

A Comprehensive Framework of Strategy Development in Strategic Programming

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ABSTRACT

Today, strategy development is an inevitable aspect that guarantees success within every organization. In this model of programming, environmental opportunities and threats are paid great attention in order to help organizations achieve the desired plans with particular attention to capabilities and weakness. For this purpose, the current study focuses on the optimal strategies employed in a hospital in the north east of Iran. The current paper is practical in terms of objectives and eclectic in terms of methodology. Thus, the data in this paper are collected through interviews as well as questionnaires. The participants of the current study are the employees and staff of the Shariati hospital. In terms of the Delfimethod used in this study, the sample includes the organizational

Available at : www.jurnalfikrah.org

ISSN 1511-1113

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elites. In this respect, using the tools of strategic management within the comprehensive framework of strategy selection, we began an investigation of both internal and external variables and eventually designed the optimal strategies. The results indicated that the studied organization obtained a score of 1.92 from internal variables and 2.16 from external variables. The obtained internal scores show a relative weakness while the obtained external scores a relative threat facing and a defensive approach taken. Thus, based on the results, five defensive strategies were employed, priorities were set and optimal approaches were suggested .

Keyword: optimal orientation, Pest analysis and provision, SWOT matrix, internal-external matrix, quantitative strategy programming matrix

Introduction

Programing is the most crucial component among the duties of management. This is identified by the organization which is followed by a series of effective strategies in order to obtain this. Various variables in recent years has made the competent managers realize that the traditional programing is no longer able to satisfy their needs. Therefore, the application of strategic programming has turned into a necessity in various organizations, governments and societies. (Brainson; 2004). The importance of strategic programming has been emphasized by various within Iran. examples of research include Sanati and Noorayi (2002) in biotechnology, Hasangholipor and Aghazadeh (2005) for small and middle-size organization, Madhooshi and Tari (2007) in non-oil export strategy, Behzadfar and Zamanian (2008) in tourism, Amini and KhabbazBavi (2009) in car industry, Sehat and Parizadi (2009) in insurance, Shojayee and PashayeeSoorkali (20010) in information technology and communication, and Ramezani and BagheriehMashhadi (2013) in gas industry. In this respect, strategic programming in healthcare has had more significant importance due to critical role of

healthcare systems as well as such necessities as heightened efficiency and effectiveness, improved level of quality and quantity of services, method and process industrialization, optimal use of resources, expanding strategic thinking and the management of hospitals and healthcare units managed based on effective management. Considering the above mentioned variables, the current paper attempts to investigate a hospital in the north east of Iran using a strategic approach. The purpose of the current paper is to investigate the strong and weak points of under internal variables, identification of opportunities and threats, determining SWOT matrix, determining strategic situation and eventually prioritizing strategies and presenting optimal approaches. Thus, optimal strategy through comprehensive framework of designing strategies within the mission of the unit was presented.

Theoretical backgrounds

Strategic programming:

Strategic management with a future oriented perspective considers strategies vital and guiding for objectives of each organization. (Acur&Englyst, 2006). Therefore the necessity of designing a strategy is not only an inevitable necessity for most of the institutions, but also various variables witness the absence of orientations towards strategic programming leads to making haphazard decisions that often lead to the destruction of the industry. (Parhizgar et al., 2010) Thus, it is crucial for organizations to constantly practice strategic programming before they deal with the unpredictable variables of the world in order to avoid instant decisions (Emerald, 2006). In fact, strategic programming is collection of theories and frameworks along with tools and supplemental techniques designed to help managers to improve programming (Stonehouse and Pemberto 2002). Therefore, strategic programming provides the necessary tool for organizations to follow the introduction and application of strategies within various sections of organizations and thus be able to observe their own strategic functions. Strategic

development processes are continuums that include strategic programming on one side and strategic thinking on the other side. In fact, these two approaches represent two different schools of thought. Strategic development belongs to the school of designing program in which strategy development is a formal and organized process while the strategic thinking approach is based upon school of learning where strategy development is a gradual process that that accompanies execution. (Ghafarian&Emadzadeh, 2006). What is meant by strategy development is determining organizational mission, determining factor that threat the external environment of an organization, the weaknesses and strength of the organization, long term objectives, considering various strategies, and selection of particular strategies for continuing the activity of the organization. Issue that are important in strategy development include the kind of activity of that the organization intends to follow or leave, resource allocation and making decision about expansion of activities. (Aliahmadi et al, 2003)

In the current paper, after reviewing the related literature, in order to investigate and present the appropriate strategies, the following programs have been used: BEST analysis, Evaluation Matrix of internal elements, evaluation matrix of external elements, internal-external matrix, SWAT matrix and quantity programming matrix. This section examines each of these programs:

PEST analysis:

A crucial principle in strategic programing is that organization, in order to benefit from external opportunities and avoid the impact of external threats or reducing such impact, must develop strategies. (Fred, 20110)

Thus, strategic development helps organization to predict environmental threats and respond accordingly. (Athanasios, 2002). Hunger and Veilen believe that environmental exploration include observation, evaluation and presentation of environmental information to important people within the organization. The purpose of investigating external variable is to provide an inventory of all the opportunities that can be benefited and

all the threats that must be avoided (Fred, 2011). In this respect, BEST is an important and user friendly tool with great capabilities that contribute to the better realization of conditions in which we are situated. Lexically, PEST represents four words that indicate the general conditions in the organization. These four words are political, economic, social, and technology conditions. PEST analysis is used across the world by various managers in order to develop their understanding for the future. There are three distinctive steps in this tool that include brainstorming in relation with issues related to the organization, identification of issue that play a role in the execution, as well as making conclusion. The important issue while moving from the second stage to the third stage is the deep and realistic thought for the meaning of variables for the description. Otherwise, the analysis will not be precise. (Moosavi, 2010)

External variable evaluation matrix and internal variable evaluation matrix:

Once the list of external variables has been provided, it is time to present a list of internal variables that must include both the strength and weaknesses. In fact, those who develop strategies must be able to identify the strength and weaknesses of internal variables in order to develop strategies in an effective manner and select the best option among the various available options. (Fred, 2011). Generally, analysis of weaknesses, strength, opportunities and threats identifies variables that might impact the organization in the future. Thus, the pattern of weaknesses, strength, opportunities and threats for the analysis of the unique capabilities of an organization is an important issue that guarantees success within the organization. (Lerner, 1999). The purpose for analysis of such variable is presentation of strategies that guarantees the balance between the external environment with the internal environment. In method of comprehensive development of strategy development, once the internal and the external variables are identified, they are ranked. For this ranking, matrix of internal variables and matrix of external variables is used. External evaluation matrix allows

strategists to investigate within the targeted time such elements as environment, economic, social, political, cultural, law, technological as well as the market conditions. This matrix can be used for both government and non-government organizations. (Forbes, 1996). In order to obtain matrix and the external variables, the following steps must be taken. In the first step, after evaluating the external variables, the most important variables will be listed. In the second step, these variables will be given a quantity, showing how important they are. These numbers range from zero (less important) to 100 (very important). In this method, every variable will receive a score in likert type from one to five. Eventually, through normalization, the total number of factors becomes one. In the third step, each of the variables that lead to success is given a score from one to four. In this ranking, exceptional opportunity is given ranking four, normal opportunity is given ranking three, normal threat is given ranking two and serious threat is given ranking one. In the fourth step, each variable's factor is multiplied by its related ranking in order to obtain the final score. Eventually, in the fifth step, we obtain the total score of each variable that allow us to obtain the total score for external variables. External variable matrix can be seen below [Table 1]:

Table 1: External variable matrix

	Threats and opportunities	weight	rank	score
O1	opportunities			
T1	threats			
	total			

Matrix of internal variables can be computed in the same way as the external variable matrix. In the ranking of internal variables, extreme power is ranked four, normal power is ranked three, normal weakness is ranked two and critical weakness is ranked one. (Fred, 2011).

Internal-external matrix:

After calculating the score of both the internal and the external variables, checked internal-external matrix was obtained [Table 2] and the situation of the organization was obtained based upon obtained coordinate. To form this matrix, the score obtained from external and internal variables must be put in rows and columns to establish the situation of the organization in each of the checks. (Erabi, 2007). The total number of external variable score between 1 to 2.5 shows threat and between 2.5 to 5 indicates opportunity. Similarly, the total number of internal variable score between 1 to 2.5 shows threat and between 2.5 to 5 indicates opportunity.

Table 2: squared internal-external matrix

Square 1 conservative	Square 2 invasive
Square 3 competitive	Square 4 defensive

According to [Table 2], when the organization is posited in an attack square, it is within the best situation because it has both opportunities and power that recommend the use of opportunities. Therefore, the growth strategy will be used. When the organization is in a competitive square, there are opportunities for the organization that deal with an inappropriate environment. Therefore, strategists use the power to create long term opportunities in the market and benefit from various strategies. Conservative square means that the organization is dealing with various environmental opportunities and at the same time suffers from some weaknesses in the work situation. Through a comparative analysis of opportunities and weaknesses, strategists can create new opportunities and find new pathways for the organization. Therefore, the senior management of the organization benefits from the strategies that include a change in the orientation of the organization. In square four, the organization deals with various threats and the internal weaknesses of the organization also act as a main barrier against the organization, thus, strategists have to use the defensive condition for increasing the possibility of survival of the organization.

SWOT Matrix:

One of the most common strategies for designing strategy is SWOT matrix. Introduced in 1960 as an important tool in comprehensive framework of strategy development (Erabi, 2007), the tool can be an excellent vehicle for designing strategy within the organization. (Alho& Kanga 1997). The main purpose of this tool is to establish balance between environment and organization. (Kenneth, 1980).SWOT matrix is used in a large number of developed and developing constructs. For example, in China and England, the tool is commonly used in business while in Bahrain and Scotland, it is used for analysis of behavior of small companies. The term SWOT stands for four terms of strength, weakness, opportunity and threat. In fact, this Matrix is the main tool through which managers can compare information and present four types of strategies. Comparison between external and internal variables is the main component of the matrix which requires precise judgments. (Abtahi&Moosavi, 2009). Basically, SWOT matrix is composed of a two-dimensional coordinate in which each area represents a group of strategies. These strategies have been indicated in [Table 3]. Invasive strategy (SO) is a strategy that benefits from environmental opportunities using the strong points of the organization. Conservative strategy (WO) is the strategy of using potential strength within environmental opportunities in order to compensate for the weaknesses within the organization. Also, competitive strategy is (ST) is a strategy that benefits from strength of organization in order to prevent the confrontation of competitive strategies with threats. Finally, defensive strategies (WT) are strategies for minimizing damages that result from threats and weak points. ((Karpi&Kokkonen, 2001).

Table 3:SWOT matrix: (opportunities, threats, strength, and weaknesses)

External variables	weaknesses	strengths
Internal variables		
Opportunities (o)	SO strategies	WO strategies
Threats (T)	ST strategies	WT strategies

Matrix of quantity programming strategy:

After determining SWOTmatrix and selecting the type of optimal strategies using external-internal strategies, these matrices are ranked using such matrices as quantity strategic programmed matrix. (Fred, 2011). This matrix indicates that one of the selected alternatives is more suitable and ranks these strategies (Honger&Villen, 2002). In other words, quantity strategic programmed matrix is an analytical framework used to homogenize strategies obtained from SWOTmatrix. (Madhushi&Tari, 2007).

Research methodology

The current research is practical in terms of purpose and descriptive, field-analytical in terms of performance since the research proposes the best possible strategies as well as describing the status quo. In this paper, the participants of the study are the staff and employee of the hospital. Considering the fact that the research paper benefits from Delfi methodology that presupposes the use of elites and specialists in the hospital and since the number of participants are reported to be 5 to 10 (Naghibolsadat&Javadi, 2011) or 10 to 20 (Ahmadi, 2010), the participants of the study included 15 of the managers and main nurses of various section of the hospital. In other words, in aDelfi approach, the validity of the research does not rely on the number of participants but on the degree of expertise of the participants in the research (Naghibolsadat&Javadi, 2011). In this research, the information was collected through questionnaires, one by one interview as well as group discussions. As for determining the factor of the significance of internal and external variables through hierarchical methodology (AHP)as well as for other stages, mean scores were obtained through SPSS.

Findings

A: entrance stage:

In this stage, the main information required both inside and outside the organization was identified for strategy development. This stage includes internal factor evaluation matrix and external factor evaluation matrix. Thus, after investigating mission agenda, and after distributing the open-ended questionnaire among the participants, the internal and external variables were identified. Through data analysis as well as interviews, the participants' opinions about both the internal and external variables were obtained through questionnaires. The results indicate that this hospital include 21 external variables that is composed of 8 threats and 13 opportunities and a total number of 24 internal variables that is composed of 14 strength and 10 weaknesses [Table 4 And 5].

Table 4: external factor evaluation

	Number	Factor	Importance coefficient	Rank	Final score
Opportunity	O1	Local hospital			
	O2	Possibility of relations with city municipality, city council and majlis			
	O3	Family doctor			
	O4	Suitable geographical conditions for hospital			
	O5	The possibility of delivering some health centers and hospitals to private section			
	O6	Availability of appropriate space for expansion of hospital			
	O7	Availability of charity			
	O8	Being one of the three government hear hospitals			
Threats	T1	Unclear spending of the government for the hospital			
	T2	The far distance of hospital site for many specialists			
	T3	Availability of professional competitors			
	T4	Low popularity of the hospital in university			
	T5	Low level of budget devoted			
	T6	Availability of a number of problems due to lack of information			
	T7	Far distance from city center			
	T8	Far distance from main road			
	T9	Hospital's low popularity in society			
	T10	Delay in payment from insurance companies			
	T11	Unavailability of transportation system to city center			
	T12	Unpopularity of the geographical situation of the hospital			
	T13	Inconvenient geographical condition for these accompanying patents			
	Total				

Table 5: internal factor evaluation (EFE)

	Number	Factor	Importance coefficient	Rank	Final score
Strengths	S1	Profitability and balance of newly-established parts with other parts			
	S2	Good behavior of personnel with patients			
	S3	Availability of in-service training programs for newly-employed employees			
	S4	Availability of young personnel			
	S5	Availability of expert, experienced and committed employees			
	S6	Generality of the hospital			
	S7	Updateability of equipment in newly-established sections and availability of appropriate equipment			
	S8	Availability of HIS system			
	S9	Psychological health of the personnel			
	S10	Capability of the hospital to improve			
	S11	Patient training in various sections			
	S12	High credit of doctors and heart specialists in the hospital			
	S13	Availability of programmed committees			
	S14	Availability and good behavior of hospital chair and other authorities			
Weaknesses	W1	Ineffective job programming and human resources			
	W2	Weak work relations			
	W3	Compensation of the workers' ineffective activities			
	W4	Development of ineffective human resources			
	W5	Hospital building problems			
	W6	Low revenue of the hospital			
	W7	Inappropriate organization of equipment			
	W8	Weak performance of some sections			
	W9	Existence of ineffective clinical sections			
	W10	Availability of weaknesses in good behavior with patients			
		Total			

In external factor evaluation matrix, the final score is between 1 to 2.5, which indicate threats while the score between 2 to 4 indicates opportunity. Equally, the total number of 1 to 2.5 in internal factors indicates internal weakness while a score of 2.5 to 4 indicates strength. Thus, 1.92 in table four indicates relative weakness in internal environment of studied unit.

B: comparison and contrast:

In this section, the main internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) are compared using such tools

as SWOT and internal-external matrix so that those strategies in line with the mission of the hospital can be identified in [Table 6].

Table 6: SWOT matrix

SWOT matrix	Strengths	Weaknesses
	1. Profitability and balance of newly-established parts with other parts 2. Good behavior of personnel with patients 3. Availability of in-service training programs for newly-employed employees 4. Availability of young personnel 5. Availability of expert, experienced and committed employees 6. Generality of the hospital 7. Updateability of equipment in newly-established sections and availability of appropriate equipment 8. Availability of HIS system 9. psychological health of the personnel 10. Capability of the hospital to improve 11. Patient training in various sections 12. High credit of doctors and heart specialists in the hospital 13. Availability of programmed committees 14. Availability and good behavior of hospital chair and other authorities	1. Ineffective job programming and human resources 2. Weak work relations 3. Compensation of the workers' ineffective activities 4. Development of ineffective human resources 5. Hospital building problems 6. Low revenue of the hospital 7. Inappropriate organization of equipment 8. Weak performance of some sections 9. Existence of ineffective clinical sections 10. Availability of weaknesses in good behavior with patients
Opportunities o	So strategies	WO strategies
1. Local hospital 2. Possibility of relations with city municipality, city council and Majlis 3. Family doctor 4. Suitable geographical conditions for hospital 5. The possibility of delivering some health centers and hospitals to private section 6. Availability of appropriate space for expansion of hospital 7. Availability of charity 8. Being one of the three government hear hospitals	Preparation for qualitative and quantitative expansion of doagnostic and clinical services and provision of educationan services S1 s2 s3 s4 s5 s6 s7 s8 s9 s10 s11 s12 s13 o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 o6 o7 o8 Making the necessary provision for attracting more finance S1,S2,S3,S6,S9,S10,S11,S12,O1,O2,O3,O4,O6,O7,O8 improvement and organization of physical spaces S1,S6,S10,S13,O1,O2,O4,O5,O6,O8 Attempts to obviate job problems of the employees and expanding services for personnel S1,S3,S4,S5,S6,S9,S10,S12,S13,S14,O1,O2,O3,O5,O8	Increasing the number of beds in the hospital considering the available employment opportunities W3,W6,W9,O1,O4,O5,O6,O7,O8 Improvement of special wards of the hospital using charity funds W1,W3,W5,W6,W7,W8,W9,O1,O2,O3,O4,O5,O6,O7,O8 Organization supervision system for human resources W1,W2,W3,W4,W5,W6,W7,W8,O1,O2,O3,O7,O8
Threats T	ST strategies	WT strategies
1. Unclear spending of the government for the hospital 2. The far distance of hospital site for many specialists 3. Availability of professional competitors 4. Low popularity of the hospital in university 5. Low level of budget devoted 6. Availability of a number of problems due to lack of information 7. Far distance from city center 8. Far distance from main road 9. Hospital's low popularity in society 10. Delay in payment from insurance companies 11. Unavailability of transportation system to city center 12. Unpopularity of the geographical situation of the hospital 13. Inconvenient geographical condition for these accompanying patents	Improving customer interaction system S1,S2,S3,S4,S5,S7,S9,S10,S11,S12,S13,S14, T2,T3, T4,T5,T6,T7,T8,T9,T11,T13 Opening new sections to the hospital S1,S2,S3,S4,S5,S6,S8,S10,S11,S12,S13,T4,T5,T9 Preparing needs for presenting new educational services S1,S3,S5,S6,S7,S10,S12,T2,T3,T4,T5,T9 Providing necessary budget for improving the equipment S1,S6,S10,S13,T2,T3,T4,T5,T7,T8,T9	Decreasing debts and increasing financial resources W3,W4,W5,W6,W9,T1,T2,T3,T4,T5,T10 Complete establishment of clinical system and necessary standards for patient safety W1,W2,W3,W4,W5,W7,W8,W9,W10,T3,T4,T5,T6, T7,T8,T9 Establishment of scientific supervision in human and non-human resources W1,W2,W3,W4,W5,W6,W7,W8,T2,T3,T4,T5,T10 Attracting participation of private sector in various sectors W6,W8,W9,T3,T4,T5,T9 Improving hospital processes W6,W7,W8,T4,T5,T9

Considering the fact that the score of internal and external scores is less than average (2.5), the strategic condition of studied unit is positioned in

defensive square. Thus, among the designed strategies in the SWOT matrix, defensive strategies are selected as optimal for this hospital. These strategies include reducing debts and increasing financial resources, complete establishment of clinical system, necessary obligatory standards for patients' security, establishment of scientific system in managing human and non-human resources, attracting the participation of the private section as well as improving various sections of the hospital.

D: Decision making:

Using the quantity strategic programming matrix (QSPM), in this stage, various alternatives for identified strategies in comparison stage are identified and evaluated and their relative attractiveness are identified.

The results of this table indicates that the strategy of decreasing debts and increasing financial resources gets a score of 3.159 in relation with internal factors of attractiveness and a score of 3.054 in relation with external factors, making it the highest score with total of 6.213. Complete establishment of clinical system and standards and obligations of patients' security obtained a score of 2.624 and 1.362 for internal and external factors respectively, making it the fifth rank with the total score of 3.986. Also, establishment of clinical system in management of human and non-human resources obtained a score of 3.346 and 1.312 for the internal and external factors respectively and a total score of 4.658, making it the third priority in this hospital. Attracting active participation of the private section has received a score of 2.334 in the internal factor section and 2.38 in external factors and a total score of 4.714, making it the second highest rank in this hospital. Finally, the strategy of improving hospital processes has obtained a score of 2.107 in the internal factor section and 2.381 in the external factor section and a total score of 4.448, making it the fourth priority in this hospital. Today, one of the biggest concerns of organizations is the design and application of strategies that guarantees the success of these organizations within complicated world. In this respect, strategic programming provides tools for organizations

that enable them to design and execute strategies within various sections of the organizations. In other words, in our modern and complicated world, those companies, organizations, region or country which fails to realize its own capabilities, potentials, weaknesses and strengths will face serious problems. Thus, designing strategies in various sections of organizations is a response to changes in various aspects of the society that guarantees achievement of the objectives of the organization. (Shojaei&Pashaei, 2010). Considering the above mentioned priorities, after designing an inventory of internal and external variables, and after forming internal-external matrix, SWOT matrix and after designing the strategic situation of the hospital, five defensive strategies were identified to be incorporated and prioritized within quantity strategic programming matrix. Considering the results obtained from this study, in the first place, the studied unit must select cost reduction and revenue increase strategy. This strategy leads to a reduction of the threats that come about as a result of being unclear and delay in payments, leading to the possibilities for employing experienced specialists and higher competition within the hospital. Therefore, it is suggested that this hospital start planning in order to reduce missions, increase the amount of charity that could be received from public, engage in optimal management of financial resources, balance the difference between cost and revenue, plan carefully to benefit from financial resources of the hospital and introduce extensively the kind of services of the hospital to the public. As it was mentioned, attracting the participation of private sector was regarded as the second strategic priority identified in this study. Considering the effect from financial resources and healthcare services, the importance of attracting public charity is considered as the first priority of the hospital. Therefore, it is necessary for the hospital to create partnership in order to develop the strategies developed for the hospital. The hospital must consider the privatization as an important issue, hold regular sessions to introduce the services of the hospital and evaluate the various sections financially in order to work with the private

sector. The third strategic priority of the hospital is the establishment of scientific in the management of human and non-human resources the purpose of which is covering a wide range of issue including job programming, work relations, services compensation and expansion of financial resources. Also, this strategy leads to better distribution of financial and physical resources within the hospital. Thus, it is suggested that appropriate proceedings be employed for suitable management of human resources and attempts be made to bring about greater satisfaction for physicians as well as the personnel. It is suggested that the improvement in the level of efficiency be considered as the agenda in various parts of the hospital and the expansion of management of organized resources become a priority. Finally, improvement in hospital processes and the establishment of clinical organization and the necessary standards for patient safety were considered as the fourth and fifth priority in this hospital. These issues are identified to be affecting the financial resources, healthcare services, human resource management and physical spaces. Thus, it is suggested that expansion and establishment of instructions and orders of clinical organization and appropriate management of unit processes and various other sections of the hospital become a priority. Also, it is suggested that information technology become an alternative for traditional approaches, quality receive higher place within hospital proceedings and appropriate actions be taken in order to keep the patients and customers satisfied in relation to the services of the hospital. Like other research projects, the current research has a number of limitations. The result of their research are related to one specific hospital and the generalization of the results to other units requires homogeneity of the internal and external variables as well as the strategic situation identified within that unit. Another limitation of the hospital was the impossibility of collecting data from anonymous respondents, since all the members of strategy team were familiar with the members of the group as a result of participation in hospital meetings. Yet, anonymity was tried to be the case in

questionnaires and the responses of each participant in the interview was kept secret. On the other hand, the absence of anonymity of group members and the use of interview along with questionnaires compensated the lack of commitment in responses and made the respondents be more committed to their answers. Also, since the identity of the studied group members, it was tried to obtain better understanding using financial and non-financial rewards for the participants.

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