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Emergent Strategy, Deliberate Strategy, and Generic Approach to Strategy: A Conceptual Approach

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I. Introduction

How organisations formulate strategy has been has been one of the most hotly debated issues in strategic management (Grant, 2010). According to Grant (2010), strategy results from managers participating in intentional, logical analysis. However, strategy may also appear through adaptation to environments (emergence). Mintzberg (2005) argues that viewing the strategic management process as one in which analysis is followed by optimal decisions and their subsequent thorough implementation neither explains the strategic management process precisely nor sets down ideal practices. He observes the business environment as far from predictable, thus limiting the ability for analysis. In other words, Mintzberg tends to view strategic process as emergent process rather than rational approach.

In the process of strategy-making – be it formal or informal, intentional or emergent – systematic analysis serves as a critical input into the strategy process (Grant, 2010). Without analysis, strategic decisions are vulnerable to power battles, individual fads, and wishful thinking. Concepts, theories, and analytic tools are counterparts not substitutes for experience, commitment and creativity. Their role, Grant argues, is to provide frameworks for managing discussion, processing information and opinions and encouraging consensus. In other words, regardless of approach adopted, systematic and rational analysis is focal as a foundation to guide decision making process. Theories and concepts provide insights to enrich the strategy process and improve the quality of decision making so that strategies crafted are much more rich and accountable. The two paradigms, both emergent strategy and deliberate strategy, are not exclusive of one another. Meanwhile, generic approach to strategy from Whittington introduces the four basic conceptions of strategy, which each has completely different implications for how to set out about doing strategy.

II. Emergent strategy

Nutt (2008) notes that decisions are rarely based on optimal rationality alone, given the political processes that take place in all organisations. In other words, Mintzberg tends to view strategic process as emergent process rather than rational approach. Nutt views strategic process as the result of the political processes around the organisation. Mintzberg then, proposed an alternative model of development strategy. Based on this model, the actual strategy of any firm consists of a mixture of deliberate and emergent strategies. In Mintzberg's perspective, numerous planned strategies fail to be executed because of unexpected changes in the environment. Emergent strategies are responses that arise unplanned in the face of unforeseen situations.

Emergent strategies are very valuable especially in the turbulent environment where firm has no control to the very fast changes and chaotic circumstances. Strategies take place as the result of the deliberations of top management is called as deliberate/intended strategy, whereas strategies do not develop on the foundation of a major plan but have a tendency to appear in organisations over time is called as emergent strategy (Johnson et al., 2011). Good managers will desire to take advantage of a new opportunity given by the environment; these opportunities emerge from independent action by individual managers within the organisation and are not the outcome of a formal top-down planning system. To be effective, emergent strategies suggest that learning process and exploration are vital.

Furthermore, Mintzberg states that emergent strategies are frequently successful and may be more suitable than intended strategies. Kukalis (1991) argues that the firms adopt a more flexible planning system as the level of environmental complexity increases, and Rudd et al. (2008) suggest that, through flexibility, organisations are better prepared to cope with environmental turbulence, enhancing the influence of their strategic planning on performance.

Intended strategies can often be successful, particularly in stable markets where there are few shocks, but it is sensible to be open as well to the possibilities of emergence. Inflexible plans can obstruct learning and prevent the grabbing of opportunities. The researcher's standing position here is that intended and emergent are important and as argued by Grant (2010) and Johnson et al. (2012), Hill and Jones (2007) that in practice, the strategies of most corporations are probably a mixture of the intended (planned) and the emergent. Both approaches are complementary each other and have facets of thruth. In stable and dynamic circumtances, rational approach (intended strategy) is more apropriate, while emergent strategy will work the best in turbulent and chaotic environment. For this, it is worthy to note what Burgelman and Grove (1996) say that it is very important for management to acknowledge the process of emergence and to interfere when appropriate, dispensing with poor emergent strategies but encouraging potentially good ones. To do so, according to Hill and Jones (2007), managers must be able to assess the worth of emergent strategies. The capability of managers to think strategically is vital. Although emergent strategies come up from within the organisation with no prior planning – that is, without going

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through the stages in a sequential manner- as described in the formal planning systems - top management still has to assess them. Such evaluation involves comparing each emergent strategy with the company's goals, external environmental opportunities and threats, and internal strengths and weaknesses. The aim is to evaluate whether the emergent strategy matches the company's needs and capabilities (Hill and Jones, 2007). It means that top management should also provide a convincing explanation of the reason for existence and the aims of the organisation which it is important as a base while organisation adopts and explores emergent strategies.

III. Deliberate Strategy

In spite of criticisms, research indicates that formal planning systems do help managers improve their strategic decisions. Miller and Cardinal's (1994) study (discussed above) as presented in the earlier section of this study, that examined the results of 26 formerly published studies, arrived at the conclusion that generally strategic planning has a positive effect on enterprise performance. Another study of strategic planning in 635 companies (Brews and Hunt, 1999) revealed that formal planning methodologies and emergent strategies both shape part of an upright strategy formulation process, particularly in an unstable environment. Further, Dobson and Starkey (1998) stated that a good strategic management process essentially includes components of each perspective; there is no one best-fit approach. The planning method can operate in a stable, foreseeable environment. Its detractors assert that "such environments are becoming increasingly scarce, events make the plan redundant, creativity is buried beneath the weight and protocols of planning and communication rules," (Dobson and Starkey, 1998:2). The second method emphasizes quick response and adaptability to enable the organization to excel in a setting that is rapidly evolving and generally unpredictable. This approach has been critiqued "for failing to give an adequate sense of where the organization is going and what its mission is," (Dobson and Starkey, 1998: 2) because, as argued by (Weihrich (1982:55), "any organisation-whether, military, product-oriented, service-oriented or even governmental- to remain effective, must use a rational approach toward anticipating, responding, to and even altering the future environment."

IV. Whittington's Four Generic Approaches to Strategy

In his book (2001), Whittington introduces the four basic conceptions of strategy, which each has completely different implications for how to set out about doing strategy. They are as follows:

1. The classical approach.

It is the oldest and the most prominent, counts on the rational planning procedures dominant in the text books. This approach views profit maximisationas the genuine outcome of strategy making. Strategy, here, is a rational process of deliberate estimate and analysis, planned to make the most of long term advantage. For the Classicists, good planning is what it grabs to understand internal and external circumstances. Strategy matters in that rational analysis and objective decisions generate the discrepancy between long run achievement and not a success. One of the most prominent figures of the classical approach, Alfred Chandler, sees strategy as "the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out those goals," (1962:13). Following the classical perspective, Volberda et al. (2011) depict that organisations utilise a rational approach to achieve strategic competitiveness and gain above-average profit. The main characteristics of the classical approach: the attachment to rational analysis, the split-up of conception from implementation, and the liability to profit maximisation (Whittington, 2001). The core of strategy, from this perspective, is flexibility and incrementalism. Hannan and Freeman (1988) and Williamson (19 1) criticize that strategy in the traditional view of rational future-oriented planning is quite inappropriate (as cited by Whittington, 2001). They said that the environment is usually too volatile to anticipate effectively. For this, It is not only that long term existence cannot be planned for; it also warrants that only those companies that somehow do hit upon profit maximising strategies will continue to exist. Successful strategies only occur as 'the process of natural selection delivers its judgement,' (p.3). All managers can do is make sure that they match as efficiently as possible to the environmental pressures of the day. In other words, strategic fit is essential for the survival of organisation. Morgan et al., (2007) also criticise the view of the classical approach andsuggest that excellent execution in the absence of sound strategy, is no better than excellent strategy with poor execution. Therefore, as suggested by Wheelen and Hunger (2000) that strategy formulation and strategy implementation should be thought as two sides of the same coin. Poor implementation has been responsible for a number of strategic failures. In other words, to be successful, the precise strategy is not everything. Strategy development and implementation are interconnected phases of the planning process and complimentary each other.

2, The Evolutionary approach.

Businesses are like the species of biological evolution: competitive manners heartlessly select out the fittest for survival; the others are incapable to change themselves rapidly enough to defend against extinction. From the evolutionary perspective, then, it is the market, not managers, which creates the important choices. In other words, this approach is less convinced about top management's capability to plan and take steps rationally. Rather than depending on managers, this approach requires markets to acquire profit maximisation. Managers necessitate not be rational optimisers because 'evolution is nature's cost benefit analysis' (Einhom and Hogarth, 1988:114 as quoted by Whittington, 2001). Evolutionary theorists frequently make an explicit analogous between economic competition and the natural law of the jungle. As said by Henderson (1989) that competition is not an issue of separate calculation but a continuous struggle for survival in an over-populated, intense and cloudy jungle. Thus, this approach suggest an evolutionary theory of thefirm that

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reduced managerial strategy and highlighted environmental fit. The most suitable strategies within a given market arise as competitive processes permit the relatively better performers to survive and succeed, while the weaker performers are overwhelmingly forced out of the ecological niche. As said byHannan (1997) that only the most fit to survive in a process of turbulent competition. Milton Friedman (1953) suggests that it hardly matters if managers do not rationally yield exploit so long as competitive markets warrant that only those who do somehow attain the profit maximising standing will stay alive over the long run (as quoted by Whittington, 2001). In brief, this approach emphasises on competitive practice of natural selection in which market forcesselect the prevalent strategies within a certain circumstance, and not managers as prescribed by the classical approach. In other words, the evolutionary approach very highlights on the fit model of strategy making.

Hamel and Phahalad (1994), however, in their 1994 seminal work, *Competing for the Future*, have critiqued the 'fit model' of strategy making for the reason that it can lead to a mindset in which management concentrates too much on the level of fit between the current resources of a firm and recent environmental opportunities, and not adequately on building new resources and capabilities to generate and exploit upcoming opportunities.

3.The Processual approach.

According to this approach, long range planning is essentially useless, but they are fewer pessimistic about the destiny of businesses that do not some how elevate environmental fit. For them, the processes of both organisations and markets are hardly perfect enough for either the strategizing of classical theory or the survivalism of the evolutionists. The plan is unavoidable to get forgotten as environments change. According to Mintzberg (1994), in practice, strategy

develops more from a pragmatic process of butchering, learning, and negotiation than from a rational sequences of comprehensive jumps forward.

Failure to plan and perform the perfect strategic plan is hardly going to bring any serious competitive difficulty. The foundations of processual approach revealed two themes: the cognitive limits on rational action and the micro politics of organisations. First theme, rational economic man is a fiction: in practice people are merely boundedly rational. People are not able to consider more than a bit of factors at a time. The result is that environmental examining, data analyses and estimated comparisons of strategic choices advocated by classical theorists of strategy have a tendency to be faulty and inadequate. Mintzberg(2005) notes that the business environment as far from predictable, thus limiting the ability for analysis. Therefore, many planned strategies are not implemented due to unpredicted changes in the environment. Emergent strategies refer to the unanticipated reactions to unexpected situations. Good managers will desire to take advantage of a new opportunity given by the environment; these opportunities emerge from independent action by individual managers within theorganisation and are not the outcome of a formal top-down planning system. Inthe Mintzberg's view (2005), emergent strategies are frequently successful and may be more suitable than intended strategies.The second theme, the micro politics of organisation was founded by the recognition of the individual interests in a firm. Firms are not come together in improving a single value, such as profit. Rather, they are coalitions of individuals each of whom takes their own personal objectives and reasoning biases to the organisation. Organisational members negotiate between each other to come to a set of a shared goals relatively acceptable to them all in which the bargaining process engages both many negotiations and policy side payments in response for agreement. In the current researcher's view, strategic decision making is as the result of combination between rational approach and reconciliation as contended by Nutt (2008) that decisions are rarely based on optimal rationality alone, given the political processes that take place in all organisations.

4. The Systemic approach.

In the view of this approach, strategy does matter, but not extremely in the meaning that Classicists think. Systemic theorists are much less suspicious than processualists about people's capacity to perceive and perform rational plans of action, and much more confident than evolutionists about their capability to define their strategies in insolence of market forces. The systemic view suggests that the objectives and practices of strategy rely on the specific social system in which strategy making happens. Strategists often differ from the profit maximising rule quite intentionally. Their social surroundings may give them other interests than revenue - professional pride, managerial authority, or national patriotism maybe. Competitive burdens do not warrant that only evolutionary profit maximisers continue to exist: markets can be manoeuvred and societies have other standards for supporting companies than just financial performance.

The systemic approach, therefore, believes that strategy indicates the certain social systems in which strategists take part, outlining for them the interests and in which they perform and the rules by which they can endure. Class and country create a difference to strategy. In other words, strategy happens in social and cultural context in which strategic planners devise strategies. As a result, each approach discussed above has implications for alternative interpretations of understanding strategy processes. They are:

Classical approach count on the rational planning method which it is the means to reach profitability as the main goal of business. Managers employ deliberate, rational analysis to devise strategy to reach the long term goals of the firm. In other words, Classicists view strategy as a rational process of long term strategic planning to assure the future. For this, strategy should be formal, explicit, its objectives definite profit maximization with focus to internal (plans) employing analytical processes.

As classical approach, Evolutionary approaches view profit maximization as the natural outcome of strategy making. However, evolutionary approaches view strategy as rising from processes directed by chance, uncertainty, and conservatism. In the view of evolutionists, the future is far too unpredictable to plan. For this, the best strategy is to focus on maximizing likelihood of survival today. In such strategy, the most valuable

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approach may be to experiment with as many diverse small initiatives as possible, to wait and see which prosper and which fail, and then to develop on the succeses at the same time as heartlessly removing the failures. Processual approach views strategy best as an emergent process of learning and adaptation. Processualists too disbelieve the value of rational long term planning.

The last, systemic approach contend that forms of strategy are hugely embedded in specific social systems, and their processes and objectives may be entirely rational in line with the criteria of the locally major groups. In brief, evolutionary approaches support the processualists in seeing strategy as rising from processes managed by chance, uncertainty, and conservatism. On the other hand, Classical and systemic theorists do have the same opinion that strategy can be intentional (deliberate).

V. Conclusion

Intended strategies can often be successful, particularly in stable markets where there are few shocks, but it is sensible to be open as well to the possibilities of emergence. Inflexible plans can obstruct learning and prevent the grabbing of opportunities. The researcher’s standing position here is that intended and emergent are important. In reality, the strategies adopted by most organizations are likely a blend of both the intentional (planned) and the emergent. Both methods complement one another and contain elements of truth. In stable and dynamic circumtances, rational approach (intended strategy) is more apropriate, while emergent strategy will work the best in turbulent and chaotic environment.

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