ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Transformational Leadership and Decision Making in Schools
By Robert Brower & Bradley Balch

Executive Book Summary by Francis S. Adjaklo

Summary of the Book

Brower and Balch begin this book by defining transformational decision making as thinking and acting in ways that reflect the common good of an educational institution. They set the tone to why transformational leadership and decision making is a necessary area to pursue by posing questions such as; Why do school leaders sometimes find it difficult to act decisively and effectively? What are the essential concepts for decision making and how and why should school leaders act with a clear conscience in difficult, difficult decision-making situations? They recognized the rich base of existing scholarship that addresses educational leadership but also concluded that none of them answer the questions they have posed in a way that is easy to understand and universally applicable.

"Most school leaders make great decisions some of the time, but few leaders make great decisions all the time. The formula for great decision making can be understood and enjoyed if transformational decision making is embraced in an institutional context.". (Brower and Balch, p. 7)

Reflective Thinking

"Imagine the most difficult decision you have made. Which aspects of the decision-making process went well? Which aspects were challenging?

(Brower and Balch, p. 7)

Chapter 2
Decision-Making Pedagogy: A Leadership Essential

Brower and Balch begin this chapter by referring to the works of Albert Schweintzer's on decision-making challenges of Molly Hampton, a director of curriculum for a metropolitan school. Molly Hampton was tasked with instituting (1) A new teacher evaluation instrument to reflect standards-based teaching. (2) A new grade card for students that reflects the state standards and an indication of knowledge of these standards. (3) Students on a certain track must demonstrate proficiency in state standards and pass the state's graduation exam to be awarded a diploma.

Decision-making and Transformational Laws

Molly Hampton wins and losses in Albert Schweintzer's arch were because decision making is complex, not all decisions made by school leaders will be correct. However, informed leaders of transformational pedagogy can be assured that if they fully understand the laws of transformational leadership, they will be more effective and confident in their decisions.

Furthermore, the transformational laws of decision making must be articulated and embedded in all interdependent institutions and shared with individuals in each institution to profoundly affect climate and culture in meaningful ways. It gives leaders the satisfaction of having a foundation of pedagogical leadership for decision making that makes their jobs more effective and tenable while, allowing school stakeholders and the opportunity to understand and practice transformational leadership making as well. No doubt disagreement and conflict will occur, but climates and cultures underscored by transformational leadership decision making will survive short-term obstacles creating improved capacity for teaching and learning to prosper.

Reflective Thinking
Institutions may be visualized as an upside-down wedding cake when viewed through the lens of decision making. What other ways could an educational institution be visualized and why?

Reflective Thinking
Describe a decision you made that was conflict with certain individuals, yet benefited the common good. Did the decision serve as a source of stress? How did you deal with the conflict?

Reflective Thinking
Is your decision making consistent and predictable for the institution you serve? Are day-to-day decisions handled consistently?

Chapter 3
Overcoming Internal Obstacles to Decision

Brower and Balch begin this chapter by recognizing that there are various philosophies of human needs. However, they conclude that regardless of the Philosophy of needs embraced, understanding, and acknowledging the fundamental needs that drive a person's personal and professional life is essential to making sound decisions from a leadership perspective; in essence human needs can manifest themselves as obstacles to transformational decision making.

Immoral and unethical decisions

It is impossible for a leader to make good decisions if he or she is not trustworthy. Without being trustworthy on a personal level, one is not free to give trust on an interpersonal level. Making ethical, immoral, or illegal decisions are practices that can quickly erode trustworthiness and will eventually lead to the downfall of the leader.

More likely than not, during an untrustworthy leader's tenure numerous decisions that otherwise would have been fine spell doom for the leader because the decisions are questioned on moral, ethical, or legal grounds.

Best for Me Syndrome

Personality traits such as arrogance, overconfidence, intimidation, fear, lack of fear, and piousness affect decision making in ways that negatively affect institutions by distracting from the common good.

These personality traits might serve other leaders, but for the contemporary school leader there is rarely an instance when these traits are effective for institutions.

Obstacles to Decision Making

1. Immoral and unethical decisions
2. Addictions clouds good decision making
3. What's best for me syndrome
4. Lack of resolve

Addictions clouds good decision making

Every human have the tendency to having an addiction. Healthy addictions might include comfort foods, caffeine, or exercise. Unhealthy addiction might include alcohol, drugs, or gambling. When the audition is so pervasive that it can negatively influence sound decision making it becomes a detriment to the leader. Addictions are easily disguised and hard to reveal and they can remain unnoticed by those closest to the person with addiction. Addiction complicates the entire process of leadership, which can result in flawed decision making by eroding the focus on the common good and supplanting it with the need to satisfy an addiction.

Lack of resolve

Some leaders may simply refrain from changing the status quo when things are seemingly okay, in other words why fix it if it's not broken?

Great leaders know when to move forward by being visionary and proactive, even in times of difficulty. The marginal leader will sometimes survive in an aura of complacency, but when the storm hits, he or she may well get swept away in the fury of change. An effective leader will always be vigilant to the needs of the institution and really lacks motivation to make tough decisions.

Reflective Thinking

How does leading from the heart influence your decision making? How is does heart orientation serve as a source of strength or limitation?

What is the role of the mission and vision of an institution in decision making?

How does 'me-first' orientation erode effective decision making?

Chapter 4
Overcoming External Barriers to Decision Making

School leaders often gain ground with one decision, only to lose ground elsewhere as a result of the same decision. Some instances will require decisions that are somewhat hazy in terms of objectivity or confoundedly uncertain when diverse perspectives are considered. Most decisions fall somewhere along the continuum between two extremes. In this chapter James Baldwin discusses external factors that may confound decision making.

A leader must serve the institution objectively, collecting as much evidence as possible from as many sources as possible before making a decision. When barriers confound the process, the prudent leader will simply factor in these obstacles as another consideration in the decision-making process. Having considered all variables, the leader must act in ways that further the institution best. By minimizing the effects of the confounding variables, the leader can ensure that best decisions and minimize the competing nature of decisions. Hopefully, the barriers will not erode institutional efforts. When the barriers are so pervasive and. Profoundly influential good leaders rely on capacity within the institution to minimize impact.

The Four External Factors Confounding Decision By James Baldwin

Laws and Organizational Guidelines

Federal, state, or local policy mandates will outweigh building in district initiatives or priorities. This is inherent to the government structure of public schooling. Laws, codes, policy, and guidelines are often put into place to protect the educational rights of individuals or groups of individuals. In these cases, the educational institution has no choice but to comply.

Socio-political Pressure

Modern society has created scenarios that reveal strong societal pressures that pushes leaders to act in certain ways or to make certain decisions. A leader who completely ignores these pressures is likely to fail in the institution that he or she leads. Local, state, and federal politics can manifest themselves in similar ways.

Media and other Communication Outlets

Before the current influx of media, it was believed that the media reported educational news. The presence of other communication outlets like the Internet, social media, YouTube, and others, News coverage can be wrought with biased opinion, subjective data, anecdotal information, editorialization, and the use of anonymous sources. Considering this, leaders must be overly cautious of their source of information for making crucial decisions.

Conflicting Interest

A looming decision may not exhibit any clear-cut path to what is in the vest interest of the institution. The decision may be so clouded that a clear transformational decision may be impossible to determine.

Chapter 5
Aligning Decision Making to the Leader's Mission

Maya Angelou champions collaboration as a way to aligning and building strong directional visioning and missioning. This chapter looks into how leaders bring together all the necessary component to making effective decisions

HOW DO YOU ALIGN PEOPLE ON TOUGH DECISIONS?

FEARLESS PRODUCT

Effective leaders know that acting in isolation can be detrimental. Hence effective leaders are articulate, moral and exhibit great people skills along with being vision oriented

Effective leaders must be able to Answer the following question: "How do I make decisions once the collaborative alignment of vision and mission within the institution has taken place?"

Decision making requires that the hierarchy of structure not be confused with hierarchy of importance and inputs. Hierarchies of structure are inherent in institution on grounds of efficiency and accountability, but the hierarchy of importance or inputs is a completely different phenomenon in which everyone in the institution must be valued equally.

Reflective Thinking

What are the best ways to encouraging and gathering stakeholder input in collaborative decision making?

Considering hierarchy of command and hierarchy of importance, is faculty is more important the staff?

Chapter 6
Understanding the Effect of Human Nature on Decision Making

Brower and Balch begins this chapter with a quote by Nelson Mandela; A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination. This chapter discusses the general proposition about human beings (Brower and Balch, 2004)

It is Always About Me
This is the most important law of human nature that leaders must recognize and understand in order to be effective leaders with transformational decision-making abilities. All stakeholders of education determine their acceptance of o disagreement with a decision based on how that decision will affect them.
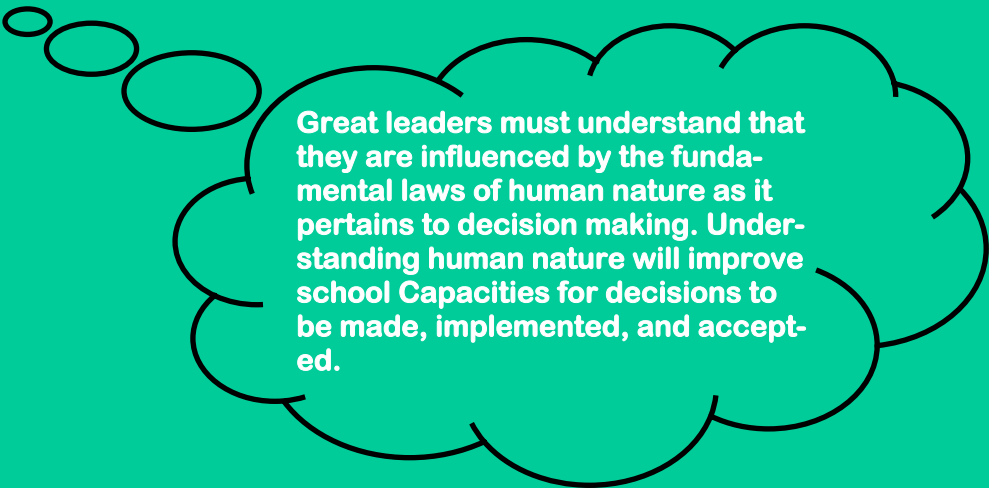
People desire to leave lasting legacy
Leaders are driven to leave a legacy for the generations that follow them. As leaders professionally mature, they begin to garner an identity which becomes representative of the gifts and talents they are contributing to education. The drive to leave such identity can negatively influence a leader's decision making and thinking.

People are fundamentally good
All things being equal, every member of staff will like to do their very best. Hence deficits in performance must have an underlying factor. As an effective leader, avoid labelling your staff with bad tags such as 'incapable, combative, uncooperative and similar names. Instead access the challenges of the staff and assist in rectifying them to encourage your staff to get back on track to being good.

Effect of Believes
People believe they are doing the right thing and a good job; A leaders capacity to comprehend and adequately assess why others disagree with them even when their position serves the best interest will improve conflict resolution systems and improve collaboration significantly.

Great leaders must understand that they are influenced by the fundamental laws of human nature as it pertains to decision making. Understanding human nature will improve school Capacities for decisions to be made, implemented, and accepted.

Chapter 7
Defining Relationships With Respect and Rapport

In this chapter Brower and Balch describes how the complexity of human relationships affect decision making. They quote Abraham Lincoln; A house divided against itself cannot stand to explain how severed human relationships can woefully impact the mission and vision of an organization.

Brower and Balch stated that a primary function of leadership is to build capacities that allow stakeholders to reach their full potential. This is best accomplished when a thoughtful focus is given to the necessary people skills. The leader's ability to communicate with people in ways that support healthy professional relationships. People skills should be defined by respect and rapport. Respect simply means treating others the way you want to be treated. rapport is evidenced through the disposition of care and concern. Respect and rapport are effective means of communicating to stakeholders that are liked and appreciated.
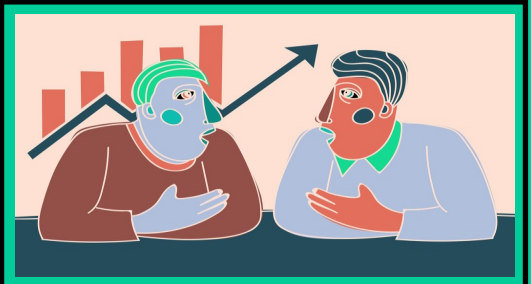
The Conceptual Framework
People skills is necessary to develop and communicate decisions. To improve people skills a leader needs to consider the following:

1. Treat others the way you want to be treated.

2. Express genuine care and concern.

3. Don't single out stakeholders in front of their peers for either praise or criticism.

4. Focus on the actions and behaviors of stakeholders. Resist generalizing.

5. Don't reduce decisions to a personal level. Always maintain a professional focus.

Chapter 8
Entrust

In this chapter Brower and Balch discusses the value of empowerment and delegation. They summed up the concept of 'Entrust' with a quote from George MacDonald; "to be trusted is a bigger compliment than to be loved"

Entrust®

By teaching and modelling transformational decision

By offering power to make decisions based on competence.

By offering power based on confidence

To strengthen leadership

Overview

Transformational leaders place equal importance on delegation and empowerment opportunities by focusing on the value and worth of each stakeholder's role. Great leaders communicate the concept of importance to every person in the institution and do so publicly. Communicating vitality to institutions stakeholders is handled privately and not among peers.

Chapter 9
The Influence of Capitalism on Decision Making

In this chapter Brower and Balch discusses the concept of free-market capitalism with minimal government and it's effect on Decision Making. Brower and Balch summed the chapter up with a quote from David Sarnoff; "competition brings the best in products and worst in people". The chapter stresses on the need for a transformational leader to adapt to the ever changing nature of a capitalist market to better lead institutions effectively.

Summary

For-Profit Organizations

Competition is a key concept in traditional product and service capitalism. For profit entities must be competitive to sell their products and services to the consumer.

Not-For-Profit

The same cannot be said of not-for-profit educational institutions. Educational institutions must be driven by cooperation, not competition, to be effective.

Conceptual Framework

Leaders must be able to distinguish between the tenet of for-profit, capitalist institutions and not-for-profit, educational institutions if informed decisions are to be made.

1. Avoid one-size-fits-all approaches to provide decisions for complex educational issues.

Reflective Thinking

How has the for-profit sector influenced your educational institution? Is the influence negative or positive

Chapter 10
Refining and Rethinking Change in Education

In this chapter Brower and Balch expands on the concept of change. In their expression of the subject of this chapter, they suggest that the only constant phenomenon is change. Brower and Balch quotes Carl Sagan; absolutely everything moves forward,

CHANGE

Summary

Capitalism is the greatest economic system the world has ever known. Adam Smith concepts were genius. However, for educational institutions to prosper and grow the for-profit values of competition and externally influenced change must be minimized in favor of more effective alternatives. A focus on cooperation can encourage partnership among the varying levels of educational institutions. Partnerships will serve as more meaningful catalyst for inside out change. Rather than external change agendas. Beyond the pedagogical constructs called transformational laws, effective leaders can build internal change capacities that support the institutions vision and mission by considering;

Develop compelling needs when change is necessary.	Encourage risk-taking	Recognize the slow pace that meaningful change often requires.	Relocate resources to support change initiatives.

Critical Evaluation

Brower and Balch have given us an insight into the groundbreaking assessments of the influence of transformational leadership and decision making in schools. They convey to us their assessment through real life scenarios, and case studies to establish the practicality of subjects such as; the internal and external behaviors. To decision making, understanding how human nature affects decision making, the influence of capitalism and few others. Their assessment of such keen issues helps us to realize that all leaders are fallible, hence the need to be knowledgeable and procedural to avoid wrong decisions that stems from human nature; the me first mindset or the need to establish/leave a legacy. Their assessment of both for-profit and non-for-profit markets brings to light the differences between the expectations of leaders in general businesses and schools. They promotes the cooperation mindset competitions in educational institutions. The various case studies and realized scenarios and the numerous anecdotes. In practice column add credibility and interest the book.

References

Brower, R. E., & Balch, B. V. (2005). Transformational leadership & decision making in schools. Corwin Press.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP & DECISION MAKING in SCHOOLS

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