THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS BETWEEN SIMPLICITY AND COMPLEXITY. AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH TO BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract. *This paper aims to analyze in epistemological terms the idea of decision-making process as found in the business administration domain. Thus, we consider an epistemological analysis of the ways in which the decision making process is encoded, decrypted and forwarded by decision makers at the level of business organizations. By the epistemological analysis we want to highlight some theoretical and practical approaches on the idea of decision-making process. In those circumstances, the starting point of our work is aimed at the idea that any business organization the decision makers have a relevant role in terms of assuming strategies and implicitly in the decision-making. In other words, the managerial dimension of the business organization overlaps the very dimension of the decision-making processes within it. In our approach we are interested on how such an approach is possible that will try to explain in epistemology terms while making reference to a logical process of the managerial action. We believe that such an attempt may prove to be effective to the extent that a number of issues that can be integrated and validated at economic and social levels in conjunction, of course, with the logical algorithm of the decision-making process are considered. Moreover, the present study aims to examine how the decision making process becomes reality depending on its simple or complex nature. The research methodology envisages on the one hand, a comprehensive analysis of the methods of enunciation and the materialization of the decision-making process, and on the other hand, those which explicit the practical results validated at the business organization level and at socio-economic level. The synthesis of the main ideas that express the concretization of the decision making process within business organizations involves a form of valorization of information by the very logic of action of decision makers (founders / top-managers). Therefore, we will try to provide details and develop at the same time a number of conceptual and theoretical approaches on the subject by relating to the ideas of simplicity and complexity.*

Keywords: decision-making process, business administration, simplicity, complexity, decision-making reasoning.

Introduction

The research direction that we take in this approach focuses on what represents or may represent a decision-making process at the business administration level. In other words, we are interested in seeing to what extent we can provide sense and meaning both pragmatic and epistemic in nature to such an idea. At the same time, the direction of research undertaken by us follows an exhaustive analysis of the structural-functional dimension of what constitutes a decision-making process. Of course, when

we talk about decision-making and implicitly about the decision-making process, our analysis focuses on the way in which business organization management is understood, implemented and developed. Moreover, the decisions developed and applied by the decision makers represent nothing else but the quantifiable result in terms of performance, efficiency, yield, profit, etc. For these reasons, we can speak of a (managerial, economic, etc.) decision as an action approach that has emerged from a choice and which has as a goal the assumption and the accomplishment of some (managerial, organizational, etc.) objectives through different specific strategies. A key resource that managers base on their decision making is knowledge. ''The results of the strategies implemented by an organization depend on the decisions taken and they depend to a large extent on the knowledge available to the managers. The more knowledgeable they have, the better they will decide on the future strategies.'' (Bejinaru, 2017; Bejinaru & Iordache, 2011)

Starting from the dimension of social and economic reality, we notice that at the level of the business organization the decision-making process can be explained in relation to a series of philosophical (humanistic, moral) and pragmatic hypostases. In these circumstances, we believe that at the level of business organizations, the analysis of such philosophical or pragmatic perspectives concerning the ways to implement a decision-making process must aim at a whole process of re-evaluation and the theoretical/practical re-contextualization of what the strategic thinking is (Bratianu, 2007). In other words, beyond the enunciation and implementation of the decision-making process at the level of business organization, and taking into account the idea of antinomy between management and anti-management (Bratianu, 2015, pp.72-103), both the founders and the decision-makers should consider both the pragmatic correspondence between the competition and performance, as well as the specific modalities of action, the deployment of the main activities within the organization. Decision-makers should consider the implementation of knowledge strategies because they are tools of transforming the potential intellectual capital into operational capital, and thus increase organizational performance (Bratianu & Bejinaru, 2017).

The concretizing of a decision-making process in the business environment can thus be customized according to how the identity of the organization is built, but also perceived both internally and externally. Perhaps, this is the reason why a decision-making process is seen as one that involves "the activities of goal formulation, problem identification, alternatives generation, and evaluation/selection" (Schwenk, 1984, p.11). The imposition of a new paradigm that of the epistemological management within the new economy reveals that any form of strategy adopted in a business must frame a specific algorithm. Thus, the correspondence of the strategies set and assumed by the decision-makers must be in close concordance with the way in which the desirable coordinates of the active value sequences within the business organization are established, i.e. with a decisional logic (Bolisani & Bratianu, 2017; Bratianu et al., 2011).

Such a process of pragmatic reassessment at the level of the business organization is to be found in the attempts to epistemologically substantiate what the organization represents as a systemic and dynamic entity. Such an approach represents the way in which a decision-making process is implemented in relation to the organizational profile of the business community. At the same time, the existence of causal relations between the way in which the decision-making process is formulated and what it

represents in a business organization reflects *sine qua non* the managers' vision of the purpose and objectives assumed. Therefore, the assumption we are considering is that we claim that the pragmatic approach to the way in which a decision-making process is conceived, formulated and implemented in a business organization is transposed into the epistemic plane through a process of modeling and synthesis of the organizational strategy, taking into account the corporate social responsibility idea (Deetz, 2007).

The decision-making process: a strategic reconfiguration of the organization's profile in the business environment

As we analyze the two types of (philosophical and pragmatic) perspectives when we look at how to enact and implement a decision-making process, we believe that such reporting should also be achieved on the organizational behavior. We especially refer in this context to the axiological benchmarks adjacent to the organizational performance evaluation criteria. Moreover, the resource optimization and management (material, financial, human) is a relevant aspect of implementing a decision-making process at the business organization level.

The decision-making process itself in relation to the strategies assumed by the founders/decision-makers, expresses beyond the desideratum of efficiency itself, a specific picture of how to speak/accept an organizational philosophy, a strategic thinking. The establishing and implementing of such a process represents a stage whereby the responsibility of all employees should be directed in the current society and the social responsibility. In this sense, by the simple method of enunciation of such an idea, its putting into practice proves to be a complex task, given the levels of reality to which it reports. In this context, given mainly the main transformations that are visible at the level of the managerial dimension. It is an attempt to (de)construct an epistemological profile of the current management, but also to relate it to a process of scientific knowledge. In addition, this analysis focuses in particular on the roles and connections between the different levels of reality, namely, the organizational levels, characteristic to the managerial dimensions.

Also, in an analysis of such roles and connections between different levels of reality, we believe it necessary to highlight the nature of ethical decisions in business management. Thus, starting from the idea of profitability (the classic sense of success of a business organization) and reaching the idea of benefit in its many forms, we can conclude that an important role in the enactment and implementation of a decision-making process is hold by the decision-making logic. Such a decisional logic can only be understood and validated to the extent that the strategic thinking succeeds in passing from a logic of simplicity (with alethic values of truth and false) to a polyvalent logic (where, in addition to the true and false values, there may be others such as: uncertain, possible, necessary, probable, etc.). An example in this sense can be given by the applicability of a decisional logic in game theory (Aplak & Sogut, 2013). Moreover, in a decision-making process, we note that formal conditioning becomes an adequate and necessary indicator in the passage from a level of reality to a different level of reality. Such conditioning expressed in formal language ($p \rightarrow q$) or in natural language (in the form "if p, then q") translates in application terms at least one step specific to the decision-making process at the level of business organization. Therefore, the capitalization by the decision-makers of the experiences in relation to a strategic

thinking corroborated with a whole modeling process (Schwenk, 1985), with a decision-making logic (Scaletti, 2014), a logic of action (Frenkel & Kuruvilla, 2002), we believe that can be the starting point for the quality and success of a business organization.

However, beyond the achievement of performance results regarding the implementation of a decision-making process, the literature and practice reveal the fact that in the current business organizations the success is not "guaranteed", taking into account only the application of an action-type logic on a single niche activity. In other words, today's successful businesses are those that make full use of a number of niches and which, at the same time, transcend more places in space and time. The simplicity of the decision-making process itself becomes a complex approach to action. The long tail theory is actually known. "*The long tail theory"* represents the image of a successful business, especially in the virtual space. To sell a little of everything represents a successful business according to this theory (Anderson, 2006).

We notice that the strategic dimension of the actual business development and implicitly of the decision-making process is multilaterally channeled, on various development niches, depending on the possibility of gaining benefits in relation to a series of needs and requirements (Wong & Leow, 2016). Or, the way itself to impose/accept the strategic principles assumed at the level of the higher management presupposes, on the one hand, the existence of principles and standards according to which the decision-making processes are materialized, and, on the other hand, to design a reference model of the development process (Kalpic & Bernus, 2002). It is obvious that even in the case of such business one can speak of a specific dimension of the organizational culture encountered in this situation. It remains to be seen, however, whether the development of such a business on various niches of development can reveal a certain type of (general) organizational culture or several other forms, types of organizational cultures (emerged/formed as a result of the business development on various niches of development). It is a fact that the statement of the organizational mission must be found in the subsequent development of the very business by making full use of the economic niches on which it operates. Therefore, the implementation of specific justifiable strategies in such a decision-making process can be correlated in our opinion with the type of business anchored in the entrepreneurial dimension by the very enunciation/content of the organizational mission.

From the point of view of the ways to operationalize the objectives resulting from the managerial strategies, and implicitly from the strategic thinking, the decision-making process can be analyzed from both epistemological and pragmatic points of view (in the economic sense). However, we believe that an absolute, gross dissociation between the two dimensions (epistemic and pragmatic) could not be accepted at the theoretical and practical levels. We could rather talk about an approach that allows a conceptual, methodological, theoretical transfer of good practice from one dimension to another. Perhaps this may also be justified by the leap from philosophy to pragmatism, from simplicity to complexity as well as a legitimate connection between such dimensions/approaches. However, we believe that pragmatism should not be confused for practice or applicability, but rather with the functions related to the socio-economic utility. An example of this is the one that Oghojafor et al. (2011) explains, which shows that we can talk about the successful outcome of a decision-making

process in terms of *achievable, useful, efficient and profitable.* Or, such terms can find epistemological and pragmatic explanations by their reporting in time and space.

In this respect, we consider that, starting from a pragmatic approach and taking into consideration the concept of organizational knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), we can set an epistemic connection between decision-making process, knowledge management and knowledge management systems. This kind of relation proves itself more than useful, especially when we take into account the implementation of these two concepts (Tiwana, 2000) within a business organization structural format. Incidentally, in specialized literature and practice, knowledge management is defined as "a source of power to outmaneuver business competitors" (Thierauf, 1999) or like a dynamic and continuous organizational phenomenon that can be found mainly in the business organizations (Alavi & Leidner, 2001, pp.107-136). Therefore, when we speak about knowledge management and knowledge management systems it is required to consider the various studies on the diversity of meanings and significations that these concepts acquire in the business dynamics.

We bear in mind that the enunciation and implementation of a decision-making process can be determined, on the one hand, by the historical-philosophical context to which the business organization and its decision-makers relate. On the other hand, such a process of strategic reconfiguration of the business organization profile, which is based on the stability-durability-efficiency triad, should, in our opinion, reveal aspects related to an economic reality regarded as a social project. It is perhaps the moment when the strategic reconfiguration of the organization's profile in the business environment (considering a decision-making logic) must materialize in an age-society of consumerism and continuous transformation. It is the moment when the professionalization of the managerial act has to materialize by remodeling the conceptions and behaviors of all the actors of the business organization and, implicitly, by the continuous re-evaluation of the decision-making process at the level of the business organization. In fact, this initiative is not entirely new at the level of scientific substantiation both theoretically and practically. We have in mind those very exceptional situations where the transformations on the economic market are paramount (crisis situations, economic/social/political reforms, the reorientation/reconfiguration on the market). Such phenomena, more or less unpredictable events at the level of the society have led to a rethinking and re-evaluation of the ways of enacting and implementing the decision-making process at a business organization level.

The decision-making process as a sequence or as a desirable project in launching and developing a business?

A connection between what is a simplistic and complex approach to understanding, enacting and implementing a decision-making process could, in our opinion, be a point of reference in terms of managerial conditioning at the level of a business organization. In this way, taking into account both the epistemic and pragmatic hypotheses involve a reassessment/resizing of the criteria of appreciation of what constitutes the very decision-making process. Such an image reflects the idea of a process of assuming/accepting managerial strategies and, implicitly, organizational philosophy. Under these circumstances, the interrogations which occur concerning the enunciation
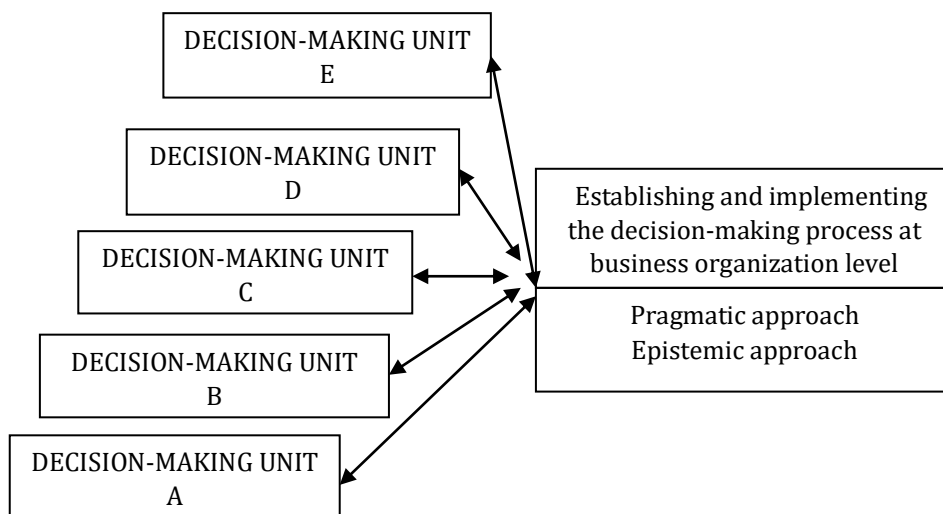
and implementation of a decision-making process at a business organization level can be summarized as follows:
(a) Is establishing and implementing a decision-making process at the level of business organizations a *mere sequence* of business development and deployment?
(b) Is the enunciation and implementation of a decision-making process at the level of business organizations a *project* in itself of how a business is being built and developed, that is, a complex approach?

Of course, the answers to both questions can generate more or less relevant issues in the validity process of an argument. We note, though, that no clear line can be drawn between the two "attributes": sequence and project. However, we can conceptually sense the fact that the two "attributes" reflect in a way or another different way of how to operate the very process of the enunciation of an organizational mission. The analysis of the two interpretations is as follows:

(a) Is enunciating and implementing a decision-making process at the level of business organizations a mere *sequence* of the business development and deployment?

Thus, by *sequence* we understand a succession of phenomena/events that form a unit; we can schematically represent what such a unit can include (Figure 1). A number of decision-making units generate the actual implementation of the organizational mission. The mission itself should reflect the intellectual capital of the company and its nonlinear integrators able to transform efficiently the potential intellectual capital into the operational form (Bratianu, 2009; Bratianu, 2011).

Figure 1. Enunciating and implementing a decision-making process at the level of business organizations on organizational reality levels (Range of decision units) (Author's own elaboration)

Our analysis starts from a simplistic approach, taking into account the idea of an organizational mission perceived as a fundamental component of the philosophy of the business organization (Pearce & Fred, 1987). Thus, we will take for example the PepsiCo Company, whose mission is expressed in the following words: "Our mission is

to be the world's premier consumer products company focused on convenient foods and beverages. We seek to produce financial rewards to investors as we provide opportunities for growth and enrichment to our employees, our business partners and the communities in which we operate. And in everything we do, we strive for honesty, fairness and integrity". (http://www.pepsicointernship.ro).

Starting from Figure no. 1, we can "decrypt" the content of the organizational mission found at the level of the PepsiCo Company, by identifying the following *decision units* (Figure 2):
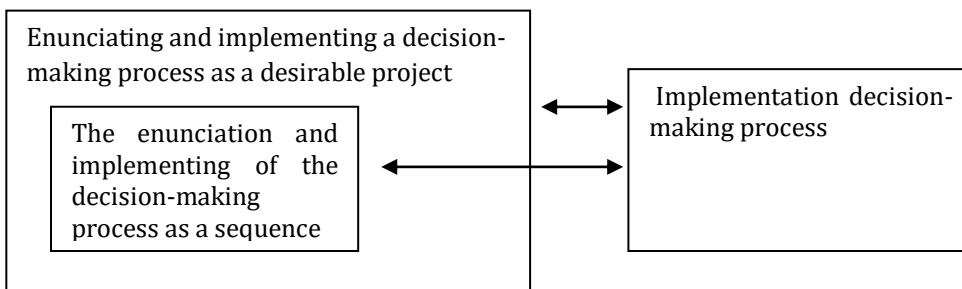- the orientation towards the economic market in the field - "Our mission is to be the world's premier consumer products company ..." - *Decision-making unit A*
- the global orientation - "... in the world ..." - *Decision-making unit B*
- the identification of the market/resource/goods and services niche "... focused on convenient foods and beverages". - *Decision-making unit C*
- the orientation towards stakeholders - "We seek to produce financial rewards to investors as we provide opportunities for growth and enrichment to our employees, our business partners and the communities in which we operate". - *Decision-making unit D*
- the orientation towards values - " And in everything we do we strive for honesty, fairness and integrity" - *Decision-making unit E*

By exemplifying the above, in the case of this company's mission, we could identify more decisional units that make it possible to state and substantiate the decision-making process in relation to the idea of an organizational mission. In other words, the realization of the organizational mission is expressed in our opinion in a simplistic way, considering a number of aspects of the social life that can be corroborated with those of a pragmatic nature as they are related to ideas such as: competition, performance and so on. As an explanation of what we have suggested in Figure 1, we argue some aspects that are deductible:
 (1) some decisional/declarative units of the mission structure of firms have a predominantly philosophical/humanistic character, while other decision-making units are and must be "marked" by economic pragmatism;
 (2) one or more decision-making units in the structure will form the essence of the decision-making process, while other decision-making units will subsequently have, as they undergo implementation, a relative subsidiary importance (even if the company publicly engages equally to all the decision/declarative units);
(3) there is no generally applicable "recipe" and by which the decision-maker can mix or combine philosophical decision-making units with pragmatic ones, namely the essential units with the subsidiary ones (the company situation, the time spent, the education of managers, the social pressure and other similar contexts will impress upon how the mission of different companies materializes).

(b) Is the enunciation and implementing of a decision-making process at the level of business organizations a *project* in itself of how a business is being built and developed, that is, a complex approach?

Through *project*, we understand a calculated effort that an economic decision-maker is doing over time, assuming a risk with the goal of gaining a benefit. Thus, we can appreciate that the statement of the mission is a relevant part of a larger project assumed by the decision-makers (Figure 2).

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│ Enunciating and implementing a decision-      │
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*Figure 2. The enunciation of the mission of business organizations as a relevant
part of a wider project (Author's own elaboration)*

The development of a business is a project that anchors the organizational mission in the enunciation and implementation of the decision-making process, taking into account the current economic and social context. The importance given to such a (whole-part) approach expresses the fact that the statement of the mission of business organizations in relation to the idea of a decision-making process implementation process acquires a pragmatic connotation when it has a positive entrepreneurial result (achievement of objectives and implicitly, of the organizational mission itself). In this way, we can state that the enunciation and implementation of a decision-making process is a projection of the way in which the business organization's life is intended to materialize in relation to the mission, objectives and strategies assumed by the decision-makers. In other words, the enunciation and implementation of a decision-making process as a managerial project but also as a projection over time is a desirable element in the development of the business organization. We can bring to this end a number of arguments to support such as the above assumptions:

(1) A first argument we bring is that any form of content of a decision-making process is a construction based upon the rationale of the existence of the organization and the implications it generates over time;

(2) A second argument is that the issue of moral/ethical implications within the organization and that referring to the idea of organizational behavior involves a reconsideration of the specific ways of reconfiguring the decision-making process as such;

(3) A third argument is that the retrieved normative (and sometimes even implied) at the managerial level involves a degree of direct conditioning of the information associated with the substantiating the content of a decision-making process.

(4) One last argument is that the format of the pragmatic and epistemic implications reveals an administrative as well as operational component in relation to the existing relationships between the top management representatives and the employees.

Such arguments that we bring to highlight the (lack of the) need to standardize the formulation and implicitly the decision-making process reveal virtual representations (in an ideological sense) of what constitutes (or could constitute) the strategy of development and growth of an organization. The efficiency of organizational philosophy assumed in a pragmatic way transposes the process of practicability of the strategies assumed on a totally different level of reality. Therefore, the image highlighted in the theoretical and conceptual terms reveals the need for specific "readjustments" and reinterpretations of the communication and action sequences in the managerial plan regarding the necessity of the decision-making process.

Conclusions and implications

The pragmatic and spiritual coordinates (the call to a system of values) of the business organization expresses *de facto* the intentions of the founders and decision-makers regarding the development / growth of the organization and, implicitly, of the business. However, as shown throughout our research, the decision maker who "projects" the future of the business should take into consideration a managerial balance in assuming an exponential growth in both the turnover and the profitability of the organization. Therefore, it is imperative that the decision maker really knows the concepts utilized to formalize the true image of the business organization. (Steven *et al.*, 2011), eliminating any form of ambiguity that affects the decision-making logic (Eisenberg, 2007).

The management with a maximum balance of such a situation is justified by the fact that the emergence of new technologies and the existence of social, political, and economic transformations generate effects whose purposefulness is not always positive. The transformations in recent years both technologically and socially have determined a reshaping of the society and the human relationships. We can notice that at the level of the society there is also a reconfiguration of the axiological criteria. In this way, the decision-making process at the business organization level has undergone a number of transformations in terms of its thinking, enunciation and implementation. We also notice that the ways to initiate and develop a business are totally different in today's society compared to those at least 15-20 years ago. The businesses themselves are described as activities whose development is based, on the one hand on a humanistic approach (the interests of the society come first) and, on the other hand, a purely pragmatic approach (the emphasis is placed on the development of organizations), whereby the staff with a high potential can be attracted.

Thus, it is possible that the decision-making process reflects the coordinates on which the organization's own growth and growth strategy is guided in relation to the (philosophical and/or pragmatic) approach assumed by the decision-makers. Moreover, by taking these aspects into account, the decision-makers (both founders and top managers) try to provide solutions to the realization of objectives that can be corroborated (theoretically, not always practically) with the assumed decision-making process. Under these circumstances, we believe the need for a thinking/elaboration strategy of a decision-making process is considered to be a priori justifying the development of a business. However, such an image expresses the need to reconsider the context in which the thinking, enunciation and implementation of a decision-making process takes place, namely the conditions in which it is about to materialize, by reference to the specificity of the way to understand and to have an insight in pragmatic, real terms of how a successful business should be run. Therefore, the decision-making process may reflect the strategy of the organization's own development and growth strategy in relation to the (epistemological and/or pragmatic) approach assumed by the decision-makers.

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