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Different Perceptions about Strategic Themes in Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI)

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ABSTRACT

The achievement strategic goals are one of the challenges faced by many organizations, including the Export Development Bank of Iran. For strengthening the financial and intellectual capitals of EDBI, appropriate strategies should be selected. Based on cognitive school of designing strategy, the belief system of organizational staff affected its strategies. One way to discover appropriate strategies in organization are studying, employees perceptions of strategic themes. The purpose of this study was to understand the dominate concourse (different ideas) of important strategic themes along the Export Development Bank of Iran. Researcher identified the 43 most important statements concerning the diversity of opinion within the present concourse. The statements of this concourse are organized in four main categories: 1) finance, 2) customer, 3) structure and 4) human resource dimensions. This categorization is based on intellectual and financial capital in organization.

Key words: Perception, concourse theory, strategic themes, financial capital

INTRODUCTION

Strategic themes are the main, high-level business strategies that form the basis for the organization's business model. They are part of the strategic planning work of building a balanced scorecard. Once you have agreed upon the vision for your organization (your picture of the future or desired future state), then we systematically decompose that vision into 3-4 strategic themes. We sometimes refer to themes as pillars of excellence. The strategic themes are very broad in scope. They apply to every part of the organization and define what major strategic thrusts the organization will pursue to achieve its vision. Themes affect all four of the balanced scorecard perspectives (financial, customer, internal process, organizational capacity). A strategic theme is an area in which your organization must excel in order to achieve your vision (Perry, 2000).

This study attempted to understand the strategic themes through the eyes of staff and administrators of EDBI.

This study presents research aimed at uncovering and documenting the diversity strategic themes has been used in managing bank. It is based on data collected from 30 staff of bank and other documents.

Literature review

School of thought on strategic planning: There are strategic approaches or viewpoints that take on thematic interpretations. For instance, Mintzberg describes the Cognitive School as one

which focuses on mental or deliberative processes. In the case of the Entrepreneurial School of strategic planning, the mainstay is a strong person with a compelling vision of the future. The Learning School places emphasis on collective or group-think. The other schools of thought regarding strategy formation and their accompanying thematic views or processes include: Political = Power; Cultural = Ideological; Environmental = Passive (Young, 2002). This research has been down based on Cognitive school (Table 1).

The capital of organization: The capital of organization is dividing into two groups, financial and intellectual capitals. Scholars have generally identified three main dimensions of IC that include human capital, structural capital and relational capital. Human capital represents the individual knowledge stock of an organization as represented by its employees (Bontis and Fitz-Enz, 2002).

Employees generate IC through their components of employees work (Ross *et al.*, 2005). Structural capital consists of mechanisms and organizational procedures which support the employees in completing their tasks and includes all non-human storehouses of knowledge in organizations like databases, process manuals, routines, strategies and anything whose value to the company is higher than its material value. Relational capital is associated with the network of relations that the organization and its members are able to establish both inside and outside the working environment. The resources that emerge, that are transferred and are made co-natural with these multifarious relations constitute the relational capital of the organization (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

Concourse theory: Concourse is the breadth of debate around a particular issue (Jeffares and Skelcher, 2009). The concourse is a technical concept (not to be confused with the concept of discourse) much used in Q methodology for the collection of all the possible statements the respondents can make about the subject at hand (Van Exel and Graaf, 2005). Brown (1991) argues that the concourse is the very stuff of life, from the playful banter of lovers or friends to the heady discussions of philosophers and scientists to the private thoughts found in dreams and diaries. From concourse, new meanings arise, bright ideas are hatched and discoveries are made. It is the wellspring of creativity and identity formation in individuals, groups, organizations and nations. A concourse regarding the role of a social worker may consist of different statements expressing opinions and views about, for example what social workers do and how they work. The concourse may include perspectives from clients and social workers. Many social work clients have a variety

Table 1: School of thought on strategic planning

School	View of process
Design	Conceptual
Planning	Formal
Positioning	Analytical
Cognitive	Mental
Entrepreneurial	Visionary
Learning	Emergent
Political	Power
Cultural	Ideological
Environmental	Passive

of different experiences. How they perceive their contact with social services might be a part of a defined concourse. However, individuals who have no knowledge of, for example, the role of a social worker will have difficulties communicating about the topic because they are unfamiliar with the concourse. The ability to communicate and share understanding of a topic is linked to the person's knowledge, experience and interest in the topic at hand. In general, an individual's point of view about a topic may be recognizable or understandable to others within the same group or culture even though they may not share the same view.

The concourse is rooted in knowledge (or communication) of which all in the group are aware (Ellingsen *et al.*, 2010). A concourse can be obtained in a number of ways, including interviews, participant observation and popular literature such as media reports, newspapers, magazines, novels and scientific literature (papers, essays and books) (Van Exel and Graaf, 2005). The concourse is represented as a series of short statements. These could number in the hundreds. Where possible, the statements should be direct quotes from interviewees so that the manner in which they express their opinions is captured.

However, this is not always possible. Alternatively, they may come from published sources or reconstructions from the researchers (Jeffares and Skelcher, 2009). According to Zafonte and Sabatier, Policy elites have well integrated policy belief systems that affect their perceptions of the severity and causes of policy problems and perceptions of the proper approaches to be used in addressing these problems (Kim and Roh, 2008). The concourse among government elite members has been studied several times in the public administration literature. For example, Selden *et al.* (1999) studied concourse among practitioners and scholars on bureaucratic responsibility, roles and values. They compiled 135 statements from 75 personal interviews, 6 focus groups with public sector employees and numerous articles and books. They divided these statements into five groups: Managerial efficiency, political responsiveness, neutrality, proactive administration and social equity.

Fang (2006) investigated concourse about fiscal decentralization in Taiwan. He collected 160 statements from literature published by Taiwanese scholars from 1990-2002. He then selected 40 statements from them as concourse about fiscal decentralization.

Jeffares and Skelcher (2009) argued that network forms of governance offer public managers considerable flexibility in shaping the way that they engage with citizens, civil society organizations and other actors on matters of public policy and services. They studied public managers' views in England and the Netherlands about this relationship. They developed their concourse of over 300 statements from interview data collected in this and previous research projects and the academic literature on governance networks and democracy.

However, although studies of the kind just outlined have established concourse among administrators and other members of governing elites, there is no literature about how administrators perceive the best strategic themes for achieving strategic goals. The present study seeks to fill this gap in the literature.

Collecting the concourse: Present concourse about strategic themes was extracted from interviews with experts in this field and from a review of documents and reports and the bank website and from a dialogue forum that was made in EDBI website. At first, 90 short statements or phrases were collected from the above-mentioned sources. These phrases stem directly or indirectly from quotes relating to strategic themes in EDBI.

Table 2: The dominant concourse

Finance	Customer	Human resource	Structure
Provide services with high added value	Promotion contracts of islamic banking	Establishment the competency model of staff and administrators	Utilization the control and supervision system of banking activities
Establishment liquidity management system	To help the companies of securities and exchanges organization in their projects and activities	Designing new services	Systematic communication with central bank
Establishment financial management system based on international standards	Increase the number of export target markets	Promotion organizational confidence	Promotion databases in bank
Establishment budget management system	Reduced customer service time	Development organizational culture based justice	Reduce bureaucracy in the bank
Establishment internal audit system	Increase market share	Attract international human resources	Investment in electronic banking
Establishment management of balance sheet	Increase lifetime customer relationship	Develop professional career	Provide integrated banking processes
Enhance profitability in the international sector	Increased volume of customer service	Promoting the welfare of employees	Formulation performance evaluation system of staff and employees of bank branches
Increase currency sales regarding the higher volumes of oil revenues	Increase advertising for introducing bank to customers	Provide systematic human resource training	Achieving the ways of physical development in target country
Attract much more government deposits	Discover the global opportunities for investment		Designing necessary systems for managing risks in organization
Ready to face international sanctions	Support imports without-consideration of its export performance	Implement a knowledge management system	Develop interaction with national and international development banks
Provide services with the lowest possible price in order to reduce the export price	Providing consulting service to domestic exports	Performance evaluation of employees	Increasing the powers of the branches
		Increase organizational commitment	

From these, 44 statements were selected. Selection favored those statements that were more comprehensive, less repetitive, and representative of different views. These statements were divided into four main groups as an inductive model: 1 finance, 2 customer 3 structure and 4) human resource (Table 2).

CONCLUSION

This is a study of subjectivity. The purpose of this study is the investigation of EDBI administrator's perceptions about strategic themes in EDBI. Unlike other studies that are devoted to finding the best strategic themes for organization, this study attempted to understand the themes through the eyes of staff. Therefore, it studied the present concourse about strategic themes for achieving organizational goals. Different views in the concourse were divided into four main groups: 1) Finance, 2) customer 3) structure and 4) human resource dimensions. The statements in the finance category indicate the techniques for management the financial capital, but three other categories show the different strategic themes about intellectual capital in bank. The results of this study show bank could get different strategic goals for managing its capital. These differentiation stem from administrators' beliefs of strategic themes in bank. All of data in this research have been gathered at EDBI, future studies can study concourse at other bank and attain different category.

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