IMPORTANCE OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: THE PRACTICE IN TURKISH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Borders lost their importance in economic, social, political and cultural relations as a result of globalization. Due to this fact; a crisis emerging in a country affects other countries; and also a crisis or fluctuations especially in large companies affects other companies and the others in relationship with them. In this age of rapid changes and information; the data to reach organizations frequently change and the new information invalidates the old one. For this reason, private or public organization, then, have to track and evaluate all changes in the internal and external environment and set strategies and goals according to these changes to maintain their activity. Public institutions, as well as the enterprises operating in the private sector, need to; benefit from the crisis management models, tend to work on this issue, and prepare their organizations for external usual changes and crisis situations. If the organizations lag behind the changes in the internal and external environment, and are not ready for the unexpected situations that they had not planned; they face crises.

Public administrations have difficulty in making the flexible and speed requiring decisions and fulfilling the needed actions in crisis situations due to their structure, which resist change and is limited with legal regulations. Internal causes resulting from staff and organizational structure; and the external causes arising from social, political, administrative, financial, and economic reasons, lead public organizations into crisis. However, when crisis management in public administration is the subject; generally the practices in the field of disaster management come forward.

In this study, after stating the concept of crisis, its features, the theoretical framework of crisis management, importance crisis management, which is a more complex model than disaster management, in public administration will be focused. The situation about crisis management implementations in turkish public administration practice and the necessary practices and regulations will be examined.

Keywords: crisis, crisis management, crisis and crisis management in public administration, crisis management in turkish public administration.

Introduction

Crises can emerge due to; not only organizational structure clumsiness and insufficient management, but also general economic uncertainty and volatility, technological developments, political, legal, social and cultural changes, strong competition arising from the disadvantages and effects from international environment. A strategic gap emerges, if organization experiencing constant change of environment cannot keep up and handle with that. The occurrence and severity of the crisis, depends on the degree of dependence between the organization and its environment, crisis perception level of the organization, and the response of the organization to the crisis.

If enterprises operating in the private sector and the agencies, and public interest aimed institutions providing public sector goods and services lag behind the internal and external environment changes and are not prepared for the unexpected situations, which emerge out of their plans, they face crises.

I. Crisis concept and its properties

In general terms, crisis represents an unstable structure and status, which does not operate properly and requires a reform. Crisis can be defined as an emergency situation of discomfort, which emerges suddenly and threatens the ordinary functioning of the organization. The origin of the concept of crisis is the ancient greek word "*krisis*" that means "decision". The concept of crisis is a change, which can wholly or partly affect the integrity and functioning of an organization. An organization (structure) in crisis is moved away from the old status, but also it cannot be considered to gain a new status. In fact, even the probable direction of change is not clear yet (genç , 2005: 334). The crisis is the situation which is not foreseeable and is unexpected. It is the case for the organization to respond immediately. Crisis is a position of threaten and stress for the current values and goals of the organization, which makes the organization's prevention and adaptation mechanisms. The concepts such as stress, anxiety and panic are emotional reflections to emerge during the crisis (tağraf and arslan, 2003: 150). Crisis is an unusual state and process of stress, which is brought forward by the strategic gap due to lack of adaption with the changes occurring in the environment. In crisis situations everyday functioning and current structure begins to be deteriorated, fast decision making is required, and the managerial bodies have difficulty in decision making.

Crisis is a condition that causes stress. It threats the survival of the organization, endangers the most important goals of it. In case of a crisis, the constancy of the prediction and prevention mechanisms of the organization become inadequate and emergency reaction is required. According to that definition main characteristics of a crisis are (can, 1999: 315; şimşek, 2002: 326);

➢ Crisis is unpredictable and the organization's foresight and prevention is insufficient,
➢ It threatens organization's survival and targets,
➢ Lack of sufficient resources, information and time to solve the problem,
➢ Need of emergency intervention and
➢ Causing stress for the management.

Crisis is an extraordinary period with almost all of those features. This situation also shows that; in the occurrence stage of the crisis routine management process continues in the organization, some incorrect decisions are taken, the formations and changes in the external environment are not predicted and observed taking enough care (tağraf and arslan, 2003: 151).

Ii. Crisis management

Crisis management, involves the activities to be done in terms of; sensing and evaluating the signs of a possible crisis, making provisions and taking the actions, in order to cause the organization to get rid of the crisis with the least damage (pearson and clair, 1998: 61). An effective crisis management requires being prepared for the crisis and having plans before. Crisis management activities are the studies for pre-determination of potential crisis situations and deciding how to deal with them. Organizations, should allocate the necessary resources against possible crisis situations, create infrastructure systems and be equipped. One of the most important factor in coping with the crisis, is the organizations management's being knowledgeable and skilled about the subjects of preparedness for and management in times of crisis (sezgin, 2003: 181). In other words, crisis management is a management model improved for efficiently getting rid of the unusual situations, which emerge suddenly, disrupt routine functioning, increase risk, stress and conflict, and therefore makes decision making difficult.

Iii. Crisis management approaches

One of the main features of crisis management should be perception of crisis signals and prevention of crisis, when detected. An organization's priority is not to face crisis situations if possible. However, despite all the measures if the crisis is faced, to the way out of the crisis with a minimum loss, should be searched (tekin and serenler, 2008: 232). The features of the situation do not change, for a fear crisis or opportunity. Usual responses are not enough; there is the lack of a system to manage change in the organization and develop new activities. Contrary to the need of emergency responses, the organization has difficulty even in defining their own goals. The management assess the process in terms of qualification and do not have the opportunity to measure, where the organization goes through. Although it is a rare situation that the management can control the emergence and speed of the crisis, reaction and solution for the crisis is a situation, which can be controlled. Because all crises, do not always arise unexpectedly and unpreventably; they warn the managers through many signs and symptoms as we noted earlier. In these conditions, two major approaches to manage the crisis well can be mentioned (dinçer, 2004: 423):

Approach of escaping from the crisis

This is the approach, which involves the aim of protection from the effects of the crisis and, if possible, to never enter into a crisis. The main essence of this approach is; to define that factors affecting the organizations to enter into a crisis and to understand the aims and thoughts, which are accepted by the organizational management for eliminating the effects of those factors (tekin and zerinler, 2008: 232).

The approach of escaping from the crisis, include the strategies to soften the undesired situations and to avoid them. Although this approach is not the mast appropriate solution for the organization; it helps to maintain a state of equilibrium especially in the crises of danger. However, such an avoidance approach will lead to a loss of alternatives, for especially in opportunity crises. To escape from the crisis, it is necessary to continually observe the external environment, and develop methods of prediction in terms of quality and quantity for the future. To state briefly, in the approach for escaping from the crisis, the management should constantly watch and observe the internal and external environment, and especially for the analysis of the internal environment, it should develop methods to monitor in which situation the organization is and in which direction the progress is. Additionally, the sources of tension and stress should be reduced during the crisis (dinçer, 2004: 423-424).

Approach of solution for the crisis

Besides being undesirable situations; a crisis can become useful if it is effectively managed. A manager, who directs the crisis well and turns it into an opportunity, can escape both him/herself and the organization from the crisis, through strengthening. Because; every crises not only reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, but also makes pressure to management for change and development. A manager can make the organization gain new approaches and dynamism by making the necessary arrangements and improvements about those weaknesses (dinçer, 2004: 424; tutar, 2000: 95-96).

Crisis periods, ate the times, when management skills of managers are best-understood. Crisis management and solution activities are fulfilled in specific processes such as all activities of the organization. Primarily solution of a crisis, begins with identifying the causes for the organization to enter a crisis situation. After determining all causes of the crisis, the organization is brought back to the previous stable state by eliminating those (tutar, 2000: 96). Even the crisis periods can be totally new eras of creating value-adds. Many organizations, cannot have the opportunity for evaluation of new approaches and development of business in normal times, under the pressure of routine business and operations. Those periods, should be considered opportunities for making structural reforms and innovations in the organization, and improving knowledge and skills of the employees (baltaş, 2002: 27).

Iv. Phases of crisis management

Crisis management is the process of taking and implementing all necessary measures for making the organization get rid of the crisis situation with minimum loss by taking and evaluating the signals of the crisis, as a response to possible crisis situations. The main objective of crisis management is to prepare the organization for crisis situations. Crisis management process consists of the following five phases (can, 1999: 318-320). In addition to the five stages of can, some authors add an intermediate phase of "*identifying the positive aspects of the crisis*", by also putting emphasis on the opportunities of crisis situation.
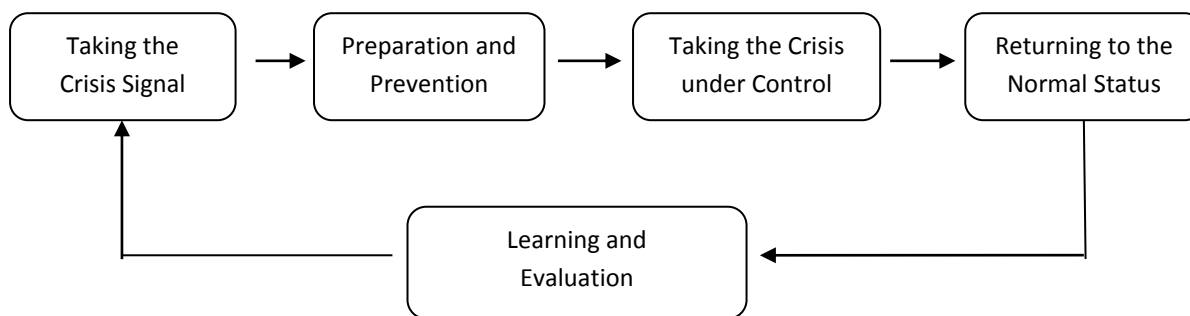
Figure 1: stages of crisis management

Source: (can, 1999: 320).

V. Importance of crisis management for public administration

As a concept, entrance of crisis management into the public administration literature is a fairly recent development. Nevertheless, disaster management, which can be considered a concept under crisis management, is a more familiar concept to public administration studies. It can be stated that; the concept of crisis management began to be frequently used in recent years after the earthquake disasters (şahin, 2008: 415). However, it should be underlined that; crisis management, which is a management model for the private sector organizations to get rid of crises, is used by the organizations in public sector and the organizations to be considered as public administrations.

Public agencies and institutions, which perform certain tasks in public sector and providing goods and services to the society, were accused of acting making decisions slowly. Of course, this is due to their great organizational size. The actions of public organizations are bordered by legislations, which are prepared in details. Commitment of public administrators and employees to legislation prevents a flexible management style and the make the structure get clumsy. However, crisis management requires a flexible management approach. On the other hand, public institutions and organizations remain slow in monitoring and applying new developments. Administrators fail to put forward their administrative skills, when they face unexpected problems. In addition, public administrators cannot be considered ready for implementing unusual crisis management models, which are required for crisis periods (aykaç, 2001: 127).

One of the features of public administration in general is the tendency to maintain the status quo and the resistance to change. It is the common situation of almost all countries. Besides, the level of sensitivity - in other terms, flexibility - of the public administrations about the developments, demands of society, transforming target audience trends and market conditions; is lower when compared with other segments of management. Adaption to the changes in environmental conditions is a big challenge for public organizations (aykaç, 2001: 123).

The crisis management model developed for preventing the problems that arise suddenly, taking necessary measures and implementing them; has as much important for the public administrations as the organizations operating private sector. For the public administrations to respond unexpected problems and crisis

situations; more power should be transferred to the units, initiatives should be increased and formalities should be decreased in many fields such as sourcing, negative bureaucracy should be reduced, the structure should be prevented from clumsiness and rigid hierarchy, flexible management and delegation of authority should be expanded, and regulations should be made for rapid decisions to be made and implemented in unusual situations, in terms of preparation. (rosenthal and kouzmin, 1997: 277-279).

Crisis management concept seems to become synonymous with business management nowadays due to acceptation of especially economic relations and structures. On the oher hand, public administrations focus the crises, which are often caused by disasters. However, the worldwide economic crisis in recent years, revealed that public administration should be ready for not only disasters but also any kind of crises for whatever the reason is (erten, 2011: 1).

The crises, domestic and global frequency and diversity of which increases as a result of today's increasingly complex needs of public institutions, makes the crisis management concept to be an area of expertise necessary. As a reflection of the current level of the service sector and institutionalization; expectations from the public institutions, which have the duty to serve the citizens, have increased greatly, when compared with the past. Thus, public institutions' better management of their internal crises has become a necessity, in order not to experience disruptions in their services (bozkurt and akdeniz, 2014: 95).

In public administration, crisis management is conscious, systematic and coordinated avoidance of major problems that may arise from the institutional structure or environment, before they occur or become uncontrollable; for implementation of public services without delay and insurance of the institution's reputation, public trust and support. The main objective of crisis management in public administration is to sense the crisis before it emerges and to minimize the possible damage for public interest as much as possible crisis if it occurs, by developing healthy attributions and correct postulations about the crisis and crisis perception (akdağ and arklan, 2013: 39).

Vi. Implementation of crisis management in turkish public administration

Due to the fact that, turkey is a country, which exposed to the great natural disasters such as an earthquake throughout history, legislation and organization of crisis management has been evaluated as a synonym for disaster management for the public administration. In 1997, in the 30.09.1996 date and 96/8716 numbered decree of the council of ministers, a "crisis management centre" was established under the prime ministry and the centre was given the power to conduct operations for management of the crisis situations, which arise due to any reasons. Implementations of crisis management can be stated to have begun in that period. However, when the operations in the field disaster management, which are in the context of crisis management, are dealt; crisis management in that scope is seen to be an area, which turkish public administration has concerned for a long time (erten, 2011: 37).

With the "law on the organization and duties of disaster and emergency management presidency" no. 5902 and enacted in 2009, a new era has stated in terms of disaster management approach and organization. In

article 1 of the law the duties of the institution are stated and clearly underlined to include "for the services about disasters, emergency situations and civil defence to be performed at the county level in an effective manner; taking the necessary measures; making the all work before, during and after disasters and emergency situations; providing the coordination between the institutions and between organizations, working with this aim; and producing and implementing policies on those issues". Disaster and emergency management presidency (afad), which was founded with this law, has removed and gathered the tasks of the pre-existing institutions of; turkey emergency management general directorate, disaster affairs general directorate, and the civil defence general directorate. Thus, in turkey, a second institution was created after prime ministry crisis management centre to be responsible for managing the crisis and disaster (erten , 2011: 72). These two institutions are the central units of the turkish public administration's crisis management structure. The structures; disaster and emergency management centre of internal affairs ministry; disaster unit, health disaster coordination centre (sakom), and national medical rescue team (umke) of ministry of health can be added to those. Local levelled bodies of turkey's crisis management restructuring consist of provincial directorates of disaster and emergency management presidency (afad), civil defence research and rescue unity directorates of disaster coordination centres of the municipalities.

Turkish public administration's crisis and disaster management policies and practices can also be observed through the development plans. In the eighth development plan, which was prepared under the influence of the disruptions and crisis intervention failures during and after the 1999 marmara earthquake, marmara and düzce earthquakes were mentioned together with effects of the economic crises in southeast asian countries and subsequently in russia, on turkey. In addition, the natural disasters in turkey and disaster management measures to overcome those with minimum damage took place under the title of "natural disasters". In the ninth development plan 2001 economic and financial crisis in turkey was focused more. I was highlighted that task confusions in the disasters, should be eliminated. Although the global economic and financial crisis, which was faced in and after 2008, was mentioned in the tenth development plan adopted in 2014, a chapter on disaster management was opened in the plan again. It can be said that, in the development plans; there is no evaluation or study being not limited to natural disasters but involving a crisis management approach and policy for all of the crisis situations that can lead to failures and problems in public administration.

In turkish public administration, crisis centres were established in recent years with the understanding of crisis management, after the disasters such as earthquakes; and some traditional practices were realised. In this regard, the application of crisis management in turkey is observed to be limited with crises arising from natural disasters. However, for example even in periods of economic crisis, crisis management implementations, public information, and enhancement of public relations will help to reduce the damaging effects of economic crises (aykaç, 2001: 130-131).

Conclusion

Beginning of private sector management concepts and practices to be implemented in public administration and concepts such as governance and new public management approach to be discussed; continues to transport the issues, which are examined and discussed by business management and other disciplines, to the agenda of the public administration discipline. Crisis management approach -as a management model- is one of them. As a result of globalization, with the loss of importance of the borders in terms of economic, social, political and cultural relations; a crisis emerging in a country especially a crisis or fluctuation in large companies, affects other companies and other organizations in relation with them. While a crisis in a region would not influence the other areas in the past; in our day, development of communication and transportation facilities have enabled the convergence of community and thus increased their relations. That situation not only promotes the development of many innovations and positive developments, but also transfers negative developments such as crises from a community to another. In this rapid changes and information age, the data to reach the organizations frequently change and the new information invalidates the old one. For this reason, private or public organizations, should monitor and evaluate all changes in the internal and external environment of them; and maintain their activities according the strategies and goals compatible with those changes.

In our day, just as the enterprises operating in the private sector, public agencies and institutions should; take the advantage of crisis management models, tend to work on this issue, and prepare for the unusual changes and crisis situations. They should establish crisis management teams for not limited only disaster management but also all crisis situations. They should also allocate resources for crisis management operations. Relevant legislation should be arranged in order to enable the administrators working in public institutions and organizations to take initiative and make rapid decisions in crisis situations.

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