

Decision-Making Methods

Introduction: A Continuum of Decision-making Methods

One of the most important aspects in the development and performance of a school or centre is the way that the people working within it make decisions. If decisions are made in an effective manner and they result in sensible follow-up action they can have a very beneficial impact on the educational community. However, if poor decisions are made they can have a significantly negative impact and, unfortunately, they may result in a decrease in commitment and motivation of the people involved. Hence, over the next few weeks, we will take a closer look at decision-making with the hope that the ideas and skills discussed can be of use to educational leaders.

In keeping with the central purpose of this website, the building of educational leadership capacity, there is an emphasis on the use of easy to implement decision-making strategies that all members of an educational community should be aware of and can use.

In the coming weeks, we will consider the following decision-making methods:

- Leader Decides
- Leader Consults and Then Decides
- Informal Straw Vote
- Majority Voting
- Consensus Decision-making
- Consensus Decision-making with Timeline

The above continuum of decision-making methods reflects an increasing amount of input from colleagues or stakeholders in the decision-making process. Moreover, as more opportunity and responsibility is given to a group to make a decision, there is also a concomitant increase in the degree of competence required of the group to make such decisions. An essential skill that formal and informal leaders need to acquire is the ability to evaluate the readiness of a group to take on increasing responsibility for making a given decision (Schein, 1999; Tannenbaum & Schmidt, 1958; Tannenbaum, & Schmidt, 1973; Vroom & Jago, 1974).

Before considering the above decision-making methods, it is important to stress that at times leaders need to make decisions with relatively little or no input from colleagues; however, in many situations it is very important for leaders to involve colleagues in the decision-making process. This is especially true if the people involved are professionals who have considerable expertise in the area under discussion, as is the case with teachers within educational settings.

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