EVALUATION OF THE PARADOXES IN STRATEGY FORMATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT SCHOOLS[1]

Süleyman Ağraş
Corresponding Author
Düzce University, Akcakoca School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Doğancılar Yerleşkesi, 81650 Akcakoca Düzce/Turkey, Tel: +90 0380 611 29 99 E-mail: suleymanagras@gmail.com

Refika Bakoğlu Deliorman

Marmara University, Faculty of Business, Ressam Namık İsmail Sok. No:1 34180 Bahçelievler / İstanbul, Turkey Tel:+90 0 (212) 507 99 25 E-mail: refika@marmara.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to evaluate the views of strategic management schools on paradoxes in strategy formation and to analyze which perspectives related with which paradox based on the secondary data. The results shows that whereas the perspectives of design, planning, positioning, environment and game based schools focused on the paradox of emergentness intensely, the perspectives of learning, power, cognitive and resource based schools are related with the paradox of deliberateness. However, it is observed that the entrepreneurial and configuration schools can be based on the integrated paradox that combined from the paradox of deliberateness and emergentness.

Keywords: Strategy, Paradoxes, Strategy Formation, Strategic Management Schools.

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Introduction

One of the main questions in strategic management literature is that how the process of strategy formation can be made most effective. Many conflicting opinions have been reported on the best way of forming strategies. The most confusion has been between different definitions of strategy as it is pattern of decision to some scholar while it is pattern of actions to the others. To distinguish these two definitions of strategy, Mintzberg and Waters (1985) have proposed to refer to the former as intended strategy and the latter as realized strategy. According to them realized strategies could come about from the intended strategy as deliberate strategy and/or emergent strategy despite or in the absence of intentions. Hence the emergent strategy and deliberate strategy seems to contradictory and appears to be true at the same time emergentness and deliberateness could be viewed as paradoxes of strategy formation (De Witt and Meyer 1998). Although, the views, opinions and definitions on strategy formation came around two paradoxes as deliberateness and emergentness, there is a strong need for interrelation of these paradoxes with strategic management schools. In this study it is tried to answer the question of which strategic management school's focus points are close related with the deliberateness and emergentness or both of them? In this context, by using a holistic approach the views of design, planning, positioning, learning, power, resource-based, environment, game-based and entrepreneurial schools on the subject of strategy formation are analyzed and interrelated. This study will contribute to the strategy formation both in the related literature and practice. The main construct of the research, is to analyze and inter-relate the perspectives of strategic management schools with paradoxes in strategy formation. By taking the context and content of the study into consideration, the secondary data in the literature are analyzed. After generating a comprehensive framework on the subject it is offered some relational matrixes that correlate the perspectives with paradoxes. In examining this, it is referred from the points of initiator authors of the schools. In this process books, papers and articles (both theoretical and empirical findings) are included to indicate the correlations.

Paradoxes in Strategy Formatıon

There are different perspectives on what strategy formation is and which dimensions it contents. According to Mintzberg, (1978: 934) the literature on the title of forming strategies for private sector and making policy for public sector deals with the question of how strategies will form. Slater and *et al* (2006:1221) also stated that (with its focus point mentioned above) the subject of strategy formation was in the central of strategic management during three decade. From the different perspectives on the subject the main questions of strategy formation can be summarized as follows (Mintzberg, 1978: Blair and Boal, 1991):

- How strategies form in organizations?

- Are strategies must be planned previously or emerged during the time?

- What is the best way of forming strategies in organizations?

However, Sloan, (2005; 4) stated that strategy formation is related with the strategic alternatives, aims and directions of enterprises and based on which roads they will or should follow. In the field of strategy, strategic management schools set forth strategy formation with its merits and definitions. The views of the schools are shaped around two main paradoxes as deliberateness and emergentness (De Witt and Meyer 1998). The paradox of deliberateness is the first and most known approach on strategy formation as planning perspective. It is based on strategy formulation and implementation traditionally. According to this approach the process of strategy formation is rational, analytical, designable, certain and measurable and depth analyses can be done in the process and both planners and implementers are exist as it depends on mainly distinction between thinking and doing (Minztberg, 1994). For example, the leader of a company determines and plans the strategy and middle managers implement typically (Aken and Opdenakker, 2005:2; Slater and *et al*. 2006:1223). In contrast, in the paradox of emergentness the strategy formation is a simultaneous action

(see the table 1 for the distinction between the two extreme positions).

Table 1: Planning versus Incrementalism Perspective

Criterias	Planning Perspective	Incrementalism Perspective
Emphasis on	Deliberateness over emergentness	Emergentness over deliberateness
Nature of Strategy	Intentionally designed	Gradually shaped
Nature of Strategy Formation	Figuring out	Finding out
Formation Process	Formally structured and comprehensive	Unstructured and fragmented
Formation Process Steps	First think, then act	Thinking and acting intertwined
Focus on strategy as	Pattern of decisions (plan)	Pattern of actions (behavior)
Decision -making	Hierarchical	Political
Decision-making Focus	Optimal resource allocation &coordination	Experimentation and parallel initiatives
View of Future Developments	Forecast and anticipate	Partially unknown and unpredictable
Posture towards the Future	Make commitments, prepare for the future	Postpone commitments, remain flexible
Implementation Focused on	Programming (organizational efficiency)	Learning (organizational development
Strategic Change	Implemented top-down	Requires broad cultural and cognitive

Source: DeWitt, B. and Meyer, R. (1998). *Strategy: Process, Content, Context*, London: International Thomson Business Press, p. 158.

Mintzberg and McHugh (1985:162) described the roots of emergentness as enterprises can also follow their strategies without targeted and determined previously. According to authors strategy formation is a dynamic learning process. However from some studies (as in Bakoğlu, 2000; Andersen, 2004), it can be emerged an integrative perspective by combining the two paradox. So beside the two main paradoxes the integrated perspective and its emerging conditions will be referred in the study. The findings in this study suggest a classification and categorization the views of strategic management schools to these three paradoxes

Strategy Formatıon Paradoxes from the Perspective of Strategic Management Schools

The two paradoxes in strategy formation and the one that is drafted by combining them are the main discussion topics related with how strategy formation should be shaped. In Mintzberg and *et al.* (1998), there is a classification on strategic management schools and their basic premises. Before giving the findings about the perspectives of strategic management schools on paradoxes in strategy formation, it will be more functional to exhibit the main definitions of them on what strategy formation is (see definitions in the Table 2 below).

Table 2: Strategy Formation Definitions of Strategic Management Schools

SCHOOL	AUTHOR(S)	DEFINITION OF STRATEGY FORMATION
Design	P. Selznick (1957) A.D. Chandler (1962)	Strategy formation is to provide appropriateness between internalpower-weakness and external opportunities-threats.
Planning	H.Igor Ansoff (1965)	Strategy formation is a deliberate and mental process of developing strategies exactly and implementing them formally.
Positioning	Sun Tzu,(M.Ö. 2000) M. E. Porter (2008)	Strategy formation is a process of choosing a generic position based on analytical computation.
Entrepreneurial	J.A.Schumpeter (1934)	Strategy formation is a process that starts with the vision of a leader.
Cognitive	H.A.Simon & J.March	Strategy formation is a mental process in the mind of strategists.
Learning	M.Cyert and J.G.March (1963) Mintzberg (1985;1996)	Strategy formation is learning process generates during the timeand don't separatefrom strategy implementation
Power	J.Pfeffer G.R. Salancik, (1978)	Strategy formation is negotiation and bargaining process between different groups in an organization.
Environment	M.T.Hannan and J.Freeman. (1989)	Strategy formation is a reactional process to environmental changing's.
Configuration	A.D.Chandler, R.E.Milles and C.C.Snow	Strategy formation is a transformation process of the messages taken from other schools.
Resource-Based	J. B. Barney (1991), (1991, 2001)	Strategy formation is a choice in the context of firm resources and strategic alternatives.
Game Based	A. Brandenburger and B. Nalebuff (1995)	Strategy formation is making great leaps forward by seeing the integrity between the parts.

Source: Adapted from Mintzberg and *et al*, 1998 and Sarvan and et al. 2003.

The perspective of *Design School* in strategy formation paradoxes will be evaluated firstly as it is the first school in strategic management literature and its keywords are the basics of strategic management courses and strategy implementations. The main perspective of strategy formation is, used as strategy formulation rather than formation in the school developing and implementing strategy is separate and different process as formulation-implementation. Beside this as seen also from the definition of it to strategy formation, design school sees strategy formation process as formal, controllable and as simple as possible (Mintzberg, 1990;171–179). By taking these points it's understood that design school's perspective fits to the paradox of deliberateness by making a clear distinction between thinking and doing in strategy formation.

The pioneer of *Planning School* is H. Igor Ansoff and the school is developed based on his book of *Corporate Strategy* in 1965. There are some similarities between planning and design schools in basic assumptions to strategy formation. (Sarvan and *et al*., 2003;75). The planning school advocates differently from design school that determining aims of firm in long-term and shaping firm recourses and decisions around the aims. However, Andrew (1994) also stated that the perspective of planning school to strategy formation is formulation-implementation as in design school. Namely, all optimum strategic alternatives define and an analytical process conducts before implementing firm strategy (Altunoğlu, 2001, 61–63). In conclusion the perspective of planning school is fit to the paradox of deliberateness.

Another strategic management school is positioning that its merits based the study of Sun Tzu "The Art of War" B.C. 2000. The focus points of *Positioning School* are the industry structure, competition conditions, and firm position in an industry. According to Porter (2008) five forces shape the structure and competitive conditions of an industry. These are competitors, suppliers, customers, substitutions and buyers. Porter

(2008) stated that the start point of strategy formation understands these forces and their impact on competitive conditions of an industry. According to positioning school, strategy formation is an analytical

process that focused on analyzing the data about the industry and choosing the optimum and comprehensive strategy. Acar and Zehir (2009: 411) stated that many academicians studied the Porter's generic strategies and there are similar views on a well planned strategy will provide firm success among them. From the point of the discussions on the perspectives of positioning school to strategy formation, it is understood that the paradox of deliberateness is the approach of this school.

Entrepreneurial School is another strategic management school. According to its perspective on strategy, strategy formation process is focused on the vision of a leader. Some of the basic assumptions of entrepreneurial school are (Mintzberg and *et al*. 1998):

- Strategy is perspective of the vision that is determined by the leader for the future of an organization,
- Strategy formation process is semi-structured and shaped around the experiences of a leader.
- Leadership and vision are critical factors for strategy formation.

Form the assumptions above; the perspective of entrepreneurial school on strategy formation is overlap with the integrated paradoxes of deliberateness and emergentness. Because strategy formation is seen a semi structured process and can be adapted to changes and also the vision of a leader can be revised.

Cognitive school is another school in strategic management. It assumes that strategies thus emerge as perspectives - in the form of concepts, maps, schemas, and frames - that shape how people deal with inputs from the environment (Pelling, 2004). Cognitive school sees strategy formation as a cognitive process that take place in the mind of the strategist. Its other assumptions about strategy formation are as follows (Mintzberg and *et al*, 1998; Pelling, 2004):

- These inputs flow through all sorts of distorting filters before they are decoded by the cognitive maps.
- As concepts, strategies are difficult to attain in the first place, considerably less than optimal when actually attained, and subsequently difficult to change when no longer variable.

As noted above cognitive school sees strategy formation as in the perceptions and mental processes in the mind of strategists. These points' shows that strategy formation is a dynamic action because of perceptions and their resources can change easily. It can be interpreted that the perspective of this school overlaps with the paradox of emergentness.

Learning School can be considered as the milestones in strategy formation as its views are based on the criticisms of design and planning schools. The origin point of criticisms of the two previous schools arise from some studies on Mintzberg's *Patterns in Strategy Formation* (1979, 1985, 1994, 1996), Mintzberg and Mc Hugh's "*Strategy Formation In An Adhocracy*" (1985) and Quinn's "*Strategies for Change: Logical Incrementalism"* (1980). Some assumptions and criticisms of the learning school are (Altunoğlu, 2001, 61–63):

- Determining the aims of a firm by only top managers in certain striation isn't practical for real business world. There should be a consensus on the aims between different stakeholders.
- Strategies can't be developed because the future can't be predicted exactly and comprehensive analyzes can't be conducted in the light of the data on the future.
- Strategy formulation and implementation is simultaneous.

The views submitted by the pioneers of learning school are focused on the synchronicity of strategy formulation and implementations. Strategies should be formed during a dynamic learning process. From the points of views above it can be said that the perspective of learning school is one of the foundation of paradox of emergentness perspective.

Power School is another strategic management school. The power school is developed based on the approaches of contingency and resource dependence. The basic studies of power school are Hickson and Hinnings's "*A Strategic Contingencies Theory of Intraorganizational Power*" (1971) and Pfeffer and Salancik's "*The External Control of Organizations: a Resource Dependence*" (1978). According to power school there are two power factors as micro and macro in strategy formation process. Micro power is related with politics in organization whereas macro power related with the using the power that organization has. Strategy formation is shaped by using these powers and politics. On the one hand, micro power effect strategy formation in inside of organization as in the process of coalitions, bargaining, persuasion and power relations that arises between different groups. On the other hand macro power sees organizations as they maneuver to control or other organizations or collaborate with them (Mintzberg, and *et al*. 1998; Sarvan and *et al*. 2003; 95). Briefly, power school sees strategy formation as the interactions between the two powers. By taking these dynamic interactions it is concluded that the perspective of power school to strategy formation is related with the paradox of emergentness closely.

Environment School is another strategic management school and based on contingency theory and population ecology theory. The basic assumptions of power school related with strategy formation are like these (Mintzberg and *et al*. 1998; Koçel, 2003; 355).

- Environmental powers should be taken into consideration during strategy formation.
- Forming strategy is a reactional process to environmental powers and changing's.
- Strategies should be formed according to the structure of environment and effect of it on organization.

The structure and affects of environment on organizations force them to form different strategies and behaviors as, mergers consortiums, strategic alliances and interlocking directorates (Koçel, 2003; 355). The perspective of environment school is related with the paradox of deliberateness as it depends on distinction between thinking and doing in strategy formation, and the school prescribes strategy be formulated according to the environmental forces as being accepted environment has a deterministic effect on firm strategies, and it shapes the strategy.

Configuration School is another school in strategic management that assumes the strategy formation is the process of integrating different messages or inputs about the environmental conditions. Configuration schooldescribes the states of an organization as configuration and strategy making as transformation. Transformation is the inevitable result of an organization moving from one state to another. Mintzberg (1979) argues that "it all depends" approach of contingency theory does not go far enough, that structures are rightfully designed on the basis of a third approach, which is called the "getting it all together" or configuration approach by him. The basic premises of the school are as in the following (Marcus, 2009);

- Most of the time an organization is in some kind of stable configuration in terms of its characteristics and structure,
- The strategy making can take many different approaches depending on the configuration of the organization.
- The strategies may take the form of plans, patterns or perspectives depending on its time and situation.

It is seen that according to its basic premises there could be different configurations in strategy formation at different stages of the organization and environment. It can be stated that there is a strong emphasize on changeability in forming strategies when these premises of the school take into account. As a result, it is rather clear that the perspective of configuration school is come around the integrated paradox that combined from the two basic paradoxes.

Another school in strategic management is Resource-based view that mainly tries to answer the question of

what is the source of firm's competitive advantage. This school has been developed based on the studies of Barney (1991; 2001). According to the principles of Resource-based view, sustainable competitive advantage of a firm depends on having and using inimitable, important and scarce resources in an industry. Resource based view assumes there are strong relations between firm resources and strategic alternatives. Firms should regard a resource policy in strategy formation process for effective strategies.

There are different perspectives on relationships between resource based view and strategy formation. For example Sevicin (2006) stated that in the context of resource based view, firm strategies should be formed based on gaining competitive advantage by using resources effectively. According to this thought the competitive advantage of a firm is related with resources rather than external environment. Resource based view sees also firms as the actors that operate in an uncertain environment in which the rules aren't defined exactly Bakoğlu, (2005; 3). From these points it can be interpreted that resource based view sees strategy formation as a work of counterbalancing between firm resources and external environment simultaneously. This case put forth a dynamic perspective on strategy formation. In conclusion it is understood that the perspective of resource based view school is related with the paradox of emergentness rather than deliberateness.

Game-based is one of the latest schools in strategic management literature. The roots of it date back to the book of *Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* which is written by *John von Neumann* who is a genius mathematician and *Oskar Morgenstern* who is an economist. However Game based school brought a different perspective to strategy formation after the studies of Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff. The authors proposed a framework for strategy formation in their article of *The Right Game: Use Game Theory to Shape Strategy*. In this framework it is proposed that firms should take into account the impacts of main player in a business game. The players are the firm itself, its competitors, substitutions and complementors. According to game based school firms should determine their roles and relations with other player during strategy formation process. The main relationships related with strategy formation are as in the following;

- Changing the game,
- Changing the players,
- Changing the added values
- Changing the rules
- Changing perceptions (by using tactics)
- Changing the scope of the game

Game based school advised that successful business strategy is about actively shaping the game that firms play, not just playing the game they find (Brandenburger ve Nalebuff, 1995; 60–70). Although there is an emphasis on shaping the game actively in the game-based school, it could only be interpreted as the school as more dynamic in nature than planning school since the rules of the game calculated in advance, and player plays the right game thought beforehand. The distinction between thinking and doing in strategy formation might be more vague than planning school, but it still exists. For these reason the game based school can be interpreted as in line with the deliberateness perspective rather than emergentness or integrated perspectives.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aims to evaluate the paradoxes in strategy formation from the perspectives of strategic management school. In the context of the study, the perspectives of design, planning, positioning learning, cognitive, environment, power, entrepreneurial, resource-based and game-based school's are examined. In conclusion which perspective matches with which paradox is determined. Table 3 summarizes these matches below.

Table 3: Categorization of Strategic Management Schools According to the Paradoxes of Strategy Formation

	TYPE OF PARADOX		
Strategic Management Schools	**Delibrateness**	**Emergentness**	**Integrated Paradox (Dual Perspective)**
	Design School	Learning School	Entrepreneurial School
	Planning School	Power School	Configuration School
	Positioning School	Cognitive School	
	Environment School	Resource Based School	
	Game Based School		

The main discussions and conclusions of this study can be summarized as in the following;

➢ Each of strategic management school shapes its perspective around one or two paradox depend on its evaluation of the factors effected strategy formation. This exposed that firms need to have a dynamic perspective in strategy formation that will enable them to form their strategies effectively.

➢ From the findings it is concluded that design, planning and positioning schools see strategy formation as the two-tier stage. This is a separate stage as the formulation and implementation of firm strategies.

➢ Design, planning, positioning, environment and game based schools emphasized the importance of external environment whereas learning; power, cognitive and resource based schools advocated the importance of internal factors as leader or strategists in organization.

➢ There is a distinction between positioning and resource-based view schools related with their perspectives on external and internal environment. Whereas the former focusing on opportunities and threats in external environment resource based view emphasized the importance of strengths and weaknesses in internal environment.

➢ The paradox of emergentness is raised based on the criticisms of Mintzberg and at al. to the paradox of deliberateness. After the criticisms and discussions related with two main paradoxes, the integrated paradox has been defined by combining them.

➢ Although there is a similarity in perspectives of environment and positioning schools in strategy formation, because of the contingency approach is the fundamental of environment it is concluded that they are different perspective in categorization of the paradoxes. The former is fit to the paradox of emergentness whereas the later fit to the deliberateness.

➢ Resource-based and game-based are the two latest schools in strategic management and their perspective in strategy formation fit the opposite paradoxes, the former being in line with the paradox of emergentness and the latter with the deliberateness.

➢ Another results is that the same approach can be the fundamental of different schools and their perspectives in strategy formation as in the example of resource-based theory is the fundamental of both environment and power schools.

➢ The learning schools emphasized that strategy formulation and implementation can't be separated. They must be evaluated simultaneously.

The general conclusion in this study is that one of the main questions within the field of strategic management is whether strategy formation is primary a deliberate process or more of an emergent one, and each strategic management school have ambiguous perspective on it apart from the established planning, positioning, environmental and design schools, and relatively new learning school. Most of the newly established schools can only be evaluated with the current knowledge and evaluation of what perspective on strategy formation they employ is relatively difficult for the time being. This difficulty may come from the fact that we are on the age of mixture of opposites like old-new, traditional-contemporary. From the different perspectives on paradoxes it is understood that how organizations should form their strategies and there is not only one best way to form them. Strategies can be formed by preferring the paradoxes of deliberateness, emergentness and integrated perspectives according to different factors, conditions and

situations. As a last remark, it can be said that accepting different approaches as paradoxes means accepting the conflicts between two opposites, and strategist's main role is accommodating both factors, even though opposites, at the same time in our age. Today strategists should employee emergentness and deliberateness perspectives at the same time for gaining the benefits of both, and it should not be surprising if all the schools use the same perspective and developed in parallel with this perspective.

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