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The Danger of Irrationality in Decision Making Process: A Review

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Abstract: Decision making as a task in management demands careful attention. This because decision made without care is likely to result in low output. Therefore, to avoid making a wrong decision, care must be taken in the decision-making process. Time, money and other resources committed to making decision in organization are scarce and their wastage if appropriate decision is not made amount to serious lost on the part of the management. Hence, trial and error in arriving at decision is not unacceptable in management, but it is very dangerous. This work reviewed the concept and theories of decision making. It also examined the dangers associated with the irrational decision-making process. It was conducted with the used of secondary method of data collection. The study found out that decision making is an act of drawing conclusion from factual and valuation premises. Synoptic, disjointed and mixed scanning as the work observed are the major decision-making models in management. The work also found out that waste of resources is one of the dangers of irrationality in decision making process. It also recommended that a clear target must be aimed before making decision as against approaching it irrationally.

Keywords: Danger, Decision, Irrationality, Making, Process.

INTRODUCTION

Decision correlate with it need and result. No decision has ever been taken with a view to arriving at failure. Decisions are taken with the aim of arriving at success. It is however the method or approach used in adopting them that often leads the decision maker into arriving at failure. Wrong approach easily misleads the decision maker and make goal far from been achieved. In so long as approach to decision making stands vital, time is also an important variable to consider in approaching decision making (Armstrong, 2005). The question is at what time is decision supposed to be taken? Decision is a stimulant that determines the functionality of organization. Therefore, at all time, decision is taken. The particular time decision is taken is actually the right time for it to be taken. Hence before it is taken, all pros and cons that are likely to accompany it outcome must be critically studied before it is taken. Although, the need for decision to be made is encouraged by certain events. The event surrounding the need for decision itself need careful examination before making the decision expected to govern it. In so long as decision making is necessary, the process of making it is also essential.

Rationality takes all events surrounding the need for making decision into consideration before the decision itself is reached. The end result of decision made is more important than the decision that produced such end itself. If it is discovered that goal will not be achieved then there is no need for decision on it, as process followed to achieve it will result in waste of resources. Under condition of scarcity of resources,

irrationality is not an alternative process in decision making hence, resources will be wasted and goal not achieved (Stoner, 2004). Irrationality recognizes trial and error in decision making process (Lindblom, 1980). This can lead to repeating the decision process over and over again without necessarily achieving anticipated target. And this process does not take into cognizance, the significant of time and resources committed to the decision making. Though, irrationality entertains mistakes and create avenue for their corrections in future cause of repeating the decision process circle. But rationality implies that necessary steps be taken to tackle any possibility of mistake that is likely to be encountered. Room for mistake in the rational perspective should not be created talk less of correcting them. Extra care which must be taken in decision making process against trial and error implies the need for rationality over irrationality. In some other cases. Both rational and irrationality are adopted into one as combined tactic in decision making. This combined strategy as Etzioni (1961) posits is popular known as the mixed scanning approach in decision making process.

DECISION MAKING

Decision making is one of the most crucial activities in management. The ability to decide is an active principle of management. Decision is the selection of alternative cause of action from available alternatives in order to achieve targeted objective. It is a choice aimed at achieving optimum results in a given situation. It could be seen as a mental process that forces us to analyze the situation in order to master it or

increase our knowledge on the area in which decision is to be made. Absence of a decision is a decision. A decision not to act or to postpone a major decision is also a decision (Nwachukwu, 2007; Stoner, 2004). Decision maker considers the facts and values involved in a decision situation and draws conclusion based on perception of the variables concerned. Decision changes as time goes on. What is known today may be unknown tomorrow (Simon, 1976; Mbaya, 1997). The views given on concept of decision justify the basis for rationality than irrationality in the process of decision making.

Theories of Decision Making

Several theories exist on decision making process. This work examined three of these theories. They include; the synoptic, disjointed and mixed scanning theories popular known as decision making models.

Synoptic Model

Propounded by Herbert A. Simon (1976), the synoptic model is also known as the rational or comprehensive model. And as a dominant model in decision making process, the synoptic model emphasizes thoroughness, rational judgement, systematic pursuit and wide coverage of issues involved in decision-making. The epistemology of this model is drawn from logical positivism which involves logical, systematic and empirical based analysis. The model believes that decision maker must among other tasks, calculate cost and benefit of each alternative, estimate the probabilities of future events, projected trends, choose the best alternative or set of action and integrate chosen cause of action comprehensively before adopting or arriving at a final decision. Synoptic model disallowed, rushing, trial, error and greater mistakes in decision making process. The model encourages the need and use of intelligence to accurately calculate the ratio of cost to benefit of alternative and decision. It supports and facilitates absolute rationality in decision making process.

Disjointed Incremental Model

Popularized by Charles Lindblom (1959), the disjointed incremental model of decision making is also known as the science of modelling through, sub-optimal, process model and successive limited comparison model. According to Lindblom, the decision-making arena is in an unstable state of affairs. Therefore, the decision maker need to base his decision on a mutual adjustment method. Instead of approaching decision making rationally, the model believes that decision making should be approached irrationally. The model advocated that, only a restricted variety of alternatives should be considered in the decision-making process. The model further believes that, only a restricted number of consequences should be considered and alternative aims or objectives should be adjusted in the light of postulated means and their consequences.

Disjointed incremental model further uphold the view that there is limitation to knowledge, ends are rediscovered but not fixed and analysis tries to move away from ills rather than goals. Therefore, room for learning based on previous mistakes must be given in decision making process. The science of modelling through because of its tolerance for mistake, trial and error tactics is often regarded by many as the zig zag and irrational decision-making model.

Mixed Scanning Model

Amitai Etzioni (1964), advanced with the mixed scanning model of decision making as a compromise between the rational and disjointed models. To him these models are both faulty. He posited that disjointed incremental model underlined assumptions of trial and error which can equally lead the decision maker into ending up wasting resources and time. To him, the synoptic model also leads to waste of time and energy because it is an analogue of sharp focus lens. Due to these waste, he advocated for the combination of the two models as the surest means and way of arriving at a good decision and result. This combination according to him is all about using mixed scanning or balancing the two models to get better results of decision.

The rational, irrational and mixed scanning are the active models of decision making in Management (Daft, 2000). Other models still exist. The optimality, trickle down, transactive, etc. models all exist in decision making process.

Dangers of Irrationality

The irrational decision-making process is characterized by a number of dangers-reason why contemporary decision makers find it worthless an approach to decision making. Resources are greatly committed to decision making process. Capital and human knowledge are invested in the cause of making decision. Considering the value of resources invested in the decision-making process and the objectives expected to be achieved in the long run, it will not be wise to adopt the irrational approach in decision making. Irrationality welcomes trial and error and this often leads to waste of resources both human and material. Repeated error making and trial implies that more resources are committed to decision making process hence, each trial attracts resources and each error leads to waste of resources. A clear target must be aimed before decision making starts. Objectives that are expected as outcome of decision made or taken are seriously important that process leading to the achievement of these objectives must not be adopted and treated using zig zag approach. The waste of resources involved in irrational decision-making process, make the approach to making decision dangerous.

Irrational decision-making process undermines the general objective of making decision. Decision is made with intension to achieve certain goal. And for such goal to be achieved, care must be taken in the decision-making process. Irrationality implies that extra care is not necessary as the decision-making process can be revisited again to rectify mistakes made in the process. Non-carefulness in decision making process is a serious mistake which can make goal achievement risky. Risking the chance of goal achievement due to trial and error game involve in irrational process of making decision is often dangerous.

Decision made in the atmosphere of rush is bound to fail in relation to achievement of objective. Irrationality entertains rushing in decision making process as if the objective targeted to be achieved is not important. Decision maker must be aware of the fact that objective targeted and which necessitate decision making is important than the time used to achieve it. Thus, there is no need for rushing. Decision maker may end up in regret for rushing and not achieving objective. Rushing into decision making without studying the decision environment carefully especially the uncertainties which are likely to come up on the path leading to goal achievement is dangerous. Hurriedly made decision has in several cases, ended it maker in frustration and disappointment. Decision maker in some other cases, end up regretting not taken possible consequences which are likely to be experienced into considering before making decision. This demonstrated the danger of irrationality in decision making process.

Trial and error is an act of gambling. Irrationality involves gambling. And decision making is more than a game of gambling because it outcome touches the life of organization, society and even the individual depending on the group for which the decision is made. Repeating same act as in irrational process due to accommodate principle of trial and error is dangerous to goal achievement and the decision-making process itself. It leads not only to waste of time and resources but also contaminates the decision-making process with lot of mistakes and error. Against the principle of irrationality, care must be taken to ensure that only minor or negligible mistakes are made in decision making process. This type of errors is most often basic but they do not vitiate the decision-making process entirely or in totality. Although, room for mistakes should not be created because minor ones can be over looked. Repeated mistakes and corrections not only lead to waste of time and resources but endanger the entire process of decision making.

Irrationality is a problematic process of making decision. It does not allow the decision maker to consider uncertainties likely to come up in decision making process as a significant issue. Uncertainties are basic but the decision maker is expected to be talented

in forecasting possible uncertainties and how they can be minimized. Though, irrationality recognizes the existence of uncertainties in decision making but it only recommended repeated trial as an alternative to making correction instead of supporting critical thinking to reducing possible uncertainties in the decision-making process. This implies that irrational process of making decision is not specific in goal pursuance. It prediction basis is bogus than how assumption is expected to be drawn in decision making process. Trial and error, zig zag, as well as undefined conclusion in relation to goal achievement formed the structure of irrationality in decision making, and these are dangerous variables in decision making process.

CONCLUSION

Decision making is a very significant role in management. Administrator or manager is expected to be skillful in this aspect to be able to fulfil leadership task. Irrationality with the contradictions inherent in it, has suffered severe abandonment in different instances. And today, rational approach to decision making is preferred to irrationality so as to escaped the dangers put forward by irrationality in decision making process. Protagonists of irrational decision-making process pretends in most cases to be unaware of the fact that irrationality approach leads to waste of time and resources. They promote the approach believing the fact that, it entertains mistakes and create avenue for future corrections through repeated efforts and trials. Not taking uncertainties into consideration, undermining overall objective of making decision and rushing the decision-making process itself are part of the dangers of irrationality in decision making process.

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