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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Decision making process in NGO's working in education sector

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1.0 Role of NGOs in education sector

Education is one of the key factors to a healthy, productive, and equitable society. It is necessary in order to produce thoughtful and knowledgeable humans who can actively participate and contribute to society. In order for people to grow and develop in ways that will benefit themselves and their communities they need to have schools readily available.

The task of ensuring basic education and literacy to every child, youth and adult also requires the voluntary and private sectors as well as communities to collaborate and contribute. It is a shared responsibility for all- Government, community and NGOs. Successful experiments and new approaches to education should emerge from NGOs.

NGOs empower communities to advocate for better educational services and to accomplish such goals as increased access to education, especially for girls, and improved management of schools, using a variety of participatory approaches. In so doing communities recognize their abilities to identify and solve their own problems, to act as an organized social unit and to put

in place the basic conditions to deliver better education at services to their children. However, while NGOs use participatory methods to empower communities, they also tend to retain decision-making power and use participatory methods to achieve their own goals. Nonetheless, all partners agreed that one of the most important successes of NGOs working in education has

been increased access to schooling and active local community involvement in the quality of education.

2.0 Importance of decisions in NGOs in Education sector

2.1 Nonprofits take on huge goals to end hunger, to eliminate homelessness, to end illiteracy. They take on challenges that no for-profit company would ever attempt. For-profits are successful if their profits are increasing and their market share is growing. On the contrary, nonprofit organizations are rarely satisfied with their progress, since the needs seem never-ending. On a personal level, people who lead nonprofits also fear the potential failure of disappointing the people and institutions that have given them time and money.

2.2 Decision analysis stands on a foundation of thousands of years of philosophical and practical thought about uncertainty and decision –making. Nowadays, we have a discipline of decision analysis that provides systematic procedures for clarifying a confusing situation by offering the possibility of replacing confusion with clear insight, and arriving at a desired cause of action. This is based on the assumption that members, given the constraining influence of a structured decision-making environment, will ‘satisfice’- settle for acceptable, as opposed to optimal solutions, will attend to problems sequentially rather than simultaneously, and will repeat standard solutions.

2.3 The decision-making ability of the think tank of any organization, decides how effective a role it will play in the world. Many organizations exist for the sake of existing and despite phenomenal amount of resources available at their disposal, they hardly do any work. That is because there is no will or decision-making ability at the helm. An organization without people, who can't make decisions and take them to their logical conclusion, is doomed. However, when there is a decision-making will power, with tenacity to execute strategy, miracles can happen despite limited resources. That's why, its importance in any organization, can never be overemphasized.

2.4 When decision-making processes are not working well, complaints about lack of information, inadequate consultation or rowdy behavior usually occurs. When this happens, it's worth looking at the whole process to see where problems are and how they can be addressed. Tensions often occurred between staff and senior managers because of the staff expectations, that they would be equal partners in the decision making process. Decisions are at the heart of leader success, and at times there are critical moments when they can be difficult, perplexing, and nerve-racking. However, the boldest decisions are the safest. Nothing succeeds a success better than another sweet success.

2.5 The way to get better at making smarter decisions is learning from experience and not repeating the same mistakes again. No decision is perfect in the sense that no decision can guarantee a 100% success rate in attainment of objective. However, we must choose the best course of action that has highest chance of success and is backed by logic and confidence in own judgment. Decisions may turn out to be good or bad but none of them are wasted. Bad or good ones both add up to what we call wisdom if they are analyzed in the aftermath. One often realizes the importance of decision making only after making a couple of bad ones.

3.0 Types of Decisions taken in an NGO in Education sector

3.1 *Programmed and non-programmed decisions:*

Programmed decisions are concerned with the problems of repetitive nature or routine type matters. A standard procedure is followed for tackling such problems. These decisions are taken generally by lower level managers. Decisions of this type may pertain to e.g. purchase of material, granting leave to an employee and supply of goods and implements to the employees, etc. Non-programmed decisions relate to difficult situations for which there is no easy solution. These matters are very important for the organisation. For example, opening of a new branch of the organisation or a large number of employees absenting from the organisation are the decisions which are normally taken at the higher level.

3.2 *Routine and strategic decisions:*

Routine decisions are related to the general functioning of the organisation. They do not require much evaluation and analysis and can be taken quickly. Ample powers are delegated to lower ranks to take these decisions within the broad policy structure of the organisation. Strategic decisions are important which affect objectives, organisational goals and other important policy matters. These decisions usually involve huge investments or funds. These are non-repetitive in nature and are taken after careful analysis and evaluation of many alternatives. These decisions are taken at the higher level of management.

3.3 *Tactical (Policy) and operational decisions:*

Decisions pertaining to various policy matters of the organisation are policy decisions. These are taken by the top management and have long term impact on the functioning of the concern. Operating decisions relate to day-to-day functioning or operations of business. Middle and lower level managers take these decisions. Decisions concerning payment of bonus to employees are a policy decision. On the other hand if bonus is to be given to the employees, calculation of bonus in respect of each employee is an operating decision.

3.4 *Organisational and personal decisions:*

When an individual takes decision as an executive in the official capacity, it is known as organisational decision. If decision is taken by the executive in the personal capacity (thereby affecting his personal life), it is known as personal decision. Sometimes these decisions may affect functioning of the organisation also. The authority of taking organizational decisions may be delegated, whereas personal decisions cannot be delegated.

3.5 *Major and minor decisions:*

Another classification of decisions is major and minor. Major decisions are taken by top management. Purchase of office stationery is a minor decision which can be taken by office superintendent.

3.6 *Individual and group decisions:*

When the decision is taken by a single individual, it is known as individual decision. Usually routine type decisions are taken by individuals within the broad policy framework of the organisation. Group decisions are taken by group of individuals constituted in the form of a standing committee. Generally very important and pertinent matters for the organisation are referred to this committee. The main aim in taking group decisions is the involvement of maximum number of individuals in the process of decision-making.

When decision is important & trying to maximize outcome than information on alternatives can be gathered and quantified than rational decision making model is followed. When not willing to invest much time to make the decisions and not trying to maximize outcome and minimum criteria is clear than bounded rationality decision making model is followed. When there is time pressure and analysis paralysis would be costly and have experienced with problems and goals are clear then intuitive model of decision making is followed. When new solutions need to be generated and solutions of the problems are not clear and have time to immerse yourself in the issues than creative decision making model is followed.

While making decisions alternatives and their consequences are compared with other alternatives upto some extent. Managers determine all stakeholders and incorporate their need into the project. Principle of unity of directions and command is followed while making directions. None of assets (of tax exempted organisation) is diverted to its officials, directors, major donors, relative etc. People are clear about their level of decision making authority regarding the decisions. There is no provision to send their representative in their place in meetings. Upto some extent people lack information to engage in thorough discussions of the decision option in the meetings. In more than 10% cases people walk into decision making meeting already biased on a position. Sufficient time is given for comprehensive discussion while taking decisions. In the NGOs in education sector under study right decisions have been taken at wrong time and many decisions have not served the purpose.

During last 5 years upto 50% decisions are made on intuition decision. In most of the decisions actual situation turns out either better than anticipated or offer the potential to be so. Upto some extent members are cognizant with bias and errors that inhabit the decision making process. Most of the decisions are made on Brainstorming method (Group decision making process) technique.

4.0 Decision making bodies in NGOs in Education sector:

4.1 In NGOs decisions are made at various levels and follows participatory approach in organizational decision making at all level. The key decision making bodies are Executive Committee / Governing body Major institutional decisions are taken at Executive level, which is the highest body of NGO. Such decisions usually involves infrastructure development, new project development, accessing loans/funds from any financing institutions or banks, drawing long-term perspective plan, hiring top level management staff, etc. All the decisions are made in the formal Executive Committee meetings.

4.2 Consultative Forum (CF):

At management level, this is the highest policy making body. The forum consists of all top level managers and program heads of the organization. Various policy issues of NGOs are discussed in this forum and decisions are made on participatory basis. The meeting of the consultative forum is held at a regular interval.

4.3 Coordination and Collaboration Committee (CCC):

At management level, this is the highest body deals with operational issues. All the program chiefs are included in the Coordination Committee. In the meeting they discuss about important issues facing by the various projects, programs, units and departments of the NGOs. The purpose is to analyze the situations, problems, conflicts and make appropriate decisions for solution. The meeting helps to bring cohesiveness among the various projects, programs and organs of the organization through effective coordination.

4.4 Microfinance Development Program (MDP) Decision Making Process

In MDP the decision making process is decentralized to a great extent. The Branch Managers, Area Managers, and General Mangers all have delegated authorities to make necessary decisions within their jurisdictions. They make or change the operational policies based on ground reality of the program through mutual discussion among the Branch Managers, Area Managers and General Manager and the concurrence is taken from all others prior to implement the decisions. The General Manager is the functional head in MDP who makes final decisions through discussions with an internal management committee. The General Manager formally discusses all critical issues and decisions with the President cum the CEO of the NGO.

5.0 Decision making process in NGOs in Education sector :

5.1 SETTING THE AGENDA

In the first stage of the decision-making process council must determine which issues will be considered during the year or term. While some issues will be considered for statutory reasons, many

others end up on the agenda because they are either council policies and priorities or issues that individual councilors have put forward for discussion. The processes for developing the council plan, annual plan and the annual budget are how councils anticipate the future, set directions and priorities, and determine what will and won't be done. These processes are one of the main ways that councilors address community needs and their constituents' concerns. This can require significant negotiation and compromise as councilors strive to get decisions implemented on the issues they are most concerned about.

5.2 GATHERING INFORMATION

This stage involves compiling and preparing information for the councilors. This information will help councilors make an informed decision about each of the issues that have been put forward for consideration. The council report is the way of providing councilors with advice and information. Decision making should be based on appropriate consultation. Finding out what stakeholders think about a particular issue is an important part of the decision-making process. Understanding the views of stakeholders helps to inform council's decision. Another way in which councils can get the information they need is via advisory committees or working groups.

5.3 FORMING AN OPINION

This stage of the decision-making process gives councilors the opportunity to form their opinions on the proposals before them. This stage allows them to debate the issues effectively in the council meeting as part of the decision-making process. Briefings are information sessions involving councilors and senior officers in the administration. These sessions ensure that councilors are well informed and in the best possible position to debate the issues effectively. While councilors will get most of the information they require via formal advice and briefings, there will be times when they may require more information from the administration. Councilors should ensure that any requests for information or reports are legitimate, lawful, related to their role and directed to the appropriate officer.

5.4 MAKING THE DECISION

The fourth stage of the process is when councilors finally make the decision. Council meetings are open to the public. There are, however, certain circumstances when a council meeting may be closed. This should be avoided when possible to preserve transparency and accountability. Meetings should be conducted in a way that clearly reinforces the reason why they are open to the public. That is, council meetings allow the public to be informed and, where appropriate, involved in the government of their community. Councils are required to have a local law which covers meeting procedures. These laws are generally based on well-accepted procedures that are intended to ensure meetings are run fairly and productively. All councilors should be familiar with their council's local law. While these local laws provide a broad framework for running orderly and constructive meetings, good

governance processes add meaning to the framework. They ensure meetings are run in such a way that helps good decision-making. A well-run meeting should have a clear and informative agenda, be well chaired and facilitated, follow meeting procedures appropriately, and adhere to statutory requirements. Every council has codes of conduct which require councillors to treat each other with respect. They shouldn't simply do this because they have to, but because that's how they'd like to be treated themselves.

Councillors are elected for the primary purpose of making decisions on behalf of the community. It's therefore important that councillors take this role seriously, actively participating in all aspects of the meeting. Council meetings should be characterized by transparency. This means that observers can follow and understand the decision-making process and the reasons why a particular decision has been made. This not only helps support accountability, but also keeps legislators and administrators honest. Transparent processes are usually good processes because they stand up to scrutiny.

From time to time, councillors use notices of motion to raise issues in a public forum (the council meeting). When councillors want to formally let their colleagues know that they intend to move a particular matter at an upcoming meeting, they will do this via a notice of motion (however titled). Councils will have a procedure incorporated into their meetings local law for this to occur.

This can be a useful way for a councillor to raise an issue, which doesn't require advice or a lot of consideration on a council agenda. Like notices of motion, councillors sometimes use urgent business as a way to get things onto the agenda. Urgent business has a particular purpose on council meeting agendas.

5.5 IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION

Good decisions that are not acted on are not good decisions. Once decisions have been made, it is typically the job of management and administration to implement them. This process should include feedback on the decision to community members and key stakeholders. One aspect of the Chief Executive Officer's role is to ensure that council decisions are implemented in an effective and timely fashion. Part of this phase is to establish a process for regularly reporting to council on how the implementation is progressing. This not only allows the administration to demonstrate its accountability to the council, but also provides the council with the information it needs to meet its accountability to its community. A unique feature of local government is that all decisions are taken in the name of the whole council. Councillors are bound by the council decision, regardless of whether they were in favour of it or not.

6.0 Decision Making errors that cripple Nonprofit boards in Education Sector:

All bad decisions stem from predictable errors. Once these biases are identified they're easy to avoid.

6.1 *Narrow framing*

One of the biggest reasons bad decisions are made because choices are made more limited than they have to be. A classic sign of narrow framing is presenting a “whether or not” question. Instead, try to **widen Options**. Artificially restricting ideas to one domain leads to worse decision-making. One cannot reach a decision unless the criteria for making it are not known.

6.2 *Confirmation bias*

Unfortunately, when we want something to be a good idea all of us go looking for reasons that it is and actively ignore any reasons it might not be. That's why it's so easy to give into the confirmation bias and be utterly certain we are right, until find out aren't. We have to **Reality Test our Assumption** or else end up with a bunch of ideas that don't work—but that are totally invested in. To avoid the confirmation bias, **base decision-making in reality**.

6.3 *Short term emotions*

Behind every program and initiative, there's a real human with real emotions working on it.

Already complex decisions are often fraught with people's emotions, and that makes them even more difficult to deal with. In order to make a decision based on the best outcomes for mission, If we want to avoid the influence of short-term emotion, we need to get some distance from our problems. **Before Deciding**, and pursue strategies that sidestep the emotions, whether those emotions belong to us or other people.

6.4 *Overconfidence and lack of commitment*

Overconfidence isn't the same thing as being arrogant. It's simply being too certain about our predictions. Overconfidence afflicts experts most.

6.5 **Fear of conflict**

People generally don't enjoy conflict, but in nonprofits, an aversion to conflict can be a by-product of the familial atmosphere of the organization. Staff are working very hard for less money than they could make in the for-profit sector.

On the staff level, consensus and harmony are important in the familial nonprofit atmosphere and no one wants to feel ostracized from the group for violating the established norms. Staff are slow to question the existing process, and reticent to take on decision-making roles unless explicitly encouraged to do so. These feelings can be further complicated by the unresolved and often awkwardly, if ever, discussed issues of gender, class, age and their effect on decision-making in

nonprofits. Whether we want to admit it or not, many nonprofit leaders have biases about who should be making what decisions in their organizations, and these biases are rarely, if ever, addressed.

6.6 **Fear of rejection**

A particularly raw emotion, fear of rejection confuses discussions of nonprofit power and stymies decision-making by limiting the issues that people are willing to discuss. Exclusion from an organization can have a devastating effect on an individual, and this is particularly concerning for people outside the dominant culture. In our observations, people who work in nonprofits are consistently loyal to their organizations and committed to the mission they serve. None of them wants to be seen as uncommitted, and many are willing to stay in untenable situations for the mission's sake. Combined with the anxiety over potential loss of affiliation, this often makes people hesitant to bring up uncomfortable topics that might cause them to be ostracized. Thus, fear of rejection limits the issues—however important—that people are willing to discuss.

Taken individually or together, these fears have the undeniable effect of complicating decision-making processes in nonprofits. This can be seen in the processes surrounding fundraising decisions. Executive directors and their senior leadership are often asked to be the default decision-makers on the most crucial organizational issues, including fundraising. And this structure is implicit. If an executive director doesn't initiate an explicit conversation about this, his or her team and board are unlikely to bring up these topics.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

Decision making process in the NGOs working in educational sector is often quite similar to decision making in other types of NGOs. Though these NGOs have different field of working their decision making of happens in complex and contingent social systems involving diverse constituencies and are subject to numerous conflicting demands in NGOs. NGOs working in education sector often have to take difficult decisions regarding long term operational plans, internal policies, procedures, formation and working of governing body, human resources, fund-raising, implementation of laws etc. Decision-making can be a difficult task, and staff satisfaction is a major concern. Employees support a management decision, even if they do not fully agree, as long as they believe that a fair process was followed in reaching the decision. Decision-makers determine who is affected by a particular decision to ensure that the right people are engaged, included or represented. They decides how best to involve stakeholders and explain the process to them.

A timeline and communication plan about how and when different steps will occur and be shared adds transparency and gives stakeholders a clear sense of what to expect. Consistency is another element that plays a central role in managing expectations and perceptions of fairness and procedural justice. NGOs in Education sector have to shoulder very big responsibility of helping the society to get proper

education for the poorest people and they have areas explained in this article, they can go a long way in achieving the objective of Education to all leading to 100% literacy in India in next decade or so.

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