional expertise, (b) problem solving and decision-making, (c) interpersonal skills.

5. Shea and Guzzo (1987) note that group members need to have minimal belief in their self-efficiency.

6. Shea and Guzzo (1987) and Bassin (1988), and Sundstrom et.al. (1990) point out that effective teams structure the way team will operate by clarifying on the rules and norms of the behavior.

Hackman et.al. (1990) found that structural and human resource variables were the critical determinants of group effectiveness. Bolman and Deal (1992) cited those findings of Hackman et.al. (1990) as follows:

. Groups with a clear goals and deadlines did better.

. Vague purpose, deadlines, and fuzzy success criteria are found to be burdens of team work.

. Lack of critical resources may cripple the success of teams.

. The absence of individuals with key expertise or critical organizational linkages becomes sticking points.

. Unclear authority domains negatively influence teamwork.

7. Specific tasks and governance domains of shared-decision making councils should should be driven from the mission of the school.

8. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) note that the objectives of the team should be changed when new developments occur.

6. Bassin (1988), Sundstrom et.al. (1990) urge the importance of intrinsic or extrinsic rewards. And, Wohlstetter and Briggs (1994) found that the lack of rewards was one of the key inhibiting factors for effective shared-decision making.

7. Pearce and Ravlin (1987) concluded that the formation of   self-regulating teams should be done with an emphasis on heterogeneous composition in social background and minimal differences in status symbols.

8. Pearce and Ravlin (1987) suggested that there should be a coordination of tasks and efforts in the team decision making process.

9. Team members should have a common pool of scripts so that they can have a shared language of issues, concerns and problems at hand (Gersick and Hackman, 1990).

2. Knowing About Stages of Team Growth and Learning.

Mennecke et.al. (1992) argue that developmental phases constitute an important feature of group development. They defined the developmental phases as the processes by which group develops its maturity, achieves cohesion over time as members interact, learn about one another, and structure relationships and roles within the group. In this context, knowing the key features of each stage of group process may help school leaders to manage effectively the shared decision-making process.

Mennecke et. al. (1992) grouped team growth into three major types of models. These include:

1. Progressive models: According to Mennecke et.al. (1992), progressive model assumes an increasing trend in group maturity and performance. They divided the progressive models into the "equilibrium model" and "linear-progressive" models.

a. The Equilibrium Model: The basic assumption of this model is that group tries to manage and balance instrumental (task-related) needs and expressive (socio-emotional) needs (Mills in Mennecke et. al. (1992). This model suggests that the design of shared decision making teams should capture the needs of members to self-express, and recognize individual differences, while trying to keep the team focused on task related work.

b. Linear Progressive Models: Tuckman's model of linear progressive group development is one of the well known progressive models. Tuckman (1965) developed a model of group development and argued that groups linearly progresses through forming, storming, norming, and performing stages. This is the most popular model of team stages.

2. Cyclical Models: Cyclical models assume that groups go through the stages of birth, growth, and death. One of the models in this category is the "team performance model of Drexler et.al. (Mennecke et.al., 1992). This model describes the growth of teams in seven stages. These are as follows: (1) Orientation, (2) Trust building, (3) Goal or role clarification, (4) Commitment, (5) Implementation, (6) High performance, and (7) Renewal.

This model assumes that phases are interdependent, and that unresolved issues of early stages may confront the group during later stages. For that reason, structuring of group tasks, roles, purposes, and boundaries are important in getting the group focused on goal attainment with fewer ambiguities and conflict.

3. Nonsequential models: These models assume that there is no definite sequences through which group evolve its structure and processes to accomplish goals. Rather, it assumes that each phase can occur or interlock in different patterns over time. One model in this category was developed by Poole in 1983. Poole's "contingency model" of group development points that the lack of coordination mechanism in the group structure is one of the significant factors of "backward" or "forward" setbacks. He defined the task factors and internal group processes as

the contingency of group process to success. He suggested a structural model to accomplish things.

The implication of team development is that leaders in shared decision-making groups should spend considerable time and effort to recognize the underlying values that each member share to develop the structural routines to facilitate group process as well as define roles and task responsibilities of each member. Ancona (1984) argued that groups that exclusively focus on inward issues are more likely to be lower performers in the long run.

3. Knowing the influences of individual factors in the effective functioning of team work.

Attwater and Bass (1994) argued that team members differ from one another in what they bring to the team assumptions, capabilities, and levels of interest; what they can contribute; and how they function on team. For that reason, for effective functioning of shared decision-making process, team members should reflect a balance in their background, knowledge, and expertise.

The other aspect that we think as appropriate is the level of trust between teachers and administrative personnel. The discussion of these issues follows.

Individual factors:

a) Knowledge: Lack of appropriate knowledge and skills is one of the core shortcomings of team members. Kanter (1983) argued that effective participation takes knowledge and skills. Duke et. al (1983) states that teachers do not take advantage of decision-making opportunities because they do not feel they have the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute. This was explained in terms of Alfred Bandura's self-efficacy concept, defined as the one's self-belief of efficacy to make positive changes in his/her life or immediate environment. Specifically, Schmuck and Blumberg (1969) also argued that the lack of collaborative problem solving skills on the part of teachers is the main obstacle to initiate shared-decision-making in the schools.

Unbalanced distribution of knowledge, expertise and status differences may also inhibit the quality of participative decision making. This may cause domination of the process by stronger members of the group. For instance, Kanter (1983) stated that people with less information,

knowledge and expertise in the decision domain not stand out for their lack of knowledge, but also may be forced to accept the point of view of more knowledgeable and informed people. Further, Mansbridge (1973) concluded that group members who have the most critical and irreplaceable skills have the most power to influence the decision-making outcome (Mansbridge in Locke and Schweigher, 1979).

b) Trust Between Teachers and Administrators:

Prestine (1991), and Duke et. al. (1983) reported that suspicion of motives and means of school principals are inhibiting the sources of teacher reluctance to participate in the decision-making process. Prestine (1991) concluded that the historic conservatism of teachers and mistrust of administrator motives as well as administrator misgivings about the efficacy of teacher involvement gave rise to the blocking of successful implementation of shared authority.

Duke et. al (1983) implied the role of situational factors and background characteristics of participants in establishing trust between teachers and administrators. It can be concluded that past experiences of teachers and school principals can either be positive or negative disposition in the shared decision making.

Collegial disfavor (Duke et. al. 1983) is another problem that may inhibit the process of shared decision making. They argue that the respect from one's peers is one of the most desirable benefits an individual can get in contemporary society. Teachers who are too closely identified with the administration may face suspicions and distrust.

4) Having skills in running meetings, developing agendas, problem solving, maintaining team focus, time use and other meeting skills.

Broome and Fulbright (1995) found that participants considered planning, organizational culture and resource constraints as the three major determinants to group problem solving. They conclude that without proper planning, group sessions waste member's time and attempts at dealing with complex problems will be doomed to failure. Broome and Fulbright (1995) argue

that with proper planning prior to the meeting, a host of difficulties can be avoided or minimized. They note that with the help of planning, group composition can be more properly determined, appropriate methodologies can be selected, and steps can be taken to integrate the group work within the context of organization's culture.

The other function of the planning is that it helps the group determine the information requirements for the meeting (Volkema and Niederman, 1995). The substance of meeting planning is in the development of an appropriate agenda. Therefore, it is important to review and outline carefully the aspects of agenda.

Neal and Bazerman (1991), and Ware (1991) suggest that agendas are valuable means of controlling discussion and giving participants a sense of direction. Agendas are also helpful in determining the order that issues will be raised, discussed and decided in the decision-making process. Ware (1991) states that agenda defines the meeting's purpose for participants and places boundaries between relevant and irrelevant discussion topics. Neal and Bazerman argued that groups can avoid conflicts and maintain order through the use of agendas. If the agendas fulfill so many useful functions, what are the principles that shared-decision-making leaders should be aware of. Ware (1991) listed the principles of building an agenda as follows:

1. Sequence items so they build one another if possible.

2. Sequence topics from easiest to most difficult or controversial.

3. Keep the number of topics within reasonable limits.

4. Avoid topics that can be better handled by subgroups or individuals.

5. Separate information exchange from problem solving.

6. Define a finishing time or well as a starting time.

In addition to those suggestions, Pfeffer (1981) notes that topics or issues involving high emotional context should not placed at the beginning of the meeting. Issues coming toward the end of the meeting receive less attention and discussion than those raised at the beginning of the meeting.

5. Knowing several ways to develop high performing teams.

The development of high performing teams is a function of relationships between context, task domain, technology, leadership, reward structure, environmental support. The development of high performing teams takes time, and requires a coordinated and integrated functional process.

The development of high performing teams needs a leader as facilitator of the process. In this sense, Barry (1991) sketched out a leadership role for the management of teams. His model of leadership includes four areas of roles in the team process. These are (1) envisioning, (2) Organizing, (3) Spanning, and (4) Social.

Envisioning leadership requires creating new and compelling visions. Barry (1991) said that the envisioning leader facilitates idea generation, innovation, defining new goals, finding conceptual links between systems. Organizing leadership involves identifying the context and structure of the process by which group would solve the problem. Spanning leadership involves the facilitating activities and the linking to other parts of the organization. Social leadership requires developing and maintaining the team from a social-psychological point of view. The shared decision making leader creates an atmosphere of respect, and collegial communication.

Bushe (1989) views the team effectiveness as a function of resource mix, motivating task, and environmental support. Bushe (1989) referred to the resource mix as the resources brought to the group by its members. He said that content knowledge, social facilitation skills, and the linkage of the group members to various departments or groups are the important factors of group effectiveness. Therefore, this strategy implies that school leaders should look into these aspects of individuals who would be selected for the team.

The second element of Bushe's model is assignment of a motivating task. She said that a motivating task is likely to increase the interest and motivation of group members toward task accomplishment. The other aspect of a motivating task was given as the feedback. She argued that attainable goals facilitate the feedback process so the group knows how well it accomplishing the given task. The degree of challenge inherent in the task was also another

aspect of motivating tasks.

The third dimension of the Bushe model was environmental support. This refers to the belief of the group members that group's efforts are appreciated and outcomes that they come up with will have positive influence on the operation of the organization.

6) Knowing ways to improve team meetings, team cohesion and planning:

Effective team meetings require leaders to pay close attention to communication and interaction processes. Communication between and among all team members is an essential part of the decision-making process on teams. This is important in the sense that this increases the sense of self-efficacy of teachers, the belief that all of them can have influence on the decision-outcome. This attitude can only be achieved through open communication of ideas, opinions, and feelings on the issue of the teaching learning process and a sense of trust.

Anderson et. al. (1992) reported that teachers and principals who perceived a connection between shared governance and their ability to affect decisions about curriculum and instruction were much more willing to put time and effort in shared decision-making than were principals and teachers who did not see a connection.

Active listening and confrontational skills must be mastered by school leaders to facilitate group decision-making process and to ensure that members are aware of the school's vision. The school principal creates an understanding of what the organization is striving for and what progress is being made in that direction. This communication ability will focus teams on school achievement. In the decision-making process, the participants may have different status positions which may inhibit the communication of ideas. Tubbs and Moss (1982), Szilagyi and Wallace (1990) argued that people with differing positions of power and trust tend to communicate differently. Teachers may not have the freedom or security to speak up on an issue without fear of sanctions. These differences should be discussed and addressed openly. Tubbs and Moss (1982) and Szilagyi and Wallace (1990) suggest that the message of the superiors may be interpreted differently based on position. In order to have an effective decision-making process, the school principal should try to limit the barriers structured by the status differences. This task

can be accomplished in differed ways.

Seating positions in meetings may also influence the effectiveness (Greenberg (1985) and MacKenzie (1979). As it was pointed out by Greenberg (1990), the implicit power relationships associated with seating position can influence the behavior and atmosphere of communication and interaction. The implication of Greenberg's study is that school principal should not use the same seating positions every time. They need to change positions every time. They need to change the requirement of task at hand and use an (o) table rather than -U- table. The latter one can be a factor in creating socio-metric distance in terms of communication of values, opinions and preference. It is likely that in a -U- seating position, the closest to the school principal at the right and left beginning corner of the table will be attributed mere power.

Rules, regulations and norms that govern the social aspect of the decision-making behavior should not be subjected to frequent changes; however, the rules and regulations governing the task domain should be reviewed frequently to cope with the demands of requirements of task at hand. This will ensure that group will not be unstable in terms of the norms governing the social relationship, thus, reducing the amount of conflict and increasing the effectiveness of communication and mutual respect (Gersick and Hackman, 1990).

7. Having tools to deal with negative members and team problems.

Pacanowsky (1995) said that despite the rising popularity of the team approach, it is not problem-free. He notes that an effective team is one which integrates the relationship between team process and information, knowledge and value. Pacanowsky (1995) identified several problems of team work. These are as follows: (1) The tendency to get locked into a particular definition of the problem or to a particular solution, too early; (2) the tendency to recall things differently after a meeting is over; (3) balancing the paradox of a small team with consensus decisions as opposed to broader participation; and (4) the tendency to get emotionally involved in team issues.

The solution of these problems requires school principals to develop certain roles and display it in the group process. There were a suggest role play as a tool of problem solving of

shared decision-making teams. Steckler and Fondas (1995) identified two types of roles for team leaders to deal with the problems. These are given as follows: (1) facilitating the team process, and (2) managing the team's external boundary.

The other problem of team process was identified as the tendency to seek closure too quickly or to bog down with adversarial arguing of one position over another. This happens when someone advocates for a position without inviting inquiry into other views and when one draws inferences about the motivations and assumptions of others without inviting inquiry into them. Pacanowsky (1995) called these as "self-sealing routines". He said that one way of dealing with these problems is that before trying to find answers or solutions, one should define the question. However, in order to do that team members should develop a common and greater understanding of the problem and its complexity.

The tool was suggested is shared displays. Paconowsky (1995) argued that this model should include a) domain map b) mind map c) causal map. He said that in the domain map, all the group members including team leader, develop the dimensions of the problem separately. A question about the underlying aspects of the problem is asked and answers collected together. If possible, a model of the problem and its connections with other issues are graphically shown.

The other major problem in the team work is groupthink. Groupthink stands for an excessive form of concurrence seeking among members of the cohesive, tightly-knit policy making groups. In Janis' words, it refers to "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive group. As members strive for anonymity, they lack the motivation to realistically appraise the alternative courses of action.

For example, because of groupthink, group members may not be able to generate satisfactory alternative solutions. Because of the symptoms of the groupthink and other effects, decision making group may be ineffective in generating information, contingency plans, and so forth. This happens because the group lacks the capacity to do a comprehensive information search.

The other impact of groupthink is on decision acceptance and implementation. If the

decision group selects a decision obtained via conformity pressures, those members feel minority may influence the decision at the implementation stage. Aldag and Fuller (1993) argued that whether the alternative solution is a product of the majority or dominance, some people will influence the decision implementation.

The research on the groupthink phenomenon also concerns the role of leadership in driving the group in the direction of their values. Aldag and Fuller (1993), Park (1990), Moorhead (1986), and Janis (1971) argued that in times of conflict and stress, group members look for the direction from the group leadership. But the danger is that leaders can use this kind of situations to impose their agenda on the organization. The decision that they favor and expect group members to support may reflect their self interest.

8. Being able to analyze and correct team building and communication problems:

Bettenhausen (1991) defined the team building as the process of improving group performance by improving communication, reducing conflict, and generating cohesion and commitment among work group members. Fuller (1986) said that the major function of team building and the correcting of group dysfunctions is to increase the problem solving capacity of group members.

The basic assumption behind the concept of shared decision making is the creation of a supportive atmosphere between teachers through collaborative decision making and mediation by the school principal. The role that the school principal assumes is a form of consulting to shared decision making in the school. However, school principals should be provided with the possible sources of problems that may inhibit the team building and communication processes.

Factors that inhibit the problem solving capacity and communication processes of the group decision making have been the subject of research in the fields of small group behavior and organizational behavior. Hirokawa (1990) stated that the communication and group decision making performance are influenced by the three factors. These are: (a) task structure (b) information requirements and (c) evaluation demands.

The task structure of the shared decision making process should take into account the following aspects suggested by Hirokawa(1990). These are: (a) goal clarity, (b) goal path clarity, (c) goal-path mechanisms, and (d) goal-path obstacles. A list of barriers to group problem solving process has been developed by Broome and Fulbright (1995). (See Appendix A.)

The second aspect that may inhibit the communication process is the need for information. Hirokawa (1990) stated that this refers to the amount of collaborative, coordinated, and integrated effort required to successfully complete the task. The information requirement also has several dimensions. Weiss et. al. (1992) concluded that lack of preparedness for the use of information and selections of alternative were important shortcomings of shared decision making councils they studied.

Information on student success, trends of fluctuations in the achievements of students, change in the socio-economic character of the community, student drop-outs, teacher absenteeism and turnover should be prepared and disseminated to team members before meeting so that they could propose alternative course of actions in the context of identified problems. This helps avoid the conflict and other dysfunctional behaviors in the sense that participants develop their alternative preferences based on the underlying problems of school rather than on personal preferences, ideology or convenience.

The third dimension was the need for evaluation. This dimension requires the establishment of the criteria to which the success of the group decision-making outcome would be compared.

We see also a fourth dimension. Anderson and Martin (1995) named this dimension as the interaction involvement. Anderson and Martin (1995) identified those three elements as (a) attentiveness, which refers to listening to what others have to say, (b) perceptiveness, which is the ability to assign meaning to others' verbal and nonverbal messages, and (c) responsiveness which is providing appropriate and effective feedback.

9. Having skills at analyzing difficult team problems such as social loafing, free-riding, and exploitation.

Early (1989), Geen (1991), Harking (1987), Harkins and Szymanski (1989) defined social loafing as the reduced effort or performance of individuals who act as part of a group rather than alone. The primary condition for social loafing to occur is when the outputs are combined such that individual contributions cannot be separately determined; it makes avoidance of work possible.

Early (1989) argued that social loafing is related to the organizational concepts such as the attainment of public or collective goods. Olson argued that, even though group members may equally aware of importance of achieving public goods, they may have unequal "shared responsibility" to pay the cost of attaining those public goods in terms of putting extra effort, learning more, producing more ideas, and so forth (Olson in Early, 1989). Olson in Early (1989) furthermore argued that since individual contributions can not be noticed, and everyone equally shares the benefits of group work. As the size of the group increases, these individuals have little incentive put more effort toward the group output. Early (1989) argued that the main cause behind such behavior is the difficulty of monitoring all individual behaviors in the group process, and low social consequences for poor effort.

The second reason for social loafing has been defined as the perceived expectation of an individual about other member's likely contribution (Geen, 1991; Early, 1989). This may have two sources. One is the expectation that others will contribute enough to the output of public or group good (Early, 1989). The second aspect is that individuals may adjust their contributions to what they perceive to be output of others in the group and try to achieve a level of equity with their output (Geen, 1991).

 How to deal with social loafing: Literature on small group behavior suggests that leaders may cope with this problem effectively if they follow these sets of actions:

1. Geen (1991), Harkins and Szymanski (1987), Harkins (1989), Early (1989), reported that making group members aware of the fact that everybody's contribution will be made visible

and recognizable reduces social loafing dramatically.

2. The potential for evaluation plays an important role in reducing social loafing and increasing the motivation of group members.

3. Enforcement of norms in the group also reduces loafing behavior.

4. Identifiability of outputs reduces the low motivated behavior and loafing tendency in the group.

The other behavioral cause of motivation losses in group work has been defined as the concept of the "free-riding" tendency. Albanese and Van Fleet (1985) described the concept as referring that a group member who obtains benefits from group membership does not bear a proportional share of the costs of providing the benefits. They also addressed that this kind of behavior pattern may be attributed to the tendency of individuals such that acting rationally minimizes their costs relative to the benefits they received. Weiss et. al (1992), Blumberg and Schmuck(1969) and Duke et. al (1983) have all reported that increased time demand is one of the important inhibiting factors to facilitate shared decision-making in schools. It is our view that this increased demand on time on the part of teachers result in lack of motivation or at least a reluctance to involve in the decision making process. Duke et. al 1983) argued that participation has its own opportunity cost for teachers. They said that the time devoted to participating in decision-making processes is time not devoted to teaching activities such as preparing and leading classes, grading papers, counseling students, advising extracurricular activities, and so forth.

In order to cope with the problem of free-riding, we believe that school leaders may find it useful to consider the following ideas:

1. School leaders should try to influence the incentive system of group members. This might be achieved through providing group members with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards such as recognition, payment for extra time devoted to the shared decision-making meetings, and so forth.

2. Van Fleet and Albanese said that managers should try to broaden individual's "self

concept of interest" in the public good. School leaders should try to create, communicate, and manage an organizational culture that emphasizes the importance of larger purposes.

3. In shared decision-making groups, group performance should be limited to individual rewards, and recognition based on the separable performance of each member.

A second area where research and theory provide useful information concerns conflict and politics that develops during shared decision making. The following section provides a review of relevant skills and knowledge for leaders in schools with SBDM.

B. DEALING WITH CONFLICT AND SCHOOL MICROPOLITICS

The structure of the organization reflects authority relations. The main area where different parties try to exert influence is the decision-making body of the organization. The decision-making process is a vital process for all of the interest groups in the organization, because it distributes the resources of the organization, and legitimizes what is right and what is wrong, and reflects the authority of the institutionalized power bases. Due to this aspect, participative decision-making increases the scope of contested territories in the school organization.

In this section, we will identify the possible sources of conflicts in teamwork or group process, and outline the strategies by reviewing the literatures of small group research, organizational behavior and design, and educational administration.

1. Identify the sources of conflict in team work and group process:

Conflict is sometimes defined as the interaction of interdependent individuals who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving goals (Pendell, 1990). Locke and Schweigher (1979) claims that participative decision making increases the conflict in an organization. They argue that the conflict can involve personality clashes, difference in values and goals between members as well as rejection or resentment of some member's ideas.

Implementation of participatory decision-making in school organization cannot ignore the place of politics and differing and oftentimes conflicting preferences. In this regard, Coyle (1993) notes that new structure would require teachers to wrestle with these issues that involve tensions, trade offs, and conflict as a result of the changes in power relationships. Furthermore, Bolman and Deal (1990) argued that the degree, intensity, and form of the conflict will vary with the issues at stake and with the forms of power that one mobilizes. Kanter (1983) warned about the possible politics of team participation in the organizations. She emphasized that participative decision making does not take place in a vacuum. Decision participation does not automatically make people one thinking entity. Rather, she argued that jockeying for states and internal competition will continue because participants as human beings have different sets of preferences, interests and perceptions. As it was pointed out by Pfeffer, "since organizations are coalitions, and different participants have varying interests and preferences, the critical question then becomes not how organizations should be designed to maximize effectiveness, but rather whose preferences and interests are to be served by the organization (Pfeffer in Bolman and Deal, 1990). On this issue, a final caution is suggested by Handy (1993), and March (1994) in that inconsistent preferences, goals, and ideologies are the major sources of conflict in the decision making process, and the leaders in the school based management implementation should lead by reconciling the gaps between the inconsistent goals, ideologies, and preferences of different stakeholders in the school organization. The assertion made by Handy and March (1994) is further supported by Filley (1978). Filley (1978) argues that conflict arises because of the behavioral and perceptional attitudes. These attitudes include: (1) Knowledge is unlimited, but our perception of knowledge is very limited; (2) the tendency to see things as a fixed pie, where one person's gain is another person's loss; and (3) past behavior is self-rewarding.

The other sources of conflict in group or team work were discussed by O'connor et.al., 1993. The suggested model is applicable to the process of shared decision-making in schools. These are as follows:

1. <u>Task Type</u>: O'Connor et.al., (1993) argued that the nature of the task that group

members will carry out will be a source of conflict in the group process.

2. <u>Diversity of member input</u>: The diversity of member input means that there are competing values, beliefs, preferences, and means to solve the problem or they are inconsistent with each other. As this diversity increases, so does the likelihood of conflict occurring in the organization (O'Conner et. 1993; Rahim, 1992).

3. <u>Group stability and change</u>: O'Conner et.al. (1993) argued that unstable group composition in terms of size, member flow, and task domains can cause to conflict.

4. <u>Size</u>: Rahim (1992) also warned that as the size of the group increases, it is more likely that conflict will occur in the group process.

2. Knowing the ways power and influence are exercised through individuals.

Central to the concepts of power and influence is the concept of political behavior. Pfeffer (1981) defines organizational politics as the process by which differing preferences over the allocation of scarce resources are resolved. On the other hand, Hellriegell et.al., (1992) argues that organizational politics involve actions by individuals or groups to acquire, develop, and use power and other types of resources to obtain preferred outcomes when there is disagreements or uncertainties about the choices. Pfeffer (1981) also identifies differing preferences and alternatives as the source of political behavior, behavior that attempts to influence the decisions on the critical issues.

3. Having Skills at Conflict Avoidance and Resolution

Decision making and problem solving are two of the most significant skills and capacities that should be developed by leaders. These kinds of skills can be learned through training as well as experiences. The tips that we list here can be used to develop insights into decision making skills and knowledge. These suggestions for dealing with conflict, and decision making negotiations are noted by several authorities.

Neal and Bazerman(1991) developed an analytic approach to the conflict resolution process. The basic ingredients of this model are as follows:

1. Alternatives to a Negotiated Agreement: Rather than insisting on what you can get in terms of mathematical calculations, oftentimes you can get what you want. So, be prepared to the possible alternatives other than your negotiated alternative in the process of dealing with conflicting issues.

2. The interests of the Parties: Ask yourself: What are the stakes that may escalate the tension and anxiety of each party in the negotiation process? Knowing them often helps one to be reasonable about the demands that are put on the negotiation table because we know what may be or may not be accepted by the other party that we are in competition with.

3. Define the Reservation of Point of Each Party in the Conflict Process.

In group negotiations it is useful to locate the bargaining and compromise zone for each party. One wants to identify what are called the reservation points at which each party is indifferent to not reaching a settlement, and or impasse, and a settlement at that level.

5. Try to define the integrative dimension of the negotiation for each party.

Doing this helps one know that insisting on the original reservation points would get the negotiations nowhere. Then, decreasing the relative points of gains for each party would increase the chance of developing new alternatives for negotiations.

Filley (1978) argued that conflict resolution process should incorporate the following behaviors to be effective. These are:

1. Review and alter the conditions, perceptions, and the feelings of the people involved.

2. Identify the goals, needs, and values of each party.

3. Make an exhaustive search for solutions.

4. Agree on the solution by consensus.

4) Having a complex and in-depth understanding of power, influence, and authority, its forms and sources.

Fundamental the understanding participation in decision-making process is power. In the literature of organizational behavior, the concept of power is defined in several ways. Though

these definitions may seem different, the common issues they share is the ability to exercise sanctions on the behavior of individuals. In this regard, Astley and Sachdava (1984) defined the power as to have the capacity or ability to have someone do something that they otherwise would not do. On the other hand, Pfeffer (1981) defined the concept in terms of dependence relationship between two parties. He said that relative power of one actor over another is a product of the net dependence of one or another person. A third definition of the power concept is a motivational one. In this sense, power refers to the intrinsic need of people for self-determination or a belief in self efficacy (Bandura in Kanungo and Conger, 1988).

Increasing the scope of power and authority and autonomy requires participants of shared decision-making teams to know the sources of power in the organizations. Research and theory on the concept of power identified different sources of organizational and interpersonal power. These are reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert powers (French and Raven, 1959).

Reward power depends upon one's ability and resources to reward others. Coercive power depends on fear: the person with coercive power has the ability to exercise punishment on the target of coercion. Legitimate power stems from the target person's internalized values which gives the power holder the legitimate right to direct the target's behavior. Referent power refers to the emotional connection between the target person and power holder. The expert power is defined as the degree to which the power target attributes knowledge and expertise to the power holder.

A third area where research and theory is helpful relates to decision making. In the following section, we note some of the skills and knowledge about small group decision making that can inform school leaders using SBDM.

C. DECISION MAKING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

1. Knowing how to facilitate collaborative decision making:

Anderson et. al. (1992) found in a national study of the implementation of shared decision-making that the degree of success depends to a great extent on the quality of leadership. Manz and Sims (1987) attributed the coordinator role to the leadership of self-managing teams.

According Manz and Sims (1987), the most important leadership skills to facilitate the team work were self-observation and being aware of group task performance; self-evaluation of performance, and encouragement of the group to reinforce itself to achieve to a high performing level. Thus, the school principal role is described as the facilitator and mediator rather than as a directive leader. Shared decision-making calls for a climate of cooperative and appropriate leadership from the school principal. Hoy and Tarter (1992) developed a conceptual model of leadership skills in collaborative decision-making situations. They described five domains of leader roles for the effective implementation of shared decision-making. They argued that shared decision making can help achieve consensus, to encourage reflective deliberation of issues, to increase the acceptance of decisions, and to improve the quality of decisions. They state that to achieve to those decision-making objectives, the school principals should assume severe roles as the leader of the organization. Those roles include: (1) Principal as an integrator, (2) Principal as parliamentarian, (3) Principal as educator, (4) Principal as solicitor who seeks advice from teacher experts, (5) Principal as director who makes unilateral decisions in those instances where the teachers have no expertise or personal stake.

2. Knowing the governance problems of shared decision making and how to coordinate the process:

The main governance problems that inhibit the effective implementation of shared decision making are questions of the line of authority, where the ultimate authority resides, what are the scope and domain for the decision-making, and so forth. Kanter (1983) referred to these problems as of "boundary problems". Weiss et. el. (1992) reported that in most of the schools in six school districts they analyzed, the challenging problem was the issue of who had the power to say the final word. They said that there was an uncertainty of line of authority to decide which caused problems and ambiguities.

The other issue is the question of group representation on the team. Kanter (1983) argued that in order to reduce the degree of politicking and increase the scope of cooperation,

participants should participate as individuals rather representing some groups or departments in the organization. In contrast, Blumberg and Schmuck (1969) argued that school principal should make sure that representative decision council is indeed representative of whole, at the same time, trying to have it act effectively and in the best interest of the school as a whole.

Before the advent of SBDM Bridges (1967) identified two important criteria to solve the problem of representation and participation, relevance and expertise. He argued that when the teachers' personal stakes in the decision are high, their interest in participation would also be high. Decision areas such as textbook selection, teaching methods, discipline and organization of instruction are relevant issues with high stakes to teachers. Recently, Boles (1992) reported teachers are more interested in control of their work than they were in the power to determine policy supports the argument of Bridges. The other criterion, Bridges (1967) identified is expertise. He argued that having a personal stake is not an enough reason to participate. It was also necessary to have some expert knowledge. A clear-cut distribution of authority and specification of rules is necessary for the effective implementation of the shared-decision-making. The other important factor is the coordination of interdependence among tasks and people. Coordination of interdependence includes outcome interdependence and task interdependence. Shea and Guzo (1987) showed these two factors as the important antecedents of successful group decision making and implementation. Effective functioning of shared-decision-making will also depend upon the extent to which school principals are able to mediate the problems of task interdependence and outcome interdependence in the school. Katz and Kahn (1978), asserted that the effectiveness of the decision-making process and decision outcome will be a measure of (1) the area that the decision will influence, (2) the scope of the decision itself, and (3) the time that the decision outcome for the successful implementation. As we think all of these conceptual issues, the roles that school leader supposed to assume require him/her to reflect all of the factors in the organization.

3. Knowing the features and difficulties of decision making under stress and conflict and its implications on the several phases of decision making process:

The relationships between decision-making, decision-outcome quality, and stress have been the focus of a tremendous amount of research in organizational behavior, psychology, and medical science for a long time period. Decision specific stress, as it is induced by a crisis or threatening condition to the well-being of individuals or organizations, has some important implications on the decision-making behavior of organizations and individuals. The major consequences of crisis induced decision-making stress on the decision-making process were listed by Smart and Vertinsky (1977) as follows: (1) narrowing of cognitive processes, (2) information distortion, (3) group pathologies, (4) rigidities in programming, and (5) lack of decision readiness. This section analyzes the implications of decision induced stress on decision-making behaviors.

a) Implications of Decision-Making Stress on Alternative Generation and Evaluation

The implication of decision stress is directly related to the generation of alternatives and consequences as the decision-maker has a short time span to formulate the alternatives. Janis and Mann suggest that a high level of decision stress may lower the quality of decision-making. Hosti (1971) also concludes that high levels of stress, if induced by crisis, may influence the creativity of decision-making.

According to Keinan (1987), decision stress can influence decision-making in three ways. These are:

1. Premature closure: In this situation, a decision is reached before all available alternatives have been considered. Smart and Vertinsky note that a high level of decision stress narrows the span of cognitive processes.

2. Nonsystematic Scanning: Keinan (1987) showed that under stress alternatives are considered in a nonsystematic, disorganized way. Staw and his colleagues (1981) concluded that under hyper vigilant conditions, restriction of information processing occurs because of the

decreased information exchange. Decision-makers often fail to show enough sensitivity to the key aspects of the problem under stress (Staw et. al. in Gladstein and Reilly, 1985). A similar, but more comprehensive analysis of this process was made by Janis and Mann. Janis and Mann (1982) conclude that hyper vigilance tends to result in either partial or complete failure to meet key criteria of effective decision-making.

3: Temporal Narrowing: The third implication of decision stress in this stage is temporal narrowing, which occurs when devoting a short period of time to the development of alternatives.

For example, by violating the alternative generation stage of the decision making process and miscalculating the seriousness of consequences of a chosen course of action under decision specific stress and escalation of commitment seemed a major cause of the Challenger disaster (Kruglanski, 1986; Bower, 1987).

b) Implications of Decision-Making Stress on Information and Evidence Use:

The second impact of the decision specific stress is on information use and evaluation. Smart and Vertinsky (1977) argue that changes in communication channels during crisis situations distorts the flow of information in the organization. The communication channels can be reduced, and flow of information can be controlled by a centralized authority. The results of Gladstein and Reilly (1985) show that groups tend to centralize communication and information flow due to the intensity of perceived risk under time pressure stress. They conclude that during time pressure induced stress; groups reduced the amount of interaction and the time spent on information discussion. Overload of information and the need to respond quickly forces decision-makers to use fewer channels, therefore, reducing their information sources. Under high time pressure and decision stress, organizations and individuals can adopt some mechanisms to handle this problem and reduce their decision specific stress. Miller stated these mechanisms as the filtering of information, accelerating the processing of information evaluation, and the avoidance from the problem (Miller in Zur and Broznitz, 1981). However, Smart and Vertinsky

argued that these strategies may distort the information. They advised that these problems can be reversed through careful planning of arrangements.

c) Time Pressure and the Decision Making Process:

Time pressure is great in SBDM. The search and evaluation of information for a promising alternative formulation are the basic assumptions about the decision-making. The time factor is the main element of decision-making under stress. The results of extensive research by Wright (1974) found that people under high time pressures tend to attach greater weight to negative information than to positive information in their decisions. Those under little or no time pressure showed no tendency to attach greater weight to either negative of positive information. He concluded that the harassed decision-maker becomes extremely salient to discredit evidence on a few salient dimensions.

4) Knowing ways to improve the quality of decision making:

Janis (1982) and Kruglanski(1986) suggest that use of the check and balance procedure reduces the risk of decision failures. This is a pre-decision process that asks the decision-maker to confront and answer the questions about potential risks and gains not previously considered (Janis, 1982). Janis stressed that without an application of a systematic approach, even the most motivated and alert person may overlook some vital dimensions of the problem being considered.

Staw and Ross suggest that one of the ways to protect groups and individual managers pre-occupied with certain courses of action is to schedule regular intervals for stepping back and looking at a project from an outsider's perspective. They suggest that managers should allow the subordinates to evaluate the information in an environment in which the information is critical or supportive.

The other strategy to overcome the dysfunction of decision-maker's behavior under stress and pressure is to heighten the decision-maker's fear of failure. Kruglanski (1986) suggested that inserting several reminders into the decision-making process may be helpful. Some people may be assigned to remind the decision-makers of the negative consequences of their course of

action. Finally, he advised that making people aware of the processes which can lead to biased judgments will increase their ability to avoid these biases.

5. Knowing how to use Nominal Group Technique, Delphi Process, Devil's Advocate, Dialectic Inquiry in the Decision Making Process:

1.) Nominal Group Technique: Delbecq and Van de Ven (1974) identified four phases in the implementation of this technique. First, individual members meet as a group but begin by sitting silently and independently generating ideas on a problem in writing. Next, this silent period is followed by a round-robin procedure in which each member of the group presents an idea to the group. At this phase, no discussion of the ideas is permitted. The ideas are summarized and recorded on a blackboard or other panels. Third, for the purpose of clarification and evaluation, each idea is discussed. Finally, group members concluded the meetings by silently and independently recording their rank-ordering of the various ideas or solutions to the problem. The final decision is determined by the pooled outcome of the member's votes on the issue.

2. Delphi Process:

In contrast to nominal group technique, the Delphi process never allows participants to a decision to meet face to face. Instead, a problem is identified and members are asked to provide potential solutions through a series of carefully designed questionnaires. Members complete these questionnaires independently. Results of these questionnaires are compiled and sent to the physically dispersed other group members. After viewing the feedback, members are again asked their opinion, and to see that the opinions of other change their ideas. This process may continue until a consensus is reached among the group members.

The comparison of these techniques reveals that they can to improve the quality of decisions by freeing individual participants from the influence of the other members. However, the mechanism to achieve this goal in these two techniques is different.

In Delphi process, this purpose is achieved through anonymity and isolation of respondents from other, whereas in nominal group technique this is achieved through the

individual processes of idea generation and voting from the choice of solutions.

Both of techniques assume that equal participation in the idea generation and equal rights to vote for the choice. In the Delphi technique, the problem content is controlled through the use of structured questionnaires, whereas nominal group technique enables group members to extend dimensions of problem by outlining many possible issues. Therefore, nominal group technique is more flexible as compared to Delphi process in terms of allowing group members to generate as many as possible issues.

Delbecq and Van de Ven (1975) proposed three criteria to use or not to use the Delphi process. These are (1) adequate time (2) participant skill in written communication and (3) high participant motivation. From these criteria, it is obvious that Delphi approach would not be an appropriate mechanism to make decisions in crisis situations or when the time is the single most significant attribute to solve the problem. Van de Ven and Delbecq (1974) reported that Delphi process can take up to five months. In this situation, we cannot use this method. Nominal group or other models should be used.

However, Delphi process can be used when the participants are geographically dispersed and the respondents' judgments of these people are important for the long-range establishment of certain policy domains. Since, it brings expert judgments; it would be useful to use the Delphi method. The Delphi process can also be used when organization members do not have time to conduct face to face discussion sessions to solve the problems. It may also be used when the members want anonymity.

The situations in which the use of nominal group technique can be used is also contingent upon the context of the situation. First of all, if the decision-making problem is narrowly defined, not addressing a broad range of issues, the nominal group technique can be used effectively. Otherwise, the issues will not be discussed in depth. Nominal group technique can be used when idea generation and fact finding are the important tasks of the decision group. Nominal group should be used when organizational members have differing preferences about the issues, and it is likely that the politicking behaviors will be at issue. Nominal group can be

used when members want to be free of the influence of group pressure, and other sanctions. It can also be used to mediate the influence of the social presence effect. Finally, if the time is the essence of organizational effectiveness or efficiency, the nominal group techniques can be used as an appropriate technique.

3. Dialectic Inquiry:

Cosier and Schwenk (1990) state that the purpose of the dialectic method is to program conflict into the decision making process regardless of managers' personal feelings. This is done by structuring a debate between conflicting views. The origin of the model is attributed back to the Aristotle and Plato who advocated that the best outcomes come out of views of thesis/antithesis conflicts.

The benefit of dialectic method is given as the opportunity to single out false assumptions that go into the proposed course of action or choice made by the group. By this way, decisions based on poor assumptions or the consideration of evidence is avoided.

The potential problem in this model is that the decision outcome may be a function of who wins the debate rather than the best decision. For that reason, oftentimes, there is compromise between the views rather than optimal decision for the organization. The dialectic method should be used when uncertainty in achieving a quality solution is high and information required to process the alternatives is low or not readily available.

4. The Devil's Advocate:

The usefulness of the devil's advocate approach is to minimize the cost of decision making because of the chance of error involved in making the correct decision. With this technique the group, before making a decision, questions the assumptions that favoring a certain course of action. In order to implement the devil's advocate in the decision making process, the only necessary condition is that a person or a group of individuals are assigned to play the role of devil's advocate.

Conclusions

School based management remains on of the more common educational reforms of the mid-1990s. Research on school based management points to many problems in implementation and use. There exists a large body of research and theory in the education, management and sociological literature.   In spite of this few schools are using this knowledge base to provide sustained and systematic staff development in the skills and knowledge that could make this complex new governance process work effectively. This paper has suggested an initial set of ideas on which such training could build.

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APPENDIX A

List of Categories and Sample Barriers

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Methodology deficiencies

     Lack of strong procedural guidelines

     Lack of legitimate strategy for problem solving

     Lack of methodology and guidelines for group process

Cultural diversity issues

     Existence of biases, prejudice, sexism

     Failure to take cultural differences into account

     Differences of world view

Planning shortfalls

     Failure to define the focus of the group

     Inadequate preparation by facilitator and/or participants

     Inadequate planning of meeting strategy

Resource constraints

     Inadequate physical setting and necessary tools

     Lack of technological support

     Lack of resources

Group composition inadequacies

     Failure to have participants with right level of authority at table

     Failure to include key actors

     Participants have inadequate content knowledge of problem

Organizational culture forces

     Desire to give the boss an answer that he/she wants

     Pressure for immediate results

     Existence of rewards for not solving the problem

Communication barriers

       Inability to find and use a common language among the group

       Inability to effectively listen to what others are saying

       Dominance in group by one person or faction

Climate concerns

       Lack of supportiveness for open expression

       Lack of group identity or cohesiveness

       Lack of trust among group members

Attitude Problems

       Existence of negative and resistant attitudes

       Unrealistic expectation of the process

       Unwillingness to be flexible and compromising

Process Failures

       Failure to reach a consensus

       Lack group participation

       Tendency to focus solution before defining the problem

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Source: B. J. Broome and L. Fulbright (1995). A multi-stage influence model of barriers to group problem solving, Small Group Research, 26(1), 25-55.