Reflection Paper Example

Course: Organizational Behavior

Key Concept: Decision-Making Bias and Group Dynamics

During a semester-long consulting simulation in my management course, I participated in a team tasked with developing a market entry strategy for a mid-sized technology firm. Early in the project, our group reached consensus quickly on a proposed solution, which I initially interpreted as a sign of strong collaboration and efficiency. At the time, I viewed the absence of disagreement as a positive indicator of group alignment. This assumption later became the central focus of my reflection.

As the project progressed, flaws in our initial strategy began to surface during feedback sessions. External reviewers questioned our risk assessment and challenged several assumptions we had treated as given. In response, I revisited my role in the group's early decision-making process and recognized that alternative viewpoints had been raised briefly but dismissed without thorough evaluation. This realization prompted me to analyze the experience through the lens of group decision-making theory.

Course material on organizational behavior highlights how group dynamics influence judgment quality. In particular, the concept of groupthink describes situations in which the desire for consensus suppresses critical evaluation of alternatives. When I compared this framework to our team's behavior, clear parallels emerged. We prioritized speed and cohesion over scrutiny, which limited the range of ideas considered. At the time, I interpreted this as effective teamwork. In retrospect, it reflected a failure to engage in evaluative analysis.

Applying this theory helped me understand how informal leadership roles shaped the discussion. One team member, perceived as highly competent due to prior experience, strongly advocated for the initial strategy. I deferred to this position without questioning underlying assumptions, even when I felt uncertain. This behavior aligned with authority bias, another concept discussed in the course, where individuals assign disproportionate weight to perceived expertise. Recognizing this bias forced me to examine my own contribution to the decision-making process.

The evaluation phase of reflection required confronting the consequences of these dynamics. Our final recommendation lacked contingency planning and underestimated implementation challenges. These weaknesses did not stem from a lack of effort or preparation.

They resulted from insufficient critical analysis during early discussions. The experience demonstrated how decision quality depends not only on individual competence but also on how groups structure evaluation and dissent.

Further analysis revealed how psychological safety influences group outcomes. The course emphasized that effective teams encourage questioning and disagreement without penalty. In our case, disagreement was not explicitly discouraged, but it was implicitly minimized through time pressure and an emphasis on efficiency. I realized that I contributed to this environment by prioritizing harmony over inquiry. This insight reframed my understanding of participation as an active responsibility rather than passive agreement.

Reflecting on this experience shifted how I understand leadership within group settings. Leadership is often framed as direction-setting or coordination. This reflection clarified that leadership also involves creating conditions for critical discussion. Encouraging alternative perspectives and slowing decision-making at key moments can improve outcomes, even when deadlines are tight. The course material reinforced that structured disagreement strengthens decision quality rather than undermining cohesion.

From a practical standpoint, this reflection identified strategies I would apply in future group work. Explicitly assigning roles such as devil's advocate, pausing to evaluate assumptions, and documenting rejected alternatives could have improved our process. These strategies align with evidence-based approaches to reducing decision-making bias discussed in the course. They also demonstrate how theory can inform concrete behavioral changes.

This reflection also reshaped my understanding of accountability. I initially viewed the group's shortcomings as a collective issue without individual responsibility. Through analysis, I recognized how my silence during early discussions contributed to flawed outcomes. This realization marked a shift in how I define effective participation. Contributing critically, even when it introduces discomfort, is an essential professional skill.

In conclusion, this group project provided a meaningful context for examining decision-making bias and group dynamics. By applying organizational behavior theory to my own actions, I moved from surface evaluation to critical reflection. The experience deepened my understanding of how group processes influence outcomes and clarified my role within those processes. This insight will inform my future professional practice by guiding me to engage more actively in evaluation, challenge assumptions, and support decision-making structures that prioritize analysis over premature consensus.