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13.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the concept and process of strategic management
- Analyse the organisational and environmental infrastructure within which strategic decisions are made; and
- Undertake exercises in strategically managing your organisation and provide a long-term sustainability to the functions.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Public Administration has always had an inter-disciplinary perspective. It has borrowed concepts and principles from other disciplines to analyse and enhance the understanding of the nature and complexities of management of public affairs. The concept of strategic management has long been included in the business administration courses and has been an integral part of the practices of the corporate sector. But in the fast changing world of today, it has been found extremely relevant to public administration systems as well. Strategic management does not replace traditional management activities such as planning, budgeting, implementing, monitoring, reporting, and controlling. Rather, it integrates them into a broader

context, taking into account the external environment, internal organisational capabilities, and the organisation's overall purpose and direction. This Unit, provides you with a comprehensive understanding of the concept and origin of strategic management, and its various schools of thought and key processes.

13.2 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT: CONCEPT

Strategic management is the process of specifying an organisation's objectives, developing policies and plans to achieve these objectives, and allocating resources so as to implement the plans. It is the highest level of managerial activity, usually performed at the top with the help of the executive team. It provides overall direction to the whole enterprise. Ten schools of thought have emerged in strategic planning, whom Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998), have classified into three groups.

The term strategy implies that there is some instability in the environment. If the world did not change, we would only have to develop one plan and stick to it. However, world is changing fast. Alvin Toffler (1970), described a trend towards accelerating rates of change. He illustrated how social and technological norms had shorter lifespans with each generation, and he questioned society's ability to cope with the resulting turmoil and anxiety. In 'The Third Wave', Toffler (1980), characterises the shift from relative stability to shortening of such periods and consequently relentless change as the defining feature of the third phase of civilisation (first two phases being the agricultural and industrial waves).

In such a world, there is need for a planning model that helps in anticipating the future and using this anticipation in conjunction with an analysis of the organisation--its culture, mission, strengths and weaknesses--to define strategic issues. For example, subsidy for farmers may be a contentious issue. For a developing country like India, subsidy may be necessary for poverty-stricken farmers, whereas subsidy to farm producers in developed countries is often given to make them competitive in the world market. So, negotiations in the World Trade Organisation, where subsidies are not favoured except under few clauses, may require strategy formulation by both the parties to counter each other's arguments and to save their respective interests.

Mintzberg and Waters (1985), believe that strategic planning is at the deliberate end of the continuum between deliberate and emergent strategies. Deliberate strategy is consciously intended, designed and controlled in contrast to emergent strategy which is uncontrolled or unintended. It is argued that the more stable the environment and more centralised the control, there are more chances of employing a deliberate strategy. Reverse is true for the opposite.

At the organisational level also, the institutional pluralism being increasingly witnessed in public service provision requires the public service managers to take strategic positions. New Public Management has also focused in great detail on the efficiency and accountability of public service functions. The notion of strategy is implicit in the enforcement of efficient and accountable response. The importance of strategy lies in the following factors:

i) Its concern with the long term direction of the organisation

ii) Its distinct identity separate from the operational matters which are deemed to be concerned with day-to-day matters

iii) The need to put the organisation into a position to carry out its mission effectively and efficiently;and

iv) Integrate an organisation's goals, policies, and activities into a cohesive whole.

Bowman and Asch (1987), state that "Strategic management is the process of making and implementing strategic decisions…..[it] is about the process of strategic change. [It is] the match an organisation makes between its own resources and threats and risks and opportunities created by the external environment in which it operates. So, strategy can be seen as a link between what the organisation wants to achieve and – its objectives – and the policies adopted to guide its activities".

Strategic management can also be referred to as a technique that can be used to create a favorable future for the organisation. Stakeholders (i.e., anyone with an interest in the organisation's goals) are involved in envisioning the most desirable future and then in working together to make this vision a reality.

There are short term strategies focusing on planning and managing for the present and there are long term strategies involving preparing for and preempting the future. Derek Abell (1993), has suggested that understanding this dual nature of strategic management is the least understood part of the process. He claims that balancing the temporal aspects of strategic planning requires the use of dual strategies simultaneously. This could be specifically useful for the public sector organisations.

13.3 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT: ORIGIN

Although the literature on the subject matter can be traced back to earlier periods, strategic management as a discipline originated in the 1950s and 1960s. Alfred Chandler, Philip Selznick, Igor Ansoff, and Peter Drucker have been the notable contributors.

Alfred Chandler(1962), recognised the importance of coordinating the various aspects of management under one all-encompassing strategy. While many thinkers like Fayol had discussed the importance of coordination in the organisations, the discourse was not related to strategy. Chandler says it concisely, "structure follows strategy". Today, however, it has been observed that strategy also follows from structure.

Philip Selznick (1957), favoured matching the organisation's internal factors with external environmental circumstances. This core idea was developed into what is known as Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Harvard Business School is credited for developing this concept. Here, the strengths and weaknesses of the enterprise are assessed in light of the opportunities and threats from the environment.

Igor Ansoff (1962), built on Chandler's work by adding a range of strategic concepts and inventing a whole new vocabulary. His focus was more on the businesses in the market. In his classic *Corporate strategy,* he developed the "gap analysis" which is still used in understanding the gap between the current position and desired position, and then developed what he called "gap reducing actions".

The contribution of Peter Drucker to strategic management is very significant, but two aspects are most important. Firstly, he emphasised the importance of objectives. An organisation without clear objectives is considered a ship without a rudder. As early as 1954, he propounded a theory of management based on objectives, which later evolved into theory of Management by Objectives (MBO). According to Drucker, the procedure of setting objectives and monitoring the organisation's progress towards them should permeate the entire organisation, from top to bottom. His other seminal contribution was in predicting the importance of intellectual capital. He predicted the rise of what he called the "knowledge worker" and explained the consequences of this

for management. He opined that knowledge work is nonhierarchical. Temporary leadership would be vested in teams having the most knowledgeable person knowing about the task at hand.

Chaffee (1985), summarised what he thought were the main elements of strategic management theory. These are:

- It involves adapting the organisation to its environment.
- It is fluid and complex. Change creates novel combinations of circumstances requiring unstructured non-repetitive responses.
- It affects the entire organisation by providing direction.
- It involves both content (strategy formation) and process (strategy implementation).
- It is partially planned and partially unplanned.
- It is done at several levels, both at macro and micro levels.
- It involves both conceptual and analytical thought processes.

Mintzberg and Quinn (1988), reexamined the process of strategic management. He concluded that it was much more fluid and unpredictable than people had thought and came up with five types of strategies. They are:

- Strategy as plan – It is comprehensive, rational and linear approach to objective setting, implementation and appraisal, proceeding in a logical manner.
- Strategy as ploy –It is a manoeuver intended to outwit a competitor
- Strategy as pattern –It is a consistent pattern of past behaviour - realised rather than intended
- Strategy as position –It is determined primarily by factors outside the firm
- Strategy as perspective – It is determined primarily by a master strategist

In the 1970s, however, when strategic planning was being widely applied, external events were still viewed as relatively stable and planning was typically retrospective, or, at best, present oriented. A more detailed description about the literature can be found, if we study the important schools of thought in strategic management.

13.4 SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

The following are ten important schools of thought in strategic management.They are categorised in three groups**.**

13.4.1 The Prescriptive Schools

Thinkers in these schools focused on the ways of formulating strategies rather than how they form in reality. So in a way they are prescriptive about the formulation of strategies. This group comprises the following schools.

a. The Design School

Strategy formulation is seen as a conceptual process by the thinkers. Selznick was one of the earliest thinkers who prescribed the design principles for strategic management. More recently this approach has been represented in the SWOT analysis. It suggests assessing the environmental influences in the form of opportunities and threats and

emphasises the need for an objective appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the enterprise compared to competitiors.

Mintzberg and others critically analysed the approach and found that it:

- ignores the process of incremental learning and the 'emergence' of strategy
- fails to take into account the influence of the exisiting structure and culture of the organisation
- over emphasises the role of the chief executive
- is questionable how far an organisation can determine its own strengths and weaknesses.
- leads to inflexibility and is suscept to environmental turbulence;and
- creates an artificial separation between strategy formulation and implementation.

b. The Planning School

Thinkers in this school focused more on the planning aspect of strategic management. This approach revolves around setting objectives, external audit including scenario building, industry analysis and competitor analysis, internal audit including strengths and weaknesses, strategy evaluation and scheduling in terms of time-frame for each stage. Mintzberg and others noted that this approach ran into trouble in 1980s when industrial activities were reduced. Mintzberg critically examined this approach in his book "The Fall and Rise of Strategic Planning" (1994).

c. The Positioning School

This view point suggests that only a few key or generic strategies are desirable or defensible in any given organisation. The basic premise is that a strategy should not be judged by internal organisational factors, but by the way recepients of service see it relative to the competition. Mintzberg (1994), summarised the premises of the school as following:

- strategies are generic positions in a market place
- market is guided by economic rationality
- strategy formulation process is about selecting a generic position based on analysis;and
- analysts are key actors

Several techniques were applied to positioning theory, some newly invented but most borrowed from other disciplines. However, Mintzberg *et al* (1998), asserted that 'no one has ever developed a strategy through analytical technique'. They said that though analysts may feed useful information into the strategy making process and organisations may extrapolate current strategies but no one has ever developed a strategy through analysis alone.

13.4.2 The Descriptive Schools

As compared to the Prescriptive Schools, where a single person usually at the top position held the centre stage, the Descriptive Schools give the prime position to the 'visionary' who could be gifted with abilities such as intuition, judgment, wisdom, experience or insight. This visionary could translate ideas into strategy around which strategic management revolved. The writings of this school can be traced back to

1930s to Schumpeter. The recent exponents of this school are Drucker, Kaplan and Mintzberg. This school comprises the following approaches-

a. The Entrepreneurial School

'Vision' is the central concept of this school. The individual leader is supposed to initiate the strategy formulation activities based on his judgement, intuitive and other knowledge management abilities. The premises of this school are:

- The leader has a vision for the strategy
- Strategy formulation is only partly a conscious process
- The leader promotes the vision and keeps close control over implementation, reformulating it if required;and
- Strategy is deliberate in overall vision and emergent consequent to implementation (Saddler, 2004).

b. The Cognitive School

Proponents of this school emphasised the pre-eminence of strategising minds. Strategists are credited with having idea of strategic cognition as a process of construction and they process the information from the environment on the basis of their special cognitive abilities. Thus the designs are actually the result of thinking of an individual. Some of the important premises of the cognitive school are as given below:

- Strategy formulation is a cognitive process that takes place in the mind of the strategists.
- Strategies thus emerge as perspectives in the form of concepts, designs, schemes and scenarios;and
- Some information available to all is deciphered differently by the strategists.

The practicing managers may contest these premises. Mintzberg and his fellow critics do not give enough weightage to these propositions but concede it to be a distinct approach in strategy formation (*Ibid*).

c. The Learning School

Strategy is seen as an emergent process by the thinkers in this school. It discarded the traditional image of strategy formulation, which the thinkers thought was far away from reality. They focused on the actual process where often the strategies were the result of the interplay between external environment and actions of members of the organisation who were not in top managerial positions.

Hamel and Prahalad (1994), conceive of strategy as a collective learning process aimed at developing and exploiting 'core competencies'. They showed how important it was to know the one or two key things that the organisation does better than the competition. They conceptualised 'strategic intent', which defines emerging opportunities and mobilises the employees. They also used few other terms as well to argue their theory. They talked about stretch (having high aspirations), leverage (making optimal use of available resources) and revolution (the need to seek to change the basis of competition).

The school stressed that an organisation emphasising knowledge rather than finance, and seeing itself as an ongoing community of human beings, is an organic entity capable of learning (called "learning organisation") and creating its own processes

and goals. Some other notable contributors to this school are Mintzberg, James Brian Quin, Senge etc. The premises of this approach are summarised below:

- Deliberate strategy making is difficult due to complexity of environment. So mostly it is emergent.
- Strategising involves a process of learning over time.
- Strategy making is not restricted to top management alone.
- The role of leadership is not to make strategy but to manage the process of strategic learning; and
- Strategies first appear as logical incrementalism but gradually accepted by organisational actors as plans for future.

d. The Power (or Political) School

There are factors beyond economic rationality which influence the functioning of the organisations, which are referred to as power by this school. The thinkers focused on the internal dynamics of the organisations, which they argue lay the basis for the emergence of strategy. They also made a distinction between 'micro power' and 'macro power'. While the former relates to the exercise of power within the organisation in connection with the strategic management processes, the latter refers to exercise of power by the organisation in its external relationships. Use of macro power is often the result of interplay between values and desired behavior. The premises of the Power School are-

- Strategy formulation is shaped by power and politics.
- The strategies that result tend to be emergent as they take the form of positions rather than perspectives
- Micro power enables strategising by aligning interests of stakeholders;and
- Use of macro power enables organisation to achieve their objectives by controlling or cooperating with other organisations.

e. *The Cultural School*

Shared beliefs reflected in traditions and habits define the organisational culture. In Japan, the task of management is seen as managing the whole complex of human needs, economic, social, psychological, and spiritual. Herbert Simon had long back emphasised the importance of values in the decision making process. Further works have been carried out by Rhenman (1973), Normann (1977), and Kotter and Heskett (1992). The premises of this school are:

- Shared values and beliefs of the members of the organisation define the process of strategy formulation
- These values and beliefs are acquired through interaction in the society and are usually in their subconscious; and
- Strategy is deliberate and takes the form of a collective perspective.

f. The Environmental School

The thinkers of this school propounded that the organisations are passive and react to the changes in their environment. Thus, environment, leadership and the organisation are three forces in shaping the strategy. So, as a contingency theory, it focuses on the situation. The basic premises of this school are:

- The environment holds the center-stage in decision making.

- The organisation either adapts or vanishes.
- The leadership is responsible for analysing the environmental changes and facilitating adapting by organisations.
- Organisations exist till the conditions become too hostile.

13.4.3 The Configuration School

Distinctly different from prescriptive and descriptive schools, the configuration school 'offers the possibility of reconciliation, one way to integrate the messages of other schools' (Mintzberg *et al,* 1998). There are two aspects that describe this school-configuration describing the state of the organisation and its context, and transformation describing the process of strategy making. Some of the premises are mentioned below:

- At a particular point of time the organisation has a stable configuration and structure that fits a particular context and gives rise to a particular strategy.
- Changes in environment induce transformation to another configuration
- The transformations have a pattern or life cycle
- Strategic management involves identifying the occasions for effecting transformation; and
- The resulting strategies can take the form of plans, perspectives, patterns or positions.

13.5 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

It can be appreciated by now that the opportunities for formulation of strategy occur in both private and public sector organisations. Bozeman and Straussman (1990), offered a middle way that public management is most like private management at the operational level and least like it at the strategic level. They argued that strategic public management is guided by four principles:

i) concern with long-term goals

ii) the integration of goals and objectives into a coherent hierarchy

iii) the recognition that strategy is not self implementing;and

iv) an external emphasis on anticipating and shaping environmental change rather than just responding to it.

However, Ranson and Stewart (1994), found three differences in the application of the concept in private and public sectors:

i) Public sector does not always face market choices. In fact often they have to provide services because of market failures. Reliance on public sector enterprises (PSEs) in India in the post independent era was a strategic decision largely due to physical and financial incapacity of the private sector. Another example is that of provision of loans at concessional rates to poor people under Priority Sector Lending. This may not be financially viable for banks but it is a strategy for poverty alleviation.

ii) Public services managers are required to respond to voices raised in the policy arena and not necessarily to the logic of demand and supply. Many loss-making enterprises have been supported by the government in the past, to save

employment of workers. In this case, the strategy was to provide employment. Similarly, Reserve Bank of India keeps a tab on the currency rate so that it does not fall down drastically and remains stable.

iii) While 4 Ps (Purpose, Process, Place and Person) guide the selection of the projects that whether they are viable or not, public sector may not have this choice. Many PSEs were established in backward areas which did not make economic sense, to achieve the strategic objective of balanced regional development. The national governments have to strike a balance between regions in setting development priorities.

Richards and Rodrigues (1993), argue that there are two types of strategies in public services:

Type A: It is driven by centralised planning and control with specific directions for implementation.

Type B: It is driven by market considerations.

Strategic management in private sector attempts to bring drastic changes keeping in view the prevailing environment. Whereas in public sector, a balance has to be struck between change and status quo guided by public policy considerations.

Moore (1995), in his work *Creating Public Value, Strategic Management in Government* considers public managers as strategists rather than technicians. They look out to the value of what they are producing as well as down to the efficacy and propriety of their means. They engage the politics surrounding their organisation to help define public value as well as engineer how their organisations operate. The goal of public managers is considered to be creating public value of the services being provided by them.

13.6 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The strategic management process allows for the structured, systematic and ongoing strategic management of an organisation. The process consists of four phases:

i) Strategic Assessment

ii) Strategic Planning

iii) Strategy Implementation

iv) Performance Evaluation

13.6.1 Strategic Assessment

Strategic assessment is done in three stages.

a. Anticipating Environmental Change

Firstly, the impetus for organisational change (the case for action) is identified. It makes clear why maintaining the status quo is not a viable option for the future. Various techniques are used for this. STEP analysis (Social, Technical, Economic and Political) is useful in this context.

***Social*:** This covers the target clientele, their value systems, their aspiration levels, how they are organised, and the 'power' they can exercise over the decision making process.

***Technical*:** This encompasses the technological developments which may require alteration or altogether abandonment of organisational objectives.

***Economic*:** This refers to changes in the economy generally but also to disparities in income, higher unemployment or diminishing resources.

***Political*:** This includes international agreements, domestic legislation, political values etc.

b. Strategic Analysis

The second step in strategic assessment is to identify and focus on the core purpose of the organisation.The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a useful and powerful tool to analyse consequences of environmental change for the organisation. The SWOT model provides direction and serves as a basis for the development of organisational plans. It accomplishes this by assessing an organisation's strengths (what the organisation can do) and weaknesses (what the organisation cannot do) in addition to opportunities (potential favourable conditions for the organisation) and threats (potential unfavourable conditions for the organisation). The role of SWOT analysis is to take the information from the environmental analysis and separate it into internal issues (strengths and weaknesses) and external issues (opportunities and threats).

c. Strategic Direction

The third step in strategic assessment is to determine the appropriate strategic directions in which the organisation should head and what objectives to achieve. It creates a picture of the desired future. The information developed through techniques like STEP and SWOT is used to review the organisation's mission, set goals, develop strategic vision, and determine the most critical issues the organisation must address if it is going to achieve this vision.

The objective of the strategic direction is to help ensure that the organisation's vision and goals

- are compatible with the organisation's capabilities and complement its culture,
- foster commitment and cooperation among stakeholders; and
- maximise the benefits inherent in environmental opportunities and minimise the risks inherent in environmental threats.

13.6.2 Strategic Planning

After the strategic assessment, the planning activity is undertaken. The most popular technique is Scenario Planning. It deals with creating range of scenarios to cover different situations in terms of favourability – an optimistic scenario, a pessimistic one and one in between these two. Probabilities of occurrence are assigned to each of them.

It has some limitations also. The number of possible situations in the future may be large especially in the case of public management systems, which may require envisioning several scenarios. Besides this, value of a scenario is a function of several variables and it may be beyond the capacities of the strategists to identify all future variables.

Contingency planning is another technique, which in a way supplements the scenario planning. It requires plans to be made for possible damaging combinations of events. For example, construction of nuclear power centres in seismic zones may require contingency plans to be included in case of a disaster.

Strategic Choice

Making strategic choice is the final step in the planning. This choice is again guided by the capacities of the organisations. Different types of organisations may respond

differently in the same environment and often the strategies are better accounted for by prevailing beliefs than by environmental stimuli (Miles and Snow, 1978). Over time, because of this there is strategic drift between environmental change and strategic change.

13.6.3 Strategy Implementation

This involves executing the chosen strategy effectively and efficiently. It encompasses:

- Allocation of sufficient resources- financial, personnel, infrastructure
- Establishing a chain of command or structure to carry out tasks efficiently
- Assigning responsibility for specific tasks or processes to specific individuals or groups
- Managing the process, which includes monitoring results, comparing them with benchmarks and best practices, evaluating the efficacy and efficiency of the process, controlling for variances, and making adjustments to the process as necessary.
- Implementing specific programs, which involves acquiring the requisite resources, developing the process, training, process testing, documentation, and integration with (and/or conversion from) legacy processes.

However, it may be remembered that the delivery of public services requires discretion on the part of frontline professionals or staff at service delivery point. Demands by the clients or technical innovations may have impact on the implementation, which may not necessarily be in consonance with social, political or economic factors considered at the assessment or planning stages.

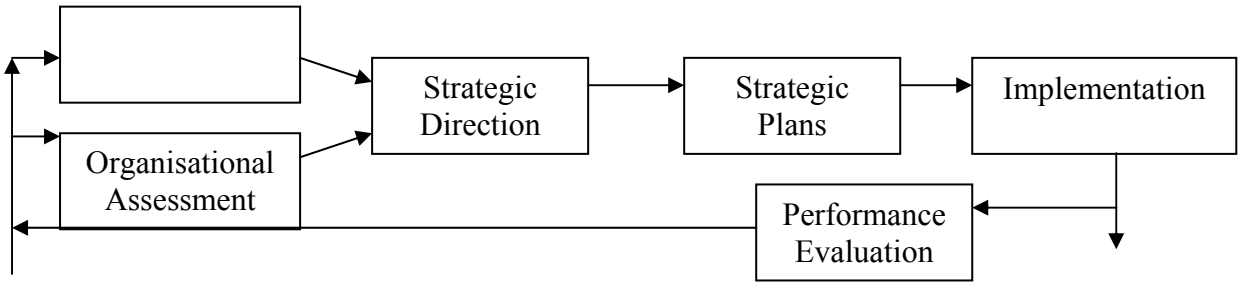
13.6.4 Performance Evaluation

Strategy formation and implementation is an on-going, never-ending, integrated process requiring continuous reassessment and reformation. Performance evaluation system helps in knowing if the plan is being carried out as desired and if it is achieving the desired results. Apparently, it compares actual results and desired results. This subsequently enables the strategists in modifying or introducing corrections in the plan, strategies, resources, and timing, as circumstances warrant.

A system is established to monitor use of resources by the organisation and its efficacy. The monitoring and reporting system is continuous, with periodic output reviewed by teams. However, major evaluations may be conducted on a rather long term basis.

The Strategic Management Model

Morrison and Wilson (1996), devised a comprehensive strategic management model as given below:



As can be seen, the building blocks correspond to the stages discussed above.

13.7 CONCLUSION

Strategic management is dynamic. It involves a complex pattern of actions and reactions. It is partially planned and partially unplanned. Because the environment is constantly changing, effective strategic management requires a continuous flow of new theories suitable for the new circumstances. The problem with most theories is that they solve yesterday's problems. Gary Hamel (2000), laments that strategies converge because the more successful ones get imitated by others who do not understand that the strategic process involves designing a custom strategy for the specifics of each situation. Ten Schools of thought have emerged in the area of strategic planning. Strategies are formulated both in public as well as private sectors. But there is variance in the environment in which they are formulated. Strategic management process is quite comprehensive comprising assessment planning, implementation and evaluation.

13.8 KEY CONCEPTS

Gap Analysis

This brings out the gap or difference between projected outcomes and the desired or needed outcomes arising out of any activity. This could be at times in terms of profits or revenues also.

Institutional Pluralism

It is a situation, wherein multiple institutions ranging from government, private sector, community groups, political parties, NGOs, function pursuing various strategies to achieve the objectives of development. It is the combination of all the efforts that contributes to development.

Intellectual Capital

It is the collective knowledge, experience, skills, competencies and abilities.

Knowledge Worker

A member of an organisation who makes use of knowledge of all varieties in performance of activities.

Learning Organisation

The increasing pace of change on all fronts is making organisations integrate the process of learning from work and give importance to innovation. Learning organisation is one that learns and encourages learning among the people. It promotes exchange of information between employees creating a more knowledgeable work force. A learning organisation is a flexible one and adapts to new ideas and changes through a shared vision. In a learning organisation, there is willingness on the part of

people at all levels, individually and collectively to increase their capacity to produce results.

Management by Objectives

It is a process of agreeing upon the objectives within an organisation, which are jointly determined by superiors and subordinates, periodic review of progress in achievement of objectives, and evaluation of results.

Scenario Analysis

It is the process of analysing possible future events by considering alternative possible outcomes or scenarios. This analysis is designed to facilitate improved decision making through analysis of outcomes and their implications. For example, a financial institution attempts to forecast several possible scenarios for the economy with regard to growth, productivity etc.

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13.10 ACTIVITIES

1. Go through any business magazine, or journal and collect material on strategic planning management processes being brought about in the corporate sector.
2. Visit any public sector enterprise and enquire about strategic planning activity in the organisation.