

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
CORPORATE STRATEGY OF THE
MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION: AN ANALYTICAL
APPROACH.**

**MASTER OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION (MBA).**

A.H. BALOYI



2010

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CORPORATE STRATEGY OF THE MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH.**

By

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RESEARCH DISSERTATION

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

In the

Faculty of Management Sciences and Law

At the

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UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

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2010



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(i) DECLARATION.

"I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of **MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION** has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other University, that this is my own work in design and in execution, and that all material contained therein has been fully acknowledged".

A.H. BALOYI MR.

DATE

STUDENT NUMBER: XXXXXXXXXX

(ii) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the following people who helped to make the completion of this research study possible and those who offered their moral support.

First, and most importantly, I want to give thanks to my God, the creator of heaven and earth, for giving me the strength, wisdom, intellect and courage to stand. May the glory and honor be to you, Almighty God. Thank you for loving me the way you do.

I thank my supervisor Dr. N.E. Schutte for encouraging and supporting me throughout the duration of the study. His constructive guidance and support kept me going, even during the most difficult times.

I also greatly appreciate the support given me by Professor Pelser, who encouraged me to complete the study within the recommended time. The support staff of the University, especially Marinda, also helped me significantly.

I thank my colleague Dr. Hardus Maritz for assisting with the development of the questionnaire.

My brother Levy Baloyi provided me free accommodation during the period of the study. Thanks Khalanga. You were too generous.

I thank my colleagues (middle managers) who participated in the study for their views, suggestions and support.

My MBA classmates supported and encouraged me – I will be eternally grateful to them.

I thank the typists, Constance Masesi Maphanga and Pertunia Nomcebo Breadth, helped with the typing and retyping of my work, and sometimes had to struggle with my handwriting!

My sons (Nyiko and Timothy) and daughter (Vukona) were so patient with me and forgave the many days I was absent from home, I love them and greatly appreciate their support.

I thank the editor of the report, Pamela Apps of Pam Apps editors for the edit work that she did.

Last, yet by no means least, I thank my wife and my soul mate, Caroline, for her unselfishness and the moral and financial support she gave me. Thanks sweetheart for standing by me even when my strength was waning.

(iii) DEDICATION.

The study is dedicated to all middle and senior managers in the Mpumalanga Department of Education.

(IV). ABSTRACT.

Higher performing organizations are characterized by their effective implementation of their strategies and goals. The Mpumalanga Department of Education is one organization which has not performed to its maximum potential because of several factors. The purpose of this research study was to critically analyze some of the factors which affect the implementation of strategies. The following are some of the factors which are perceived as affecting the implementation of strategies and cause performance problems in the department.

- Lack of effective organizational communication of strategies to all employees,
- Shortage of relevant and competent human resources,
- Lack of resources to support the implementation of departmental programs,
- Shortage of appropriate policies and procedures to regulate implementation process,
- Organizational structure which is not supportive of strategies,
- Lack of influential leadership,
- Lack of commitment by most officials,
- Unproductive organizational culture prevailing in the department,
- Negative attitude displayed by senior and middle managers towards strategic planning processes,

The focus of the study was to develop strategies to deal with challenges as raised. Chapter 5 provided recommendations which are believed to be the cornerstone towards achieving better results and improve performance.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Managing modern public and private institutions is very challenging and places a huge responsibility on managers mainly because of factors such as the competitive nature of the business environment, the sophisticated nature of clients and the advanced technology often used. The influence of globalization also forces organizations to plan in line with the needs of existing or potential global clients. This situation requires competent, knowledgeable, skilled managers who are also highly creative and innovative. Organizations cannot afford to be managed by managers whose levels of thinking and competencies are in doubt.

In South Africa specifically most organizations are able to develop sound and good strategies through the use of external consultants; however, what has become a crucial problem for most is their inability to translate these strategies into goals, the goals into objectives, and these then into activities. This problem is due to the limited knowledge and understanding in most organizations of strategic management in general and strategic planning in particular. Any organization that is unable to translate strategies into activities will clearly not be able to implement them.

Apart from these problems, there are factors that negatively affect the implementation of corporate strategies. Strategies that cannot be implemented are worthless because the organization will not be able to achieve its vision and mission thus wasting valuable and limited resources. According to Thompson and Strickland (1995:38) there are external and internal factors that may affect the implementation of corporate strategy if they are not properly managed. The external factors are those that affect the

strategy from outside the organization and cannot be controlled, instead the organization has to adapt in order to deal with them. Examples of such factors are economic forces, environmental forces, political climate, social factors and technology.

According to Thompson and Strickland (1995:38) the internal factors are those that are within the organization and are therefore controllable, examples of which are:

- Competitive capabilities,
- Company's strengths and weaknesses,
- Personal ambitions,
- Business philosophies,
- Ethical principles of managers,
- Share values and company culture.

The factors that are relevant and affect the implementation of strategies in the Department are captured in section 1.3 of the study.

1.2. BACKGROUND

This part of the study is intended to provide the reader with some insights into the general operating structure of the Mpumalanga Department of Education and the impact it has on the implementation of the corporate strategy. The Mpumalanga Department of Education is one of the biggest of the nine Provincial Government Education Departments. It has the most human resources and it is allocated the largest annual budget from the provincial treasurer. Administratively the department is headed by the Superintendent General (SG), who is supported by three Deputy Director-Generals (DDG), each one in charge of one of the three departmental branches: Systems and Planning, Corporate Services and Curriculum. The above officials constitute the executive management of the Department. Politically, the Department is led by the Member of the Executive Council

(MEC) as delegated by the Premier. The executive management together with the Chief Directors and Directors constitute the senior (top) management of the Department and therefore its highest decision-making structure. Structurally, the Department of Education has 34 senior managers including the SG, DDGs, Chief Directors and Directors. Amongst other things, senior managers are responsible for policy development, strategic planning and management and for ensuring that strategies are implemented in line with national policy guidelines. Each of the three branches has two or three Chief Directorates, with each Chief Directorate having several directorates. Each directorate has several sub-directorates and sections. The sub-directorates and sections are mainly responsible for the implementation of the corporate strategy. This is how the Head Office structure is constituted. Furthermore, the Department has four education districts (at the time of writing), which effectively divide the province into four major parts. Each district is headed by a District Director who is a member of the senior (top) management of the Department. Each of the four districts is further divided into several education circuits. The sizes of the education districts vary with some bigger than others. They are different in terms of their geographical shapes and the number of education circuits in each. Each education circuit is also divided into several public and private schools (both secondary and primary).

An example of a simple Head Office structure of the Department is as follows.

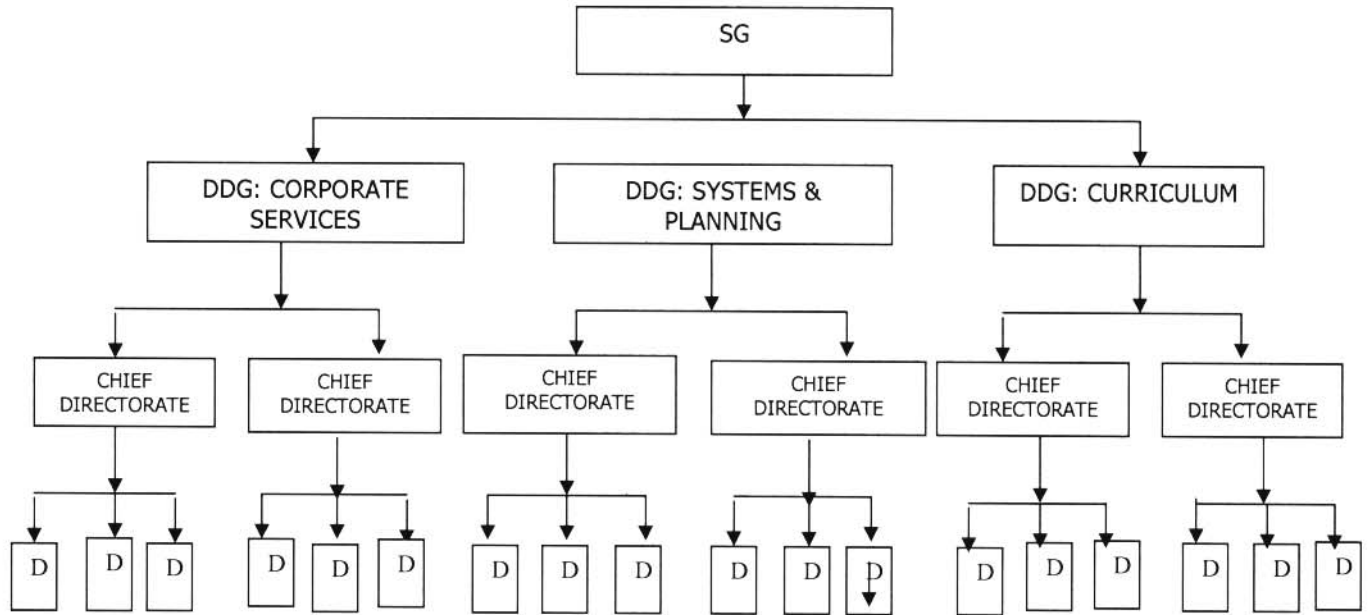


Figure 1.1. Operating structure of the Mpumalanga Department of Education (senior management in Head Office)

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems over the years as observed by the researcher are threefold:

- For five years in succession the Department has received either a qualified or adverse report from the Auditor-General, which means that there are several factors causing the problems.
- The performance of schools, which is the core business of the Department, has not improved by any standard. Judging by Grade 12 results only, the province has not performed above 65 percent in its entire history – this means that the programs are not being implemented correctly.
- The public has complained to the Department about the state of education in the province, additionally, the Department’s service providers complain that they do not receive their payments in time for the services rendered to the Department.

These three issues are an indication that the Department's strategies, which look so good on paper, are not being translated into sound performance. In the context of the researcher's organization, there are internal factors hindering the effective implementation of the corporate strategies. Given the problem as highlighted above, the researcher believed it important to therefore use scientific inquiry to analyze the factors perceived to be hindering the effective implementation of strategies and therefore to come up with sound strategies to address the identified challenges.

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

On the theoretical level, the study contributes towards the current debate about the factors that affect the implementation of corporate strategy. Practically the Department will benefit in the following ways:

- The study will provide practical guidelines towards the implementation of the Department's corporate strategy.
- Parents will get value for money from the provincial system of education.
- The Department will get an unqualified report from the auditors.
- The organization will perform optimally.
- The learners' performance will be enhanced at the schools.
- The stakeholders and taxpayers will also get value for money.

1.5. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to analyze the internal factors that affect the implementation of corporate strategy in the Mpumalanga Department of Education. Different data collection instruments were used to collect data for the analysis and the findings were used to draw conclusions and formulate recommendations.

1.6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are two-fold:

The first objectives are of a more general nature and are as follows:

- To analyze the factors that affect the corporate strategy of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, and
- To help senior managers in developing effective ways of implementing the Department's corporate strategy.

The final objective is specific and is as follows:

- To determine the extent to which the following factors affect the implementation of the Mpumalanga Department of Education's corporate strategy:
 - (i) Organization communication,
 - (ii) Organization structure,
 - (iii) Organization culture,
 - (iv) Resource allocation,
 - (v) Human resources,
 - (vi) Policies and procedures,
 - (vii) Attitude and commitment of managers.

1.7. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to Leedy and Omrod (2006:60) research questions provide another means for guiding and directing a researcher's thinking and are more common in qualitative research than in quantitative research.

Hussey and Hussey (1997:126) suggest that good research questions should express a relationship between variables, especially in quantitative research.

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do the internal factors affect the implementation of the Department's strategy?
- To what extent does the **organization's communication** affect the implementation of the Department's strategy?
- To what extent does the **organization's structure** affect the implementation of the Department's strategy?
- To what extent does the **organization's culture** affect the implementation of the Department's strategy?
- To what extent does the **organization's leadership** affect the implementation of the Department's strategy?
- To what extent does **resource allocation** (financial) affect the implementation of the Department's strategy?
- To what extent do **policies and procedures** affect the implementation of the Department's strategy?

1.8. LITERATURE REVIEWED

The study required data from several sources. The most important data were undoubtedly obtained from the literature explored, details of which are presented in Chapter 2 of this report.

The literature yielded information on the following issues regarding strategic management:

- Definitions of corporate strategy, strategy, strategic management and strategic planning,
- Strategic management models,
- Strategic implementation,
- Factors affecting the implementation of corporate strategy,
- The Mpumalanga Department of Education's Strategic Development process.

The information gathered was interpreted and incorporated in this report.

1.9. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

There are several concepts used in this study – these need to be defined:

1.9.1. Corporate Strategy

Thompson and Strickland (1995:380) define corporate strategy as the overall managerial game plan for a diversified company or organization. According to Stoner and Freeman (1992:199) corporate strategy refers to a strategy that is formulated by top management to oversee the interests and operations of multiline corporations. These definitions are supported by Wright, Pringle and Kroll (1994:97) who write that corporate strategy is a strategy that top management formulates for the overall company. These three definitions are in agreement. Corporate strategy therefore has to do with the grand or master plan of a company or organization. This master plan is developed by the top management or executive management on behalf of the organization and the shareholders or stakeholders who have invested their wealth in the organization. However it must be noted that although the corporate strategy is developed by top management, its implementation is the responsibility of all managers and employees. According to Byars, Rue and Zahra (1996:250) corporate strategies address what business a multiple business-unit organization will be in and how resources will be allocated among those businesses.

In the context of this study, corporate strategy will refer to the overall plan of the Department that guides the operations of all districts, circuits and schools in the province. It is developed by the Department's top management and it is implemented by all employees at all levels of the Department.

The public sector prefers the term strategy to corporate strategy. Strategy is defined by Bateman and Snell (2002:115) as a pattern of actions and resource allocation designed to achieve the goals of the organization. It is an attempt to match the skills and resources of the organization to the opportunities found in the external environment. This definition is more applicable to the context of this study, therefore wherever the term strategy is used in this study it refers to this definition.

1.9.2. Factors affecting the implementation of the Corporate Strategy

According to Thompson and Strickland (1995:38) factors affecting corporate strategy may be both internal and external – external refers to all factors affecting the organization from the external environment and internal refers to all factors affecting the organization from within, which are controllable.

The study will focus on the internal factors of the organization because they are the ones that control the performance of the organization.

1.10. DIVISION OF THE CHAPTERS

In the following paragraphs the structure and the proposed division of the chapters is presented by outlining the main themes briefly.

1.10.1. Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study, putting into perspective the nature of the problem and how it is going to be solved. The chapter also introduces the conceptual framework that underlies the study.

1.10.2. Chapter 2: Factors affecting the implementation of the strategy

Chapter 2 is devoted to defining the strategic management model and links it with the factors affecting the implementation of the Mpumalanga Department of Education's corporate strategy. The chapter also goes into more detail on the conceptual framework that underlies the study.

1.10.3. Chapter 3: Research design

Chapter 3 deals with the major theoretical principles used in scientific research. The study design is described in detail, as are the method of the study, the research approaches, the sampling procedures, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

1.10.4. Chapter 4: Presentation of the findings

Chapter 4 is the central focus of the study as it presents the analysis and interpretation of the data from all the different sources used.

1.10.5. Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 5 presents the major conclusions and recommendations drawn from the entire study.

1.11. METHOD OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on analyzing the factors that affect the implementation of corporate strategy in the Mpumalanga Department of Education. The study therefore required several methods of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. The study focused on the middle managers of the Department because they are responsible for the implementation of the

corporate strategy. Chapter 3 of the study focuses in more detail on the research methodology, giving details about the instruments used; a brief summary of which is given below.

1.11.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire instrument was used to collect data from all the middle managers in the Department. Respondents were requested not to identify themselves because the researcher believed anonymity would encourage honesty, frankness and objectivity amongst the respondents. Anonymity helps to allay any fears, suspicion, embarrassment and hostility on the part of respondents to such research (Van Dalen, 1979:157).

1.11.2. Literature study

Data from the literature reviewed were also used to support the argument of the researcher. The literature reviewed included official documents from the Department and other official publications.

CHAPTER 2

FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY (THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES)

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of the literature review to scientific research cannot be overemphasized. Literature gives the theoretical framework that is the building block of the researcher's arguments. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:64) the literature review describes the theoretical perspectives of the previous research findings regarding the problem at hand. Its function is to look at what others have done in areas that are similar to, though not necessarily identical to, one's own area of investigation.

The focus of the literature review for this study was three fold and is laid out in this report as follows: firstly, as a point of departure, the concepts of strategic management and planning are explored in some detail. The model of strategic management is explored briefly and a distinction between strategic management and strategic planning highlighted. The three phases of a strategic management model, which are formulation, implementation and control/evaluation, are outlined briefly. An in-depth discussion of the implementation framework, which is a central focus of this study, is given. Secondly, the researcher discusses the practical process of strategic planning within the context of the Mpumalanga Department of Education and integrates the theoretical principles discussed. Thirdly, the researcher critically analyzes and discusses in some detail the factors that affect the implementation of the corporate strategy. This theoretical discussion lays the groundwork for the practical analysis of the problem, as presented in Chapter 3 of the study.

2.2. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The discussion of the central problem of the study is centered on the factors affecting the implementation of a corporate strategy, within the context of strategic management as a process.

2.2.1. Definition of the concept

There are as many definitions as there are authors on the topic, however, for the purposes of this study a few definitions are explored. Strategic management is defined by Pearce and Robinson (2003:17) as a set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and the implementation of plans designed to achieve a company's objectives. David (1995:04; 2009:36) agrees with Pearce and Robinson's definition when he defines strategic management as the art and science of formulating, implementing and evaluating cross-functional decisions that enable the organization to achieve its objectives. Sanchez and Heene (2004:09) describe strategic management as a process that defines an organization's goals for value creation and distribution and designs the way the organization will be composed, structured and coordinated in pursuing those goals. Ehlers and Lazenby (2007:2) define strategic management as the process whereby all the organization's functions and resources are integrated and coordinated to implement formulated strategies that are aligned with the environment, in order to achieve the long-term objectives of the organization, and therefore gain a competitive advantage through adding value for the stakeholders. Rowe, Mason, Dickel, Mann and Mockler (1994), as quoted by Louw and Venter (2008:21), describe strategic management as a process by which organizations determine what value is needed and how to add that value. Wright, Pringle and Kroll (1994:17) define strategic management as a continuous process of determining the mission and goals of an organization within the context of its external environment, formulating appropriate strategies, implementing those strategies, and exerting strategic control to

ensure that the organizations' strategies are successful in attaining its goals and objectives. Stoner and Freeman (1992:20) define a strategic management approach as a pattern based on the principle that the overall design of the organization can be described only if the attainment of objectives is added to the key factors in management's operations of the organizations activities. These definitions, except for that of Rowe et al., are connected by one thread, which is "helping the organization to achieve its goals and objectives". If strategic management does not help the organization achieve its objectives then that process falls short of being strategic management. Some of the authors reviewed, as mentioned above, touch on the implementation of formulated goals in order to achieve the overall objectives. Flowing from the above definitions, the researcher concludes that Strategic Management is a process of making crucial decisions (strategies) and effectively implementing such decisions using organizational resources. This definition will therefore be used for the purposes of this research study. The central problem of this study is the analysis of the factors that affect the implementation of the Department's corporate strategy. Louw and Venter (2008:21) give an interesting equation of strategic management:

Good Strategic Management = Good Strategy + Good Strategy
Implementation.

The researcher cannot agree more with the equation, which graphically summarizes the importance of the strategic management process.

Another concept very close to strategic management, which is often confused with strategic management, is strategic planning. The two concepts are not the same and the following definitions will reveal the differences.

Smit, Cronje, Brevis and Vrba (2007:84) define strategic planning as a process of proactively aligning the organization's resources with threats and opportunities caused by changes in the external environment. According to Smit et al. (2007:84), the main focus of strategic planning is on the changing future not the present or the past. This definition is supported by Bateman

and Snell (2002:115) as they define strategic planning as a process of making decisions about the organization's long-term goals and strategies. Bean (1993:13), however, defines strategic planning as a process – a continuous, closed-looped life cycle perpetuating a healthy, growing entity – a process of determining the long-term vision and goals of an enterprise and how to fulfill them. Charles and Gareth (1998:21) state that strategic planning concentrates on long-term purpose and on the direction regarding the key issues that face the organization in the long term.

The difference between the two concepts is very narrow, and sometimes nearly invisible. Strategic management is broad – it covers a wide scope of management responsibility; strategic planning is narrower in scope – focusing on the annual performance of the organization. Strategic management is a process that covers a three to five year cycle while strategic planning is an annual process. Put differently, strategic planning is a process within strategic management. Both concepts involve a cyclical process and both result in a development of goals and objectives. Both require a great deal of resources for effective implementation. Managers who do not have the capacity to manage the process of strategy development will effectively fail to develop proper strategy let alone its implementation. If, for example, managers are not able to comfortably and competently develop a strategy because of certain factors (both internal and external), that organization will experience serious challenges and shareholders and stakeholders will always have problems.

2.2.2. Strategic management model

According to Pearce and Robinson (2000:11) the strategic management process can be divided into three main components – formulation, implementation and control. Charles and Gareth (1998: 05) depict the three components of strategic management the same way as Pearce and Robinson. David (1995:04) also identifies three components of the strategic

management process – formulation, implementation and evaluation, the difference being the last component – strategy evaluation instead of control. The research project will focus on the second component of the strategic management process – implementation.

The justification for this choice is that good strategies that cannot be implemented effectively remain a critical challenge to managers and the whole organization. Most organizations spend more resources in the formulation phase and sometimes fail to implement their strategies, which results in fruitless expenditure of scarce resources.

It is for this reason that the researcher has decided to focus on the implementation phase of the process because this is a critical stage of the planning process.

The whole process of strategic management is depicted graphically in Figure 2.1 on the next page.

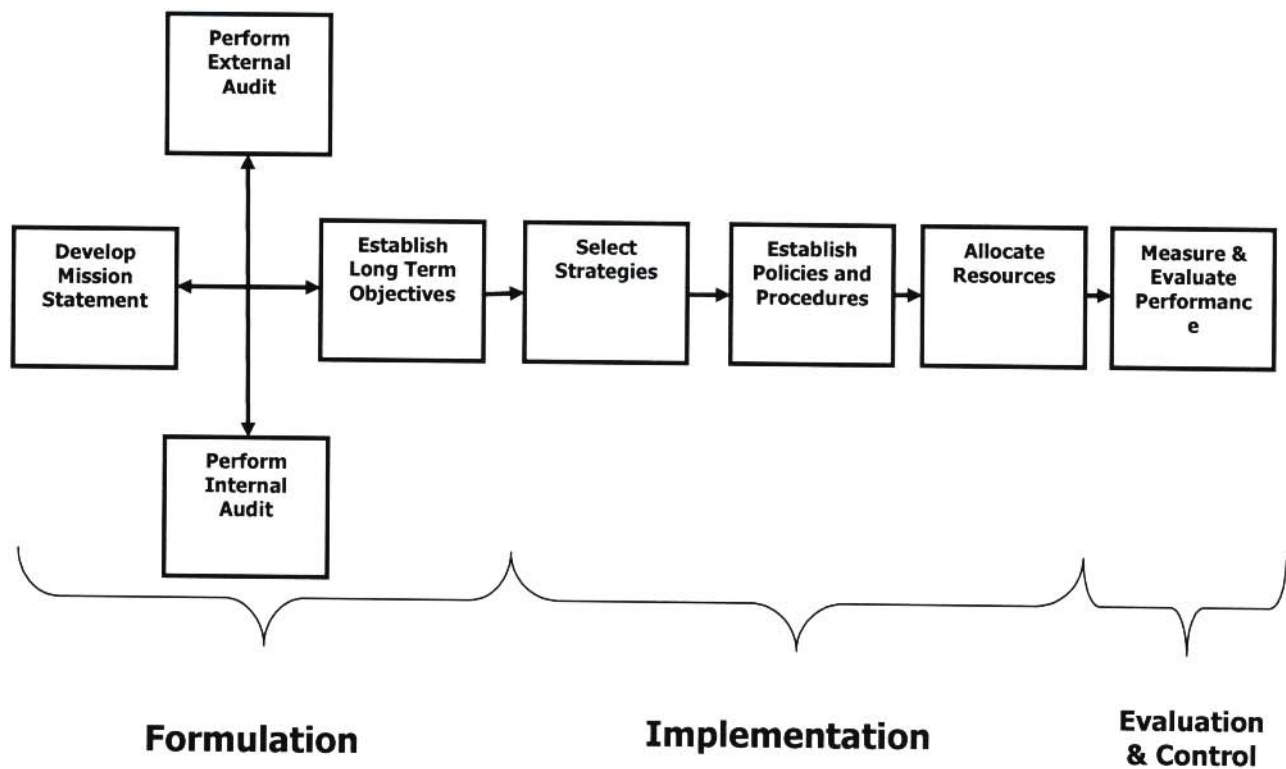


Figure 2.1. Schematic of a strategic management model

2.2.2.1. Strategy formulation

In the first stage of the strategic management model, the organization, through its strategic leadership, develops a vision and the mission statements. They spell out where they want to be. They analyze the external and the internal environments. Crucial decisions are then taken based on the outcome of the environmental assessment and a strategy is formulated.

2.2.2.2. Strategy implementation

Strategic implementation is the action phase of the strategic management process. It is defined as a process that turns strategic plans into a series of action tasks, and ensures that these tasks are executed in such a way that the objectives of the strategic plan are achieved (Ehlers and Lazenby, 2007:212; 2010:261).

David (2007:260) concludes that strategy implementation is more difficult than formulation. Successful strategy formulation does not guarantee successful strategy implementation. The reason is that there are several factors that inhibit the implementation of the corporate strategy as will be discussed in the next section. Johnson and Scholes (1999:22) state that strategy implementation is concerned with the transition of strategy into organizational action through organizational structure and design, resource planning and management of strategic change. David (1995:04) states that strategy implementation requires the firm establishment of annual objectives, the devising of policies, the motivation of employees and the allocation of resources so that the formulated strategies can be executed. Strategy implementation includes developing a strategy supportive of organizational structure, redirecting marketing efforts, preparing budgets and utilizing information systems, and linking employee compensation to organizational performance. Implementing strategy means mobilizing employees and managers to put the formulated strategies into action. This part of the strategic management process is considered the most difficult. It requires personal discipline, commitment and sacrifice. Successful implementation hinges upon the managers' ability to motivate employees and to control the organizational culture. If employees are not motivated and the culture is not good, the implementation becomes a daunting task. According to Pearce and Robinson (2003:11) implementation involves three key activities:

- Developing short-term objectives which are implementable,
- Developing functional tactics, and
- Policies that empower action.

2.2.2.3. Strategy evaluation and control

The evaluation of a strategy involves the review of the impact of the strategy in the organization.

2.2.2.4. Synthesis

The above definitions of implementation of strategies indicate how critical this stage is. It requires thorough preparation and planning. Most organizations that do not succeed in translating their strategies into concrete action plans fail to perform and ultimately fail to get their return on investment. David (1995) highlights key factors that are critical in the implementation of strategies: policies, employee motivation, resources, organizational structure, budget, and commitment of employees – especially the managers. The central focus of this study is to analyze the impact these factors have on the implementation of strategies.

2.3. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS IN THE MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

2.3.1. General orientation

The Mpumalanga Department of Education is one of the Provincial Government Departments of the Mpumalanga Province, therefore it is a public institution and its planning processes are controlled by the government planning cycle. The electoral cycle of government is five years, therefore after every five years the department receives a new mandate from the elected government of the day in the form of priorities called electoral mandates, which are captured and recorded in a document called the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). The MTSF is a statement of intent, identifying the development challenges facing South Africa and outlining the medium-term strategy for improvements in the conditions of the lives of South Africans and for our enhanced contribution to the cause of building a better world (South African Government, 2009:01). The MTSF is meant to guide the planning and resource allocation across all spheres of government. National and provincial departments develop their five-year strategic plans and budget requirements taking into account the medium-term imperatives. The MTSF is

reviewed annually during the mid-year cabinet makgotla in the light of new developments and experience in actual implementation. The MSTF gives the national objectives (there are five current objectives), which are broken down into ten implementable priorities giving effect to the objectives. The priorities are implemented by all government departments across all provinces. The priority that speaks to the education departments is to "improve access to education." Therefore any education activity should seek to address this priority. Various education departments across the country (including Mpumalanga) develop their own strategies in order to adequately address this priority.

2.3.2. The process of strategic planning

The Mpumalanga Department of Education conducts a strategic planning process and formulates strategies in order to implement the national government priority. Due to the Departments' lack of capacity, an external consultant is hired to develop a framework and help senior managers to develop their corporate strategy. Strategy in this context is that defined by Bateman and Snell (2002:115) as a pattern of actions and resource allocation designed to achieve the goals of the organization. The strategy an organization implements is an attempt to match the skills and resources of the organization to the opportunities found in the external environment.

The Vision, Mission and Values are formulated as guided by the environmental factors (external) and organizational factors (internal). From the Department's corporate strategy, strategic goals (long-term) are developed and captured in a five-year strategic document called the Annual Performance Plan (APP). According to Bateman and Snell (2002:115) strategic goals are major targets or end results that relate to the long-term survival, value and growth of the organization. Strategic managers (top level managers) usually establish goals that reflect both effectiveness (providing appropriate outputs) and efficiency (a high ratio of outputs to inputs).

From strategic goals, strategic objectives, which are more specific and concrete, are generated and translated into measurable objectives that adhere to smart principles. From the objectives key performance measures are developed to help to gauge and monitor the progress towards achieving the specific objectives. An implementation strategy or plan is developed in order to implement these objectives. A document called the implementation plan is used to capture all the plans, and records all the annual outputs, which are further broken into quarterly outputs. The budget is linked to this implementation plan.

Each sub-directorate is expected to implement its plans without the benefit of proper instructions from senior managers who are the only ones privileged to attend the strategic meetings. The sub-directorates also face other related challenges such as: lack of or shortage of relevant resources; lack of policies and procedures; questionable skills, competencies and the capacity to implement; a structure that is not aligned to the needs of the department; and lack of leadership to provide direction. Over and above all these challenges is the fact that the Department has a very weak culture where employees simply do not work effectively and efficiently. It is at this stage of strategic management where the Department of Education is failing and it is on the basis of this background that this study was conceived and planned.

The last phase/stage of the strategic management process is reached when the implementation of the strategy is evaluated. During the course of the year the implementation is monitored and feedback given on a quarterly basis by the monitoring and evaluation unit. Quarterly reports are provided to all the units to assess their progress against the standard set in the implementation plan.

The final evaluation reports are given at the end of the financial year. The annual report is compiled by different units within the Department, as follows:

- a) Program performance from the monitoring and evaluation unit.
 - This report provides information on the Department's performance with regard to the achievements of the goals and priorities per program.

- b) Internal audit and the audit committee reports.
 - These reports provide information regarding the Department's annual financial performance, financial statements and risks.

- c) External audit report from the Auditor-General.
 - This report provides information on the Department's financial statements, capital assets, governance, compliance with applicable legislation, internal controls and expenditure, and offers a final opinion on the Department's performance.

These reports provide the information regarding the overall performance of the Department. They reveal the Department's ability or inability to implement the corporate strategy. Over the last five years the Department has received either adverse, disclaimer or qualified opinions from the Auditor-General, implying an inability to implement the corporate strategy. The performance of learners at most of the public schools is always far below the expected standard.

There are reasons for this state of affairs in the Department and this study analyzes the factors that affect the implementation of the strategy. It is on the basis of this that the research was initiated. In the next section, 2.4., some of the factors which negatively affect the implementation of the strategy are discussed.

2.4. FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CORPORATE STRATEGY IN THE MPUMALANGA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ehlers and Lazenby (2007:25) state that nine out of 10 organizations fail to implement strategies and as few as 10 percent of effectively formulated strategies are effectively implemented. Ehlers and Lazenby (2010:262) refer to those factors that hinder effective implementation simply as barriers to implementation of strategy. According to a 2006 white paper on the strategy implementation of Chinese corporation's strategy implementation has become the most significant management challenge faced by all kinds of corporations. The survey reported in that white paper indicates that 83 percent of the surveyed companies failed to implement their strategy smoothly, and only 17 percent felt that they had a consistent strategy implementation process.

Factors affecting the implementation of the corporate strategy refer to anything that hinders the implementation of the strategy. Different authors identify different factors, which can further be divided into internal or external factors. Stonich (1982:xviii) writes that the external focus of strategy formulation must be balanced by the assessment of internal capabilities (factors), which are the organization structure, human resources, management processes and organizational culture, in order to implement strategy effectively. Thompson and Strickland (2001:19) identify the following internal factors that may hinder the implementation of a corporate strategy:

- Resource allocation,
- Supportive policies,
- Operating procedures,
- Motivating people,
- Tying the reward structure to the achievement of targeted results,
- Company culture,

- Communication and operating systems that enable the personnel to carry out their strategic roles effectively,
- Instituting best practices,
- Leadership that is competent and knowledgeable to drive the implementation forward.

Different organizations will have different factors impacting on the implementation of strategy. For the purpose of this research study, the researcher will focus on the following factors primarily because they impact negatively on the implementation of the Departments' corporate strategy:

- Organizational culture,
- Organizational structure,
- Human resources (recruitment policy),
- Policies and procedures,
- Leadership,
- Resource allocation,
- Communication strategy,
- Attitude and commitment of managers.

These nine factors have been identified as those causing serious implementation challenges in the department; therefore, each one will now be explored in detail.

2.4.1. Organizational culture

Thompson and Strickland (2001:410) define organizational culture as a company's values, beliefs, business principles, traditions, and ways of operating and internal environment. Stonich (1982:35) defines corporate culture as a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the members of an organization. These beliefs and expectations produce rules for behaviors, and norms. These two definitions are supported by Gibson, Ivancecich and Donnelly (1998:30) who define organizational culture as what the employees

perceive and how this perception creates a pattern of beliefs, values and expectations. Greenberg and Baron (2003:515) define organizational culture as a cognitive framework consisting of attitudes, values, behavioral norms and expectations shared by organization members. According to Jacques (1952:251), as quoted by Senior (1997:101), an organization's culture is defined as its customary and traditional way of thinking and doing things, shared to a greater or lesser degree by all its members, and which new members must learn, and at least partially accept, in order to be accepted into the service of the firm. Luthan (2002:124) also thinks that organizational culture is a set of core values shared by the majority of the organization's members. Luthan, Kreitne and Kinicki (2004:81) perceive organizational culture as a set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds. These definitions show that there is a general agreement amongst the authors across different ages and countries as to what organizational culture is. Four elements of organizational culture are commonly emphasized:

- Shared values and attitudes,
- Way of doing things,
- Thinking pattern and behaviors,
- Perception and assumptions.

The Mpumalanga Department of Education as an organization has its own culture, which inhibits the effective implementation of the corporate strategy. One pervasive element of the Department's culture is non-compliance to the legislation and legal framework provided to all government departments, another is the high level of inefficiency and unprofessionalism in dealing with the public in general. For example, most of the Department's service providers are not paid for the services rendered to the Department, or are paid a very long time after having invoiced. Additionally, underperformance is rife in the Department.

2.4.2. Leadership

Leadership is a somewhat elusive concept and is difficult to define precisely. Smit et al. (2007:271) define leadership as a process of directing the behaviors of others towards the accomplishments of the organization's goals. It involves motivating people, giving orders, influencing people, communicating and managing conflicts. The leadership of the Department falls seriously short of these skills. Communication is a serious challenge in the Department; the researcher has not participated in one motivational session since joining the Department some 10 years ago – such sessions do not happen. Charles and Gareth (1998:14) write that leadership is the ability to articulate a strategic vision for the company or a part of the company and to motivate others to buy into that vision. The vision of the Department is only known by those at a very senior level and those who work directly with documents containing such information. Ordinary workers are not even aware of such a strategic vision – let alone understanding what it means to them and to their organization. Thompson and Strickland (2001:431) outline the most critical leadership roles in the implementation of strategy:

- Closely monitoring progress and learning what obstacles lie in the path of good execution/implementation,
- Promoting a culture and spirit that mobilizes and energizes organizational members to execute strategy,
- Keeping the organization responsive to changing conditions,
- Exercising ethical leadership and insisting on keeping the corporate citizen,
- Publishing corrective actions to improve strategy execution and overall strategic performance.

The Auditor-General's reports for the past five years have made stinging comments about the lack of leadership in the Department. This lack of leadership plays a very large role in the Department's inability to implement its strategies effectively.

2.4.3. Organizational structure

Smit et al. (2007:187) define organizational structure as the basic framework of formal relationships between responsibilities, tasks and people in the organization. Robbins, Judge, Odendaal and Roodt (2009:300) define organizational structure as systems of how job tasks are formally divided, grouped and co-coordinated. Organizational structure may create a barrier towards the implementation of a strategy if it is not properly designed. Under normal circumstances a structure is developed after a strategy and different jobs and tasks have been well defined. A structure assists the organization to identify the skills and competencies required for each job to be performed.

Given this, a structure must therefore follow a strategy. Put differently, strategy must dictate the kind of organizational structure that is required. In the Mpumalanga Department of Education this aspect is not handled properly, for example, in the current organizational structure there is no position or post that deals with policies and procedures. The Auditor-General's report revealed that most of the Department's goals and objectives are not achieved because of a lack of implementing procedures. The majority of the Department's policies are drafts that are not properly developed since there is no unit taking care of this aspect in the system. This is a structural problem. The Department created a single policy research position – one person is not able to handle the research work alone. In contrast, some sections are overstaffed with people who do very little every day. The Head Office structure is huge and there are many people who are not really adding any value to the operation of the Department. This happened because posts were created to fit people, not to implement the strategies. This professional sickness is causing the Department huge performance problems.

2.4.4. Policies and procedures

Thompson and Strickland (2001:382) state that policies and procedures aid the implementation of strategy in several ways. Policies and procedures provide top-down guidance to operating managers and employees regarding how certain things should be done. This helps to align actions and behaviors with strategy throughout the organization, enforcing the required consistency. Official Policies and procedures also help to counteract the tendencies for some people to resist or reject common approaches.

As stated already, the Department does not have enough policies and procedures to guide the implementation of strategies. Most of the Department's policies are drafts that have not been approved. The Auditor-General's reports over the last three years remarked on this fact but nothing has yet been done to correct this problem. This lack of guidance impacts negatively on the implementation of the Departments' corporate strategy.

2.4.5. Human resources

Thompson and Strickland (2001:351) state that putting together a strong management team with the right personal chemistry and mix of skills is one of the first strategy implementation steps. The human resources of an organization are the personnel required by the organization to execute the strategy. Thompson and Strickland (2001:352) further write that talented people in possession of superior intellectual capital are not only a resource that enables proficient strategy implementation but also a prime source of competitive advantage. Some authors prefer to call human resources human capital. It is therefore very important for any organization to recruit people with good skills and competencies. A good management team is not enough; staffing the organization with talented people must go much deeper than the managerial jobs in order to assemble the human resources and knowledge base needed to effectively implement strategy (Thompson and Strickland,

2001:351). No company can hope to perform the activities required for successful strategy implementation without employees that give it a suitable knowledge base and portfolio of intellectual capital.

The Department of Education's recruitment strategy is inappropriate. Employees are not recruited based on their skills and competencies. The majority of the senior managers and middle managers were recruited based on their association with certain influential people rather than on their skills, knowledge and competencies. This has compromised the quality of the human capital in the Department and has led to poor service delivery. The problem exists at all the levels: school level, circuit level, district level and Head Office, and is crippling the Department. Although the Department has a mentoring program on paper, it is still to be implemented. The staff is also supposed to be motivated as part of the Department's strategy – this is not happening. Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield (2006:9) state that the effectiveness of an organization depends greatly on the effectiveness of its employees. Without a high-quality labor force, an organization is destined to have mediocre performance. The Mpumalanga Department of Education is a perfect example of this statement by Grobler et al. It may be that this one factor alone contributes most to the major implementation challenges.

2.4.6. Resource allocation (financial)

It is an open secret that education receives the largest budget from the treasurer in all the provinces; the government is very serious about education. Education is at the top of the government's list of five national priorities, which also indicates the government's commitment to education. Ehlers and Lazenby (2007: 216) state that the allocation of resources within an organization must be aligned with its chosen strategy. A resource allocation plan describes how the different types of resources will be allocated to support the various long-term goals and short-term objectives. Resources in this context refer to tangible assets, especially finances.

David (2009:265) identifies four critical resources that can be used to achieve the desired goals:

- Financial resources,
- Physical resources,
- Human resources,
- Technological resources.

Of these resources, the financial resources are the most critical because they determine the extent to which a strategy can be implemented. In the Department, budget cuts have been one of the most serious challenges hindering the effective implementation of strategy. It has become the norm for the senior managers to cut the budget after all the plans have been finalized and costed. This action hamstrings the middle managers who were willing to implement the plans.

2.4.7. Organizational communication

Communication serves four major functions within an organization: control, motivation, emotional expression and information. According to Robbins et al. (2009:268) communication fosters motivation by clarifying to employees what is to be done, how well they are doing it, and what can be done to improve performance if it is sub-standard. Communication provides information that individuals and groups need to make decisions by transmitting the data to identify and evaluate alternative choices. Ehlers and Lazenby (2007:212) write that strategy implementation is the communication, interpretation, adoption and enactment of strategic plans.

In the Department of Education information on strategic implementation is not properly communicated from the senior to the middle managers, who are doing the actual implementation. There is no proper unit that takes the responsibility for effectively communicating the information; as a result there is no information flow from the top to the bottom and vice versa.

2.4.8. Attitude and commitment of managers

The commitment and the attitude of most senior and middle managers are questionable given the amount of effort they give to their work.

2.5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher tried to capture the following: firstly, the definitions of strategic management and strategic planning are given. A comparison between strategic management and strategic planning is also given.

Secondly the researcher highlighted the three phases of strategic management and elaborated more on the implementation phase because it is central to the study.

Thirdly, the researcher outlined the process of planning in the Department within the context of the strategic planning process.

Fourthly, the researcher discussed in some detail the seven critical factors perceived to be the cause of the poor implementation of the Department's corporate strategy.

The literature review highlighted that it is impossible to successfully implement strategy without the necessary preparations. The nine factors identified within the Department as hindering implementation provided a theoretical basis for the researcher's arguments – empirical evidence was needed to refute or confirm the claims made. Chapter 3 will therefore provide the research design and the methods of data collection used.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The success of a research study is dependent on its design. A well-designed research study is much more likely to succeed in its aims and a good design makes the actual execution/implementation easier, too. It is for this reason that the researcher spent a great deal of time in the design phase of this study. Every effort was made to align the study with the principles of scientific research. The central focus of the study is the analysis of the factors affecting the implementation of the Mpumalanga Department of Education's corporate strategy. In this chapter, an in-depth discussion of the methodology and how data were collected is presented.

The study is intended to answer the following research question, as presented in Chapter 1:

To what extent does each of the following factors affect the implementation of the Mpumalanga Department of Educations' Corporate Strategy:

- Organizational structure,
- Organizational culture,
- Resource allocation,
- Organizational communication,
- Human resources,
- Policies and procedures,
- Organizational leadership,
- Attitude and commitment of managers.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACHES

Rudestam and Newton (1992:25) write that the choice of the research approach to be used in any research is influenced by a number of factors, which may include the nature of the unit of analysis and the overall setting. In this study the researcher chose to fully apply the principles of both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Scholars in the academic world do not agree with regard to which approach is better instead arguing that the type of research determines and dictates the approach to be used. It is a fact that these two approaches are not the same but instead complement each other. McMillan and Schumacher (1995:14) state that the most obvious distinction to the reader between quantitative and qualitative research is the form of data presentation. Quantitative research presents statistical results in a number format while qualitative research presents facts in a narrated format. Some scholars perceive the differences as much more than this narrow distinction.

3.2.1. Qualitative approach

According to Polkinghorne (1991:112), qualitative methods are especially useful in the generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of the interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience. Qualitative methods focus on the nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

Patton (1985:01) describes qualitative research as an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular content and their interactions. Qualitative implies that the data are to a great extent in the form of words as opposed to numbers. In this study this method was used in the form of an in-depth study of documents in order to discern the impact of the different factors that hinder the implementation of the Mpumalanga Department of Education's strategies. Formal publications were perused and

valuable data, which assisted in drawing conclusions about the problem, were sifted and extracted.

3.2.2. Quantitative approach

Rudestam and Newton (1992:24) describe quantitative research as a method used to determine the aggregate differences between groups or classes of subjects. Quantitative data are generally evaluated using descriptive and inferential statistics. The emphasis in this method is the relationship between variables in terms of numbers. This method was also used in this study as variables were quantified. Questionnaires were developed and administered to 65 middle managers of the Department. Middle managers refer to Deputy Directors and Chief Education Specialists based at both districts (4) and at the Head Office.

3.2.3. Rationale for using the two approaches

Vockell and Asher (1995:193) summarize the two approaches as follows: "in fact, the two types of research approaches are perhaps of greatest value when combined. An appropriate strategy is to understand the basic principles of both qualitative and quantitative research, to know the strengths and limitations of each, and to be able to interpret the results of both methods". There could be no better statement to justify why the two methods should be used together. The advantage of using the two methods is that the reliability and validity of the research are checked (McMillan and Schumacher, 1995:14) and assured. This approach where multiple methods of gathering data are used is called triangulation. De Vos (1998:359) describes triangulation as a method that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches and gives information about the different facets of a problem.

3.3. RESEARCH SUBJECTS

The study involved choosing participants or subjects to be used in data collection. The subjects are referred to in scientific studies as the population. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:87) regards a population as a set of elements that the researcher focuses on and to which the results obtained by testing the sample should be generalized. Gay (1992:124), however, defines a population as the group of interest to the researcher. Population is also defined as the specific pool of cases that the researcher wants to study (Neumann, 2000: 201). The researcher made every effort to select the population that will make the generalization of the findings acceptable.

In this research study the entire Department's middle managers were included and were given a questionnaire to respond to. There was no need to sample the middle managers as they are not many and they are distributed all over the Mpumalanga Province (Districts and Head Office).

According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:104) all methods of data collection should be used in such a manner that the validity and reliability of the findings are ensured. Validity and reliability are key concepts in any form of inquiry, including this study. A brief explication of each of the two concepts is given below.

3.4. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

A scientific study must comply with the principles of validity and reliability, as defined below.

3.4.1. Validity

The term validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration

(Babbie, 1998:127). Validity is undoubtedly one of the most important concepts in scientific research. According to Silverman (1993:149) validity measures the extent to which data and the findings gained from that data present an accurate account of the events they claim to be describing. Validity therefore is a process of ensuring what ought to be measured is accurately measured. Efforts were made by the researcher to live up to this principle. Two factors contributed to the validity of the instruments:

- Firstly the researcher made use of widely accepted data collection instruments, namely a comprehensive literature study and a specifically developed questionnaire.
- Secondly, the instruments, especially the questionnaire, were discussed with experts in research and statistics.

3.4.2. Reliability

Babbie (1998:124) defines reliability as a matter of whether a particular technique, applied repeatedly to the same object, would yield the same result each time. McMillan and Schumacher (1995:385) define reliability as the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of participant meanings from data.

In this study, two instruments were used and the researcher avoided bias and subjectivity in their usage. The triangulation method was again applied.

3.5. DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

3.5.1. Orientation

Two data gathering instruments were used in the study as briefly explained in the table below.

Table 3.1. Summary of data gathering instruments

Instruments	Description	Number of responses	%
Literature	Several sources dealing with the research topic were explored	-	-
Questionnaire for middle managers	The questionnaire contained 15 items	42/65	65%

3.5.2. Literature reviewed

Chapter 2 of the study provided a detailed exposition of all the relevant literature reviewed. The literature reviewed provided answers to the major research questions of the study. The main idea of exploring and reviewing the literature was to collect theoretical data to help address the problem adequately. Several sources on strategic management and strategy implementation, as well as sources on factors affecting strategy implementation and more importantly, the official documents of the Department were explored in greater detail (see Chapter 2). Crucial data were identified and collected that formed part of the conclusions of this study.

3.5.3. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a very popular instrument in qualitative research and it was used in this study very effectively. Two sets of questionnaire items were used – open-ended and closed-ended items.

According to Rubin and Babbie (1989:58) open-ended questions have the following disadvantages:

- The respondents may be tempted to include false answers,
- They are difficult to score and record,
- Answers may be complex to analyze.

Due to this problem, the researcher included a very limited number of these types of question items. The advantage of this type of question is that the respondents are not confined in their answers as they are required to express their views freely. Rubin and Babbie (1989: 158) state that open-ended questionnaire items are those that require the respondent to provide his/her own views in answer to each question.

Close-ended questionnaire items are those where the respondent is asked to select an answer to the question from the list provided (Rubin and Babbie, 1989:158). These questions are very popular in quantitative research because they provide greater uniformity of responses and are fairly simple to analyze.

Grinnell (1998:317) identified the following advantages of close-ended questions:

- They enable data to be gathered on topics that are difficult to investigate in other ways,
- Fairly easy to quantify the results,
- Simple to record,
- Easy to answer,
- Easy to administer,

- Less time consuming than open-ended questions.

Although these questions have advantages, they also have their disadvantages (Grinnell, 1998:319):

- They are restrictive as there are only a few options to choose from,
- They tend to be biased as some categories may be left out.

The researcher included both set of questions in order to minimize the problems highlighted above. In the subsequent paragraphs full details of the questionnaire planned and prepared for the Department's middle managers are given.

3.5.3.1. Middle managers questionnaire

McMillan and Schumacher (1995:238) point out that a questionnaire is relatively economical, has standardized questions, can assure anonymity, and questions can be written for specific purposes. In this study qualitative data were collected by means of a questionnaire designed for middle managers. The questionnaire was deemed the most suitable method because it captured a detailed description of the experiences of the participants within a specific setting, the underlying processes influencing those experiences, and the perceptions of the participants regarding their experiences.

a) Questionnaire design and construction

According to Cohen and Marion (1994:92) an ideal questionnaire is one that is clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. Its design must minimize potential errors from both the respondents and coders. Participation in surveys is voluntary, a questionnaire therefore has to engage the interest of the targets, encourage their co-operation, and elicit answers as truthfully as possible. The questionnaire was designed with this statement in mind and aimed to facilitate rather than impede the research subjects' ability to provide

the information needed. All the respondents are professionals who are comfortable with English as a medium of communication; therefore the questionnaire was presented in English.

b) Questionnaire content

The questionnaire contained 14 closed items and 3 open-ended items, which were mainly follow-ups to the close-ended questions, seeking clarity on some items or additional details to the close-end questions. The questionnaire was structured in three sections as briefly described below.

(i) Biographical details

The questions under this section were about gender, age and education. This section was intended to collect personal information about respondents.

(ii) Strategic Planning Process in the Department

This section asked the respondents questions aimed at revealing their understanding of the strategic planning process and their involvement in it.

(iii) Factors affecting the implementation of the strategy in the Department

This category of items was intended to assess and analyze the factors affecting the implementation of the Department's corporate strategy. The questions were central and key to the study. Middle managers were required to rate the impact of each factor according to a scale provided. They were also asked to explain their choices or their ratings.

c) Validation of the questionnaire

The questionnaire instrument was validated by experts in the field of research. Two experts were involved in evaluating the draft questionnaire. The first was Dr. Hardus Maritz, a colleague of this researcher, and a very experienced researcher in his own right – his comments and constructive criticisms were very helpful as he highlighted a number of short-comings in the questionnaire. The researcher's supervisor, Dr N.E. Schutte, also reviewed the questionnaire and proposed some changes before receiving it as part of the researcher's submission. Finally the questionnaire was given to a statistician for further comments. After this process, the researcher was satisfied with the inputs and could confirm the validity of the instrument. The instrument was then finalized for pre-testing.

d) Questionnaire pre-test

Babbie (1998:153) mentions that no matter how careful you are in the design of a data collection instrument, such as a questionnaire, there is always the possibility, indeed the certainty of error. In the light of this statement, the best way to counter such errors is to pre-test the questionnaire. The researcher therefore gave the questionnaire to a few selected middle managers and then discussed with them any difficulties or misunderstandings that arose. Some words that posed problems were fully explained in the final instrument.

e) Questionnaire administration

The researcher made appointments with all the middle managers telephonically and then visited them at their workstations. The managers cooperated very well with the researcher, this was ensured as the researcher is a colleague to all the respondents and his job is actually to conduct research for the Department. The questionnaires were distributed to all the

middle managers and were collected five days later. The process of administering the questionnaire went well; 65 percent (42) of the questionnaires were collected and were duly analyzed by the researcher.

f) Data capturing

The data obtained from the questionnaires were captured and computerized by the researcher's colleague who is a specialist in statistics. Microsoft's Excel programme was used to analyze the data. After all the data were captured and analyzed using spreadsheets, printouts were given to the researcher for interpretation.

3.6. CONCLUSION

The design of this study was done in such a manner that all critical factors were taken into consideration in order to avoid problems that could negatively affect the findings of the study. The researcher made every effort to ensure that the research questions and objectives of the study were kept in order to direct the process of the study. The objectives are restated as follows:

- To analyze the factors that affect the corporate strategy of the Mpumalanga Department of Education.
- To help senior managers in developing effective ways of implementing the Department's corporate strategy.

In addition, and more specifically:

- To what extent do the following factors affect the implementation of the Mpumalanga Department of Education's corporate strategy?
 - (i) Organization communication,
 - (ii) Organization structure,
 - (iii) Organization culture,
 - (iv) Resource allocation,
 - (v) Human resources,

- (vi) Policies and procedures,
- (vii) Attitude and commitment of managers.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this chapter is to present the results of the data collected and analyzed. The research problem is restated in this chapter thus linking it directly to the preceding chapters. The data presented and reported in this chapter represents the points of view and experiences of the different respondents to the study, namely the middle managers in the Department of Education, as well as the information gleaned from the official documents perused. The evidence that emerged from the data is crucial in addressing the problem as stated in Chapter 1. **The research problem is restated as follows:**

The problem observed by the researcher over the years is that the strategies of the Department are not effectively implemented.

For more than five years the Department has received either a qualified or adverse report from the Auditor-General. In addition, the performance of schools, which is the core business of the Department, has not improved by any standards. Judging by Grade 12 results only, the province has not performed above 65 percent since 2006. There have also been several complaints from the Department's service providers that they do not receive payments in time for the services they have rendered to the Department. These three issues are an indication that the Department's strategies, which look good on paper, are not being translated into sound performance and effective service delivery. In the context of the researcher's organization, there are internal factors hindering the effective implementation of the

corporate strategy. Some examples as observed by the researcher and also confirmed in the Auditor-General's report are listed below:

- Lack of appropriate and enough resources,
- Weak organizational culture,
- Inappropriate organizational recruitment processes,
- Ineffective organizational structure,
- Ineffective organizational communication strategies,
- Lack of appropriate policies and procedures,
- Lack of influential leadership,
- Lack of managers' knowledge, competencies and skills in strategic management and planning.

These are some of the factors the researcher believes are the cause of the Department's low annual output and the ineffective implementation of strategies. These factors needed to be tested by empirical means and investigated in the relevant literature to prove whether they indeed affect the implementation of strategies.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using different data collection instruments in order to test these claims and in the subsequent paragraphs the analysis of the data is presented.

4.2. MIDDLE MANAGERS QUESTIONNAIRE

A. Biographical information

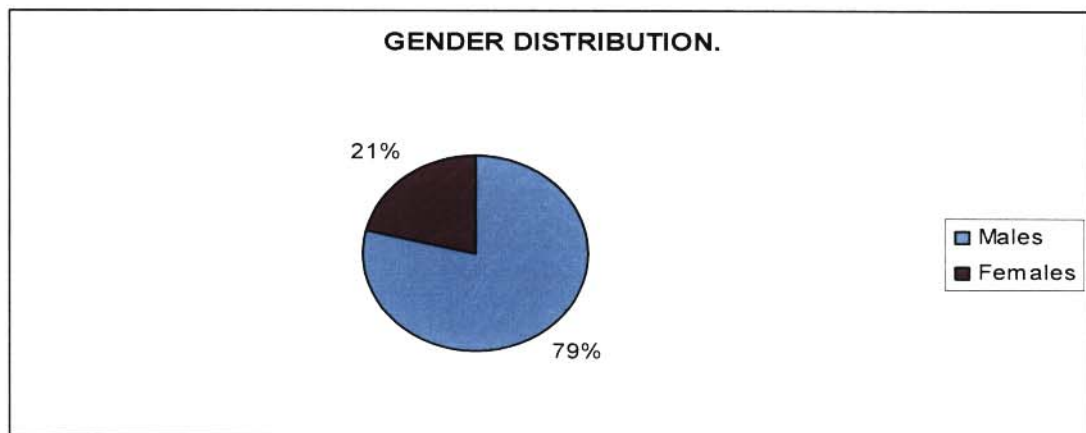
Data with regard to biographical information, that is, the gender, age and academic qualifications of the respondents were collected and are presented in graphical and table form below.

Item 1. Gender

Table 4.1. Distribution of respondents according to gender

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
Males	33	79%
Females	9	21%
Total	42	100%

Table 4.1. shows the distribution of respondents according to their gender. Out of 42 respondents, 33 (79%) are males and 9 (21%) are females.



Graph 4.1. Distribution of respondents according to gender

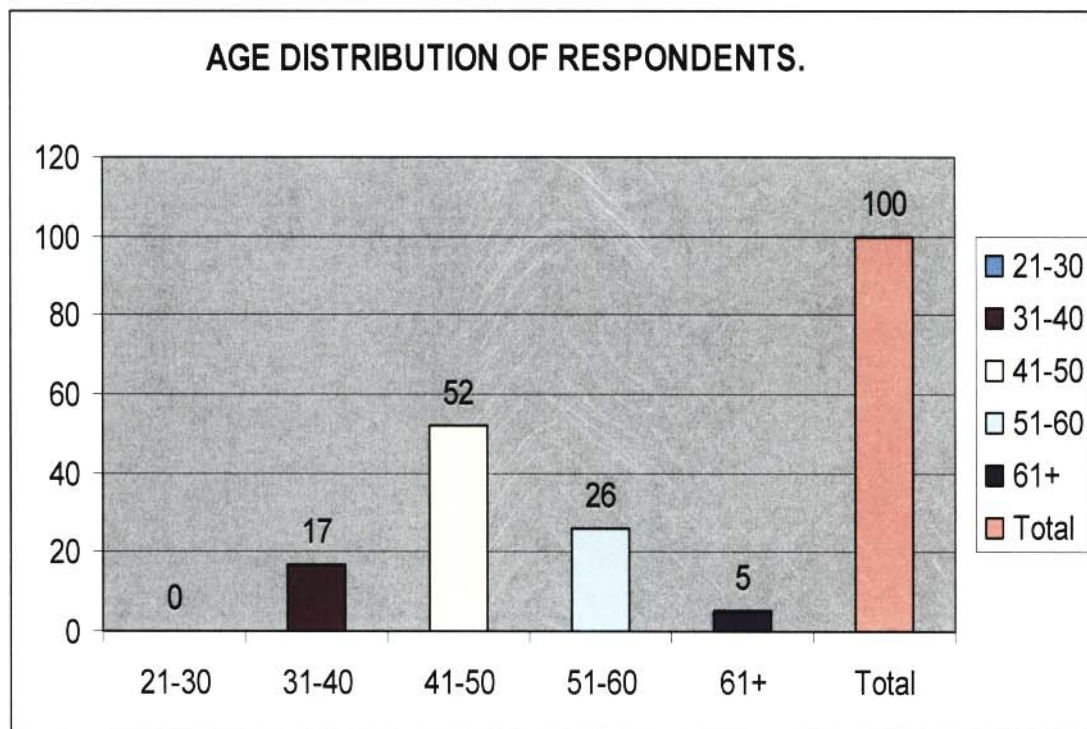
Conclusion

These statistics show that the Department of Education has not adequately addressed the gender disparity in the workplace – an overwhelming majority of middle managers are males (79%). The ideal is to have 50/50 gender representation in the work place by 2011.

Item 2. Age distribution

Table 4.2. Distribution of respondents according to age

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
21 – 30	0	0
31 – 40	7	17%
41 – 50	22	52%
51 – 60	11	26%
61 +	2	5%
Total	42	100



Graph 4.2. Distribution of respondents according to age

Table 4.2. and Graph 4.2. Show the distribution of the age groups of the respondents. The statistics reveal that most middle managers (22) in the Department are in the 41 – 50 age group (52%), while only 11 (26%) are in the 51 – 60 age group, and only 2 (5%) are above 60 years' old.

Conclusion

These statistics mean that most of the middle managers are nearing their exit point or retirement age (35 or 83 %). This means the Department should start planning and preparing young officials who are already in the system to replace the aging cohort.

Item 3. Education qualifications

Table 4.3. Distribution of respondents according to academic qualifications

Academic qualification	Number of respondents	Percentage
Diploma	7	17%
Junior degree	11	27%
Honors degree	9	21%
Masters degree	9	21%
PhD	3	7%
None	3	7%
Total	42	100%

The above statistics reveal that most middle managers hold junior degrees (27%), honors degrees (21%) and master's degrees (21%) which augurs well for the Department. 17% hold diplomas while 7% hold PhD degrees. What these statistics do not reveal, however, is the relevancy of these qualifications to strategic planning and management, this is dealt with in items 4 and 5.

Conclusion

The majority of the middle managers are highly qualified – having attained degrees of some description – this is good for the Department. Research has proved that there is a relationship between academic qualifications and performance if the qualifications are relevant to the jobs and are coupled with

other factors such as a conducive working environment and other conditions of service.

Item 4. Qualifications in relation to strategic planning

Table 4.4. Distribution of qualifications in relation to strategic planning

Rating	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	22	52%
No	18	43%
No response	2	5%
Total	42	100%

More than half of the middle managers (52%) who hold degrees covered strategic planning as a course or module in their degrees, while less than half (43%) did not cover any strategic planning as part of their academic qualifications. 5% did not respond to the question. It is important for any manager, whether middle or senior, to have full understanding of strategic planning because it is one of the critical management requirements.

Item 5. Qualifications including strategic planning modules or courses

Table 4.5. Distribution of qualifications that included strategic planning modules or courses

Qualifications	Number of respondents	Percentage
Diploma	8	38%
Junior degree	1	5%
Honors degree	8	38%
Masters degree	4	19%
PhD	0	0%
TOTAL	21	100%

The statistics as shown in Table 4.5. reveal that out of the 21 respondents who did strategic planning as part of one of their qualifications, most of them completed the course at the diploma level (38%) or as part of an honors degree (38%), while 19% covered strategic planning at the master’s level and 5% at the junior degree level. It is also interesting to note that while 52% of the respondents state that they completed a strategic planning course or module as part of their qualifications, their knowledge, understanding and competencies in strategic planning do not reflect this claim.

Item 6. Formal training in strategic planning

Table 4.6. Distribution of respondents according to formal training in strategic planning

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	33%
No	28	67%
Total	42	100%

The majority (67%) of respondents have not received formal training in strategic planning as either part of their induction program or skills development. It would seem that the Department is not really investing in its human resources, especially personnel at the middle management level. 33% of the respondents were trained on strategic planning – this is not enough by any standard as 100% should have received formal training on the subject to make sure that all middle managers have the skills, competencies and knowledge required at that level of management.

B. Strategic planning process in the Department

Item 7. Strategic planning sessions of the Department

Table 4.7. Distribution of strategic planning sessions of the Department

	Number of responses	Percentage
Yes	39	93%
No	3	7%
Total	42	100%

39 (93%) of the middle managers are aware of the planning processes in the Department, which leaves only 7% who are not aware of the planning processes. This could be because their directorates or branches are not involved in the planning processes or because these managers are simply un-informed.

Item 8. Frequency of planning in the Department

Table 4.8. Frequency distribution of planning in the Department

Frequency of planning	Number of respondents	Percentage
Annually	38	91%
Twice	2	5%
Three times	0	0
Four times	0	0
Five times	1	2%
No response	1	2%
Total	42	100%

An overwhelming majority (91%) of respondents reported that the Department conducts one strategic planning session per year while only 5% believed the Department to be conducting these sessions twice a year. One

manager (2%) did not respond and another (2%) believed that the Department only conducts strategic planning once every five years.

Item 9. Involvement in the planning processes

Table 4.9. Distribution of the respondents' involvement in the planning process

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	32	76%
No	9	22%
No response	1	2%
Totals	42	100%

The above statistics reveal that the majority of middle managers – 32 (76%) – are involved in the strategic planning processes of the Department while 22% are not involved. One person (2%) did not respond to the question.

Conclusion

The statistics reveal interesting information about the involvement of officials, especially the middle managers. Middle managers are rightfully involved in the planning processes as part of their responsibilities; however, there are a few who claim that they are not involved, which is a problem not only for the Department but also for their sections and for their own professional development. This is the area the Department will need to focus on.

Item 10. Level of involvement in the planning process

Table 4.10. Distribution of the level of involvement in the planning process

Level	Number of respondents	Percentage
Head Office level	12	26%
Branch level	03	6%
District level	05	11%
Directorate level	08	17%
Sub-directorate level	16	34%
Section/unit level	03	6%
Total	47	100%

Five respondents gave multiple answers as they are involved in planning at more than one level, for example, some respondents are involved in the planning process at the branch and directorate levels. 12 respondents (26%) are involved in the planning process at the Head Office level. Corporate planning in the Department is generally known to be the responsibility of senior managers only so it is interesting to note that some middle managers do participate at that level. 6% revealed that they participate in the planning process at the branch level. Branch plans are normally the responsibility of the middle managers and some of the senior managers who belong to that branch, so it stands to reason that more middle managers participate in the planning process at this level.

11% revealed that they participate in district-level planning. These are middle managers based in the districts and it is expected that they should be fully involved as they form part of the management (top) structure of the districts. 17% revealed that they participate at the directorate level – this is not surprising as each directorate is headed by a director who works with several middle managers.

34% of the respondents revealed that they participate at the sub-directorate level. It was in fact expected that this number would be 100% as all the sub-directorates are headed by middle managers. 6% of the managers revealed that they participate at the unit level, which is in most cases construed to be a sub-directorate.

Conclusion

These statistics clearly reveal that most middle managers do not really form part of the planning process at the top level, which is Head Office. They are only represented by their directors who very often do not report how the corporate plans are conceived at the top level and as such the middle managers are expected to implement plans which they were not really part of developing. This is where the implementation challenges begin as most of the middle managers only receive strategies without proper understanding. What happens is that they either resist or develop negative attitudes towards these strategies, as they perceive these plans to be prescribed by top management. This approach causes corporate strategies to fail. As part of this study is to assess the level of involvement of middle managers in the planning process, these results are very important.

Item 11. Phases of planning

Table 4.11. Distribution of the phases of planning

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Formulation phase	15	47%
Implementation phase	26	81%
Evaluation and control phase	5	17%
None of the above	0	0%
Total	46	100%

As for item 10 some respondents gave multiple responses, as they believed that they were involved in more than one phase of planning. The statistics reveal that the majority of the middle managers (81%) are involved in the implementation phase of the planning process while some (47%) revealed that they also participate in the formation phase of the planning process. Only 5 managers (17%) are involved in the evaluation and control phase.

Conclusion

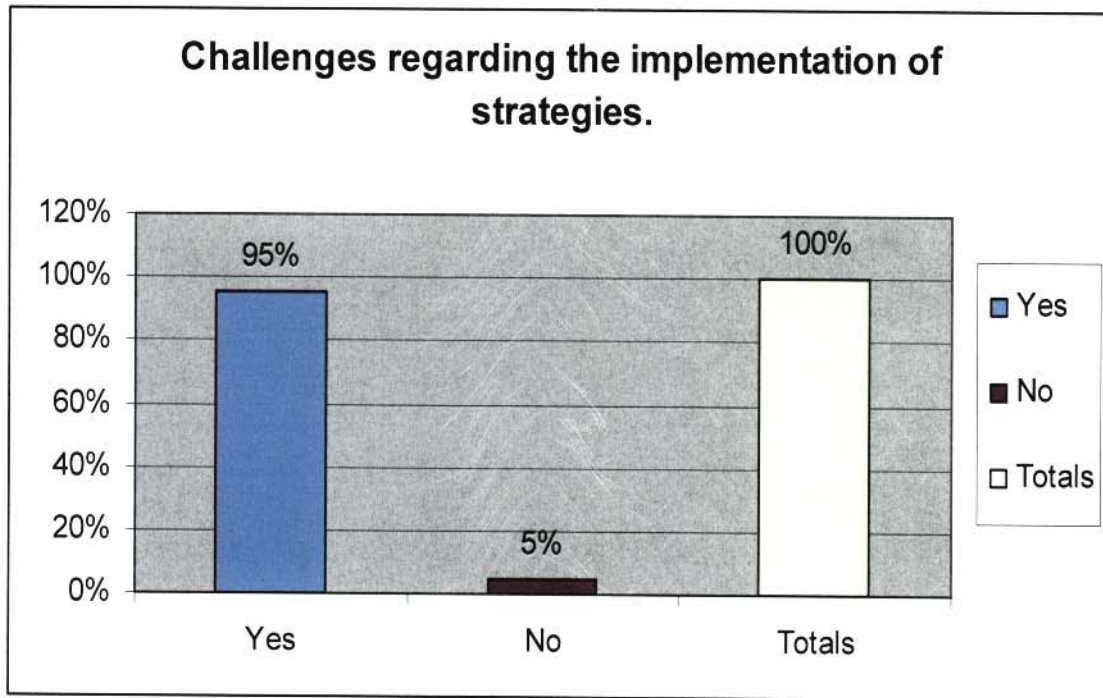
Middle managers are by their appointment in the Department expected to implement the different strategies and programs of the Department. It is therefore appropriate to have the majority of them (81%) involved with the implementation. Implementing something, however, is far more likely to succeed if the implementers were also involved in its formulation phase. Most of the middle managers are not really involved in the formulation of strategies – they only implement them. This approach is neither efficient nor effective as the managers may not fully understand the strategies or how and why they were formulated. This is one area that needs to be improved.

C. Factors affecting the implementation of the strategy

Item 12. Challenges in the broad strategies of the Department

Table 4.12. Distribution of challenges in the strategies of the Department

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	40	95%
No	2	5%
Totals	42	100%



Graph 4.3. Challenges in the broad strategies of the Department

An overwhelming majority (95%) of the respondents revealed that there are definitely challenges in the implementation of the strategies of the Department while only 5% believe there to be no challenges. From these statistics, it is clear that there is indeed a challenge in the implementation of the strategies. This study aims to analyze the factors affecting the implementation of strategies.

Item 13. Implementation challenges as perceived by middle managers

In the questionnaire, middle managers were requested to identify factors affecting the implementation of Departmental corporate strategies. Note that only those challenges that the majority of the middle managers perceived to be serious were captured – these are as follows.

- Lack of skills and knowledge about strategic management and planning of senior and some middle managers,
- Lack of financial support – budgets are not allocated according to plans but according to what is available and are not informed by needs,
- Lack of motivation by the leadership of the Department, middle managers claim that there are barely any motivation sessions for staff, let alone presentations by or communication with those who are at the top,
- Some senior managers do not take the strategic planning sessions seriously,
- Most middle managers are not involved in the corporate planning processes,
- Lack of commitment by senior managers,
- Shortage of resources such as office space and staff,
- Lack of discipline within the Department from some officials,
- Lack of financial management skills,
- Austerity measures and the moratorium on the filling of vacant posts is a challenge for the implementation of programs,
- Centralized budget in Head Office causes implementation problems,
- Ineffective, inefficient and corrupt procurement system of the Department causes untold delays in the delivery of services,
- Poor relationships amongst senior and middle managers and between officials create animosity, which affects the implementation of programs,
- Lack of sound and strong organization culture,
- Lack of relevant experience and skills of some managers,
- Strategies are not communicated properly,
- Lack of effective monitoring systems,
- Performance Management Development Systems (PMDS) do not center on delivery,
- Red-tape causes problems when it comes to the implementation of programs as people are made to wait longer than necessary,

- Sections work in silos causing duplication of activities and misuse of resources,
- Lack of proper SWOT analysis for the Department, this is needed to establish the real causes of poor service delivery,
- No feedback from strategic planning sessions and other meetings to officials who do not attend such meetings,
- Demotivated managers and officials.

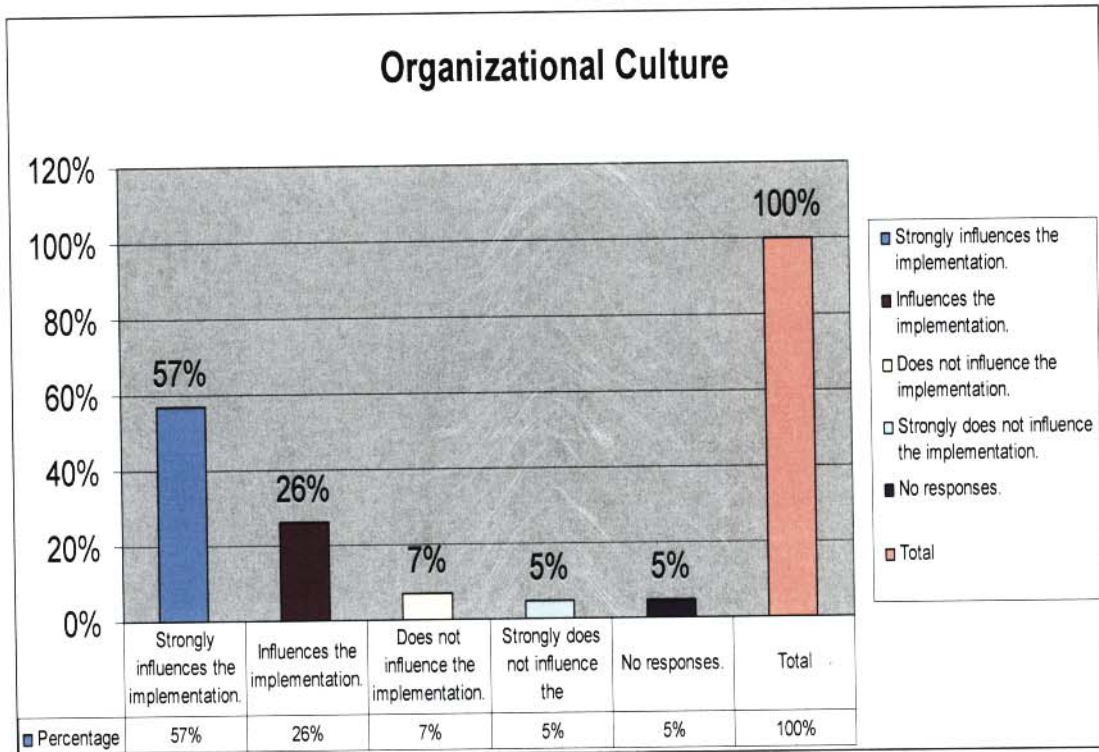
Item 14. Factors affecting the implementation of strategies

This item was divided into nine (9) sub-items and captured individually as follows:

Sub-item 14:1 Organizational culture

Table 4.13. Distribution of organizational culture

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	24	57%
Influences the implementation	11	26%
Does not influence the implementation	3	7%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	2	5%
No response	2	5%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.4. Distribution of organizational culture

The statistics reveal that most of the middle managers (57%) believe that organizational culture strongly influences the implementation of strategy while 26% revealed that they believe the influence, whilst evident, is slightly less. This means that 35 (83%) of the middle managers rated the organizational culture as one of the factors negatively affecting the implementation of the Department's strategies while only 7% believe it not to be negatively affecting strategy implementation. Of the latter group, 5% revealed that they believe organizational culture strongly does not affect the implementation of the strategies.

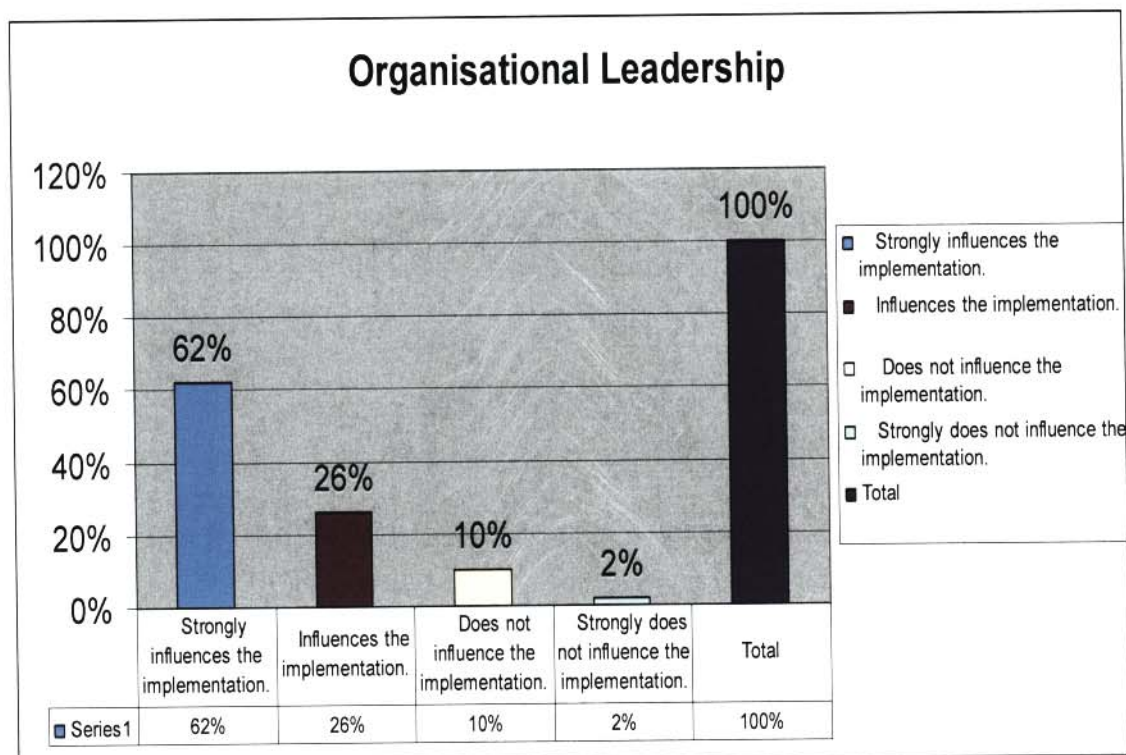
Conclusion

The above picture shows that an overwhelming majority of middle managers believe that organization culture does indeed negatively affect the implementation of strategies. This indicates that the Department will have to act on many levels to correct the implementation problem.

Sub-item 14:2. Organizational leadership

Table 4.14. Distribution of organizational leadership

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	26	62%
Influences the implementation	11	26%
Does not influence the implementation	4	10%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	1	2%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.5. Organizational leadership

The majority of the respondents (62%) believe that leadership strongly affects the implementation of the Department's corporate strategies and 26% believe that leadership affects the implementation to a lesser degree. In

essence 88% of the respondents believe that the leadership of the Department does affect the implementation of the corporate strategy. 10% of the respondents believe that leadership does not influence the implementation of strategy and 2% believe that leadership in no way at all influences the implementation of the strategy.

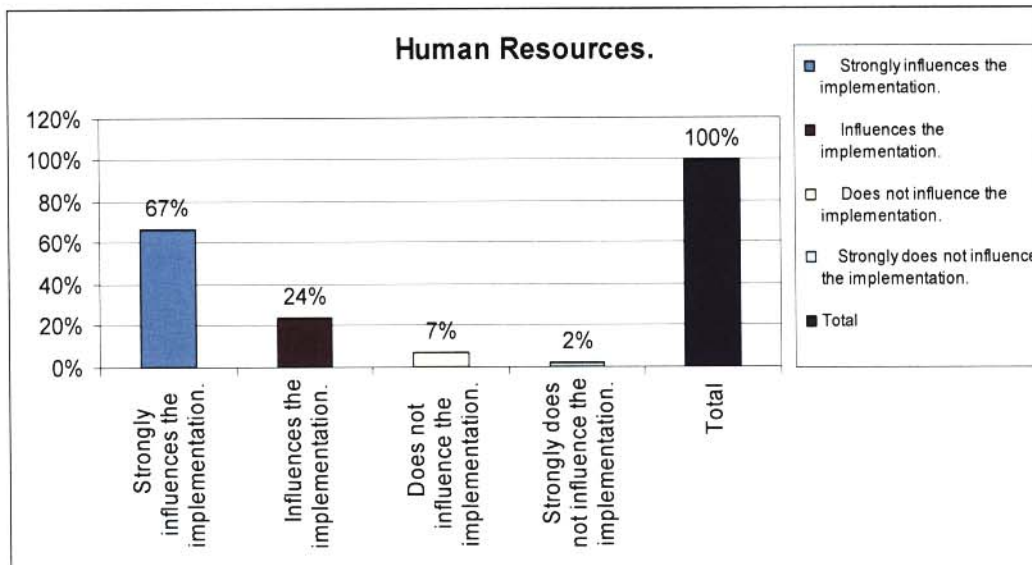
Conclusion

The above picture shows that the majority of the respondents (91%) believe that leadership does negatively affect the implementation of strategy.

Sub-item 14:3. Human resources

Table 4.15. Distribution of human resources

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	28	67%
Influences the implementation	10	24%
Does not influence the implementation	3	7%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	1	2%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.6. Human resources

The statistics reveal that the majority of middle managers (67%) believe that human resources strongly affect the implementation of the strategies while 24% believe that human resources affect the implementation of strategies to a lesser degree. 7% of the middle managers believe that human resources do not affect the implementation of strategies and 2% believe that human resources strongly do not affect the implementation of strategies.

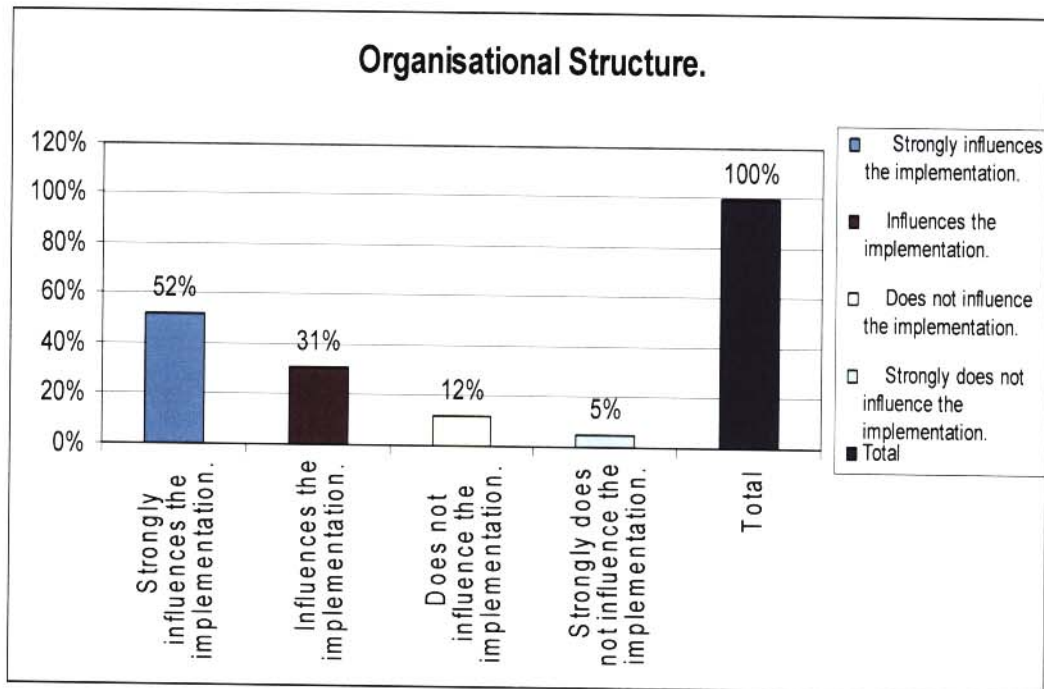
Conclusion

An overwhelming majority of the middle managers (91%) believe that human resources affect the implementation of the Department's corporate strategy while only 9% believe that human resource do not affect the implementation of the corporate strategy.

Sub-item 14.4. Organizational structure

Table 4.16. Distribution of organizational structure

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	22	52%
Influences the implementation	13	31%
Does not influence the implementation	5	12%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	2	5%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.7. Organizational structure

22 respondents (52%) revealed that the organizational structure of the Department strongly influences the implementation of the corporate strategies while 13 (31%) of the respondents believe this influence, whilst present, is to a lesser degree. 7 (17%) respondents do not believe that the

organizational structure affects the implementation of the organizational strategies. Of those respondents who believe the organizational structure does not affect strategy implementation, 5 (12%) do so to a normal degree and 2 (5%) do so strongly.

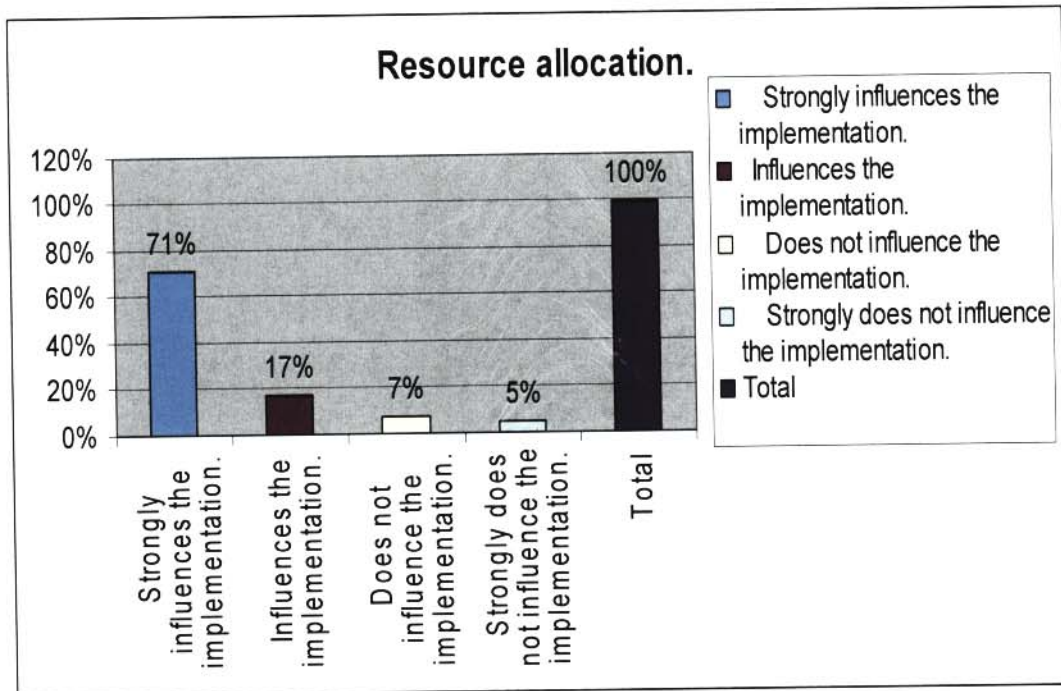
Conclusion

The statistics presented in Table 4.16 clearly reveal that the majority of the respondents (83%) believe that the way the structure of the Department is organized really does affect the implementation of the Department strategies.

Sub-item 14.5. Resource allocation

Table 4.17. Distribution of the effect of resource allocation

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	30	71%
Influences the implementation	7	17%
Does not influence the implementation	3	7%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	2	5%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.8. Resource allocation

The above statistics reveal that an overwhelming majority of respondents (71%) believe that resource allocation does indeed strongly affect the implementation of the Department's corporate strategies while 17% of the respondents believe so to a lesser degree. 7% of the respondents believe that resource allocation does not affect the implementation of strategies and only 5% of the respondents strongly believe that resource allocation does not affect the implementation of strategies.

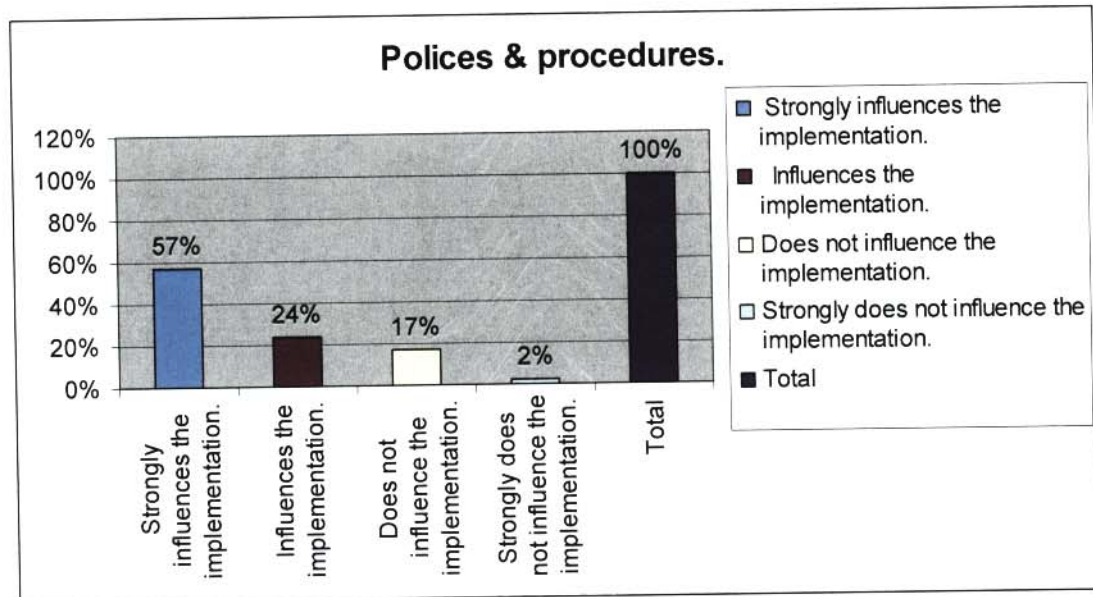
Conclusion

Given these statistics, it is clear that the majority of the Department's middle managers (85%) believe that resource allocation does affect the implementation of corporate strategies.

Sub-item 14.6. Policies and procedures

Table 4.18. Distribution of the effect of policies and procedures

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	24	57%
Influences the implementation	10	24%
Does not influence the implementation	7	17%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	1	2%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.9. Policies and procedures

Table 4.18. Shows that 57% of the respondents believe that Departmental policies and procedures strongly affect the implementation of the corporate strategy while 24% of the respondents believe that policies and procedures merely affect the implementation of the strategies. 17% believe that the policies and procedures do not affect the implementation of the strategies

and only 2% believe that the policies and procedures strongly do not affect the implementation.

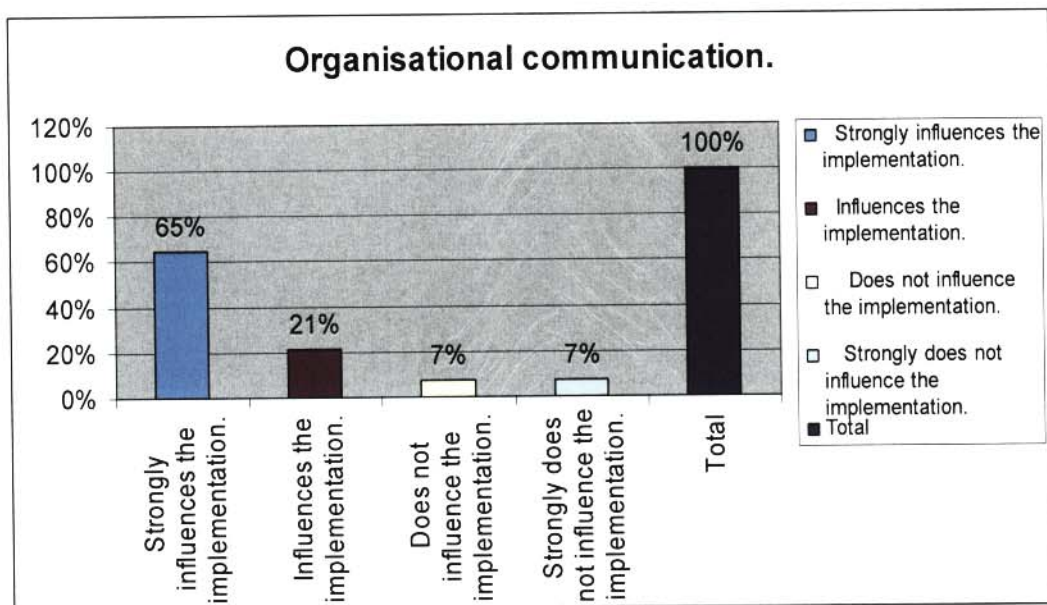
Conclusion

The majority of the respondents (81%) think that the policies and procedures of the Department do affect the implementation of its corporate strategies.

Sub-item 14.7. Organizational communication

Table 4.19. Distribution of the effect of organization communication

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	27	65%
Influences the implementation	9	21%
Does not influence the implementation	3	7%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	3	7%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.10. Organization communication

65% of the respondents believe that the way the Department communicates its strategies to the middle managers strongly affects the implementation of the organizational strategies. This is further supported by 21% of the respondents who believe that communication does affect the implementation of the strategies. Of the respondents who believe that organizational communication does not affect the implementation of strategies, 7% state that this is the case to a normal degree and 7% to a greater degree.

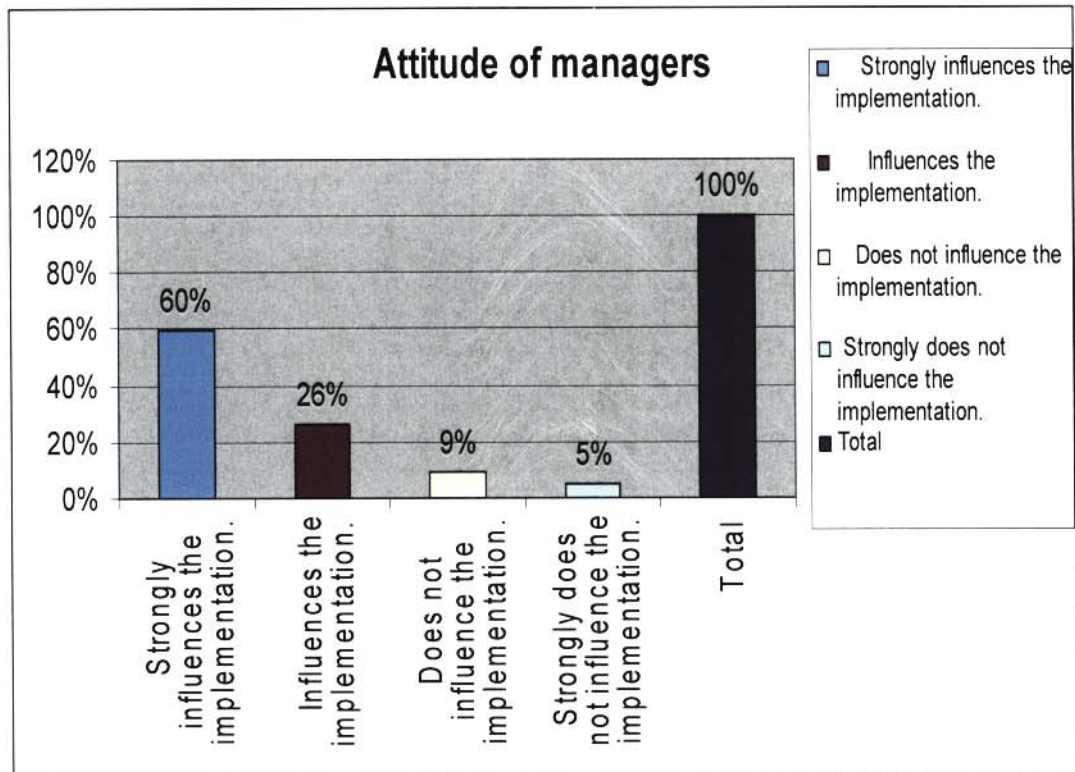
Conclusion

It is therefore clear that an overwhelming number of the respondents (86%) believe that the way strategies are communicated to the middle managers and to other officials affects the implementation of the Department's corporate strategy negatively.

Sub-item 14.8. Attitude of both middle and the senior managers towards strategic planning

Table 4.20. Attitude of both middle and the senior managers towards strategic planning

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	25	60%
Influences the implementation	11	26%
Does not influence the implementation	4	9%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	2	5%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.11. Attitude of both middle and the senior managers towards strategic planning

The above statistics show that 60% of the respondents strongly believe that the negative attitude of managers negatively affects the implementation of the Department's corporate strategies and 26% believe that the attitude of managers does affect the implementation of strategies. However, 9% believe that the attitude of managers does not affect the implementation while only 5% strongly believe that the attitude of managers does not affect the implementation of the strategies.

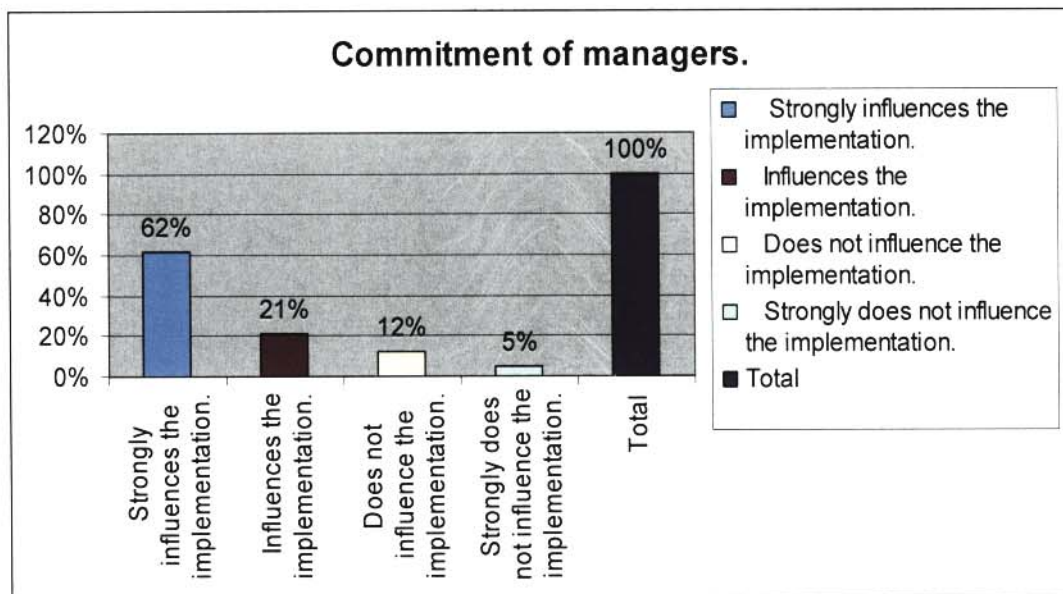
Conclusion

An overwhelming number of the respondents (86%) believe that the attitude of both middle and senior managers does affect the implementation of the Department's strategies. This percentage is high enough that it indicates that this feeling is a true reflection of that in the Department.

Sub-item 14.9. The commitment of the middle and senior managers towards strategic planning

Table 4.21. The commitment of the middle and senior managers towards strategic planning

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Strongly influences the implementation	26	62%
Influences the implementation	9	21%
Does not influence the implementation	5	12%
Strongly does not influence the implementation	2	5%
Total	42	100%



Graph 4.12. The commitment of the middle and senior managers towards strategic planning

The statistics as captured in the table above reveal that 62% of the respondents believe that the lack of commitment by both middle and senior managers strongly affects the implementation of the Department's strategies and 21% of the respondents believe that this lack of commitment does affect the implementation of the strategies, but not as strongly as the former respondents. 12% of the respondents do not believe that the lack of commitment does affect the implementation and only 5% believe that the lack of commitment from managers (middle and senior) strongly does not affect the implementation of the Department strategies.

Conclusion

The statistics show that most of the middle managers (83%) fully agree that the lack of managerial commitment towards the strategic planning process of the Department does indeed negatively affect the implementation of its corporate strategies.

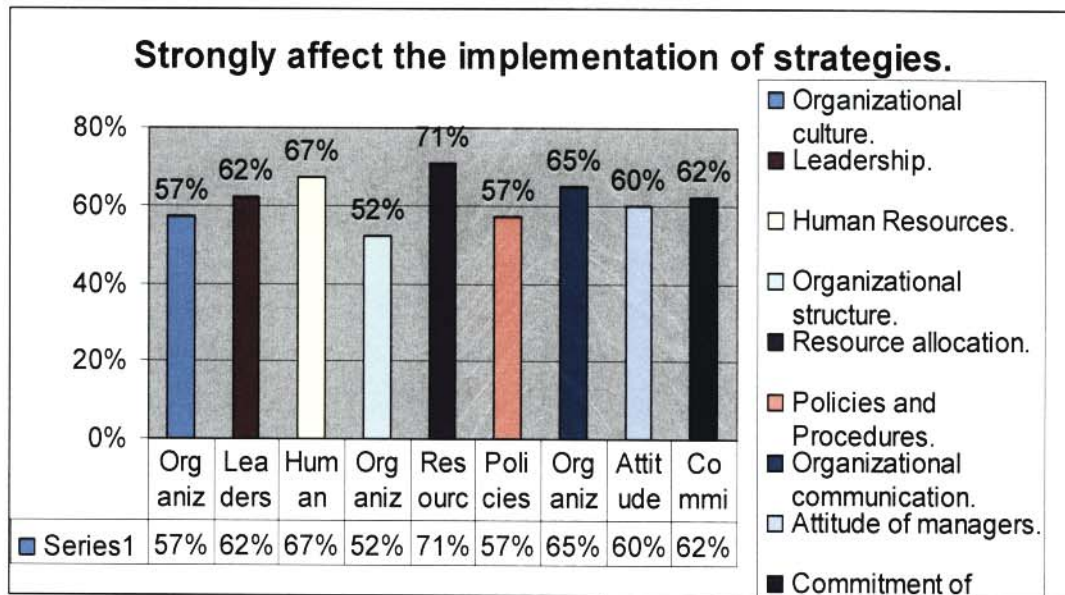
D. Summary of the distribution of the responses and ratings of the factors

Table 4.22. Summary of the responses and ratings per factor

Factors	Strongly affect the implementation	Just affect the implementation	Does not affect the implementation	Strongly does not affect the implementation	Total
Organizational culture	57%	26%	7%	2%	100%
Leadership	62%	26%	10%	2%	100%
Human Resources	67%	24%	7%	2%	100%
Organizational structure	52%	31%	12%	5%	100%
Resource allocation	71%	17%	7%	5%	100%
Policies and procedures	57%	24%	17%	2%	100%
Organization communication	65%	21%	7%	7%	100%
Attitude of managers	60%	26%	9%	5%	100%
Commitment of managers	62%	21%	12%	5%	100%

Table 4.23. Factors strongly affecting the implementation

Factors	Strongly affect the implementation
Organizational culture	57%
Leadership	62%
Human resources	67%
Organizational structure	52%
Resource allocation	71%
Policies and procedures	57%
Organization communication	65%
Attitude of managers	60%
Commitment of managers	62%

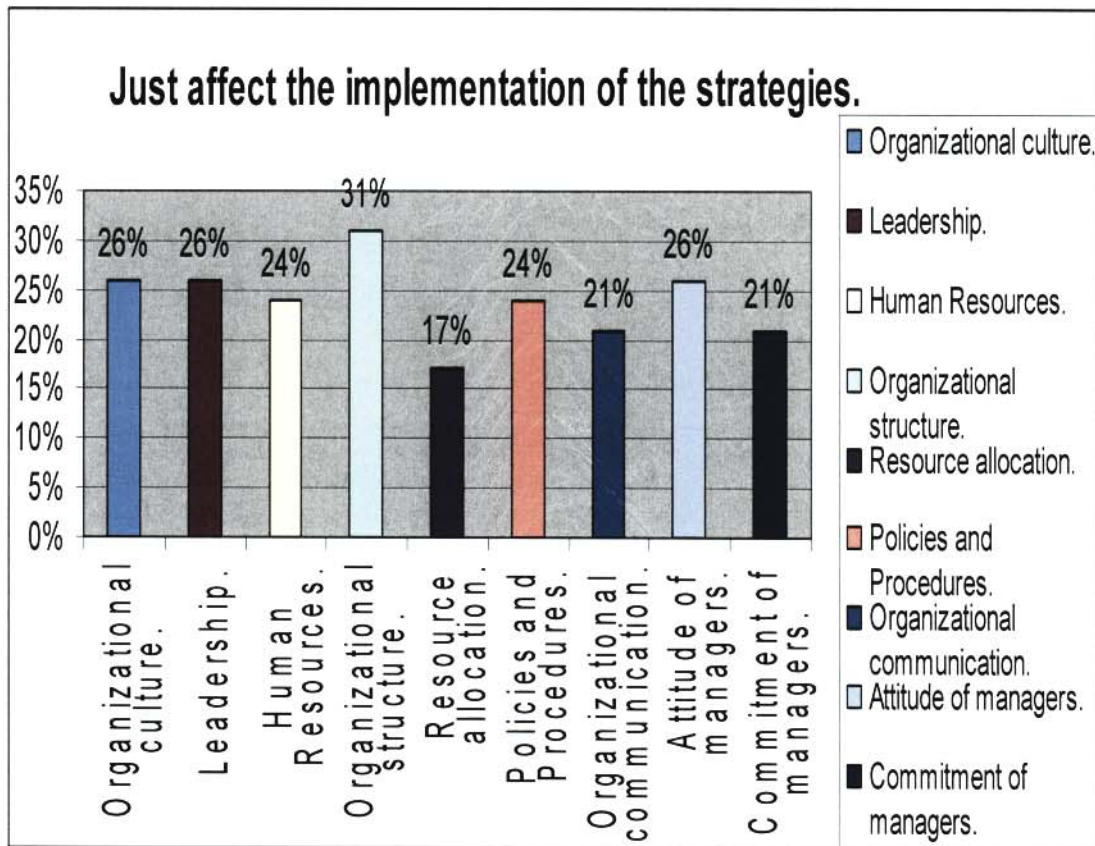


Graph 4.13. Factors strongly affecting the implementation

Table 4.22. And Graph 4.13. Show the summary of all the factors that the middle managers believe strongly affect the implementation of the Department's corporate strategy.

Table 4.24. Factors just affecting the implementation

Factors	Just affect the implementation
Organizational culture	26%
Leadership	26%
Human resources	24%
Organizational structure	31%
Resource allocation	17%
Policies and procedures	24%
Organization communication	21%
Attitude of managers	26%
Commitment of managers	21%

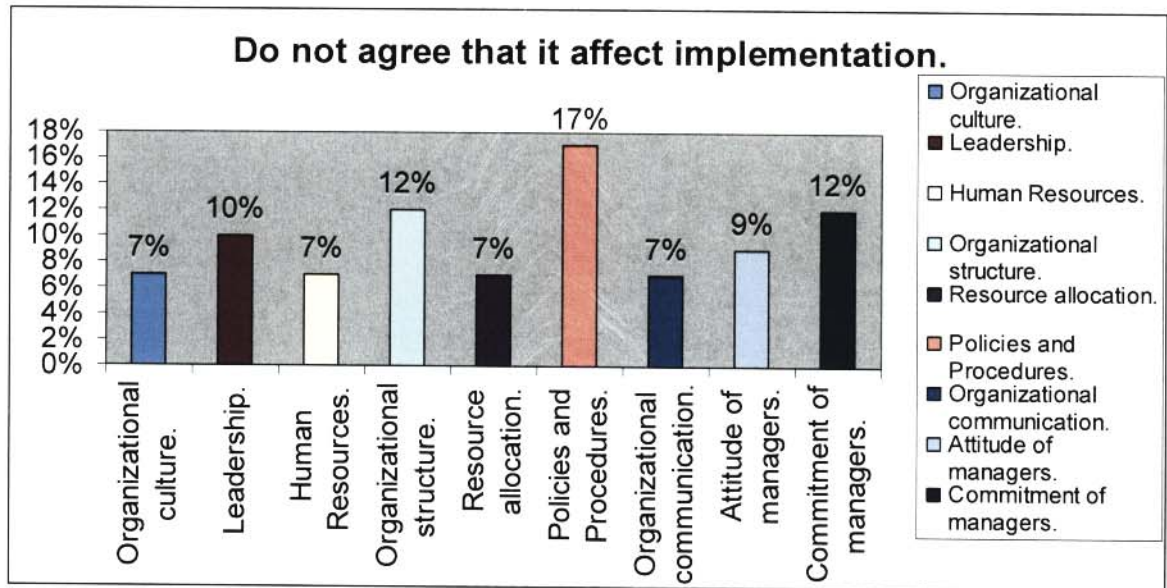


Graph 4.14. Factors just affecting the implementation

Table 4.23. and Graph 4.14. Show the summary of all the factors which the respondents believe just affect the implementation of the strategy.

Table 4.25. Factors that do not affect the implementation

Factors	Do not affect the implementation
Organizational culture	7%
Leadership	10%
Human resources	7%
Organizational structure	12%
Resource allocation	7%
Policies and procedures	17%
Organization communication	7%
Attitude of managers	9%
Commitment of managers	12%

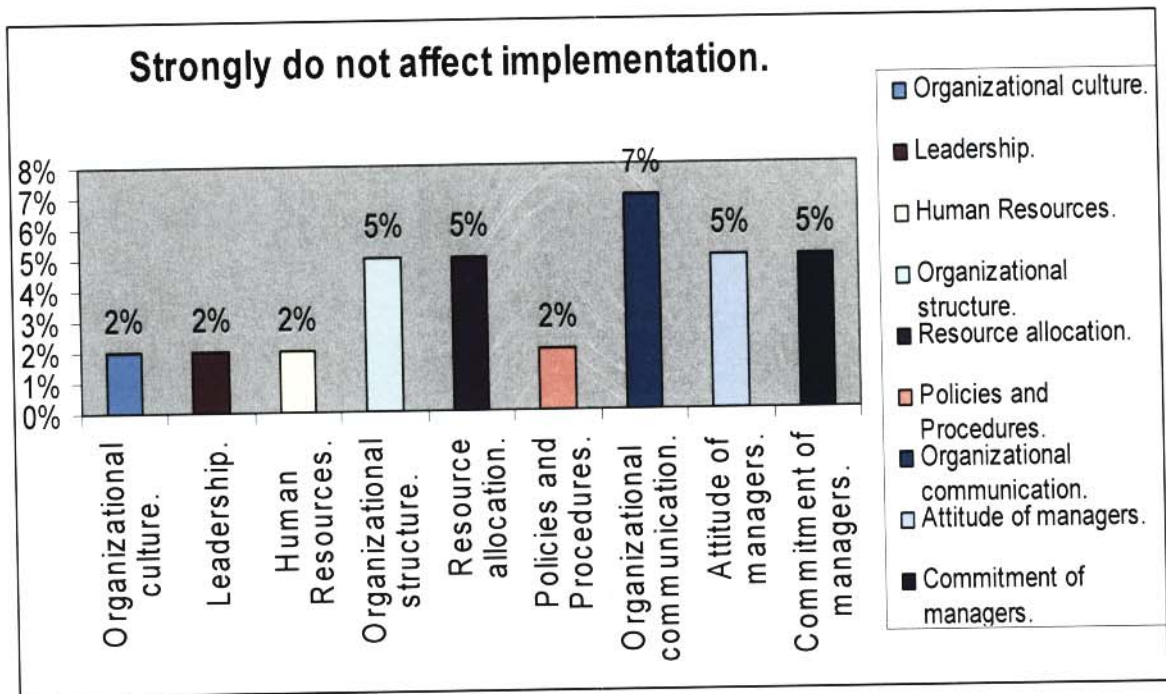


Graph 4.15. Factors that do not affect the implementation

Table 4.23. and Graph 4.15. Show the summary of all the factors which the middle managers believe do not affect the implementation of the strategy.

Table 4.26. Factors that strongly do not affect the implementation

Factors	Strongly do not affect the implementation
Organizational culture	2%
Leadership	2%
Human resources	2%
Organizational structure	5%
Resource allocation	5%
Policies and procedures	2%
Organization communication	7%
Attitude of managers	5%
Commitment of managers	5%

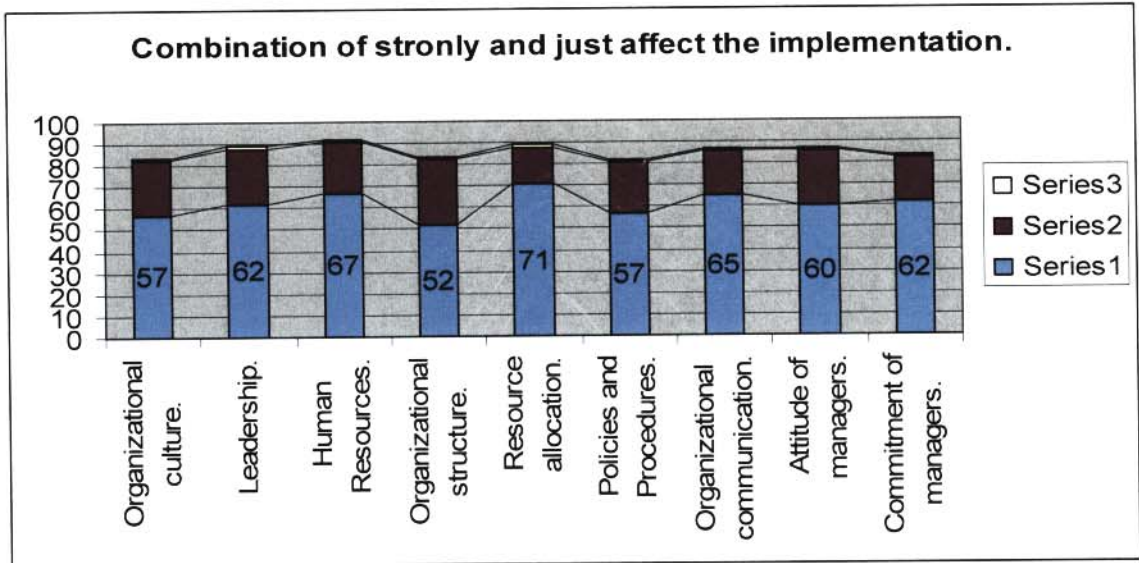


Graph 4.16. Factors that strongly do not affect the implementation

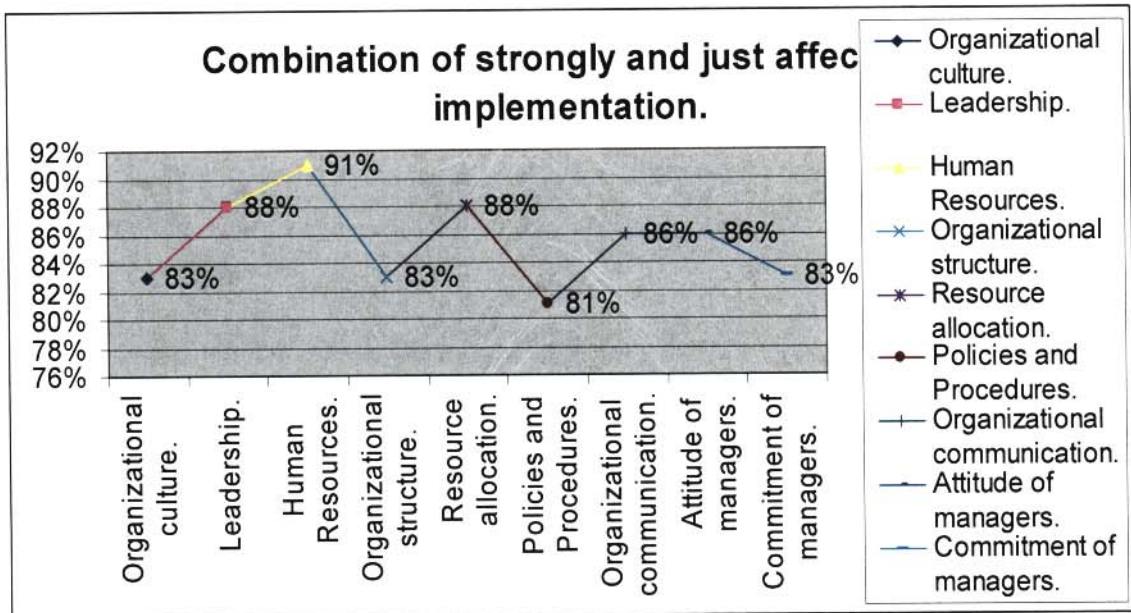
Table 4.24. and Graph 4.16. Show the summary of all the factors that the middle managers believe strongly do not affect the implementation of the Department's strategy.

Table 4.27. Combination of factors strongly and just affecting the implementation

Factors	Strongly affect the implementation	Just affect the implementation	Total
Organizational culture	57	26	83%
Leadership	62	26	88%
Human resources	67	24	91%
Organizational structure	52	31	83%
Resource allocation	71	17	88%
Policies and procedures	57	24	81%
Organization communication	65	21	86%
Attitude of managers	60	26	86%
Commitment of managers	62	21	83%



Graph 4.17. Combination of factors strongly and just affecting the implementation



Graph 4.18. Combination of factors strongly and just affecting the implementation

Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. And 4.18. Show the combined summary of all the factors the managers believe to be strongly and just affecting the

implementation of the Department's strategy. These statistics show that all the nine factors as discussed in the document are perceived to greatly affect the implementation of the strategy; however, it is interesting to note that human resources, leadership and resource allocation were rated top of the list of the nine factors. All the nine factors are above the 80% mark of the combined or stacked bar chart, which means that the Department should focus on all of them in order to normalize the situation.

Item 15. Steps the Department must take in order to address the challenges of strategy implementation

As for Item 13, this item elicited qualitative responses, which varied from one respondent to another and only a few respondents answered this question. Even so, common responses were captured and are therefore presented as follows:

- Develop an effective communication strategy throughout the whole organization,
- Involve all middle managers in the strategic planning sessions,
- Shorten the red-tape in the procurement of goods and services,
- Hold motivational sessions for employees at least once per quarter,
- Create a platform where middle and senior managers address the bottlenecks in the procurements system,
- Communicate organizational strategies, goals, vision and mission effectively to all members of the Department,
- Empower all managers and involve them in the processes of strategic planning,
- Decentralize the budget to the districts because that is where most programs are implemented,
- Support middle managers with resources in their efforts to implement the strategies,
- Fast track the filling of critical vacant posts,

- Monitor the implementation of strategies regularly and frequently,
- Encourage commitment by all officials, especially senior managers,
- Reward good performance,
- Appoint managers based on competencies and skills not other factors,
- Develop and empower all managers on a regular basis,
- Include the implementers of strategies in the planning process,
- Do away with double approval of one strategy or program for funding or financing,
- Hold quarterly (at least) meetings for middle managers concerning the implementation of programs at which the Head of the Department addresses them on any implementation issues,
- Structure the circuits to support schools more effectively,
- Involve middle managers from the early stages of planning.

4.3. ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

4.3.1 Introduction

Apart from the quantitative data that were collected from the middle managers using the questionnaires, crucial qualitative data about some of the factors affecting the implementation of the Department's strategies were also collected from some of its official publications. Documents such as the annual reports for the 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2009 financial years contain information regarding financial statements and performance with regard to the implementation of strategies. Implementation plans for the same period also contain crucial information; therefore the information will be presented in this section of the report to support the empirical evidence and findings already presented in Section 4.2 of the study.

4.3.2. APP for 2006/2007 to 2008/2009 financial years

These documents contain the main strategic vision of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, the mission statement and the values. These are broad statements of intent encapsulating the corporate strategy of the Department. The vision of the Department during the period was "providing quality education and training towards a better life for all" (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2009, APP). By its nature this vision statement spells out and implies the corporate responsibility of all officials who are expected to work towards implementing and achieving it, however, each branch, chief directorate, and directorate are expected to have a fair share of the responsibility of realizing the vision. The vision is therefore broken down into strategic goals and objectives. These goals and objectives, like the vision and the mission, are the same for the five-year period covered by the APP.

Each sub-directorate has a strategic objective that should be implemented per financial year and this is where the middle managers play the critical role of implementing the strategies. Strategic objectives are further broken down into measurable objectives, and have performance targets. All these are captured in the APP. For the sake of brevity the actual strategic goals, objectives and measurable targets are not given here, it is sufficient to outline the process as has been done.

4.3.3. Implementation plans for 2008/2009

From the APPs an implementation plan document is developed; this document contains all the strategic objectives and the annual planned outputs per branch, per chief directorate, per directorate and per sub-directorate, all linked to the available resources (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2009, APP). The annual outputs are also divided into the four quarters of each financial year for the purpose of implementation. The implementation plan clearly shows the details of the Department's measurable activities on an

annual basis for the specific periods referred to earlier, the 2006/07 to 2008/09 financial years. The strategic objectives are the same, however, what changes every year are the annual outputs, the targets and the resources allocated to achieve the goals.

In order to implement the plans properly, the Department needs resources – human, financial, both physical and material, leadership, organizational structure, productive organizational culture, positive attitude, commitment by all officials and effective organizational communication strategy. Without these factors properly linked, it is impossible to implement the strategies and it will be very difficult to achieve the stated vision.

4.3.4. Annual reports

In order to assess and evaluate the achievements of the implemented strategies, quarterly reports, which culminate in an annual report, are developed. The annual report captures the following:

- General information, including statements from the political and administration heads,
- Programs' performance, with details of how all the different programs performed in that particular financial year,
- Report of the audit-committee, with a synopsis of the effectiveness of the internal controls,
- Report on the financial statements, where all financial statements for the financial year are given and the Auditor-General's report is attached. It is in this report that qualified opinions are given. The researcher will therefore summarize the reports over the mentioned three financial years to highlight the challenges of strategy implementation.
- Lastly the reports show how the human resources for the year were utilized and the cost implications.

4.3.5. Analysis of the Auditor-General's audit reports

4.3.5.1. 2006/2007 Financial year

The Auditor-General made the following findings during the audit of the Department for the 2006/2007 financial year.

- Management policies and procedures have not been developed as required by action 38(1) of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (Mpumalanga Department of Education, Annual report 2007). This limitation has an impact on the implementation of the strategies of the Department.
- The human resources management strategies as indicated in the Human Resources Plan to address the gap between demand and supply were not costed and target dates for the achievement of the strategies were not indicated (Ibid.:42).

4.3.5.2. 2007/2008 Financial year

The Auditor-General made the following findings during the audit of the Department for the 2007/2008 financial year.

- The measureable objectives were not consistent or aligned in the manner that they were set out in the strategic plan, the budget and the annual report, with the result that the measureable objectives on one of the three documents could not be reviewed in relation to the other two documents (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2008: 44),
- The objectives were predetermined as a strategic plan and were not budgeted for, they were not reported in the annual report
- There was a lack of appropriate audit evidence

The evidence given was materially inconsistent with the reported performance information

4.3.5.3. 2008/2009 Financial year

The Auditor-General made the following findings during the audit of the Department for the 2008/2009 financial year.

- Payments due to creditors were not always made within 30 days from receipt of invoices, as required in terms of section 38 (1) of the PFMA and Treasury Regulation 8.23 (Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2009 APP),

Certain employees of the Department did not declare their business interests as required by section 50 (3), (a0) and (b) of the PFMA .

The follow-ups of audit findings were not implemented.

The above information as captured in the Auditor-General's reports is an indication that the Department does not comply with statutory requirements. This problem is reflected in the implementation of the Department's strategies.

4.4 CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data relating to each factor, the results confirm that the following factors (resource allocation, organizational culture, organizational structure, human resources, organization communication, policies and procedures, leadership, commitment and attitude), as identified and discussed, do negatively affect the successful implementation of strategies in the Mpumalanga Department of Education. Tables 4.1. to 4.25. And Graphs 4.1. to 4.18. of the study provide full statistics to that effect. It is also interesting to note that the empirical data fully support the theoretical discussion as given in Chapter 2. It can therefore be concluded that the empirical evidence collected supports the theoretical principles on the subject, therefore the research questions, as stated in Section 1.7. of Chapter 1 have been fully confirmed. The official documents that were investigated also provided some insights regarding the Department's inability to implement

strategies, which is caused by the stated organizational factors. This analysis has given the researcher a sound basis to make informed conclusions and, therefore, recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the analyzed data and to present the recommendations in a logical form.

5.1. FINDINGS

The empirical data and the official documents reviewed yielded the following findings:

5.1.1. The majority of the literature reviewed supports the notion that the nine factors that were discussed do indeed affect the implementation of corporate strategies (**see Sections 2.4.1. to 2.4.7. of Chapter 2, Item 14 of Chapter 4 and Section 4.3.**).

5.1.2. The review of the Departmental official documents – the APP, the Implementation Plan and the Annual Reports – also reveals that the Department's implementation of corporate strategies is hampered by several factors, as highlighted (**see Sections 2.3. of Chapter 2 and Section 4.3. of Chapter 4**).

5.1.3. The majority of the middle managers (83%) in the Mpumalanga Department of Education are above 40 years' old (**see Table 4.2. and Graph 4.2. of Chapter 4**).

5.1.4. Most of the middle managers (70%) hold post diploma qualifications, although not all are relevant for the job they are doing (**See Table 4.3 in Chapter 4 and questionnaire Item 3**).

5.1.5. Most middle managers (67%) have not received formal training in strategic planning (**Questionnaire Item 6 and Table 4.6.**).

5.1.6. 76% of the middle managers are involved in the strategic planning but at the lower levels of the Department (**see Items 9 and 10 of the questionnaire**).

5.1.7. The majority of the middle managers (81%) are involved with the implementation of the strategies but few (47%) participate in the formulation of such strategies, which is a challenge for the Department (**see table 4.9.**).

5.1.8. An overwhelming number of the respondents (95%) confirmed that there are indeed challenges in the implementation of the Departmental strategies (**See Table 4.12. and Graph 4.3.**).

5.1.9. Item 13 of the questionnaire captured the following factors (5.1.10. to 5.1.18. below) regarding the challenges of implementing the Departmental strategies (**For more details on the responses refer to Item 13 of Chapter 4**).

5.1.10. 83% of the middle managers rated organizational culture as one of the factors which affect the implementation of the strategies (**see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.**).

5.1.11. 88% of the middle managers rated leadership as one of the factors affecting the implementation of the organizational strategies (**see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.**).

5.1.12. The study also shows that 91% of the middle managers believe that the lack of, shortage of, or irrelevance of human resources cause challenges in the implementation of strategies (**see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.**).

5.1.13. 83% of the middle managers believe that the operating structure of the Department hampers the implementation of strategies **(see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.)**.

5.1.14. The study reveals that 88% of the middle managers believe that the manner in which resources are allocated negatively affects the implementation of strategies **(see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.)**.

5.1.15. 81% of the middle managers believe that policies and procedures affect the implementation of the strategies **(see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.)**

5.1.16. 86% of the middle managers revealed that the organization's communication strategy negatively affects the implementation of strategies **(see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.)**.

5.1.17. 86% of the respondents believe that the negative attitude of both the middle and senior managers affects the implementation of strategies. Managers are believed to have negative attitudes towards the strategic planning process **(see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.)**.

5.1.18. 83% of the middle managers believe that the lack of commitment to the strategic planning process by both middle and senior managers negatively affects the implementation of the Department's strategies **(see Table 4.25. and Graphs 4.17. and 4.18.)**.

5.1.19. The middle managers believe that certain measures are implemented, the Department's performance will improve **(refer to Item 15 of the document in Chapter 4)**.

5.1.20. The Auditor-General's reports over a period of three years gave the Department qualified opinions on the performance information and financial statements, which reflects the poor implementation of strategies (**see Section 4.3.4. of the report**).

5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the research findings outlined above, the following recommendations are made:

5.2.1. Recommendations on the training of middle managers on strategic planning

The skills development section should as a starting point conduct a skills audit of both middle and senior managers, especially in the area of planning, to identify gaps. The Department should prioritize the training of middle managers on the strategic management process. The training should be conducted by credible institutions, preferably one of the universities strong in management sciences.

5.2.2. Recommendations on gender

This study reveals that 79% of the middle managers in the Department are males; this is contrary to the policy of gender equity in the work place. It is therefore recommended that the Department develop a program that will address the challenge by balancing gender disparity in the Department within the next five years.

5.2.3. Recommendations on age

The majority of the middle managers are fairly old and therefore a succession planning coupled with the mentoring of young officials should begin in the

next financial year (2011/12). Proper career pathing should inform the program of skills development in line with the employment equity plan.

5.2.4. Recommendations on the involvement of middle managers in the planning process

On the basis of the findings it is recommended that all middle managers should attend and fully participate in the strategic planning processes at the Head Office and branch levels. They will get the opportunity to learn how to formulate and to implement the strategies. It will give them the opportunity to understand the formulation processes, which in turn inform the implementation.

5.2.5. Recommendations on the organizational culture

The organizational culture of the Department is unproductive and is costing the Department a lot of resources. It is therefore recommended that the executive management establish a task team to study the culture of the Department and recommend strategies to the leadership for improvement. The focus should be on discipline, meeting deadlines, time on task, late arrivals, clock-off and clock-in times, and noise during official working hours, etc.

The following should be given the most attention:

- Establishing a culture of achieving customer/client satisfaction,
- Establishing a culture of quality services in line with the vision of the Department,
- Creating common belief concerning organizational goals and strategies,
- Creating an environment where staff will socialize and gel as a team,
- Creating a collaborative culture of team and group working,
- Creating explicit organizational values, and engendering employees' openness to these values,

- Establishing a culture of appropriate flexibility in the organization.

5.2.6. Recommendations on leadership

Leadership is a reflection of the organization as a whole; therefore, the leadership should seriously consider the issue of motivating the staff and should provide proper leadership to the Department. The middle managers feel that the current leadership of the Department is not providing effective leadership and direction to the organization. The executive management should meet the middle managers at least once per quarter to provide leadership and address concerns.

The following should be given the most attention:

- Explicit goal setting by the leadership of the Department,
- Supporting the employees' perception of the goals and strategies,
- Consulting with and using the intellectual abilities of employees,
- Create an atmosphere of needed change in the Department,
- Presenting effective solutions and ideas to the employees,
- Encouraging and motivating employees as often as possible.

5.2.7. Recommendations on human resources

The Department, through its executive management, should start recruiting relevant, competent and knowledgeable personnel to fill the vacant posts. Appointments based on nepotism, friendship and other factors are compromising the quality of service delivery. The new organogram should be used to appoint relevant skilled people based on competencies and nothing else. All sections should be provided with human resources to fill the required posts.

The following should be given the most attention:

- A precise system of evaluating performance should be introduced,

- An organized recruiting and staffing system should be introduced,
- A systematic regular training program in relation to the strategic goals should be introduced.

5.2.8. Recommendations on organizational structure

The structure of the Department is not informed by the work which the Department is expected to perform and millions of rands are spent on officials who are doing nothing or doing very little because the structure accommodates positions which are not really needed. It is therefore recommended that the Department develop the job profiles and skills required before developing a structure. A structure should be informed by what needs to be done not by who needs to be employed. Many of the service delivery challenges the Department is experiencing are caused by the wrong approach being used where posts were created with people in mind rather than service delivery in mind.

The following should be given the most attention:

- Creating a structure relevant for effective service delivery,
- Creating defined organizational rules and instructions,
- Creating space for employee creativity,
- Decentralizing decision making at the top level of the organization,
- Flexibility in the structure should be allowed.

5.2.9. Recommendations on the allocation of resources

Not even a hard worker can be productive without the relevant resources required to do his or her particular job. On the basis of this it is recommended that the Department provides relevant and sufficient resources, especially in terms of budget, to all sub-directorates and that the middle managers be allowed to exercise their management responsibilities.

The following should be given the most attention:

- The budget should be informed by the activities,
- Middle managers should be trusted to a point of allowing them to manage their budgets without undue interference,
- Districts should be given power to manage their budgets.

5.2.10. Recommendations on policies and procedures

One of the recommendations of the Auditor-General in the 2006/2007 annual report was the introduction of approved policies and procedures to guide the correct implementation of the strategies. The Department should therefore develop guidelines, manuals, protocols, procedures, strategies and policies to guide the implementation of the Department's strategies.

5.2.11. Recommendations on communication strategy

The Department should ensure that there is upward and downward feedback in the organization. Information flow should be promoted in the Department. A communication directorate should provide an effective communication strategy. The Head of the Department should ensure that all the officials know what to do and when to do it especially around the issues of strategy implementation. Various paths of communication must be created in the organization (horizontal, vertical, lateral, etc.).

5.2.12. Recommendations on attitude and commitment

This is the responsibility of all the Department's employees to have a positive attitude and be committed to their jobs and the organization, but the executive management of the Department should lead the way. All the employees should sign performance contracts and these contracts should be monitored from time to time in order to ensure that all employees earn their

salaries. Senior managers or any other managers should be made to account for jobs not done.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS

This study provides overwhelming evidence of the factors that are negatively affecting the implementation of the Mpumalanga Department of Education's organizational strategies. While it is true that not all the factors can be addressed in a short space of time, the recommendations given above provide a good basis for implementing a program of change and improvement. It takes strong and courageous leadership to start a process where change is going to be initiated and possibly be resisted. If these factors as discussed cannot be interrogated and the recommendations be implemented the Department will not be able to move from the current position of underperformance. It is therefore very important for the management to embrace these recommendations and try to implement them.

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ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE MIDDLE MANAGERS

1. Introduction.

The purpose of this study is **to analyze the factors affecting the implementation of the corporate strategy in the Mpumalanga Department of Education**. You are therefore requested to support the study by responding to all the questions as captured in the attached instrument. Your responses will be highly appreciated as the recommendations will help to improve the planning systems of the department.

2. Confidentiality.

All information provided will be treated as confidential and it will only be used for research purposes. Anonymity is important to the researcher; please do not write your name or the name of your organization or section on this questionnaire.

3. Instructions.

When answering multiple-choice questions, please indicate your answer with an x in the spaces provided. Be as honest as possible as your responses are going to help us determine the findings and the subsequent recommendations.

4. Word of Thanks.

Your cooperation in assisting us to analyze the factors affecting the implementation of the strategy will be highly appreciated.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION.

1. Sex.

1	2
M	F

2. Age group.

1	2	3	4	5
20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+

3. Highest education qualifications.

1	2	3	4	5
Diploma	Junior or first degree	Honors degree	Masters degree	PhD

4. In your academic qualification, were you exposed to courses or modules on strategic planning?

1	2
Yes	No

5. If your answer at 4 is yes, please indicate the level in the spaces provided below.

At diploma level	1
At junior degree level	2
At honors' degree level	3
At masters' degree level	4
At Ph D level	5

6. Have you received any formal training on strategic planning?

1	2
Yes	No

B. STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS IN THE DEPARTMENT.

7. Does your department conduct strategic planning sessions?

1	2
Yes	No

8. If your response at 7 is yes how often? Choose from the table.

1. Annually.	2. Every two years.	3. Every three years	4. Every four years	5. Every five years.
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9. Are you involved in the planning processes?

1	2
Yes	No

10. If your response at 9 is yes, at what level are you involved?

Choose the relevant one from the list provided.

At head office level	1
At branch level	2
At district level	3
At directorate level	4
At sub - directorate level	5
At section/unit level	6

11. At which phase or stage of strategic planning process do you participate? Choose from the list given:

Formulation phase	1
Implementation phase	2
Evaluation and control phase	3
At none of the above	4

Formulation refers to conducting external and internal audit, develop Mission statement & establish long term objectives.

Implementation refers to the selection of strategies, establish policies & Procedures and Allocation of resources.

Evaluation and control refer to the measuring and evaluating performance.

C. FACTORS AFFECTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY.

12. Do you think there are challenges in the implementation of the broad strategies of the department?

1	2
Yes	No

13. If your response at 12 is 'yes', kindly identify the challenges you experience or you have experienced as a middle manager. E.g. lack of skills and competencies, lack of resources etc you are required to list up to the maximum of 5. Use the spaces provide below:

14. Use the scale to rank the following factors:

1. Strongly influences the implementation.
2. Influences the implementation.
3. Does not influence the implementation.
4. Strongly does not influence the implementation.

Factors affecting the implementation of the corporate strategy.

14.1.: Organizational culture:

Values, beliefs, principles, traditions, and ways of doing things in the department.

1	2	3	4
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14.2.: Leadership:

A process of directing the behaviors' of others towards the accomplishments of the organizations goals.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

14.3.: Human Resources.

Personnel required by the organization to implement the strategy.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

14.4.: Organizational Structure.

The basic framework of formal relationships between responsibilities, tasks and people in the organization.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

14.5.: Resources Allocation (Financial).

Whatever is required to aid the implementation of the strategy e.g. finance.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

14.6.: Policies and Procedures.

Implementation rules and procedures.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

14.7.: Organizational Communication.

Communication provides information that individuals and groups need to make decisions by transmitting the data to identify and evaluate alternative choices.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

14.8. Attitude of both middle and senior managers towards strategic planning.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

14.9. Commitment of both middle and senior managers towards strategic planning.

1	2	3	4
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**What major steps do you think the department must take in?
Order to reduce this challenge of strategy implementation? Use
the space provided.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRECIOUS TIME.