Perceived procedural rationality and political behaviours in strategic decision making process and organizational commitment triangle

Münevver Çetin \(^a\), Dilek Pekince \(^b\)

\(^a\) University of Marmara, Department of Educational Sciences, Istanbul, 34722, Turkey
\(^b\) University of Marmara, Department of Educational Sciences, Istanbul, 34722, Turkey

Abstract

Effectiveness of a strategic decision is characterized with the strategic decision making process behind it. To follow a rational process; looking for and analyzing relevant information extensively; giving adequate importance to analytic techniques and focusing on crucial information rather than irrelevant ones should be realized. To protect the process from political behaviours; decision makers should primarily be concerned with organizational goals and open with each other about their interests and preferences; make negotiation among group members and should not effect the decision with their own power and influence. Today’s universities are not only expected to research and teach; but also make their own strategic plans for future. With these expectations, considering the fact that strategic decision making process determine not only the final decisions; but also effect the people for whom decisions are; a relation between perceived procedural rationality, political behaviours and organizational commitment were hypothesized. The study was conducted with 150 academicians and data were analyzed with regression analyze.

© 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under CC BY-NC-ND license.
Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of 7th International Strategic Management Conference

Keywords: Strategic decision making process, Rationality, Political behaviour, Organizational commitment
1. Introduction

Strategic decision making process that involves matching the institution’s capabilities with its threats and opportunities within the context of an institutional mission (Hunt et al, 1997: 32), as the brain and the nervous system of organizations, is also the cornerstone and catalyst of strategic planning. Beyond choosing the most appropriate one from alternatives; it requires the awareness of the nature of decision conditions, choosing and implementing the best alternative. It functions as a part of synthesis (Mintzberg, 1994: 107). At this point, efficiency of a strategic decision is determined with to what extent it serves to organizational ends and depends on the complete information between different alternatives. These attributions refer to the rationality of the decision and to what extent it includes political behaviours of decision makers.

Strategic decision making process determine not only the final decisions; but also effect the people for whom decisions are. In this study, organizational commitment is taken as part of strategic decision making process’ possible effect. Three of the components of organizational commitment are conceptualized as affinity, continuance and normative attachment of the employee to the organization. Determining the perceived procedural rationality and political behaviours in strategic decision making process by academicians and these perceptions’ relation to their organizational commitment is the aim of this study. To this end, Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS) and Normative Commitment Scale (NCS) developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) were used to measure organizational commitment; Strategic Decision Making Process Scale developed by Dean and Sharfman (1996) were used to measure perceived procedural rationality and political behaviours in strategic decision making process.

2. Strategic Decision Making Process

Content research and process research are the main and complementary branches of researches into strategic decision making process. While the subjects like portfolio management, diversification, acquisitions and mergers; alignment of firm strategies with environmental characteristics take place in content research; process research deals with the process through which a strategic decision is made and implemented and the factors that effect the process (Elbanna and Child, 2007: 561). To clarify the link between strategic decision making process and effectiveness, two assumptions are suggested (Dean and Sharfman, 1996: 369). While the first assumption explains the causal relationship between decision processes and strategic choices; the second assumption is that choices relate to outcomes.

Strategic decision making process for which two assumptions are also plausible, consists of rationality, centralization, formalization/standardization, political/problem solving dimensions (Papadakis et al, 1998: 116), Hitt and Tyler (1991: 329) describe rational strategic decision making as “series of analytical process whereby a set of objective criteria are used to evaluate strategic alternatives”. This dimension emphasizes the critical function of having complete, related and critical information and usage of analytic techniques. At the political behaviour dimension, Sussman et al (2002: 315) assess these behaviours as the ones that serve to personal interests. The ones, that are not part of person’s formal role in the organization; but effects the distribution of advantages or disadvantages. Political actors are thought to be enacting for self-serving and self-aggrandizement purposes in an unethical manner.

The political perspective on strategic decision making assumes that decisions emerge from a process in which decision makers have different goals, forming alliances to achieve their goals in which the preferences of the most powerful prevail (Elbanna and Child, 2007: 434). From an organizational
perspective, organizational politics include both reactive (intends to protect self-interest) and proactive (promotes self-interest) behaviours. Organizational politics are accepted to be visible via blaming or attacking others, use of information, image building/impression management, support building for ideas, praising others, power coalitions, strong allies; associating with the influential and creating obligations-reciprocity (Allen et al, 1979: 77-79).

The fundamental question in the field of strategic management focuses on how firms achieve and sustain competitive advantage (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997: 509) and literature suggests little findings on strategic management in education sector that has a non-profit structure different than firms. Ereṣ (2004: 21) states that application of strategic planning in education is different than the other fields due to their management styles. One of the limited researches on strategic planning in education sector; is on resolving the debate between learning school and formal planning types of planning in their strategy formation behaviours (Brews and Hunt, 1999). While there is a narrow space on strategic management in educational institutions in the literature; in practice, universities and schools of Turkey are asked for making their own strategic plans by the governments.

In an official document published by Council of Higher Education of Turkey (YÖK, 2007), there exist two explanations to clarify why strategic planning in universities is necessary. It is written that with a flexible guidance, it will be possible to realize general goals, determine basic politics, and evaluate opportunities with a creative approach and secondly; with a consentaneous plan; there will be less tension between internal and external factors and so more productive developments will be possible. In the light of these necessities, it has been a legal obligation for universities to make their strategic plans since 2005 (YÖK, 2005).

3. Organizational Commitment

There is a relationship between the perceptions and behaviours of individuals. Individuals are influenced by their qualities, by the features of the people and the events which are perceived and by the atmosphere which the processes are realized. One of the variables of the organizational behaviour is commitment that is one of the attitudes of personnel and is related to work (Özgan, 2011: 241-242). Becker and Billings (1993: 188) suggest that commitment profiles should be considered as part of the explanation of commitment-related phenomena such as satisfaction, intent to quit, prosocial organizational behaviour and absenteeism, turnover, tardiness. They classify organizational commitment into four categories; First, the locally committed (employees who are attached to their supervisor and work group). Second, the globally committed (who are attached to top management and the organization). Third, the committed (who are attached to both local and global foci), and fourth, the uncommitted (who are attached to neither local nor global foci). Angle and Perry (1986) consider commitment with dual commitment that includes commitment to the organization and commitment to the union.

Organizational commitment as one of the strongest predictors of organizational behaviours is assessed by Allen and Meyer (1990:3) with a three-headed approach. They state that employee remain in an organization due to three reasons: desires, needs and necessities. According to Williams and Anderson (1991: 604), there is a closed relationship between organizational citizenship and organizational commitment; because both types reflect personal sacrifice made for the sake of organization, do not depend primarily on reinforcements or punishments and indicate a personal preoccupation with the organization.

One of the key factors that effect organizational commitment is human resources management practices. Herrbach (2009: 908) state that training opportunities, assignment to new roles and provision of
flexible working conditions are associated with organizational commitment and more specifically, these practices are strongly associated with the willingness to remain in the organization. Wright and Kehoe (2007: 15-16) also notes that empowerment enhancing practices are expected to have a positive impact on organizational commitment, and probably impact the affect, motivation, and continuance outcomes. They state that organizations that allow employee input into decisions, share information, and treat employees with respect; strengthens shared perceptions of congruence between employee and organizational values, integrates employees into the life of the firm, and increases employees’ identification with the firm and thus enhances commitment.

Other factors effect organizational commitment are that participation in decision making, growth opportunities and fairness of rewards/recognition. Allen, Shore and Griefeth (2003: 114) state that organizational human resources practices seen as supportive by employees increase perceived organizational support and lead to affective attachment to the organization because of employee perceptions that the organization supports and cares about them. This perceived support is considered by Whitener (2001: 530) in the context of social exchange theory that engenders feelings of obligation, gratitude and trust (Bock and Kim, 2002: 15). He states that employees’ commitment to the organization derives from their perceptions of the employers’ commitment to and support of them. In the light of this view, employees interpret human resource practices and the trustworthiness of management as indicative of the personified organization’s commitment to them and they reciprocate their perceptions accordingly in their own commitment to the organization. Ussahawanitchakit, (2008: 9) points that building a climate of openness and experimentation in accepting new ideas and points of view in both internal and external aspects have a positive relationship with organizational commitment.

The ideas related with openness and support are seen in procedural justice. Procedural justice theory focuses on how decision making procedures affect those who have a stake in; but limited control over, the outcome of the decision (Johnson et al, 2002: 1145). Ceylan and Kaynak (2010: 33) define procedural justice as a concept that provides employees to believe that organizational and managerial decisions are legitimate. They state that sense of powerlessness and isolation are consequences of impossibility to control decision making process and convenient grounds for organizational commitment to disappear. Because, an employee whose concerns, views, needs and opinions are not considered in decision making processes; feels itself isolated and as one that is low-status and so, low committed to organization. Özgan (2011: 244) also shows a significant and positive relationship at the medium level between the perception of organizational justice and organizational commitment with his study.

Segars and Grover (1998: 144) consider cooperating as one of the necessities of strategic planning to be successful. Armstrong (1982: 2) also underlines a systematic procedure be used to gain commitment of those who will be affected by the plan in each of the steps of formal strategic planning process. If decisions are just taken to have control by top managers, staff will feel less responsible to implement decisions and this will lead strategic decision process to failure.

There is little empirical findings that show strategic decision making process’ effect on employee’ organizational commitment. While Dooley and Fryxell (1999) suggest that perceptions of trustworthiness (loyalty and competence) play different roles in enabling dissent to enhance decision quality and build decision commitment in strategic decision making process; the research conducted by Johnson et al (2002: 1156) to determine how international joint venture management (IJV) teams’ and parent involvement in strategic decision making influences the IJV management teams’ commitment to the IJV and to the parent firms, show that procedural justice in strategic decision-making can have a powerful effect in aligning the organizational commitment.
On one side, aforementioned progresses about strategic planning living in universities due to legal necessities bring many changes to academic staff’ lives depending on strategic plans and on the other side, today’s competitive atmosphere needs workers with high commitment (Gemlik, Ayanoğlu and Sigri, 2010: 137) and the other side; growing size of career opportunities for academics at the outside of universities and universities’ problems related with the difficulty to recruit and retain high-quality academic staff (Pienaar and Bester, 2009: 377). In the light of this multi-dimensional space; if strategic decision making process determine not only the final decisions; but also effect the people for whom decisions are; we tried to find the answer the question of “Is organizational commitment related with the perceived political behaviours and rationality in strategic decision making process?” and we suggested two hypothesis for each of organizational commitment types:

**Hypothesis 1:** Perceived procedural rationality in strategic decision making process will be positively related to academic staff’ organizational commitment.

- **Hypothesis 1a:** Perceived procedural rationality in strategic decision making process will be positively related to academic staff’ affective commitment
- **Hypothesis 1b:** Perceived procedural rationality in strategic decision making process will be positively related to academic staff’ continuance commitment
- **Hypothesis 1c:** Perceived procedural rationality in strategic decision making process will be positively related to academic staff’ normative commitment

**Hypothesis 2:** Perceived political behaviour in strategic decision making process will be negatively related to academic staff’ organizational commitment.

- **Hypothesis 2a:** Perceived political behaviour in strategic decision making process will be negatively related to academic staff’ affective commitment
- **Hypothesis 2b:** Perceived political behaviour in strategic decision making process will be negatively related to academic staff’ continuance commitment
- **Hypothesis 2c:** Perceived political behaviour in strategic decision making process will be negatively related to academic staff’ normative commitment

**4. Method**

This study aims to determine academic staff’s perceptions about the procedural rationality and political behaviours in strategic decision making process and these perceptions’ relation with their organizational commitment to the university. Data including perceived procedural rationality and political behaviours in strategic decision making process were gathered with the Likert-style scale developed by Dean and Sharfman (1996). In this scale, there exist five items in procedural rationality factor and four items in political behaviour factor. For the procedural rationality ($\alpha=0.80$) and for political behaviour ($\alpha=0.66$) and for factor values; correlation between factors $p<0.05$; eigen value 1.0. After adapting the scale in
To measure, academic staff’s organizational commitment to the university, Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS) and Normative Commitment Scale (NCS) developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) were used that are all Likert-styles. Each of the factors of Organizational Commitment Scale is consisted of eight items. For affective commitment ($\alpha=.87$), continuance commitment ($\alpha=.75$) and normative commitment ($\alpha=.79$). For this study; translation of Çetin (2004) was used. Data were collected from 150 academicians that were randomly selected, working in state universities. Each of the academic personal was asked to answer the items in two scales. To analyze the obtained data, regression analyze was used.

5. Findings

Table 2. Perceived procedural rationality and political behaviours in strategic decision making process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedural rationality</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>3,1667</td>
<td>.05179</td>
<td>.63433</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Behaviour</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>3,0533</td>
<td>.04626</td>
<td>.56654</td>
<td>3,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows that, perceptions about procedural rationality and political behaviours have similar and also average ratings considering their means (3.31667 and 3.0533).

Table 3. Organizational commitment’s three dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective commitment (AOC)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2,125</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>3,0767</td>
<td>.02939</td>
<td>.35996</td>
<td>1,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuance commitment (COC)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1,571</td>
<td>4,571</td>
<td>2,9381</td>
<td>.03587</td>
<td>.43928</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative commitment(NOC)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>3,625</td>
<td>2,7292</td>
<td>.03562</td>
<td>.43625</td>
<td>2,125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between organizational commitment dimensions; affective commitment has a bigger degree than the other two dimensions; but three of the ratings show that academicians’ commitment to the universities is at an average level.

Table 4. Regression analyze results of procedural rationality and affective commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Rche</th>
<th>Fche</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedural rationality</td>
<td>Affective commitment</td>
<td>.166a</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>4,172</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows that perceived procedural rationality in strategic decision making process is positively related to academicians’ affective commitment (p= .043) as it is suggested in Hypothesis 1a.

Table 5. Regression analyze results of procedural rationality and continuance commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Rche</th>
<th>Fche</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedural rationality</td>
<td>Continuance commitment</td>
<td>.030a</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that there is no significant relationship between perceived procedural rationality and continuance commitment of academicians.

Table 6. Regression analyze results of procedural rationality and normative commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Rche</th>
<th>Fche</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedural rationality</td>
<td>Normative commitment</td>
<td>.078a</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 shows that there is no significant relationship between perceived procedural rationality and normative commitment of academicians.

Table 7. Regression analyze results of political behaviours and affective commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Rche</th>
<th>Fche</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political behaviour</td>
<td>Affective commitment</td>
<td>.136a</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>2.795</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows that there is no significant relationship between perceived political behaviours and affective commitment of academicians.

Table 8. Regression analyze results of political behaviours and continuance commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Rche</th>
<th>Fche</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political behaviour</td>
<td>Continuance commitment</td>
<td>.035a</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>.675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows that there is no significant relationship between perceived political behaviours and continuance commitment of academicians.

Table 9. Regression analyze results of political behaviours and normative commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>Rche</th>
<th>Fche</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political behaviour</td>
<td>Normative commitment</td>
<td>.036a</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>.660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows that there is no significant relationship between perceived political behaviours and normative commitment of academicians.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study is an attempt to find a link between perceived procedural rationality and political behaviours in strategic decision making process and employee’ organizational commitment in universities. So it is expected to contribute to strategic management literature with the new sights it brought related with academicians, their perceptions about strategic decision making processes and organizational commitment.

Johnson et al (2002: 1145) state that procedural justice theory focuses on how decision making procedures affect those who have a stake in; but limited control over the outcome of the decision. They also note that procedural justice in strategic decision making can have a powerful effect in aligning the organizational commitment. Similar to this finding, Ceylan and Kaynak (2010: 33) point that there is a strong relationship between procedural injustice and work alienation dimensions. An employee who feels powerless; thinks that it has not an effect in determining how the resources are distributed and controlling decision making process and this feeling results with a low degree commitment to the organization. Study’s first hypothesis is supported with these findings that; perceived procedural rationality is positively related with affective commitment. But other hypotheses that were predicting a relationship between perceived procedural rationality and continuance and normative dimensions of commitment; and
between perceived political behaviours and affective, continuance and normative commitment were not supported by research findings.

References


