

DECISION MAKING SKILLS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Chanaporn Natsawang

Student of Master in Educational Administration, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

E-mail: s66561802005@ssru.ac.th

Thada Siththada

Graduate school, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

E-mail: thada.si@ssru.ac.th

Abstract

School administrators are considered to have the authority to plan, manage, and control various resources, including personnel, budget, and curriculum development, to create an effective learning environment. Accurate and appropriate decision-making within these powers will directly affect the quality of education and the progress of the educational institution. Good decision-making skills not only help administrators effectively manage arising problems but also promote strong leadership in working with staff and stakeholders, especially in decision-making processes related to resource management, policy development, and solving complex problems. Therefore, this article aims to present the decision-making skills of school administrators, with the objective of providing readers with more knowledge and understanding of administrators' decision-making skills, as well as presenting the models and decision-making processes of school administrators.

Keywords: School Administrators, Skills, Decision-Making

Introduction

According to the Ministry of Education Regulatory Act B.E. 2546 (2003), amended (No. 2) B.E. 2553 (2010), Section 39 defines the powers and duties of administrators as follows: First, they must manage the educational institution in alignment with laws, regulations, rules, or policies set by the government. Second, they must coordinate and control the management of resources and personnel in the educational institution. Third, they act as representatives of the educational institution in general operations, including executing legal documents as assigned. Fourth, they have the authority to prepare annual reports summarizing the operations of the educational institution. Fifth, they approve certificates and diplomas within the educational institution (Ministry of Education Regulatory Act, 2003).

Given these administrative powers and duties, it can be said that administrators play a crucial role in management and decision-making. Therefore, administrators must possess good decision-making skills to ensure that educational institutions operate effectively and can respond to the needs of students, teachers, and the community. Jutamas Deepaen (2020) conducted research on administrators' decision-making and school effectiveness under the Nonthaburi Primary Educational Service Area Office. The results showed that administrators' high-level decision-making positively correlated with high-level school effectiveness.

The author believes that administrators' decision-making skills affect school effectiveness and are one of the fundamental skills that administrators should possess. Therefore, this academic article has been prepared to provide readers with more knowledge and understanding of school administrators' decision-making skills, as well as to present models and decision-making processes of school administrators.

Roles and Responsibilities of School Administrators

The Ministry of Education Administration Act, Section 39 (2003) outlines five key aspects of school administrators' roles and responsibilities: First, manage the educational institution in accordance with laws, regulations, and rules of the government and the educational institution or government agency, as well as the policies and objectives of the educational institution or government agency. Second, administrators must coordinate and supervise personnel, finance, supplies, facilities, and other assets of the educational institution or government agency in compliance with laws, regulations, and government rules, as well as the affairs of the educational institution or government agency. Third, act as a representative of the educational institution in general affairs, including executing legal documents for the educational institution or government agency within the budget allocated to the educational institution or government agency as assigned. Fourth, prepare annual reports related to the affairs of the educational institution or government agency to be submitted to the Educational Service Area Committee. Fifth, have the authority to approve certificates and diplomas of the educational institution in accordance with the regulations set by the Basic Education Commission.

Henry Mintzberg (1989) describes three main roles of administrators: Interpersonal roles: These primarily involve communication with others. Communication helps administrators better understand needs and problems, and allows them to explain organizational and personal perspectives to others. Sub-roles include: Representative role in all situations (e.g., opening ceremonies, welcoming others). Leadership role, motivating and stimulating staff to achieve goals Liaison role, working with people outside their own unit. Informational roles: These involve gathering and sharing information. Sub-roles include: Monitor role, gathering information disseminator role, sharing information with others inside the organization spokesperson role, sharing information with those outside the organization. Decision-making roles: These involve collecting and sharing information to maximize benefits for the organization. Administrators should use this information effectively, as gathering and sharing data both internally and externally aids in better decision-making. Sub-roles include: Entrepreneur role, shown when making personal adjustments. Negotiator role, related to work schedules, projects, and setting work goals. These roles highlight the diverse responsibilities of administrators in managing relationships, information flow, and decision-making processes within an organization.

In summary, the roles and duties of administrators according to the Ministry of Education Administration Act, Section 39 (2003) define five key roles for school administrators, namely: managing in accordance with laws and regulations, coordinating and controlling personnel and assets, acting as a representative in general management, preparing annual reports for presentation to the Educational Service Area Committee, and approving certificates according to established regulations. Meanwhile, Henry Mintzberg (1989) divides the roles of administrators into three main categories: interpersonal roles focusing on communication and understanding problems, informational roles involving gathering and sharing information, and decision-making roles using information for optimal management. The integration of these two perspectives enables administrators to manage educational institutions efficiently, responding to the needs of staff and students in a rapidly changing environment.

Basic Skills of Educational Institution Administrators

Katz and Kahn (Kotbantao, 2019) defined the essential basic skills in the management process and emphasized that all successful administrators, whether at the top, middle, or lower levels, must possess three basic skills: Technical Skills refer to having knowledge, abilities, or

expertise related to methods, processes, procedures, and techniques for organizational operations. For example, expertise in curriculum concepts and practices, proficiency in measurement and evaluation, or other related tasks. Technical skills are particularly important for those in administrative or supervisory roles at the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy and authority structure, as they work more closely with operational staff than middle and top-level administrators. The next administrative skill is Human Skills, which refers to the knowledge, abilities, and expertise of administrators in working effectively and efficiently with others, both individually and in groups. This includes self-awareness and understanding others, or putting oneself in others' shoes. The foundational knowledge for human skills in administration includes understanding leadership, leadership characteristics, leadership behaviors, motivation and persuasion, attitudes and attitude development, group dynamics, human needs, work morale, conflict and conflict management, and human resource development. The final skill is Conceptual Skills, which refers to the knowledge, abilities, and expertise of administrators regarding the overall work and organization. It is the administrator's capacity to see the organization as a whole, including the interrelationships between various units within the organization, and the roles and responsibilities of all departments and all personnel within the organization.

Griffin (2011) presented seven important management skills for administrators, with the first three skills derived from Katz's concept. The details are as follows: First, Technical skills are skills related to specific understanding and abilities to accomplish tasks. Second, Interpersonal skills are the ability to communicate, understand, and motivate employees and groups both inside and outside the organization. It includes the ability to adapt well to others both internally and externally. If managers have a high level of interpersonal skills, they are more likely to succeed in their work and drive the organization towards success. Third, Conceptual skills are the manager's ability to see the organization as a whole, understanding how different parts are interconnected, and how internal and external environments affect the organization. This enables managers to determine appropriate and highly efficient approaches to managing the organization. Fourth, Diagnostic skills are skills that help managers respond appropriately to situations. Fifth, Communication skills are the ability to effectively communicate ideas and information to others, while also efficiently receiving ideas and information from others. Communication with people both inside and outside the organization may be conducted through face-to-face conversations or via online systems. Sixth, Decision-making skills: Most effective managers should have good decision-making skills. These skills involve the manager's ability to identify problems or opportunities and choose the most appropriate course of action to solve problems or capitalize on opportunities. However, no manager can make correct decisions every time. Effective managers tend to make more correct decisions than wrong ones, and when they do make wrong decisions, they quickly identify the irregularity and try to find better decision-making approaches to minimize losses to the organization. Seventh, Time management skills are the manager's ability to prioritize tasks and delegate work appropriately. If managers cannot manage time efficiently, it may lead to stress and failure to achieve desired goals. Therefore, managers must determine the importance and urgency of each task to know what should be done first and what can be done later. Managers with good time management skills can balance work, personal life, and family well. Conversely, managers lacking time management skills often spend more time than normal working and frequently request additional time, but the results or quantity of work do not meet expectations.

In summary, Katz and Kahn defined the essential basic skills necessary for administrators at all levels, dividing them into three main categories: Technical Skills, which refer to knowledge and expertise in methods and processes related to the organization's

functions, such as evaluation and measurement; Interpersonal Skills, which involve communicating and working effectively with others, both individually and in groups; and Conceptual Skills, which help administrators see the organization as a whole and understand the connections between various departments. Additionally, Griffin (2011) added four more management skills: Diagnostic Skills, which help administrators respond appropriately to situations; Communication Skills, which involve efficiently communicating and receiving information; Decision-making Skills, which relate to choosing appropriate approaches to problem-solving; and finally, Time Management Skills, which are crucial for prioritizing tasks and creating a balance between work and personal life. Possessing these skills enables administrators to operate efficiently and helps drive the organization towards success.

Decision Making

Banyong Tojinda (2005, p. 178) states that decision making refers to the process by which administrators consider, decide, and issue orders on a particular matter. Decision making or issuing directives is important because it involves selecting the best course of action among various alternatives.

Somkid Bang-mo (2005) says that decision making means choosing a course of action from several options to achieve a set goal. This action may involve deciding to do one thing or several things to succeed according to the established objectives. In practice, decision making often involves complex problems with more than one solution to consider. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the problem solver to choose which method of action will best achieve the goals and bring the highest benefits to the organization.

Worapot Butsarakamwadee (2005) defines decision making as the process that administrators use to solve organizational problems or determine a course of action based on available information.

Simon (1966) describes decision making as a process of various activities consisting of three components: intellectual activities focusing on data and information systems used in decision making, design activities involving data analysis to determine courses of action, and activities related to selecting the most appropriate alternative to implement.

Pacheco and Webber (2016) define decision making as the intentional act of choosing from multiple alternatives to achieve organizational objectives.

In summary, decision making refers to the process by which administrators consider and determine courses of action to solve problems in order to achieve their goals.

Decision-Making Models

Daft, R.L. (2008) describes five types of decision-making models (Vroom Yetton and Jago): First, AI: The administrator decides alone using information available at that time. Second, AII: The administrator receives necessary information from staff and makes the decision to solve the problem alone. Third, CI: The administrator involves staff individually to share the problem, listening to opinions and advice, without consulting the group before making a decision. Fourth, CII: The administrator involves staff as a group to share the problem, collects opinions and suggestions, and then decides. Fifth, GII: The administrator involves staff as a group to share the problem. The leader's role is as a chairperson who does not influence the group's decision but is willing to accept and implement the solution as supported.

Watcharee Trichareunkoonphak Jongjaem (2023) divides decision-making models into two types: The first model is individual decision-making, used for uncomplicated matters or urgent issues when there's no time to consult others. The second model is group decision-making, which emphasizes participation and opinions from those responsible for implementing

the decision. It's suitable for complex decisions or issues lacking sufficient information or experience, necessitating input from knowledgeable and experienced individuals.

In summary, there are various decision-making models, broadly categorized into two types: individual decision-making and group decision-making. Group decision-making involves staff participation in the educational institution. The administrator may participate in the decision-making process or simply lead without influencing the decision, depending on the situation.

Decision-Making Process

Witoon Tonsirikhongkhon (1999) discusses the decision-making process according to the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), which consists of six steps: The first step is defining the problem issue. The decision-maker must truly understand the main or key aspects of the problem, avoid incorrect assumptions, and prevent bias in choosing any particular option. The second step is establishing concrete and abstract criteria or factors for decision-making. This involves using reasoning in decision-making, and there should be criteria for making decisions. The third step is comparative analysis of decision-making criteria or factors. This involves comparing and prioritizing various criteria or factors used in decision-making. The fourth step is identifying alternatives. This involves specifying courses of action to achieve the goals. Time is a crucial variable in determining efficient alternatives. The fifth step is comparative analysis or ranking of various alternatives under each decision-making criterion. This step is considered the most important, as it requires the ability to predict future outcomes without bias. The sixth step is calculating the best alternative based on priority ranking. This involves multiplying the priority of each alternative with the priority of each criterion or factor, then summing these products to get a total priority value. The alternative with the highest total priority value or weight should be selected.

Kaufman described a five-step decision-making process: Step 1: Defining the Problem. This involves identifying the root cause(s) of the problem and understanding its context. The goal is to isolate the true problem. Step 2: Exploring Alternatives. This step involves identifying a comprehensive range of options, considering various approaches that could yield optimal results. Each alternative may offer varying degrees of suitability in solving the problem. Step 3: Selecting an Alternative. This involves proposing a course of action. The decision-making process includes: 1) Gathering relevant information about each alternative; 2) Applying relevant criteria to evaluate this information objectively and thoroughly; 3) Choosing one alternative; 4) Reviewing the supporting data for the chosen alternative; 5) Building confidence in the chosen alternative, perhaps by seeking additional information, modifying decision criteria, adding alternatives, and reassessing the feasibility of each. The original choice may still be selected. Step 4: Implementing the Chosen Alternative. This involves acting on the decision. The appropriateness and accuracy of the decision will depend on the outcome. Step 5: Evaluating Results and Correcting Deficiencies. This final step involves evaluating whether the results meet the predetermined objectives.

Organizational decision-making in education can utilize the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) proposed by Witune Tonsricongkhon (1999), which comprises six main steps: problem definition, establishing decision criteria, criteria comparison, defining alternatives, ranking alternatives, and calculating the optimal alternative. Simultaneously, Kaufman proposes a five-step process: defining the problem, exploring alternatives, selecting an alternative, implementing the chosen alternative, and evaluating results. Applying these approaches helps administrators make systematic decisions and respond appropriately to challenges.

Conclusion

In this article, the author has studied the decision-making skills of educational institution administrators. It is evident that decision-making skills are a crucial part of the role of school administrators, as specified in the Ministry of Education Administration Act, Section 39, which stipulates that administrators are responsible for managing in accordance with laws and regulations, controlling personnel, and acting as representatives in general management. Additionally, Henry Mintzberg emphasizes the decision-making role, which involves using information for efficient management. These decision-making skills require a systematic process, such as the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and Kaufman's process, which includes steps for defining problems, studying alternatives, and evaluating results. These processes help administrators solve problems and respond appropriately to the needs of staff and students in rapidly changing environments. If school administrators can make good decisions, it builds confidence among students and staff in the educational institution, leading to better work outcomes and sustainable development in the future.

References

- Chuthamat Deepaen. (2020). *Administrators' Decision Making and School Effectiveness under Nonthaburi Primary Educational Service Area Office*. Master of Education Thesis in Educational Administration, Faculty of Education, Silpakorn University.
- Banyong Tojinta (2005). *Organization and Management* (3rd ed.). Bangkok: Ruamsan.
- Ministry of Education Administration Act B.E. 2546 (2003) as amended (No. 2) B.E. 2553 (2010). (2010, December 3). Royal Thai Government Gazette.
- Somkid Bang-mo. (2005). *Organization and Management* (4th ed.). Bangkok: Wittayaphat.
- Soonthorn Kohtbantau. (2019). *Educational Administration: Principles and Theories* (2nd ed.). Bangkok: Panyachon Publishing.
- Worapot Butsarakamwadee. (2005). *Organization and Management*. Pathum Thani: Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University.
- Watcharee Trichareunkoonphak. (2023). *Decision-Making Skills*. Pimwalee Publishing.
- Witoon Tonsirikhongkhon. (1999). *AHP: The World's Most Popular Decision-Making Process*. Bangkok: Graphic and Printing.
- Daft, R.L. (2008). *The leadership experience*. 47 ed. Ohio: South-Western, Cengage Learning
- Griffin, R.W. (2011). *Management principles and practices*. (10th ed.). Internal Edition: Cengage Learning.
- Roger A. Kaufman, "The principal and the system approach" in *The Principalship : Foundations and Functions* (New York : Harper & Row, 1974), 35.
- Mintzberg, H. (1969). *Mintzberg on Management Inside our Strange world of organization*. New York, Free Press.
- Pacheco, G. & Webber, D. (2010), *Participative Decision Making and Job Satisfaction*, University of the West of England, Economics.
- Herbert Simon. *Administrative Behavior : A Study of Decision Making Process in Administrative Organization*. Toronto The Free Press, 1966.