Strategic management and the mintzberg school of strategic studies: a literature review

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Abstract

Strategic management is a management technique that outlines what an organization does, its reason for existence, and the goals it wants to achieve in the future. When creating strategies to achieve goals in an organization, the first stage involves planning these strategies within the framework of the company's vision, then implementing these planned strategies, and finally, reviewing and monitoring the results of the implementation. Strategic management is a management technique used in making future-oriented decisions in an organization. (Aktan, 2003; Karakaş, 2003; Dinçer, 2003).

These schools, known in the literature as Mintzberg's ten strategic schools, have developed and emerged after the 1960s, contributing to the strategic management literature with different perspectives. Each school has made different contributions to strategy and introduced new concepts. Some of these schools take a predictive approach, focusing on how strategy should (ideally) be formulated. Others, with a descriptive approach, are more concerned with how strategy actually is than how it should be. The later emerging school is the integration school, which attempts to unite all other schools under a single umbrella. This school tries to integrate the strategy-making process, the scope of strategies, organizational structures, and the different elements related to their relationships within separate phases or periods (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, and Lampel, 1998: 5-6). This study will theoretically examine Minzberg schools of thought as an element of strategic management and offer some recommendations.

Keywords: Strategic management, Minzberg's schools, A part of strategic management of Minzberg Ten School

1. Introduction

Globalization, technological advancements, and increasingly uncertain markets clearly demonstrate that both businesses and public institutions cannot survive with short-term responses. Therefore, the need for strategic thinking, long-term direction setting, and consistent decision-making has become central to the management agenda, not only in the private sector but in almost all types of organizations. In this context, the concepts of strategy and strategic management have become fundamental concepts used in both academic literature and practice when discussing organizations' competitive advantage, sustainability, and adaptability (Dursun, 2021: 447; Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 74) [4, 12].

The field of strategic management has rapidly developed since the 1960s, giving rise to numerous definitions, models, and approaches drawing from different theoretical traditions. Studies accumulating around fundamental questions such as how the concept of strategy should be understood, what stages the strategy-making process consists of, and which actors determine this process, have become quite heterogeneous and scattered over time. Sarvan and colleagues state that the different definitions of strategy, the different descriptions of the strategy-making process, and the divergent strategy proposals in the strategic management literature create a certain confusion for both students and practitioners (Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 74) [12]. Similarly, İdil emphasizes that while attempts are

made to classify the views developed in the literature on strategic management thought according to various criteria, a holistic framework to bring this diversity together is important (İdil, 2007: 3) [6].

In this context, Henry Mintzberg stands out not only as a name who added new concepts to strategic management thought, but also as a thinker who tried to systematize the theoretical diversity in the field. Dursun states that Mintzberg, with his "ten schools of strategy" approach, offers a framework that sheds light on the complex structure of the strategy-making process and makes it possible to see different lines of thought together (Dursun, 2021: 447) [4]. According to İdil, Mintzberg, particularly in his 1990 work, grouped the ideas in the field of strategic management under certain schools, interpreting the 1980s as a threshold year in which the positional school was institutionalized and a new era began in the literature (İdil, 2007: 37) [6]. Hattangadi, on the other hand, emphasizes that the "Ten Schools of Thought" model offers a comprehensive framework that allows for the classification of the field of strategic management and a critical discussion of the perspective of each school, thus facilitating a better understanding of the overall picture (Hattangadi, 2017: 32) [5]. Mintzberg's contributions are not limited to strategy schools; his studies analyzing the daily activities and roles of managers within organizations have also been influential in shaping contemporary management thought. Şeker states that

Mintzberg, by classifying managers' jobs under ten distinct roles, demonstrates that management activities are not merely a set of technical decisions, but also a process in which interpersonal relationships, information flow, and decision-making dimensions are intertwined (Şeker, 2014: 14-15) [13]. This situation shows that Mintzberg offers a micro and macro-level perspective on both how organizations are managed and how strategies are formed, making the analysis of strategy schools' part of a broader intellectual framework (Dursun, 2021: 447) [4].

Given the richness and diversity in the strategic management literature, it can be said that Mintzberg's approach of ten strategy schools provides both an instructive and critical framework for understanding the field. These schools allow for the consideration of, on the one hand, "prescriptive" approaches such as design, planning, and positioning; on the other hand, the more descriptive aspects of the entrepreneurial, cognitive, learning, power, cultural, and environmental schools; and finally, the integrative framework of the formalization school (Dursun, 2021: 448; Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 75; İdil, 2007: 13; Hattangadi, 2017: 32-33) [4, 12, 6, 5]. The aim of this article is to examine these ten schools of strategic management in terms of their fundamental assumptions, their understanding of strategy formulation, and their contributions to the strategic management literature, and to evaluate the field of strategic management from a more holistic perspective by discussing the relationships between these schools of thought (Dursun, 2021: 447; Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 74) [4, 12].

2. The emergence of school approaches in strategic management thought

In the field of strategic management, the concept of "school" is used to name lines of thought that share similar assumptions, questions, and methods in a given period. Hattangadi defines the expression "school of thought" as an intellectual tradition that shares a common perspective and conceptual language, and sees Mintzberg's model of ten schools of strategy as a framework that allows for the classification of the field of strategic management (Hattangadi, 2017: 32) [5]. Thus, the seemingly scattered literature is gathered under ten separate schools with specific focuses, and the unique contributions of each school to strategy become more visible (Mintzberg *et al*., 1998: 1-5) [17].

However, the roots of the concept of strategy are much older than the discipline of strategic management. According to İdil, the word strategy originates from Ancient Greece; it carries meanings such as "directing, guiding, leading, ruling person," and is considered to be derived from the concept of strategos (Dinçer, 2003: 16) [3]. On the other hand, the widespread use of the concept in business and management literature began in the Second World War. The accelerated competition and corporate growth processes in the post-World War II period, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, are reflected in this historical background, which shows that strategic management thought is too multi-layered to be reduced to a single founding figure or text. As the strategic management literature has grown and diversified both quantitatively and qualitatively since the

1960s, different definitions, process descriptions, and strategy proposals have accumulated side by side. Sarvan *et al*. emphasize that the different definitions of the concept of strategy and the various descriptions of the strategy-setting process from the 1960s to the present day can become a significant source of confusion for students and practitioners (Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 74) [12]. Within this diversity, ten schools of strategic management, considered influential, have emerged over time; each has made unique contributions to the literature with its own assumptions, key concepts, and strategy proposals (Mintzberg *et al*., 1998: 1-5) [17]. At this point, Kahveci's observation is critical: None of the different perspectives developed to explain strategy are sufficient on their own to fully define the concept; each should be seen as a part that completes the whole (Kahveci, 2008: 3) [8]. As Mintzberg has argued since the 1980s, strategy can be understood as a plan, a position, a perspective, or a pattern that emerges in organizational behavior, and each of these meanings is emphasized by different schools (Mintzberg, 1987) [9]. Therefore, the ten-school model, rather than imposing a single "correct" definition of strategy, functions as a classification that allows us to systematically see these different meanings side by side (Dursun, 2021: 447) [4].

Idil, while examining the historical development of strategic management, considers the period between 1960 and 1980 as a particularly critical period. According to her, a significant portion of the studies conducted until this period are normative approaches that focus on "how strategy should be"; In other words, the models are largely theoretical and prescriptive in nature (Geyik, 2006: 36) [7]. This normative approach has been shaped especially around the design and planning schools; it has brought to the forefront a long-term, rational planning understanding that attempts to harmonize environmental conditions with the internal resources of the enterprise (Ansoff, 1965; Mintzberg *et al*., 1998: 24) [17].

The historical origins of the design school are based on Selznick's work emphasizing the organization's "distinguishing competencies" and the harmony between internal resources and environmental expectations (Selznick, 1957) and Chandler's work Strategy and Structure, in which he examined the strategy-structure relationship in large American industrial enterprises (Selznick, 1957; Chandler, 1962; cited in Mintzberg *et al*., 1998: 24) [17]. While Selznick put forward the idea of building policy within the social structure of the organization; Chandler reframed this idea within the concept of business strategy, developing the argument that structure should follow strategy (Chandler, 1962; cited in Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 75) [12]. According to Dursun, these contributions provide important historical foundations for the strategy-structure relationship, which Mintzberg would later elaborate on in the formative school (Dursun, 2021: 449) [4].

The planning school, on the other hand, is placed in a separate category with Ansoff's Corporate Strategy work in 1965. While Mintzberg and his colleagues differentiate Ansoff's work from the ideas of the design school, they state that both schools approach strategy with a prescriptive, or rule-setting, perspective (İdil, 2007: 14) [6]. According to İdil, Ansoff's

engineering and mathematics-based education, combined with his strategic planning assignments for NATO, led him to view strategy as a highly rational and formal long-term planning process (İdil, 2007: 14) [6]. Therefore, the planning school, similar to the design school, represents a strategic understanding in which top management pre-designs the future and directs the organization through detailed plans (Ansoff, 1990) [2].

This prescriptive approach was further developed in the 1970s by Harvard's business policy and Andrews' work. Andrews emphasizes that strategy is a general classification of goals and overall outlook that show how a company should operate within the business world, and that the CEO's primary task is to define, review, and implement these goals (Andrews, 1971: 23-28) [1]. At the same time, the assessment of opportunities and threats, along with their strengths and weaknesses, lays the groundwork for what is now known as SWOT analysis (İdil, 2007: 13) [6]. This body of knowledge strengthens the foundation of both design and planning systems and leads to the establishment of a predominantly prescriptive organizational model in management education (Sarvan et al., 2003: 74-75) [12].

Mintzberg et al., in evaluating the development of this knowledge, primarily classify the first three schools – design, planning, and position schools – as "prescriptive" (rule-based) schools. The question is how the procedures of these schools emerged and how they are currently formulated; that is, the strategy-making process is considered a prescriptive mental activity (Dursun, 2021: 447) [4]. In contrast, the entrepreneurship, nutrition, power, cultural, and environmental schools are of a higher standard and try to find out how strategy is formed in practice (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 6) [17]. Finally, the shaping school offers an integrative framework that brings together nine schools containing both predictive and corrective characteristics (Dursun, 2021: 448) [4].

In summary, the emergence of schools within creative management thinking is; The shift from traditional military and political strategic thinking to prescriptive models focused on design and planning in the business field from the 1960s onwards, the institutionalization of Harvard policy and Ansoff's planning regime, followed by the proliferation of descriptive roles and further research in the 1970s and 1980s, and ultimately Mintzberg's integration of these diverse approaches under the umbrella of a school of thought, can be explained by these factors (Geyik, 2006: 36; Mintzberg et al., 1998: 1-6; Dursun, 2021: 447-448) [7, 17, 4]. The Download Management School model, as a framework that both summarizes and critically reinterprets this structural process, is discussed in the subsequent summarized version of the article.

3. Mintzberg's ten strategic management schools: key assumptions and main concepts

Mintzberg's ten-school approach makes it possible to see very different views on the strategy-making process within a single framework. The design, planning, and positioning schools are considered as predictive approaches that define strategy in terms of "how it should be," while the entrepreneurial,

cognitive, learning, power, cultural, and environmental schools are classified as descriptive approaches that attempt to explain "how strategy emerges" in organizational practice. The last school, the configuration school, offers an integrative framework that brings together these nine approaches in terms of both structure and process (Dursun, 2021: 448; Sarvan et al., 2003: 74) [4, 12]. According to the table presented by Dursun, the design school views strategy as "an understanding process," the planning school as "a formal process," the positioning school as "an analytical process," the entrepreneurship school as "a vision creation process," the cognitive school as "a mental process," the learning school as "an emerging process," the power school as "a negotiation process," the cultural school as "a collective process," the environmental school as "a reactive process," and the formative school as "a transformation process" (Mintzberg, 1998: 5) [17]. Below, the basic assumptions and main concepts that briefly summarize each school's perspective on strategy are discussed.

3.1. Design school

The design school is considered both the earliest historically emerging line of thought and one that profoundly influenced subsequent strategic management approaches. In this school, strategy is designed as the product of the "harmony" to be achieved between the organization's internal resources and capabilities and environmental opportunities and threats. According to Sarvan et al., the fundamental concepts of the design school are based on Selznick's Leadership in Administration (1957) and Chandler's Strategy and Structure (1962); while Selznick discusses the organization's "distinctive competences" and the harmony between internal resources and environmental expectations, Chandler institutionalized these ideas with the argument that "structure should follow strategy" (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 24) [17]. Therefore, in the design school, strategy formulation is conceived as a conscious and conceptual process in which top management synthesizes the organization's internal and external conditions to develop the "most suitable" design (Sarvan et al., 2003: 75) [12]. Hattangadi defines the design school as an approach that views strategy formulation as a "conceptual design process" and seeks a "fit" between internal capabilities and external resources. Within this framework, the CEO or senior management is seen as the main actor in both the design and implementation of the strategy; strategy formulation is a process that should be conscious, planned, and kept as simple as possible (Hattangadi, 2017: 32) [5]. The typical assumption of the design school is that strategies will be successful if they are clear, simple, and consistent; and that the implementation phase begins after the strategy formulation is complete (Sarvan et al., 2003: 75; Hattangadi, 2017: 32) [12, 5].

3.2. Planning school

The planning school transforms the conceptual framework of the design school into a more formal and detailed process. In this school, strategy formulation is treated as a formal and systematic planning process consisting of clearly defined steps.

İdil states that Ansoff's Corporate Strategy (1965) is considered the foundational text of the planning school, and that in this approach, strategy is formally constructed through long-term goals, budgets, programs, and detailed plans (İdil, 2007: 15) [6]. According to Ansoff, strategy is defined as the set of decisions that a firm develops to overcome the problems related to the product mix it produces for the market it operates in, which reflects the planning school's emphasis on internal consistency, rationality, and predictability (Ansoff, 1990: 18) [2].

The distinguishing feature of the planning school is that it views strategy formulation as a separate activity carried out by expert planners within the organization, based on formal procedures. Hattangadi emphasizes that in this school of thought, the entire process is documented from beginning to end, strategic plans become the main point of reference for new decisions, and the planning function plays a key role in determining the long-term direction (Hattangadi, 2017: 32-33) [5]. Sarvan et al. also state that while the planning school shares the basic assumptions of the design school, it emphasizes that planning should be carried out through formal goals and detailed processes, thus making a clear distinction between strategy formulation and implementation (Sarvan et al., 2003: 76) [12]. This perspective largely treats strategic management as a matter of "planning for the future" and is based on the assumption of a predictable environment (İdil, 2007: 14) [6].

3.3. Positioning school

The position school stands out as an approach that shifts strategy discussions from the "process" dimension to the "content" dimension. Industrial organization theory and Michael Porter's 1980 work, Competitive Strategy, have been decisive in the development of this school. Sarvan et al. state that the position school essentially became a separate school of thought with Porter's model of competitive strategies, which defines strategy content through "general positions" (generic strategies) within the market (Porter, 1980). İdil also emphasizes that Porter, while inheriting the rational and analytical tradition of the planning school, reshaped this tradition through industry structure, competitive forces, and positioning analyses (İdil, 2007: 17-18) [6].

According to Hattangadi, in the position school, the entire focus is on strategy content; when business management decides how to position its products and services in the market, it analyzes the position of competitors, the industry structure, and the level of competition. In this context, tools such as Porter's Five Forces model, value chain analysis, and the BCG matrix stand out as fundamental analytical tools of the position school; after analyzing the market, an attempt is made to select the appropriate position that will provide the firm with a competitive advantage (Hattangadi, 2017: 33) [5]. In the classification cited by Dursun, the position school also considers strategy formulation as a data-intensive process based on analytical calculations and identifies the strategy with the "generic position" selected as a result of these calculations (Dursun, 2021: 448) [4].

3.4. Entrepreneurial school

The entrepreneurial school views strategy as a process shaped around the vision of the leader at the top of the organization. According to this approach, strategy formulation is largely guided by the intuition, experience, and future-oriented mental vision of a charismatic leader (often the CEO). Hattangadi states that in the entrepreneurial school, strategy formulation is defined as a "visionary process," and in this process, the leader's long-term sense of direction and picture of the organization's future are decisive (Hattangadi, 2017: 33) [5]. Strategy often emerges in the leader's mind as a result of unconscious accumulation and intuitive assessments, not fully formulated; a general orientation and the ability to see opportunities are prioritized over detailed plans (Sarvan et al., 2003: 78) [12].

In this school, the capacity to take risks, seize opportunities, and move the organization into new areas is closely linked to the leader's personal characteristics. Entrepreneurship school offers a functional framework for explaining the impact of a single individual's vision on determining the strategic direction of an organization, especially in young and growth-oriented businesses (Dursun, 2021: 448; Hattangadi, 2017: 33) [4, 5]. Conversely, this heavy reliance on a single actor to determine strategy is also open to criticism in the literature, as it relatively downplays the roles of organizational learning, internal participation, and institutional structures (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 139-140) [17].

3.5. Cognitive school

The cognitive school of thought views the strategy-making process primarily as a product of individual mental processes and cognitive structures. This approach focuses on how managers perceive the environment, how they process information, and how they make sense of it through their own mental models. Hattangadi points out that the cognitive school is linked to cognitive studies that examine the perceptions and behaviors of individuals, and that models such as the Johari window can be used to better understand employees, suppliers, and customers within an organization. Similarly, it is stated that the Howard–Sheth consumer behavior model can also be considered within the framework of the cognitive school, as this model attempts to explain consumer product preferences under conditions of limited information and limited processing capacity (Hattangadi, 2017: 34) [5].

In this school of thought, strategies are shaped through schemas, maps, and cognitive structures formed in the minds of managers; therefore, strategic errors are often associated with cognitive biases, stereotyped thinking patterns, and false assumptions (Sarvan et al., 2003: 79) [12]. The contribution of the cognitive school of thought is that it attempts to understand strategy not only through external data and rational calculations but also through the "limitations of the human mind." However, Hattangadi points out that the cognitive model may have limitations in practice; it is difficult for large companies to generate new ideas and build relationships with customers based solely on surveys and market research (Hattangadi, 2017: 34) [5].

3.6. Learning school

The learning school of thought defines strategy development not as a plan formulated all at once, but as a learning process that evolves over time and is shaped by experience. In this approach, the environment is complex and unpredictable, and information is scattered and fragmented within the organization; therefore, it is emphasized that developing strategy with tight, centralized, top-down control is not possible (Dursun, 2021: 448) [4]. Hattangadi states that organizations adopting the learning school of thought learn from their own past experiences as well as from successful or unsuccessful examples in the market when developing strategies, thus the strategy gradually takes shape based on "learned from the past" (Hattangadi, 2017: 34) [5].

In this school of thought, strategy often has an "emergent" quality; instead of predetermining every step, top management changes direction with minor adjustments based on feedback from different units of the organization and environmental signals. In the classification cited by Dursun, the learning school defines strategy formation not as a pre-planned design, but rather as the recognition of patterns that emerge during the implementation process and the development of new orientations based on these patterns (Mintzberg, 1998: 5) [10].

3.7. Power school

The power school is an approach that interprets the strategy-making process through internal and external power relations, coalitions, and conflicts within an organization. In this school, strategy emerges not from rational compromise, but from bargaining and negotiation processes between different interest groups. Hattangadi emphasizes that the power school views strategy design as a political process; customers, suppliers, labor unions, or powerful leaders within the organization are the main actors shaping the strategy (Hattangadi, 2017: 34) [5]. Strategy making is seen as a negotiation arena intertwined with the formation of interest coalitions, the shaping of alliances, and different groups trying to promote their own interests (Sarvan et al., 2003: 80) [12].

Within this framework, the power school emphasizes that strategic decisions are often made according to the balance of power, deviating from "ideal rationality"; This offers a useful perspective for explaining how strategy, especially in large organizations and public institutions, emerges as a result of actual power relations rather than formal plans (Sarvan et al., 2003: 80; Hattangadi, 2017: 34) [12, 5].

3.8. Cultural school

The cultural school views strategy as a process closely related to shared values, beliefs, and norms within the organization. In this approach, human capital and organizational culture are seen as fundamental determinants of strategy formulation. Hattangadi states that the cultural school considers "human capital as the most important element"; that a positive organizational culture fosters innovation and entrepreneurship; and that strategy becomes a perspective shaped within the shared world of meaning among members (Hattangadi, 2017: 35) [5]. Strategy is seen as the institutionalized expression of a perspective passed down from generation to generation through the organization's historical experiences, myths, symbols, and rituals (Sarvan et al., 2003: 81) [12].

In this school, strategy formulation progresses through social interaction processes involving individuals, shared meanings, and the organization's unique sense of "we." It is emphasized that the compatibility of different company cultures is crucial for strategic success, especially in merger and acquisition processes, and therefore, significant problems can arise if the cultural dimension is ignored (Hattangadi, 2017: 35) [5]. The cultural school's contribution lies in its strong inclusion of sociological dimensions such as values, identity, and belonging in strategy discussions.

3.9. Environmental school

The environmental school is an approach that argues that environmental conditions are the primary determinant in the strategy-making process. In this school, the organization is largely positioned as a "reactive" actor that must adapt to environmental pressures; therefore, strategy is seen as a response to the conditions imposed by the external environment rather than an active choice of the organization (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 258-262) [17]. Hattangadi states that the environmental school offers a situational perspective and that the environment necessarily reshapes the strategy, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors where specialized knowledge becomes scarce or rapidly outdated (Hattangadi, 2017: 35) [5]. For example, in the IT sector, employees' knowledge and skills need to be constantly updated; in conditions where specialized knowledge decreases or demand increases, the organization's strategy is re-engineered according to these environmental realities (Hattangadi, 2017: 35) [5]. In Dursun's classification, the environmental school also treats strategy making as a "reactive process"; It is assumed that the organization must adapt to environmental selection pressures in order to survive (Dursun, 2021: 448) [4].

3.10. Configuration school

The configuration school is an approach that attempts to explain strategy and organizational structure through "holistic configurations" by bringing together the contributions of the previous nine schools. Dursun states that this school has both predictive and descriptive characteristics; it emphasizes that elements such as the strategy-formulation process, the content of strategies, and organizational structure should be considered together (Dursun, 2021: 448-449) [4]. In this framework, organizations operate under relatively stable "structure-strategy-culture" combinations during certain periods; the occasional ruptures and transformations represent a transition to new configurations (Sarvan et al., 2003: 82) [12].

According to Hattangadi, the configuration school accepts that each of the other nine schools may be valid in certain situations and argues that the strategy-formulation process cannot be explained from a single perspective. Strategy development is related to the organization's ability to create a strategic orientation appropriate to the structure it adopts in a particular context, manage periods of stability, and successfully carry out

transformation processes when necessary (Hattangadi, 2017: 36) [5]. Therefore, the formalist school views strategy as a "transformation process" and positions the essence of strategic management in its capacity to manage transitions between periods of stability and periods of change (Dursun, 2021: 448-449; Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 82) [4, 12].

4. Criticisms and current debates regarding mintzberg's strategy schools

Although Mintzberg's framework of ten strategic management schools is widely accepted in the literature, there are various criticisms directed at both the individual schools and the overall classification attempt. Generally speaking, criticisms directed at the predictive (design, planning, positioning), descriptive (entrepreneurial, cognitive, learning, power, cultural, environmental), and integrative (formative) schools have different focuses. The main axes of this debate are the criticism that predictive schools risk being overly rational and remaining "on paper," that descriptive schools are limited in terms of implementation and prescription, and that the formalist school oversimplifies complex reality (Mintzberg *et al*., 1998: 5-6; Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 74) [17, 12].

4.1. Main criticisms of predictive schools

The design school, while conceptualizing strategy as a "design of harmony" between internal and external environments, is criticized for some of its assumptions about the process. Sarvan *et al*. state that in this school, the processes of strategy development and implementation are sharply separated; thought and action are disconnected; the organization is treated as a "case study"; and strategy is framed within a process where one person designs and others implement. This situation presents strategy as a one-way process where top management designs and lower levels are merely implementers; it relegates the role of organizational learning, feedback, and participatory decision-making mechanisms to the background (Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 77) [12].

Despite these criticisms, Sarvan *et al*. emphasize that the design school has made significant contributions to the discipline by introducing concepts such as environmental analysis, distinctive capabilities, opportunities, and threats to the literature and making the strategy-structure relationship visible. Although the model's oversimplification and "top management-centric" structure are questioned, it is stated that the idea of external opportunities-internal capabilities alignment has become a cornerstone of the strategic management discipline (Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 77) [12]. In this respect, the design school represents a starting point that is both criticized and still largely referenced. Criticisms of the planning school, on the other hand, mainly concern the fact that rigid and long-term plans do not work in practice in conditions where environmental uncertainty and the speed of change increase. Hattangadi sees the critical point of the planning school in the fragility that emerges "when an unexpected situation arises"; he states that detailed plans made years in advance quickly lose their validity in the face of sudden changes in the industry or organization, and therefore planning

can only be meaningful if it is based on accurate and precise predictions. In variable and complex environments, the inability to predict an internal or external variable can lead to the breakdown of the entire plan in a chain reaction (Hattangadi, 2017: 33) [5]. Similarly, Sarvan *et al*. state that the planning school views strategy as a long-term formal planning process divided into stages, relying heavily on steps such as setting objectives, environmental analyses, risk calculations, and budget creation; however, in real life, strategy development often does not operate in such a linear and predictable manner (Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 78) [12]. Within this framework, the main criticism directed at the planning school is that it reduces strategy to a bureaucratic "plan-making" activity and does not adequately reflect the dynamic, conflictual, and learning-oriented nature of implementation.

The position school, on the other hand, receives criticism for its content-oriented and highly analytical approach. It is noted that Porter's competitive advantage, five forces model, and generic strategies framework, while representing a significant conceptual contribution, risk overshadowing organizational processes and learning dynamics (Porter, 1980) [11]. Sarvan and colleagues argue that the position school's models, developed through industry structure and competitive forces, define strategy based on the position of competitors and the structure of the market; While this approach is particularly explanatory in mature and relatively stable industries, it can lead to flexibility problems in areas experiencing rapid technological change (Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 80) [12]. Therefore, a common criticism of predictive schools is that they over-rationalize strategy and do not adequately account for environmental uncertainty and organizational policies.

4.2. Limitations and controversial aspects of descriptive schools

Descriptive schools of thought, in contrast to predictive approaches, attempt to explain how strategies actually emerge through internal organizational processes and the interaction between actors. While the learning school views strategy as patterns that emerge over time; the power school interprets strategy through coalitions and bargaining processes; the cultural school through shared values and meanings; and the environmental school within the framework of external pressure (Dursun, 2021: 448) [4]. This framework provides an important correction by showing that strategy formation is not "designed" from a single center; however, descriptive schools also have their own limitations. The power school, while treating strategy as the product of power balances, coalitions, and conflicts between internal and external actors, often fails to develop clear normative recommendations on "what should be done." Hattangadi notes that this school places the strategy process in a political arena; it is useful for understanding negotiations between unions, suppliers, customers, and powerful leaders, but offers only limited positive prescriptions to guide practitioners (Hattangadi, 2017: 34) [5]. Similarly, while the cognitive school explains strategy failures through cognitive biases and mental models, it is open to criticism for

not offering practical tools on how to overcome these biases (Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 79) [12].

The environmental school, on the other hand, is criticized for positioning the organization as a largely passive actor reacting to external conditions. Sarvan and colleagues particularly point out that the population ecology approach emphasizes "the selection of the strongest among the adaptable organizations, not every adaptable organization," but does not offer a satisfactory explanation for organizations that cannot adapt. Similarly, although the reasons for the emergence and proliferation of organizations are mostly based on entrepreneurs and innovators, it is criticized that these factors are not given enough attention in population ecology theory, thus exaggerating the emphasis on environmental selection (Sarvan *et al*., 2003: 104) [12]. These criticisms show that the environmental school relegates the organization's internal capacity and entrepreneurial and innovative activities to a relatively secondary position in strategy development. Although the learning school offers a significant alternative to predictive models by defining strategy as an "emerging" process, it risks blurring the line between strategy and "trial and error" when taken to extremes. Within the framework described by Dursun, the strategy development process in the learning school works by recognizing behavioral patterns that emerge in practice and then labeling these as strategies (Mintzberg, 1998: 5) [17]. While this perspective is particularly fruitful for understanding innovation and adaptation processes, it is debated because it may weaken the relationship between strategy and predetermined goals, vision, and normative preferences.

4.3. The formalist school and classification debates

The configuration school is both the most comprehensive and the most controversial component of Mintzberg's ten strategy schools model. This school brings together the contributions of nine different schools, grouping organizations under specific "configurations" and conceptualizing strategy as a transformation process. As Dursun emphasizes, the configuration approach argues that organizations operate under specific structure-strategy-culture combinations during relatively stable periods, while environmental changes radically transform these configurations from time to time (Dursun, 2021: 449) [4].

Despite this comprehensive framework, there are significant criticisms of the configuration school. Dursun notes that Donaldson criticizes the school's fundamental assumptions by arguing that it evaluates theories according to a single criterion of truth, while Mintzberg and his colleagues remind us that theories are "words and pictures on paper," and reality is a much more complex structure (Mintzberg *et al*., 1998: 345) [10]. From Donaldson's perspective, the problem is that the Formative School relies too heavily on specific typologies when explaining the relationship between organizational structure and strategy; in contrast, Mintzberg argues that these typologies were developed not to reflect reality exactly, but to make complex reality more understandable (Dursun, 2021: 458) [4].

The second important criticism directed at the Formative School concerns its claim of "simplification." As Dursun points out, any classification is actually an arbitrary process reflecting the preferences of the classifier; therefore, it is argued that the classification made under ten schools does not fully grasp the entire complexity of reality and inevitably simplifies the diversity in the world of strategy (Mintzberg *et al*., 1998: 345) [17]. In contrast, Dursun states that despite all these criticisms, the Formative School offers two fundamental contributions to strategic management thought: Firstly, by considering the strategy development process together with organizational transformation, it provides a holistic perspective that includes culture, structure, systems, and human resources; Secondly, it brings order to the scattered literature by relating different schools of strategy within a single framework (Dursun, 2021: 458-459) [4].

Hattangadi also states that the configuration school partially attempts to resolve the conflict between emerging and intentional strategies; it draws attention to emerging strategies more during periods of stability, and intentional strategies in which top management and consultants play a role during transition periods. However, this school is also criticized for defining the distinction between periods of stability and transition with too rigid lines, arguing that organizations do not actually live in such clear "phases" (Hattangadi, 2017: 33) [5].

Finally, the classification effort itself is at the center of current discussions. Kahveci emphasizes that in the evolution of strategic management thought, there are various approaches that criticize each other, such as rational planning, emerging strategy, core competencies, and competitive positioning, and that none of these approaches alone is sufficient to explain the phenomenon of strategy as a whole (Kahveci, 2008: 4) [8]. This observation suggests that Mintzberg's ten-school model should be read not as an absolute "correct framework," but as an attempt at classification that opens the field to debate and makes different perspectives visible. In this context, Mintzberg's schools of strategy continue to be both a powerful teaching tool and a focus of critical discussions. Criticisms directed at both predictive and descriptive approaches point to the fact that the concept of strategy is too rich and multifaceted to be reduced to a single school of thought.

5. Result and Conclusion

The conceptual diversity in the field of strategic management demonstrates that no single theoretical approach is sufficient to fully explain organizational reality. The design, planning, positional, entrepreneurial, cognitive, learning, power, cultural, environmental, and formative schools, emerging in different periods and contexts, offer distinct yet complementary answers to the questions of what strategy is and how it is formed. In this context, Mintzberg's framework of ten schools of strategy functions as an explanatory map that, rather than dissecting strategic management thought, attempts to show how the existing parts form a whole. Throughout the study, the distinction between predictive and descriptive schools highlights the tension between "how strategy should be" and "how it actually emerges." The design, planning, and positional

schools center on a rational, planned, top-management-oriented, and largely predictable understanding of strategy. In contrast, the entrepreneurial, cognitive, learning, power, cultural, and environmental schools emphasize that strategy is shaped within uncertainty, conflict, learning, values, and environmental pressures. The formalist school of thought brings these two main approaches together through the configurations that organizations adopt during specific periods and the transformation processes that occur between these configurations. This allows for a simultaneous understanding of both the order and change dimensions of strategic management.

The findings reveal that each school of thought simultaneously contains both contributions and limitations. Predictive schools of thought offer a strong framework, especially in situations where objectives are clear, the environment is relatively stable, and formal planning is possible. However, these schools of thought risk oversimplifying and bureaucratizing strategy in complex and rapidly changing environments. Descriptive schools of thought successfully capture the formation of strategy within organizational practice, power relations, culture, and learning processes, but often fall short in producing normative recommendations that guide practitioners. This picture indicates that searching for a single "correct" school of thought in strategic management is unrealistic, and that a contextually sensitive and pluralistic approach will yield healthier results. This article aims to contribute to a more organized framework for the often scattered concepts and debates in strategic management literature by comparatively examining Mintzberg's ten schools of strategy. Placing the schools' core assumptions, understandings of strategy formulation, and critical perspectives side-by-side reduces the tendency to view strategy in a one-dimensional way for both researchers and practitioners, offering a more nuanced assessment of which perspective might be more explanatory in different situations. Thus, it becomes clearer that both theoretical richness and practical flexibility must be considered together in the field of strategic management. In conclusion, Mintzberg's ten schools of strategy approach is considered not a final and immutable classification, but rather a dynamic frame of reference that opens up discussion on strategic management thought. Future studies that empirically examine how these schools manifest in different sectors, different types of organizations, and different cultural contexts will contribute to narrowing the gap between strategy theory and practice. At the same time, questioning the extent to which new phenomena such as digitalization, sustainability, network organizations, and platform economies can be explained within the existing school framework increases the capacity of strategic management literature to renew itself. Such a perspective makes it possible both to use Mintzberg's classification more productively and to adapt the understanding of strategy to a changing world.

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