An Investigation in How Six Sigma Project Teams Should Make Rational Decisions in Shared Leadership Environments

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ABSTRACT

It is proposed that shared leadership environments have an effect on six sigma team decision-making as well as the methods used to make decisions. It is also proposed that the consensus decision-making method is the technique that is the most effective and related to the fundamental conditions of a shared leadership environment. Furthermore, it is believed that a model of shared leadership decision-making can be developed from the results of these hypotheses. Research has found that a strong relationship exists between shared leadership and team decision-making principles and approaches. As a six sigma team becomes more involved in the shared leadership model, the methods utilized to make decisions change in such a way that the power is more distributed among members; the team moves from a single individual decision method, towards a shared decision method. Review of the relationship between shared leadership and team decision-making techniques has shown that the consensus approach is the most effective in satisfying the fundamental conditions and requirements of the shared leadership model. A model of decision-making in shared leadership environments is proposed for use by teams to determine the type of decision-making method that should be employed as a team’s level of shared leadership increases.

KEYWORDS
Rational Decision-making, Shared Decision-making, Shared Leadership, Six Sigma Teams

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

In the past two decades, organizations have increased their push for employees to work efficiently in completing projects in order to be competitive and to outperform competition. In order to meet the needs of the organization, more projects are being executed through the use of different team formats. These team formats enable the organization to quickly adjust to the various requirements and demands of its industry. The proper team format needs to be selected in order for a group of people to work effectively as a team, since it enables the group to make rational, timely, and effective decisions. Over the past twenty-five years, research into shared leadership models has significantly increased since this type of team format has proven to allow team members to complete projects on time and make decisions that were both logical and effective (Koschzeck, 2009, p. 3).

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1.2. Hypotheses and Research Questions

It is proposed that shared leadership environments have an effect on group/team decision making as well as the methods that are used to make group/team decisions (Hypothesis 1). It is also proposed that the consensus decision-making method is the technique that is the most effective and closely related to the fundamental conditions and requirements of a shared leadership environment (Hypothesis 2). Furthermore, it is believed that a model of shared leadership decision-making can be developed from the results of these hypotheses. The purpose of this paper will be to answer the following questions: How does shared leadership in group/team environments affect the methods used in team decision-making? Based on the needs of shared leadership environments, what methods have proven to be the most effective in making group/team decisions in shared leadership environments? In order to answer these questions, this paper aims to determine the relationship and effects (if any) that a shared leadership environment has on the team’s approach to decision-making. Based on the internal and external environmental needs of a shared leadership, the final segment of the paper will investigate how decisions are made in shared leadership environments (i.e. the methods that have proven to be most effective in shared leadership environments) as well as outline a model for decision-making in shared leadership environments, which can be used by teams to determine the type of decision-making method that it should be employing as its level of shared leadership increases over time.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 highlights recent research relevant to the topic of the paper. Section 3 outlines the methodology used in the research. Key findings are presented in Section 4. Section 5 discusses the implications of the research findings and proposes a model of shared leadership decision-making. Section 6 concludes the paper with final thoughts and suggested future steps for this area of research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Shared Leadership

The concept of leadership is comprised of four main components: “leadership involves influence; leadership is a process; leadership involves goal attainment; and leadership occurs in a group context” (Northouse, 2007, p. 3). Shared leadership is a concept that is known by many names, including: team leadership, distributive leadership, co-leadership, collective leadership, shared governance, shared power, and blended leadership (Koschreck, 2009, p. 14). Shared leadership implies the idea that team members accept the responsibility and accountability of leadership in the team setting; team members actively share responsibility of the leadership role (Yukl, 2006, p. 8). The team members work as one to accomplish a shared vision or set of objectives and act as both followers and leaders. Research into the different definitions of shared leadership has shown that shared responsibility, influence, accountability, and decision-making (shared power) were the most common factors associated with shared leadership (Northouse, 2007, p. 2). The use of shared leadership enables individuals to increase their levels of empowerment, decision-making, team effectiveness, accountability, and responsibility. Past research efforts has shown that the use of shared leadership results in increased job satisfaction, shared sense of purpose and vision, improved communication, and reduced employee turnover (Koschreck, 2009, p. 15).

Pearce & Conger (2003) present the concern that there are many definitions or views of shared leadership and what it is; their paper goes into depth about the vast array of concepts and definitions of shared leadership, which in turn shows the lack of uniformity in the field of leadership. Their research also highlights the fact that currently there are very few empirical studies that investigate shared leadership; they point out that there are mostly theoretical studies, but they also concluded that there are many barriers that exist to performing empirical studies in this field. The researchers investigate the evidence around the idea that there is a temporal factor influencing shared leadership;
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