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Dr. Rajesh I Bhatt
Department of Education,
Sardar Patel University,
Vallbh Vidyanagar, Anand,
Gujarat, India

Higher education: Decision processes and situational responses

Dr. Rajesh I Bhatt

Introduction

Screams of dissent and threats of violence have been hurled from college campuses by rebel students only to clash head-on with yells of rebuke and threats of retaliation from angry citizens. As the verbal, and sometimes physical, battle is watched with fascination by the outside world, universities continue the function because professional employees in higher education like as university president, deans, faculty members, counselors, students, parents and alumni continue to make daily decisions about hard-to-solve campus problems.

So many time have been written about campus troubled, but relatively few words can be found which convey the complexity of the problems facing those who are directly involved. One can search the literature with little hope of finding guidelines which may help those who must make difficult decisions.

This paper will partially fill the void that now exists around decision making process in higher education. People both in and out of the university need to become more aware of the problems which must be solved in modern university life and also as a resource for those seeking careers in higher education.

Higher Education

Many people are confused about Higher Education, because there have been a lot changes recently, including institutions changing their names and titles.

Education beyond high school, specifically that provided by colleges and graduate schools, and professional schools.

To start with the definition of the term-Higher Education- In fact, There is no simple definition of higher education. The international definition of tertiary (post school) education divides it into two parts. Type A (Higher Education) and Type B (Further Education). A higher education qualification at degree level takes a minimum of three years to complete, more typically four. It will have a theoretical underpinning, it will be at a level which would qualify someone to work in a professional field and it will usually be taught in an environment which also includes advanced research activity. Shortly, Higher education mainly and generally means university level education. It offers a number of qualifications ranging from Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees to Honors Degrees and as further step, Postgraduate programmes such as Masters Degrees and Doctorates. These are recognized throughout the world as representing specialist expertise supported by a wide range of skills that employers find very useful. Further education is generally includes those post graduate studies in where you can gain your Master and Doctorate degrees.

The right of access to higher education is mentioned in a number of international human rights instruments. The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 declares, in Article 13, that "higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education". In Europe, Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, adopted in 1950, obliges all signatory parties to guarantee the right to education.

This describes a distinct form of Higher Education that offers a particularly intense integration with the world of work in all its aspects (including teaching, learning, research and governance) and at all levels of the overarching Qualifications Framework of the

Correspondence
Dr. Rajesh I Bhatt
Department of Education,
Sardar Patel University,
Vallbh Vidyanagar, Anand,
Gujarat, India

European Higher Education Area. Its function is to diversify learning opportunities, enhance employability, offer qualifications and stimulate innovation, for the benefit of learners and society.

Decision process

Cognitive processes that presuppose the availability of knowledge and put it to use, deciding or controlling something's outcome or nature; the determination of grammatical inflections,

making decisions on the basis of what seems best instead of following some single doctrine or style and in group think decision making by a group especially in a manner that discourages creativity or individual responsibility.

Problems of Higher Education in India

The problems of higher education in our country today are more non-educational than educational. Attempts have been repeatedly made to solve these problems in educational terms but all these attempts have failed primarily because it was assumed, that the problems were educational whereas in actual fact these are fundamentally non-educational. This is not to deny that a good many problems can and ought to be solved within the ambit of the educational structure and organization but chance of success in this regard are severely limited because non-educational factors impinge upon educational factors much too negatively and unrelentingly. Most people agree that the country is finding it difficult to educate such large numbers properly or successfully. Our present way of solving the problem can, no stretch of imagination, be described at satisfactory level by taking a more decision process in situational responses. Obviously in respect of our H.E. situation, there is more than one problem increasing and after or this time many of these problems are inter-connected. Any decisions must, therefore, take into account into inter-connected factors. Evidently, non of these problems can be solved by educationists with any degree of competence. Only the planners are qualified to do so. Indeed, only to define the order of priorities in which the planners should take decisions within the next few years, for obvious reasons. Decisions about economic matters should come first. After those decisions have been taken. This is not to imply that other matters are unimportant. But some of them, for intense defense, are very important. Then decisions about them are being taken all the time and most of these sectors of activity are working within a policy framework. Decisions about H.E. in particular must receive a high order of priority. Investments in H.E. are so closely inter linked that it is extraordinary, to say the least, that more attention has not been paid to these aspects of the problem.

Higher Educational Problems in University:

Driven by market opportunities and entrepreneurial zeal, many institutions are taking advantage of the lax regulatory environment to offer 'degrees' not approved by Indian authorities, and many institutions are functioning as pseudo non-profit organisations, developing sophisticated financial methods to siphon off the 'profits'. Regulatory authorities like UGC and AICTE have been trying to extirpate private universities that run courses with no affiliation or recognition. Students from rural and semi urban background often fall prey to these institutes and colleges. One of the

fundamental weaknesses of the system is lack of transparency and recommendations have been made to mandate high standards of data disclosures by institutions on performance. Other problem was on the excessive obsession of having Indian universities among top global College and university rankings, at times originating from government's inconsistent priorities, indicating a showcasing mentality of Indian higher education in the world stage while pathetic ignorance towards primary and secondary educations continued. The argument has been that the whole model of ignoring primary and secondary education, while focusing on ranking of a few universities and institutes, is not a sustainable model for the nation

Decision Process

It is useful to distinguish between decision process and the product of that process, the actual decision. Process refers to the decision-maker's thoughts and actions which relate to and culminate in the actual decision.

Process varies from person to person and can include gathering information by reading, exploring, consulting; interpreting dreams and reading the stars. A process can be continuous, an intermittent, or a single act, or it can be a complex sequence of events. It can be overt or covert. Because people have different beliefs and values, they employ different decision processes. Person's explanation of his process accurately describes how his decision was made. He may not be aware of all the ingredients of the process he used or he may deliberately present his process in a distorted way. This could be the case if he wanted to be taught of as a good decision-maker by a person advocating another process. Such problems make it difficult to study decision processes used by good decision-makers.

Seven decision-making types

In higher education people employ simple and complex processes. Simple processes can be grouped onto seven basic types. Each can result in a decision, but whether that decision is good or bad depends on the person evaluation the decision. The complexity results by incorporating all or parts of two or more simple processes into complicated chains. The seven basic types are (1) followed and accepted rule, (2) utilize a rational process, (3) act to gain social approval, (4) follow your intuition, (5) leave it to fate, (6) arrange a compromise, and (7) consult an expert.

(1) **Followed and Accepted Rule:** using the followed and accepted rule process, a decision-maker arrives at the appropriate decision by applying what he considers to be a relevant rule to the decision situation. A university has a rule that an applicant must be in the top half of his graduating class. An application arrives stating that the applicant is in the bottom half of his class. The admissions director writes him that he is not admissible. Rule, in this case, covers any written or verbal statement or thought of such statement that provides the decision-maker with a sufficient basis for action in the situation. Such statements stem from a variety of sources: law, philosophy, parental edicts, moral or ethical codes, superstitions, science, and religion. A decision-maker can apply the first rule he thinks of, or he can refer to several and apply the one he feels is most appropriate or most powerful. Rules can be combined into sequences and can include if

statements as part of a sequence. If it is raining and you don't want to get wet, carry an umbrella. If it is raining and you don't want to get wet and you cannot have an umbrella, wear raincoat. One could add a provision for staying inside during periods of high winds or lightning. Experienced bridge players make use of complicated sequences of rules. Computers can be programmed with a number of sequences so they can play chess or shoot rockets to the moon.

Making a decision by rule is a very common method of deciding. The method works well in situations that repeat themselves regularly. The method is quite efficient in terms of manpower, time, money, energy, and maintaining emotional stability. But in novel or ambiguous circumstances where conflicting rules can be applied or in changing societies when accepted rules are being vigorously challenged, the rule-applying process has its limitations.

- (2) **Utilize a Rational Process:** The second method utilize a rational process refers to decisions that made as a result of considering the expected consequences. There are several versions of this process. Using one variation, the decision-maker first considers the alternatives and then considers the outcomes of these alternatives. He estimates the probability of occurrence for each outcome and indicates what numerical value he places on each outcome. He multiplies the value by the probability. For each alternative he adds the products for those outcomes associated with a given alternative, giving him a number representing the expected value for each alternative. He then maximizes. That is he chooses the alternative with the highest number. To illustrate the process, we use a condensed version of a going-home-from-work decision taken from **Bross (1965)**. The alternative with the highest expected value is the best decision using this method.

The rational process is not new, but it is both lesser known and more complicated than the using a rule process. **Edwards (1967)** has traced it back at least as far as Bernoulli. It has been widely used in the economic world and has been considered the best single decision process. The rational process provides techniques for and stresses the quantifying of probability and value. In practice such numbers are elusive or unreliable, and a shrewd guess may have to suffice. Numbers and techniques for combining them help make more exact decision, but the key concept in the rational process is not number or technique; it is attempting to anticipate probable consequences of various alternatives for action and then to choose in consideration of these probable consequences.

- (3) **Act to gain Social Approval:** using the act to gain social approval process, the decision-maker knows or finds out what relevant people value and then decides in consideration of these values. Relevant is defined by the decision-maker. One aspect of such a process is aptly illustrated by the phrase. The decision-maker's behaviour is controlled largely by others. But when used in other ways, the process has a more positive meaning. How useful is the social approval method? One needs friends, family employer, and the support of

the community. In many situations, making decisions to gain their support makes a lot of sense. There are times, however, when their support is neither necessary nor generally regarded as a person with character, leadership ability, or responsibility. Other processes are necessary to maintain personal identity and to decide issues of no social import or issues where social forces have conflicting values.

- (4) **Follow your Intuition:** people who use the follow your intuition process make decisions almost without thinking. The decision is impulsive, reactive, in consideration of the moment. Merchants know that if they display items attractively and intimate they are bargains, shoppers will buy them impulsively. The question must be asked, are impulses or intuitive actions really decisions? We treat them as decisions because some do accomplish intuitively what would require a more thoughtful decision process by others. The irresponsible, carefree, and the existential approaches to life stress intuitive and spontaneous decisions. There are many mature, responsible people who can trust their intuition, but there are others who are always in trouble because of some crazy impulse. Most people can and do respond intuitively in many daily decision situations. The question is, is this a good way to resolve major decisions of the type normally faced by participants in higher education?
- (5) **Leave it to Fate:** The leave it to fate decision process includes a variety of methods. Most are viewed in western civilization as amusing, irrelevant, or illogical. Such methods include palm reading, consulting mediums, reading astrology charts, and interpreting dreams. Any process for solving problems that involves chance, luck, or accident belongs in this category. So do all processes involving and outside source which has no known or logical relationship with the real world. Fate and lady luck are common expressions for such a source. When a decision must be made but there is no real basis for a decision and the decision-maker wants to remain neutral, fate processes are as useful a way of deciding as man has yet been able to devise.
- (6) **Arrange a compromise:** Arrange a compromise process, is self-explanatory. Bargaining with a merchant over the price of an article for sale and management bargaining with a union to reach a wage settlement are common examples. A compromise agreement is a joint decision that is beneficial to at least two parties. But perhaps not as beneficial as either had originally wanted. If one party will not compromise, a different process must be used.
- (7) **Consult an Expert:** Consult an expert process, a decision-maker lets another person recommend a decision for him. Presumably, the other person has more information, better understanding, and more experience with whatever must be decided and therefore is capable of making a better decision than the decision-maker. Consulting a lawyer about legal matters, an architect about house design, an accountant about financial matters are common examples. The

advantages of experts are recognized, but a person seeking one should be capable of sorting out pretenders. In the case of troublesome decisions in higher education, there are not many experts available who have had much experience.

There are similarities among different processes. For instance, some rules can be stated in social approval terms, a desirability value can be put on social approval and that value may be attach to particular outcomes and incorporated in the rational process. Or, one can have a rule to consult an expert or a rule to compromise. Compromise can be viewed as striving for maximum social approval, and so the similarities continue, however, differences remain if only the thinking of the decision- makers. Recognition of these differences is implied by adjectives used to described people: compromising, conforming, law abiding, deliberating, and impulsive. In a stable society, the majority of people have common values and consequences are predictable. A great many decisions are easily made by knowledgeable individuals-intuitively, rationally, following an accepted rule or in consideration of social approval. The decision tends to turn out as expected, and no questions about processes are asked.

In a rapidly changing society where groups of people are challenging other groups, where the young will not adopt traditional values, and where consequences of changing conditions are not easily predictable, even knowledgeable individuals using any or all processes are going to have decisions go sour. Then the process is questioned. It may be that regardless of the process, some decisions will be rejected by some group. Literally, the decision-maker cannot win. Also we have to say let us reexamine the decisions the seven decision-making processes would be most helpful. An intuitive decision by the president could go either way, depending on how he responded to the immediacy of the situation.

Defensible Processes

Seven decision processes have been examined and applied to a troublesome decision. In any decision situation, all or none of the processes may achieve similar results depending on chance, acts of God, amount of information available to the decision-maker, and the values of the decision-maker, plus the value of those who will evaluate it. Some evaluators would judge on the basis of how it was made, others on what happened afterwards, and some on what was actually decided.

Evaluating Decisions

No decision is good or bad in and of itself. How it is evaluated by people gives it its value. This observation is true of a wide range of decisions-going to good or bad judgments depend on a number of situational conditions and individual values. A decision is to recognize that any label, good or bad, right or wrong, is a projection of the one who attaches the label and may have little to do with the actual decision. When a person talks about the goodness on a decision, he is saying much more about his own values and perceptions than he is about the decision. When persons disagree about the goodness of a decision, they are talking primarily about differences in their own personal values. These differences refer to specific things and events, the usefulness of various decision processes, the responsibility

of man, and criteria by which a decision should be evaluated. Differences regarding more complicated aspects of decision-making are worthy of further exploration, for they often are not completely understood. They account for the use of a variety of decision processes and for much of the prevailing criticism decision-makers.

Conclusion

Criticism of individuals in higher education is often criticism of the decisions these people make. By carefully examining the concept of good decision. It becomes apparent that good is largely an illusion- a product of people rather than of decisions. Depending on the person making the decision. It is clear that almost any position can be taken toward any decision. It is clearly impossible for a decision-maker to protect himself from all critics. He can, however, reduce the risks of criticism by understanding various decision processes and ny becoming competent in the process of making decisions. Much of this directed toward achieving these purposes.

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