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Abstract

The research presented here contributes to the understanding of components of strategic management and their relationships to organizational effectiveness. Based on a sample of 75 nonprofit organizations, the study emphasizes individual and diverse elements of the strategic management process. The statistical analysis show significant relationships between some elements of strategic management to organizational effectiveness suggesting that strategic management elements contain significant but different signals.

Keywords

*Strategic Management,
NPOs , organisational
effectiveness, Strategic
Management elements*

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Over the past several decades, NPOs have become major players in the field of international development. Several studies have emphasized the importance of the non profit sector to the nation's economy, the vibrancy of our civil society, and the implementation of public policies (Salamon, 1995, 1997; Smith, S. R. and Lipsky, 1993; Weisbrod, 1998). The presence of a large non-profit sector is sometimes seen as an indicator of a healthy economy in local and national financial measurements (Verdier, D, 2002). In Sweden, the non profit sector is attributed with fostering a nationwide social change towards progressive economic, social and cultural policies (Muffels, J. 2001), while in Italy the third sector is increasingly viewed as a primary employment source for the entire country (Antonelli, G. and De Liso, N.; 2004).

In the United States nonprofit sector is contributing immensely to the economic growth of the country. According to Facts and Figures from the Nonprofit Almanac 2008, approximately 1.4 million nonprofit organizations are registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and employ nearly 11 million people or about 7 percent of the entire U.S. workforce, and the number of nonprofit organizations registered with the IRS grew by 27.3 percent from 1995 to 2005. While the U.S. GDP increased by approximately 35 percent over this period after adjusting for inflation (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2007), revenues and assets for reporting nonprofits grew by at least 54 percent -- a difference of nearly 20 percentage points. Nonprofits now exercise enormous spending power and

have become a far greater force in the U.S. economy, offering more jobs than ever before (Salamon, L. M, 2002).

Voluntarism has long been an integral part of the Indian society, dating back to 1500 BC when it was mentioned in the Rig Vedas (Sen, Siddhartha, 1992). India is estimated to have between 1 million and 2 million nonprofit organizations (www.Indiangos.com, 2007). India being a developing country, NPOs play a vital role in complementing government efforts in meeting human needs and particularly in backward region like Manipur. Manipur is a small state in the north east region of India. It lacks infrastructural facilities and its development primarily depends on Government funds. State funds are limited, political situations are fluid, natural disasters resulting from both predictable and unpredictable environmental circumstances occur, ethnic strife is rampant, and the level of per capita income severely restricts the ability to purchase needed goods and services – social, educational and economic. There are more than 18,191 NPOs registered under Manipur Societies Registration Act 1989 (Administration Report 2007-08, Cooperation Department, Government of Manipur), and the knowledge of how to manage strategically is least known. No matter what their size and scope are, the NPOs in Manipur face the complexities and challenges of resource development, institutional and technical demands, meeting the objectives and achieving sustainability like any other NPOs in rest of the world. Besides many NPOs are undergoing transformations, specially NPOs engaged in microfinance, in pursuit of financial sustainability. These call for a strategic approach in the successful management of NPOs. Most of the empirical research pertaining to the relationship of planning and performance has been conducted in the for profit organization sector (Odom and Boxx, 1988) and there are few studies in the not for profit world. Little empirical work has examined the relationship between planning sophistication and organizational performance in nonprofit organizations. Few empirical studies have attempted to link elements of strategic management in nonprofit organizations to measures of performance (Stone & Crittenden, 1994).

Little is known about the extent to which adoption of strategic management practices improves or influence the performance of nonprofit organizations (Stone & Crittenden, 1994). The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between elements of strategic management process and organizational effectiveness in nonprofit organizations. The study examined the relationship of seventeen elements of the strategic management process broadly classified as formulation, implementation and evaluation

Review of Literature

The non profit environment has provided a rich context for the study of a number of theoretical constructs, providing insight into, among others, interorganizational systems (Boje & Whetten, 1981; Galaskiewicz & Shatin, 1981), dependence (Provan, Beyer, & Kruytbosch, 1980), and the effect of values on structure (Bartunek, 1984). Many researches are conducted in a wide variety of non profit settings, focusing on the different components of strategic management: strategy formulation, content, and implementation (Schendel & Hofer, 1979; Shortell, Morrison, & Robbins, 1985; Shrivastava, 1987; Topping & Hernandez, 1991) and identified an array of determinants and outcomes of strategic management processes and practices.

The focus of research on strategy formulation in non profit organizations has been narrow, concerned with the adoption and use of formal strategic planning, the impact of organization-level determinants (such as size, board and management characteristics) on adoption, and the influence of formal planning on outcomes, such as structure, mission, and board-management relationships (Stone, Bigelow, and Crittenden, 1999). Few studies attempted to examine the relationship between the use of formal planning and performance in nonprofit organizations. Among those that did, the use of formal planning was associated with organizational growth in terms of funding (Crittenden et al., 1988) and members (Jenster & Overstreet, 1990; Odom & Boxx, 1988). Whether planning leads to growth or growth stimulates the need for formal planning is unclear because the studies do not examine causality. In the words of Stone et.al, “it is also not clear how formal planning is related to strategy content and to implementation nor is it clear why planning by itself would improve performance”.

Strategy content is the corporate, business, and functional level strategies composed by the actions and tactics within the organization. The literature on strategy content in nonprofit organizations focused on determinants and outcomes of strategy but was silent on the link between particular strategies and measures of performance (Stone et.al 1999). Strategic management research in the area of strategy content has typically focused on two relationships: the effect of environmental and organizational factors on strategy content and the link between strategy content and desired outcomes or objectives. Outcome of this research are typologies that either define successful strategies (Hall, W. K. 1985; Porter, 1980), or reflect different degrees of environmental complexity (Miles & Snow, 1978).

Research on strategy implementation typically “concentrates on how decisions are put into action and evaluated and includes the characteristics of the strategy, environmental characteristics, and organizational factors” (Topping & Hernandez, 1991). Strategy implementation in nonprofit organizations has not received the same attention as strategy formulation and strategy content. The majority of the research on implementation focused on the relationship between antecedent variables (such as general environmental characteristics) and direct determinants of implementation such as organization structure or values. The actual impact of those determinants on implementation or on outcomes is considerably more sketchy.

Stone, Bigelow, and Crittenden (1999) concluded that “few explicit connections have been made among research studies, contributing to fragmentation in the field. Ketchen et al. (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of 40 empirical studies that examined strategy, structure, and performance and concluded that future research should focus on existing theories such as Miles and Snow (1978). Ketchen et al. recommended that future research should “replicate existing configurations-performance relationships in multiple contexts. The lack of uniformed consideration of strategic factors has led to confusion and contradictory results associated with strategy and its impact on performance and the complexity of the non profit environment and the combination of institutional and technical demands they face, suggests the development of multiple indicators of performance (Stone et.al 1999). So there exists a need to develop better conceptual and empirical understandings of performance and its relationships to strategic management activities in non profit organizations.

Organizational effectiveness in the nonprofit sector is difficult to define and is a complex concept. There exist alternative ways of measuring organizational effectiveness (Herman, 1990; Herman and Renz, 2008) and the different interpretations make it a problematic concept (Kanter & Summers, 1987). Early studies used measures consisting subjective ranking of performance as indicators of organizational effectiveness (Babchuk, Marsey and Gordon, 1960; Price, 1963; Zald, 1967). Still some studies used financial measures such as level of fund raised (Miller, Weiss and MacLead, 1988; Pfeffer, 1973; Provan, 1980) and comparison of income derived to expenses and assets ratio (Barrett and Windhan, 1984; Chabotar, 1989; Flynn, 1986). Forbes (1998) reported from his study reviewing empirical researches on nonprofit effectiveness covering 20 years from 1977 to 1997, that there is variation in the way effectiveness

has been conceptualized. He found that many of the studies used one of the three approaches – the goal attainment, the system resource and the reputational approaches. The goal attainment approach (Barnard, 1938; Price 1972), with the assumption that goals are identifiable and unambiguous, defined effectiveness as meeting organizational goals. However, there have been many criticisms of the goal approach (Mohr, 1982) from organizational theorist. Another approach the system’s approach proposed by Yutchman and Seashore (1967), treated effectiveness as the organizational ability to exploit environment and acquire resources and used quantitative data such as financial and operational reports (Pfeffer, 1973; Provan, 1980). Herman and Renz (2004) argue that even though resource acquisition may be one of the most important criteria of effectiveness for chief executives or board members it seems unlikely to be important to other stakeholders. Herman and Renz (1998) cited two contemporary theoretical perspectives relevant to nonprofit organizational effectiveness- the multiple constituency and the social constructionism. The multiple constituency which is regarded as a modification of the goal model (Herman and Renz, 1998) sees organizations to have multiple constituencies or stakeholders. These multiple constituencies have different stakes and interest in the organization and they tend to see and evaluate the organization according to their stakes. Herman and Renz (1998) argue that, “organizational effectiveness is not a single reality, but a more complicated matter of differing interest and expectations”. The other theoretical perspective is the social constructionism which is not a specific model of organizational but a general ontological perspective – a philosophical position about the nature of reality and reality is created by the beliefs, knowledge, and actions of people (see Herman and Renz, 1997, 1998, 2004 for a discussion of social constructionism). According to Herman and Renz (2004), social constructionism views organizational effectiveness as stakeholder judgments formed in an ongoing process of sense making and implicit negotiation. Assessments of effectiveness are not regarded as necessarily stable and objective facts nor are they irrelevant. The perceived effectiveness may mean different things to different constituencies and different constituencies will differ in their judgments. Nevertheless the social process resulting in judgment of nonprofit organizational effectiveness may lead different constituencies to develop the same criteria and to evaluate information relevant to those criteria in the same way (Herman and Renz, 2004). On the whole Herman and Renz (2004) adopted the view that overall nonprofit effectiveness is whatever multiple constituents or stakeholders judge it to be.

For the purpose of this research the perceived effectiveness of the organization by the chief executive is assumed as judgment of organizational effectiveness. The chief executive is one among the best situated to judge the effectiveness of the organization (Herman and Renz 1998) based on the seventeen elements used in the instrument

Research Methodology

The study involves an understanding of the determinants and components of strategy and their interrelations and interactions which are related to organizational effectiveness. This study used questionnaire developed after employing instrument pretests. Based on the pretest response a sample size of 100 was selected. Preliminary contact was made by telephone and or personal talk with the top administrator in each of the sample organizations. Questionnaires were then sent to the sample of 100 nonprofit organizations in Manipur, India, directed to the top administrator. 92 surveys were returned and checked for completeness and errors resulting in a final sample of 75 organizations. The research is exploratory in nature.

Analysis

In terms of mission type that largest group are human service agencies (45.3%) followed by health agencies (20%), public social benefit agencies (16%), educational institutions (12%), and finally a small group (6.7%) of agencies micro finance agencies.

The questionnaire gathers information on four major areas: formulation, implementation, evaluation and

organizational effectiveness. The purpose of the data was to see if significant relationships existed between strategic management elements and organizational effectiveness. The study did not assume that strategic management was a single process but rather one composed of separable elements. The analysis, therefore sought to determine statistically what elements were included within the strategic management process and whether specific elements were related to effectiveness of organizations. Each of the elements was a separate variable for this study in accordance with recommendations in the literature. For example, Armstrong (1982) argued that some of the planning steps might be more useful than others, and collapsing the data hides this information.

Since the measures were untested they needed to be cleaned and checked for internal consistency. Investigation of the interactions between the different survey questions for each of the strategic elements was done using a simple cluster method. This approach is primarily used to identify similar objects by forming groups that consist of items that correlate highly with one another, and have comparatively low correlations with other items. After purifying the different strategic measures, the internal consistency for each item was explored using Cronbach's alpha. The results are shown in table 1 and each item is above the recommended level of 0.70. Cronbach's alpha was also calculated for the effectiveness measure (0.73) which also ended up being above the recommended level.

Table 1: Internal consistency of variables

Table 2 reports the zero-order correlations among the variables and their means and standard deviations. The descriptive information in table 2 suggests that majority of the variables are correlated significantly.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1 Vision Statement	5.09	.628																	
2 Mission Statement	5.35	.381	.923**																
3 Understanding Values	5.15	.505	.888**	.893**															
4 Environment analysis(internal & external)	4.91	.595	-.011	-.048	.038														
5 Understanding issues	4.79	.775	-.164	.000	-.051	.161													
6 Long term objectives	5.47	.410	-.157	-.147	-.087	.240*	.333**												
7 Generate strategies	4.85	.702	-.176	-.219	-.138	.439**	.274*	.514**											
8 Policy support	5.01	.788	-.089	-.097	.009	.350**	.326**	.430**	.747**										
9 Financial capacity	4.83	.995	-.117	-.159	-.065	.368**	.366**	.513**	.719**	.864**									
10 Willingness and motivation	4.30	1.003	-.119	-.149	-.048	.263*	.328**	.552**	.564**	.678**	.752**								
11 Board support	5.23	.844	-.031	-.047	.010	.272*	.222	.292*	.509**	.579**	.586**	.486**							
12 Organizational structure	5.19	.735	-.155	-.105	-.100	.363**	.474**	.477**	.707**	.629**	.669**	.551**	.444**						
13 Orientation to change	4.71	.874	-.067	-.035	-.020	.249*	.405**	.619**	.762**	.782**	.752**	.638**	.541**	.734**					
14 Human resource capability	5.32	.525	-.050	.099	.201	.442**	.408**	.238*	.399**	.581**	.526**	.337**	.467**	.423**	.415**				
15 Assessment	4.34	1.122	-.104	-.035	-.018	.344**	.320**	.387**	.545**	.436**	.417**	.429**	.476**	.489**	.468**	.400**			
16 Measure of performance	4.63	.934	-.188	-.206	-.140	.402**	.320**	.538**	.865**	.759**	.776**	.530**	.507**	.673**	.812**	.496**	.465**		

*p < .05
** p< .01

Note:Strategic management variables range from 1 (low relevance) to 6(high degree of relevance) and effectiveness variable range from 1 (very ineffective) to 5 (exceptionally effective).

Table 3: Strategic management elements and organizational effectiveness

*p < .01
**p < .05
***p < .10

To examine the relationships between the strategic management elements and the organizational effectiveness regression analysis was employed. Table 3 shows the regression result of the seventeen elements of strategic management process and organizational effectiveness. The majority of the relationships between the elements and organizational effectiveness were insignificant with four exceptions. Long term objective (.422 p < 0.10), board support (.394 p < 0.01), organization structure (.276 p < 0.10) and assessment (.028 p < .05) have positive relationship to organizational effectiveness. The positive relationship between the long term objective and organizational effectiveness indicates that a well defined long term objective with clear understanding of the purpose, the role, function, commitment of the stakeholders and commitment of necessary resources and use of technologies is important to the view of organizational effectiveness by the nonprofit top executives. Long term objective setting and long term planning are essential parts of strategy formulation of the nonprofit organization. This finding suggests effective strategy formulation process links rhetoric, choices, activities and consequences into reasonably coherent and consistent patterns across levels, funds and time as stated by Eden and Ackermann, 1998. This relationship indicates that top executive view objective setting, forecasting, integration and evaluation as having more value for organizational effectiveness.

The significant relationships of board support and organization structure with perceived organization effectiveness are indications that a well implemented strategy may improve organizational effectiveness. The study also suggests that a good and strong board and may have a strong impact in the strategy implementation process. Appropriateness of the structure of the organization and the effectiveness of the governance model create conducive climate for implementation of strategic initiatives.

The positive relationship of assessment with organizational effectiveness shows that having a system for assessing the ongoing strategic initiatives may track the success or failure of the strategic initiatives. Corrective actions may be identified where strategic initiatives fail or could be improved. Participation of the stakeholders of the organizations in the different stages of the strategic management process can also be looked as strengths for the nonprofit organization. These may have been conceived by the top executives as organization's important ability or practices on which it can draw routinely to perform well.

The insignificant result of other strategic initiatives elements suggests that not all the factors of the strategic management process are associated with organizational effectiveness. These findings suggest the absence of strong relationship between some strategic initiatives and organizational effectiveness.

Conclusion

The study found few significant relationships between strategic elements and organizational effectiveness suggesting that strategic management elements contain significant but different signals. The findings tend to suggest that comprehensiveness of a planning process does not provide one unified signal in many nonprofit organizations. The lack of differentiation and absence of statistically significant relationships suggests that not all the strategic elements are important for organizational effectiveness. It may also suggest that strategic management initiatives are often viewed as part of a larger effort toward rationalizing managerial activities and practices (Wolch, 1990). It may have a meaning to inside and outside stakeholders that extends beyond that embodied in the strategic process itself (Crittenden, Crittenden, Stone, & Robertson, 2004). To this effect strategic planning process – an important element of strategic management may be significant for its legitimating qualities.

This research examined only nonfinancial measures and the results reported in this paper are clearly preliminary and warrant further development. Moreover, how long each organization used the strategic management elements was not established, it is possible that some nonprofit organizations are now reaping the benefits of past efforts which other organizations may have not yet been benefited. The differences in the age of the organization should have been considered.

Despite these limitations, the findings suggest several implications for research in the nonprofit sector. Further research exploring in much greater depth the magnitude and factors of many other aspects of nonprofit performances and effectiveness can be recommended. The results have implications concerning organization size, how the strategic process is operationalized. The individual planning elements or constructs should be targeted as areas for further research.

The findings also have implications for board members and executives of nonprofit organizations. For the nonprofit executives and who are attempting to institute a strategic planning process but faces limited resources and time constraints, they can concentrate more on the planning elements which are more significantly related to performance. Governing bodies can foster management satisfaction by formalizing the processes involved with objective setting, forecasting, integration and evaluation

In summary, this study suggests future opportunities for researchers interested in studying the role of strategic planning in nonprofit organizations. Further the study provides strong incentive for nonprofit executives to take leadership role in formalizing key components of strategic management.

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