Group decision making in hidden profile situations: dissent as a facilitator for Decision Quality

The effect of diversity in individual prediscussion preferences on group decision quality was examined in an experiment in which 135 three-person groups worked on a personnel selection case with 4 alternatives. The information distribution among group members constituted a hidden profile (i.e., the correct solution was not identifiable on the basis of the members' individual information and could be detected only by pooling and integrating the members' unique information). Whereas groups with homogeneous suboptimal prediscussion preferences (no dissent) hardly ever solved the hidden profile, solution rates were significantly higher in groups with prediscussion dissent, even if none of these individual prediscussion preferences were correct. If dissent came from a proponent of the correct solution, solution rates were even higher than in dissent groups without such a proponent. The magnitude of dissent (i.e., minority dissent or full diversity of individual preferences) did not affect decision quality. The beneficial effect of dissent on group decision quality was mediated primarily by greater discussion intensity and to some extent also by less discussion bias in dissent groups.

Stichworte:
- group decision making
- information pooling
- hidden profile
- dissent
- minority influence