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An exploratory research on strategic planning in public institutions: Turkish prime ministry disaster and emergency management presidency case

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Abstract

The problem of managing public institutions in an efficient and effective manner has been discussed for a long time in public administration discipline. In this discussion platform it is mentioned that the concept of strategic planning might bring a new perspective and might be a necessary tool for changing the inefficient structure of public institutions. Turkey has recognized the significance of forming strategic plans and it is mandatory for each public institution to have a strategic plan now. However, it is also a well-known fact that these strategic plans might become useless and even hinder the progress of the institution if they are not properly prepared. The purpose of the study is to analyse strategic plans in praxis of public sector. In this study we seek an answer to the following questions; to what extent newly published strategic plans are embraced by the government and implemented by the institution, and whether there is a difference between the envisioned and actual results. The current strategic plan of Turkish Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) is chosen as our research sample. As it is directly affiliated with the Turkish Prime Ministry, this plan is considered to be a decent sample in terms of reflecting the population. All strategic plans related to disaster management, written in English and Turkish, are examined in this study. Obtained data is analyzed by the method of content analysis. The findings shall not only reveal us information regarding to what extent the new planning approach has been applied by AFAD but also provide us the opportunity to make a comparison between the strategic plans of disaster management systems in different countries.
Keywords: Strategic Plan, Plan, Disaster Management, Change of Public Administration.

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1. Introduction

As an organization development tool, strategic planning started to be outlined in mid 1950ies and for more than 30 years was mainly used in private business sector while the concept and performing culture of public administration was developing entirely on the basis of national constitutions and laws. In previous studies it is expressed that strategic planning would help a public institution manage its sources effectively and establish control on its personnel while they perform their duties. It is also expressed that strategy, objective, activity and projects that are carried out within the scope of strategic planning would increase the institutional productivity. However; as strategic planning includes an entirely new understanding, it demands a significant and radical mental shift in public diplomacy. As a result, this situation creates some difficulties for preparing and implementing strategic plans if the institution is lack of this understanding and a broad perspective (Karasu, 2012: 160).

The subject of strategic planning has taken great interest of academicians but majority of the studies are concentrated on theory and whether strategic plans are executed successfully has not been questioned. On the other hand, understanding the results of these plans, which are prepared in accordance with the functional requirements of current policies, has equal importance with the theoretical aspect (Koteen, 1997). Today, in one or another way all organizations in both, private and public sectors, are using strategic planning as a tool for performance and development. To what extent the applied strategic plan corresponds to the idealized one and whether implemented strategic plans by the public become successful are remarkable questions to be answered. This study aims to seek answers to these questions by focusing on both theory and practice with a holistic point of view.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Relation between Strategic Management and Strategic Planning Process

There are many definitions of strategic management in literature but it is most commonly defined as a management technique that helps all types of organizations to set future goals and objectives. It is also asserted that this management technique guides organizations within the process of reaching these goals (McKay, 2001: 1). The subject of strategic planning, on the other hand, is defined as "an instrument that allows making long-term plans in consideration of the risks and opportunities faced by the organization, and improving efficiency by acting in line with these plans" (Özdem, 2011; Yüksel, 2002). According to Erdoğan (2002), strategic planning is a process which starts with identifying the current situation of the organization by regarding the external factors, and proceeds with drawing the suitable strategies to maintain the existence of organization, implementing these strategies, and finally evaluating performance. The main difference between strategic management and strategic planning is; while the first one focuses on producing strategic results, the second one focuses on applying the best and optimum strategic decisions. These strategic results are new markets, new products and new technologies and strategic management is more comprehensive compared to strategic planning in this way (Özgür, 2004: 212-213).

2.2. Strategic Planning Discussions in Public Administration

Strategic planning and strategic management in public administration is closely related to the overall concept and culture of public administration. According to a joint initiative of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU) the strategic planning system at central public administration level includes two main components; namely management component and budget component. The strategic management component mainly include mandate (statement of mission), vision, values, internal and external environment analysis, medium term priorities, directions of activities, monitoring, and evaluation, reporting, on the other hand the budget component includes current situation analysis, objectives, results and performance indicators of the budget programs, funding programs. A strategic plan of state institution supports the shift from a resources oriented management to a results based management (Dinu, 2007). Scholars and practitioners have been interested in strategic planning and management in the public sector nearly more than two decades (Bryson, 1995; Eadie, 1983; Ring, Perry, 1985). Over that period, many books and articles have been published on this subject, and strategic planning has become widespread in governmental jurisdictions at all levels; the federal, state, and local. Whereas it was an unfamiliar subject 20 years ago, it has become orthodox practice at present. There are some consistent findings that the way an organization implements strategy affects the possible outcomes and an organization's performance. (Poister and Streib, 2005; Hendrick, 2003; Poister et. al., 2010; DPT, 2006).

Although the significance of strategic planning and management have been recognized by Turkey, and therefore it became a legal obligation by the Act of 5018, to what extent these strategic plans are implemented is still a controversial issue in Turkey in terms of public administration (Karasu, 2012: 163; Güler, 2005: 173).

2.3. Turkish Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency Sample

In Turkey, disaster and emergency management was governed by three institutions until 2009. These are General Directorate of Disaster Affairs under Ministry of Public Works and Settlement, General Directorate of Civil Defense under Ministry of Interior, and General Directorate of Turkey Emergency Management under Prime Ministry. With the law N.5902 issued in 2009, these three institutions were united under the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency. The central and provincial level structure of this new unit is defined by the Law N.5902 (Aydınoğlu and Demir, 2010). There are six departments at central levels according to this law. These are Departments of Planning and Mitigation, Civil Defense, Earthquake, Response, Recovery and Administrative Affairs. This presidency provides coordination and implements policies among the governmental, non-governmental organizations and private institutions. Presidency' services are conducted by Director-General of the Presidency according to legislation provision, development and strategic plans, policies, performance criteria, service quality and standards and integrated disaster management policies of the Presidency (AFAD, 2010).

According to the latest National Earthquake Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2023, responsibilities related to emergencies are distributed among the 13 organizations including AFAD, Ministries of Culture and Tourism, Environment and Urban Planning, Health, Energy and Natural Resources, Education, Ministries of Interior, Development and Transportation, Undersecretariat of Treasury, The Council of Higher Education, General Command of Mapping and Boğaziçi University Kandilli Observatory and

Earthquake Research Institute. Besides, three major axis, seven objectives, 29 strategies and 87 actions have been determined (AFAD, 2012).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Goal

Strategic plan was placed into the law in 2003 for the first time but placing and implementing strategic plans are two different processes and it does not necessarily mean that placing a strategic plan would be enough for implementing. Although there are many strategic plans including disaster prevention plan in Turkey, a number of problems have been reported while implementing these plans effectively and to what extent these plans accomplish their objectives is a controversial issue (Karasu, 2012: 165).

All strategic plans published by public institutions forms our research population. The current strategic plan of Turkish Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) is chosen as our research sample. As it is directly affiliated with the Turkish Prime Ministry, this plan is considered to be a decent sample in terms of reflecting the population.

First of all, all strategic plans related to disaster management, written in English and Turkish, are examined in this study. Obtained data is analyzed by the method of content analysis. Also performance reports published by the public institutions in Turkey are examined. And then all written documents published by AFAD are examined in detail. A questionnaire consisting of 41 questions, which are previously developed and used by Karasu (2012) is also used in this study to analyze AFAD's plan in detail:

- "Where are we?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?
- How can we measure our performance?" (Karasu, 2012: 179).

The findings are discussed in the conclusion part and new suggestions to improve the implementing process of this plan is tried to put forth.

3.2. Findings

First of all it is found that the National Earthquake Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2023, which is published by AFAD, have certain weak parts compared to the other examples worldwide. When we look at especially Group of Seven countries, they all have comprehensive and applicable strategic disaster plans. In addition, the subject of building resilience of nations and communities to disasters was discussed in 2005, in Japan and 168 countries adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 as a blueprint for global disaster reduction. In this framework, which is accepted as an exemplary document by all these countries, strategic goals are determined. This subject is also enlisted among the seven critical issues in terms of ensuring sustainable development at the strategic level, at Rio + 20 Conference organized by the United Nations. The significance of reducing disaster risks, building disaster resilient cities and

developing efficient disaster management systems was discussed by the delegates from both public and private institutions as well as nongovernmental organizations at Rio + 20 Earth Summit on Sustainable Development. At this point, the significance of forming applicable strategic plans is discussed as well (Report of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 2012).

When the National Earthquake Strategy and Action Plan 2012- 2023 is examined by asking the given questions above, both positive and negative answers are found. First of all, the name of the plan is called our attention. It is the only plan currently carried out by AFAD, which is based on previous strategies and objectives of relevant institutions, states its purpose by briefly mentioning about the milestone experiences in this field. The reason behind forming a specific disaster plan is clearly stated. However, this plan only focuses on earthquakes in general but as it has already been stated before, Turkey is highly prone to different disasters at different regions. Thus, the question "Where are we?" is partially answered within the plan.

Secondly; short, medium and long terms objectives as well as strategies and actions are presented basing on mainly earthquakes within the plan. Thus, "Where do we want to be?" question is answered in general.

The questions related to "How we get there?" are partly answered by mentioning about the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the relevant organizations to reach objectives.

The questions related to "How can we measure our performance" remain unanswered within the plan.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

In this study, current disaster management plan is examined in a comparative manner and first of all it is seen that there is a conceptual confusion about disaster management terms both in Turkey and in other countries. If we can manage an incident or emergency with our own resources, it becomes controversial to label this incident or emergency as a crisis and thus instead of the term "crisis management", we offer to use the term "management in crisis". Therefore; disasters should be dealt with this approach and disaster management plans should be prepared according to this approach.

As it could be understood from its name, National Earthquake Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2023 is prepared basing on a specific disaster, namely earthquake. It is a well known fact that Turkey is highly prone to many disasters but these disasters are not given in this plan. There is also a plan called "National Disaster Response Plan" but as it generally focuses on post disaster period and managing a crisis, it has been excluded from the analysis. Hence, it could be said that "Where are we?" question is partially answered. Therefore, the name of the plan should be revised and it should include other natural and technological disasters to determine where we really are.

Secondly, this plan is prepared basing on previous strategies and objectives of relevant institutions and tasks are shared among 13 organizations. At this point, as the assigned institution, AFAD is supposed to form a new strategic plan including both preparedness and response to all kinds of disasters and other relevant institutions should revise their plans according to it. These institutions should be certainly

consulted but forming a plan according to the previous strategies of other institutions and forming a comprehensive strategic plan by consulting these institutions are completely different approaches.

When the questions related to "Where do we want to be?" and "How do we get there?" are directed, it is seen that a kind of consortium has been developed and tasks and responsibilities are specified according to objectives. Developing short, medium, long terms objectives would give an insight to all institutions and the society but whether these objectives are developed in line with the emergency needs of Turkey is controversial so this section should be enhanced in line with Activity Report published in 2011.

In National Earthquake Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2023, objectives, strategies and actions are gathered under three main titles and these titles are all concentrated on earthquakes but the issue of cooperation and coordination is not mentioned among these titles. This issue has been emphasized throughout the plan and this emphasis indicates that we have learnt from our previous experiences to a certain extent. On the other hand, if we aim to have concrete outcomes, this title should be added to the list of strategic goals as well.

Besides, items related to measuring performance are missing in this action plan. There is an Activity Report which published by AFAD in 2011 and it mentions what have been done so far and the new objectives are given. These new objectives are prepared in a more sophisticated way but the questions related to which strategic plan and objectives are grounded on and how the performance is measured remain unanswered. Thus, the new strategic plan should include performance-based arrangements.

When the disaster management literature is examined, it is seen that all developed countries have strategic plans based on managing all kinds of disasters in an efficient and effective manner. In order implement a comprehensive disaster management model, a new strategic plan should be developed in line with the international standards. This plan should also be prepared according to the specific needs of disaster regions in Turkey. Once this plan is implemented, activities related to disaster preparedness should be accelerated as well. In this way, this new strategic plan could achieve its strategic goals and we could be ready against the disasters at the strategic level.

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