Decision-Making and Problem-Solving System at JHS IT Darul Hikmah, West Pasaman Regency

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ABSTRACT

Decision-making plays a crucial role in the management of educational institutions, as decisions made by the principal must be implemented by subordinates and other individuals associated with the institution. The effectiveness of decision-making directly impacts an organization's success, while mistakes can lead to significant consequences, such as loss of reputation or financial resources. This study investigates the problem-solving and decision-making system at JHS IT Darul Hikmah. The objective is to understand how the principal applies this system to achieve the school's goals and address challenges effectively. This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing descriptive study methods to analyze the decision-making processes at JHS IT Darul Hikmah. The findings reveal that decision-making involves deliberation with teachers to ensure democratic practices and alignment with the school's vision and mission. However, the study also identifies several factors that hinder effective decision-making, including limited teacher participation in deliberations and financial constraints. These challenges highlight the need for more comprehensive strategies to improve decision-making at JHS IT Darul Hikmah.

Keywords: DECISION-making system, Problem-solving, Educational management, Teacher participation, Financial constraints.

INTRODUCTION

Problems frequently arise in people's lives, presenting challenges that, even when addressed, can lead to new issues requiring further resolution. Skills such as analyzing, generating ideas, listening, communicating, decision-making, and teamwork are closely related to problem-solving. In educational settings, effective decision-making is crucial for leaders to implement specific measures to solve particular problems or situations. According to Fernandes (2023), data-driven decision-making is vital for educational leaders to identify areas for improvement accurately, enabling better resource allocation and goal achievement. Collaborative problem-solving, which combines the constructs of collaboration and problem-solving, is essential for addressing complex tasks that are too intricate for individuals to solve alone (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Furthermore, design thinking has been shown to enhance problem-solving and teamwork skills among students, fostering creativity and effective collaboration in educational environments (Smith & Taylor, 2021).

In educational management, decision-making is a fundamental process that involves selecting the best course of action from various alternatives to achieve desired outcomes.

Effective decision-making enables education managers to perform their core duties, including planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and staffing, with greater ease and efficiency (Ochieng & Ndegwa, 2022). Therefore, whether within an organization or on an individual level, decision-making is crucial for navigating challenges and achieving objectives. The ability to address issues systematically and collaboratively ensures progress and supports the broader goals of educational institutions.

Decision-making is a cornerstone of both management and educational institutions, as it directly impacts the success and sustainability of these organizations. In schools, the decisions made by principals are the result of thoughtful deliberations that ideally involve contributions from staff members and other stakeholders connected to the institution. This inclusive approach ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, fostering well-rounded and effective solutions.

The consequences of poor decision-making can be severe, leading to losses that range from reputational damage to significant financial or material setbacks. A school's reputation, often built on trust and performance, can be quickly undermined by inadequate or poorly executed decisions. Similarly, financial stability and resource management are directly tied to the quality of the decisions made.

The effectiveness of a principal's decisions greatly influences the implementation and success of institutional plans. Strategic and well-informed decision-making not only ensures operational efficiency but also drives the school toward achieving its objectives. When decisions are aligned with the institution's goals, they provide a clear direction and establish a strong foundation for growth and development. Therefore, a leader in any institution or organization must possess the ability to identify, evaluate, and execute appropriate decisions. This competency is not only a reflection of their leadership skills but also a critical factor in ensuring the institution's success and resilience in a competitive and ever-changing environment.

The study supports the significance of effective decision-making in educational leadership. For instance, Ingersoll *et al*. (2018) highlight that granting teachers a role in school decision-making enhances school performance. Additionally, Grissom & Loeb (2011) find that principals' organizational management skills are strong predictors of student achievement growth. Furthermore, data-driven decision-making has been identified as essential for driving positive change and ensuring high-quality education for all students. Moreover, Leithwood (2010) emphasizes that a principal's leadership and decision-making style significantly affect a school's performance. Finally, Ochieng & Ndegwa (2022) discuss how effective decision-making enables education managers to perform their core duties efficiently. These studies underscore the critical role of decision-making in educational leadership and its impact on school effectiveness and student outcomes.

As indicated above, problems must be addressed before making decisions. Also, it is important to note that the decision-making process carried out by a school institution or organization can have a significant impact on the school's performance. Therefore, to understand the system of Darul Hikmah IT Junior High School (JHS), study on problem-solving and decision-making processes will be conducted at this juncture. This study aims to explain the methods used for problem-solving and decision-making at JHS IT Darul Hikmah.

METHODS

The author employs qualitative study as the chosen methodology. Qualitative study, in essence, refers to a type of inquiry where results are obtained without using quantitative methods such as statistical calculations or measurements expressed in numerical values. This approach utilizes descriptive data, which consists of words written or spoken by the individuals or subjects being observed. A descriptive qualitative study is grounded in theoretical frameworks as part of the study design, ensuring the focus aligns with findings in the field. Researchers follow the events or subjects of the study closely and must conduct in-depth analyses to derive meaningful qualitative results. Thus, based on the chosen study methodology, researchers will present a detailed description of the problem-solving and decision-making systems at JHS IT Darul Hikmah.

The study was conducted over two days, from Thursday to Friday, November 14–15, 2024, at JHS IT Darul Hikmah. The study location was Darul Hikmah IT Junior High School, situated in Simpang Tiga Nagari Koto Baru, Luhak Nan Duo District, West Pasaman Regency, West Sumatra Province.

RESULTS

3.1 Definition of Decision-Making

Decision-making is a critical process that occurs once a problem has been resolved and a path forward needs to be determined (Snowden & Boone, 2007). It is not just a procedural task but also a reflection of a leader's ability to navigate challenging situations and showcase their leadership acumen. How a leader identifies problems, evaluates potential solutions, and makes informed choices often serves as a benchmark for their effectiveness, especially in times of crisis.

Prof. Dr. Prajudi Atmosudirjo, SH, defines decision-making as the culmination of a series of cognitive processes. These include identifying existing problems, seeking possible solutions, and evaluating alternative approaches before arriving at a final decision. According to this perspective, decision-making represents the end point of thorough consideration and deliberation (Tindangen *et al*., 2020).

P. Siagian emphasizes that decision-making involves a systematic approach to gathering facts and data about a problem. This involves identifying suitable alternatives and ultimately selecting the most appropriate course of action to address the issue. His perspective highlights the methodical nature of the process, which integrates analytical reasoning and strategic planning (Hidayah *et al*., 2022). Hamburg *et al*. (1976) offer a more concise definition, describing decision-making as the process of selecting one alternative from among various options. This simplicity underscores the essence of the process as one of choosing the best fit for a given situation.

Dr. H. Malayu and SP Hasibuan further elaborate on decision-making as the act of choosing the best option among various possibilities. Their definition focuses on the practicality of implementation, viewing decision-making as an anticipatory measure to prepare for future scenarios by adopting alternative courses of action (Sayuti *et al*., 2021). Drawing from these perspectives, decision-making can be broadly understood as the

process of carefully selecting one option from a range of alternatives. The chosen option is considered the most suitable and effective for achieving specific goals. It involves critical thinking, analysis, and an understanding of both the immediate and long-term implications of the decision.

In summary, decision-making is a multifaceted process that combines strategic evaluation, systematic data collection, and informed judgment. It not only determines the immediate course of action but also sets the foundation for achieving organizational or individual objectives. Effective decision-making is, therefore, a cornerstone of leadership and management, reflecting the leader's ability to align choices with the overarching goals of the institution or organization.

3.2 Steps in Decision Making

According to Robbins & Coulter (2007), the decision-making process involves eight structured steps that guide leaders in making informed and effective choices. These steps begin with identifying the problem, as decision-making is inherently triggered by the presence of an issue that requires resolution. Recognizing the problem is crucial, as it defines the scope and nature of the decisions to be made.

The second step is determining decision criteria, which involves identifying the factors that will influence the decision. These criteria ensure that the decision is relevant and aligned with the goals of resolving the identified problem. Once the criteria are established, the next step is allocating weights to the criteria, which prioritizes them based on their importance. This ensures that more significant factors are given precedence during the decision-making process. The fourth step is developing alternatives, which requires evaluating all possible solutions or approaches to address the problem. By considering a range of options, decision-makers can ensure a comprehensive assessment of potential solutions. Following this, the fifth step is selecting an alternative, where the option with the highest score based on the weighted criteria is chosen as the best course of action. Once a decision is made, it must be implemented, which is the sixth step. Implementation involves putting the chosen alternative into practice, ensuring that all relevant members are informed, involved, and committed to the decision. This step is crucial for translating decisions into tangible actions. Finally, the decision-making process concludes with evaluating the effectiveness of the decision. This involves assessing how well the decision has addressed the problem and whether the desired outcomes have been achieved. Evaluating performance helps identify any shortcomings and provides insights for improving future decision-making processes.

In summary, the eight steps outlined by Robbins & Coulter (2007) ranging from identifying the problem to evaluating the decision's effectiveness provide a systematic and comprehensive approach to making decisions. These steps ensure that the process is logical, data-driven, and goal-oriented, ultimately leading to better outcomes for individuals or organizations.

3.3 Factors Affecting Decision-Making at JHS IT Darul Hikmah
3.3.1 General Overview

JHS IT Darul Hikmah operates under the Darul Hikmah Foundation, established by Mr. Muhajir, S.H., M.M. The school integrates Islamic education with general education, aiming to produce students proficient in both religious and general knowledge. Located in

West Pasaman Regency, West Sumatra Province, the school, founded in 2008, has grown to accommodate 245 students across 13 classrooms. Despite its private status, the institution faces various challenges in its decision-making processes.

3.3.2 Factors Influencing Decision-Making

According to Terry, various tangible and intangible factors influence decision-making. These include emotional and logical considerations, alignment with the organization's vision and mission, practicality, and the need for follow-up actions. At JHS IT Darul Hikmah, several unique factors shape the decision-making process:

– Teacher Involvement: A lack of teacher participation in decision-making discussions hinders effective implementation. Teachers often do not engage actively in deliberations, which reduces the quality of decisions. For example, when planning for classroom expansion, insufficient teacher input led to gaps in addressing logistical challenges.

– Financial Constraints: The school's dependence on limited foundation funds, shared with other units like the IT Elementary School and IT High School, significantly affects decision implementation. For instance, plans to build new classrooms to improve student services have stalled due to inadequate funding.

– Understanding of Decisions: Misunderstandings about decisions often arise due to unclear communication. Teachers need a comprehensive explanation of the rationale behind decisions to ensure proper alignment with school objectives.

3.3.3 Strategies to Overcome Challenges

To address these issues, the school adopts the following strategies:

– Collaboration with the Foundation: Decisions with high risks are discussed with the foundation's owner, who holds a pivotal role in the school's structure. This ensures shared responsibility and minimizes errors in high-stakes decisions.

– Deliberative Discussions: Regular meetings between teachers and administrators focus on collective decision-making. By prioritizing democratic deliberations, the school ensures that decisions align with the vision and mission of JHS IT Darul Hikmah.

3.3.4 Implementation of Decisions

The school faces challenges in implementing decisions effectively due to a lack of teacher support and cooperation. Teachers' reluctance often stems from dissatisfaction with their working conditions and financial stability. This underscores the need for reevaluating how decisions are imposed and ensuring that teachers' welfare is considered. Effective implementation requires fostering better relationships with teachers and addressing their concerns to secure their commitment to decisions.

The decision-making process at JHS IT Darul Hikmah demonstrates the complexity of balancing organizational goals, resource limitations, and teacher involvement. Effective decision-making requires addressing financial constraints, enhancing teacher engagement, and fostering a collaborative environment to implement decisions efficiently. By adopting a transparent and inclusive approach, the school can navigate its challenges and achieve its long-term objectives.

CONCLUSION

The decision-making system at JHS IT Darul Hikmah emphasizes the importance of discussions and deliberations with teachers. This democratic approach allows educators to actively participate and express their aspirations regarding decisions to be made. By involving teachers in this manner, the school ensures that the authorities consider diverse perspectives, contributing to the school's progress and the realization of its vision and mission. However, decision-making at JHS IT Darul Hikmah faces several challenges. One significant obstacle is the lack of active participation from teachers during decision-making meetings, which hampers the effectiveness of the process. Additionally, financial constraints pose another critical issue, as the school's resources are shared with the IT Elementary and IT High School units under the same foundation. This financial limitation has delayed the implementation of plans, such as building new classrooms to improve student comfort. Consequently, decisions at JHS IT Darul Hikmah often remain ineffective, largely due to insufficient teacher support and the ongoing struggle to address funding challenges. Addressing these issues through enhanced teacher engagement and improved resource management will be vital for the school to achieve its goals and ensure the effectiveness of its decision-making system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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