



ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

ÖZET

Today, business life has gained a high level of dynamism and momentum. Political, social and technological developments can change business life very quickly in addition to the developing and globalizing economy as well. The effects of the recent pandemic on business life can be given as an example. As a result of such developments, the dynamics change and the uncertainty increases in the fields of activity of the firms. Firms need to be better prepared for uncertainties compared with the past. Managers, at any level, need to approach events with a strategic management awareness. Strategic leadership is defined as the ability to predict and design the future, maintain flexibility, think strategically and initiate changes that will create a competitive advantage for the firm in the future. Strategic leaders are responsible for the overall performance of the firm and they have the most important influence in the strategic management process. Strategic leadership is the most important tool for firms to achieve high performance and competitive advantage. In this study, strategic leadership and strategic management terms were discussed conceptually, then strategic leadership was evaluated in the context of strategic management, and finally, some suggestions were presented.

Keywords: Strategy, Leadership, Strategic Management, Strategic Leadership, Strategic Management Process.

1. INTRODUCTION

Today, businesses have transformed into the form of organizations of a globalizing world. Competition has increased from national level to international level, markets have matured, technological developments have accelerated, many companies have grown and created new product lines. As a result of this, increasing competition in many industries has led companies to increase complexity and uncertainty. Leaders have to act in many different roles to deal with changing external environmental and organizational conditions and problems, and have to address strategic and general problems and guide business managers (Eren, 2000). In this study, the concepts of strategic leadership and strategic management, which are of great importance for organizations, will be discussed and strategic leadership will be evaluated in the context of strategic management.

2. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

2.1. Definition of Strategic Management

Strategic Management is not a term that researchers have a consensus about its concept, and so many definitions related to this term can be found in the literature.

Dinçer (1998) defines strategic management as the coordination of organizational instruments by taking account of environmental dynamics and taking all kinds of strategic measures in line with the goals and objectives of the organization in order for the organization to be successful.

Kabar (2011) defines strategic management as a whole of certain strategic moves developed in order to provide a competitive advantage against the organization's competitors in managing its relations with its environment. According to him, strategic management is a set of operations that enable the organization to reach its intended point.

2.2. Features of Strategic Management

According to David (2011), strategic management is a science and art that enables to formulate the functions of the organization, to implement the process and to evaluate the result in order to create new opportunities for the future and avoid possible threats.

The strategic behaviors formed by the organization against environmental stimuli have certain common features. Strategic Management means determining specific goals and planning/implementing activities to achieve these goals in order to achieve medium-term and long-term goals (İşcan, 2000).

However, strategic management is not a rough planning, implementation and evaluation calculation. It is a dynamic process of applying an updated and consistent plan in accordance with the spirit of the time (Poister & Streib, 1999).

Strategic management is a high level management instrument. It is aimed at the long-term goals of the organization and is related to the future. It also helps to develop a holistic perspective to operate the organization's goals and objectives in harmony with social reality. It targets the efficient distribution of the organization's resources and guides the lower-level managers (Porter, 1996).

2.3. Strategic Management Process

Looking at the processes of strategic management, it is seen that most of these strategy processes take roots from the studies of the Harvard Business School in the 1960s. These processes are; data collection, selection, definition, analysis and evaluation stages. In addition to these, SWOT analysis, which evaluates opportunities and threats, is one of the frequently used tools in these processes. Looking at the studies on the processes of strategic management, many similar approaches and models can be seen.

Olsen and Eadi (1982) determine the basic stages of strategic planning processes as follows;

- I. Expressing the mission and goals
- ii. Analyzing environmental factors
- iii. Determining the organizational profile
- iv. Resource analysis
- v. Formulation of strategies
- vi. Implementing the strategy and ensuring its control within the process
- vii. Evaluation of performance outcomes

On the other hand, Demir (2010) discussed the process that started with the situation analysis as the execution of the strategic objectives with certain activities within the framework of the mission and principles, and the monitoring and evaluation of these activities and the performance measurement of the obtained outputs.

Looking at the definition of strategic management processes by the State Planning Organization, there is a flow of situation analysis, developing a future projection, implementing implementation strategies and performing monitoring-evaluation processes (State Planning Organization [DPT], 2003).

2.4. The Importance and Necessity of the Strategic Management Process

In this current time period that technological and cultural developments are dizzying, organizations need to anticipate changes in order to survive and develop, and the opportunities and threats that will arise must be analyzed and evaluated correctly.

The uncertainty of the future can be reduced by strategic management and a position can be created for current opportunities and threats. Vision, mission and strategy can be reconstructed according to objectives that change over time. In addition to these, strategic planning contributes to a competitive advantage over other organizations. In this context, it refers to a dynamic and complex process that starts with planning in the realization of long-term goals and ends in the control-evaluation step (Demir, 2010).

3. LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

3.1. Leadership

People live as a society. People who took risks and responsibilities were needed in the protection and development of this social order. At this point, people have emerged who manage the organization voluntarily or involuntarily and take care of the interests of the organization against environmental factors. At this point, the concept of leadership shows itself.

Leadership phenomenon started to be the focal point in management literature especially at the beginning of the 20th century, and it is an area on which researchers have started to create literature. However, this does not mean that leadership was not defined and there was no interest before the 20th century. In every period of history, leadership was a phenomenon criticized by certain researchers.

It is among the duties of the leadership to ensure that organizations adapt quickly to changing environmental factors, to make employees a part of changing processes by affecting them, to take the organization with a holistic approach by ensuring teamwork, and to make important decisions in the vital processes of the organization (Vera and Crossan, 2004). On the other hand, people who make certain decisions for the organizations and employees to work effectively, and who provide work performance and establish balancing / harmonizing mechanisms are called leaders (Saruhan, 2012).

Looking at the literature, there are many definitions of leadership. Some of those; Charismatic leadership, servant leadership, mentor leadership, visionary leadership. Again, looking at the literature, charismatic leadership, autocratic leadership, democratic leadership and laissez-faire (delegative) leadership are seen, while in another classification, leadership is defined as transformational and interactionist leadership.

3.2. Strategic Leadership

When strategic leadership, which is another leadership concept among all these leadership definitions, is aware of these definitions, it is striking that strategic leadership is in a high-level decision-making position.

A strategic leader is the person who plans the actions and activities of the organization within the framework of a road map against the uncertainties and confusion in the environment, supervises the implementation of these plans and controls the outputs (Akyüz, 2018).

Stating that a strategic leader is not a branch of leadership among other types of leaders (such as democratic, charismatic leaders), Davies and Davies (2005) state that all leadership types have important characteristics.

Strategic leadership is a specific and complex form of leadership. It requires a higher level of ability to foresee the future, to create a vision, to be flexible, to activate the talents and potentials of people, and to make strategic changes when necessary.

Hinterhuber and Friedrich (2001) state that shaping the future by foreseeing and developing a management understanding / culture within this framework, showing innovative and creative goals and providing the required speed of change in the global competitive environment are the characteristics of the strategic leader.

When looking at another definition of strategic leadership, Pisapia (2009) studies stand out. In this study, it is claimed that strategic leaders should emphasize and apply five important strategic leadership behaviors, namely transformational, managerial, ethical, political and relational, according to the right environment and situation.

Strategic leaders are people with highly innovative and flexible problem-solving skills by adapting to the changes in the environment (Barutçugil, 2014). Those who manage the activities that are at the center of strategic leadership processes, support the development of employees, and display appropriate leadership behaviors (Aydın, 2012).

Looking at the characteristics of the strategic leader, the following skills stand out (Davies & Davies, 2005):

- I. Strategically aligned
- ii. Putting strategic goals into action
- iii. Organizing the organization and ensuring its compliance
- iv. Determining the strategic points that need to be intervened
- v. Developing and supporting strategic skills

In addition, Davies and Davies (2005) state that a strategic leader should have characteristics of insatiability, assimilating capacity, adaptive capacity, and wisdom.

4. ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Developments in the world are increasing gradually and these developments constitute certain movements of change. It is not possible for organizations that continue their activities within these movements of change to survive by focusing on daily problems. All changes such as technological developments, cultural changes, population structure, policies, etc. affect organizations directly or indirectly. These multi-dimensional changes will have multi-dimensional solutions. This situation has brought concepts such as strategic management and strategic leadership to the literature.

It is among the objectives of the strategic management to shape the future of the organization, to create a culture of consensus within the organization, to establish an effective ethical program within the organization, to gain a creative and effective problem-solving culture within the institution.

A strategic leader is responsible for analyzing environmental factors, creating an organization profile, planning resources, implementing and evaluating strategies in strategic management processes that start with the expression of mission and goals. In the operation of this process, the strategic leader must demonstrate certain skills. The strategic leader, who starts with the setting of strategic goals, organizes the organization by triggering the organization to put the goals into action, determines the strategic points to be intervened, and conducts the process by supporting the strategic capabilities. In addition, leaders are expected to be flexible and comprehensive in solving existing questions in order to ensure organizational efficiency (Barutçugil, 2014).

One of the main issues in strategic management is the question that "why some organizations are more successful than others?" An answer to this question will be the scope of the strategic leadership applied in the organization (Hitt and Ireland 2002). Hosmer (1982) defines the strategic leader as the person responsible for the strategic management processes of the organization on the basis of regular adaptation to changes in the environment, organization and managerial attitudes.

Ülgen and Mirze (2004) also place strategic leadership in an important place in the strategic management process and see it as one of the soft elements of the strategic management process. According to the authors, strategic analysis and rational decision making constitute the hard elements of the process, while the capabilities of the enterprise, corporate culture and strategic leadership constitute the soft elements of the strategic management process, which includes human-related issues, which are necessary for the organization to be successful. Strategic leadership focuses on the characteristics and behaviors of managers and leaders with strategic management awareness who know what is going on and how to do things.

Organizations can successfully use the strategic management process through effective strategic leadership. Senior managers, as strategic leaders, have to guide the organization in creating mission and vision in businesses. Strategic leaders then have to facilitate the development of appropriate strategic activities and determine how to implement these strategic leadership activities. These actions are concluded by strategic leaders in strategic competitiveness and above-average earnings (Hitt, Hoskisson & Ireland, 2007).

5. CONCLUSION

The fact that change is continuous and rapid puts especially the managers of organizations confronted with important problems and makes strategic management and strategic leadership mandatory. Strategic leadership has a function that greatly increases the success of the strategic management process. In other words, these two, which are in constant interaction, complement each other and can cause negative consequences if they do not work well, and when they function effectively, they provide a competitive advantage to the organization.

In order for today's leaders to lead their organizations to success, it is of great importance that they are a compromise between different professional groups within the organization, that they do not allow ethical values to be damaged, that they always develop and use their managerial skills, and that they always follow the developments in their environment and keep their organizations ready for change.

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