University of KwaZulu-Natal

EVALUATING MIDDLE MANAGEMENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS WITHIN EZEMVELO

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Business Administration

Graduate School of Business & Leadership

College of Law and Management Studies

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2015

DECLARATION

I, Sudhindre Kumar Ghoorah, student number 992240962, hereby declare that the work submitted in this dissertation *Evaluating middle management's perceptions of the strategic management process within Ezemvelo* to the Graduate School of Business of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, is my own work and has not been submitted previously for any other degree at this university or any other university.

This dissertation is my own work and all the sources have been referenced and appear in the list of references.

Signature

10/03/2016

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the following individuals, without whose assistance, this study would not have been possible:

- My parents, Chimunlall and Shardha, your persistent and relentless push for your children to be well educated is indeed an admirable quality and your sacrifices made to achieve this selfless objective are commendable.

- My wife, Karmanie, for your understanding, caring and loving support throughout this process. Thank you for taking care of all of us, including our three children and allowing me time to undertake my study. The completion of this project would not have been possible without your unconditional love, encouragement, support and amazing patience.

- My children, Pratham, Prishtee and Pragya, for consistently entertaining me during my studies and making sure that I never get bored.

- My supervisor, Dr Kader, for your valuable input, support, guidance and patience in helping me complete this study.

- My direct superiors, Dr Bandile Mkhize and Dr David Mabunda, for consistently encouraging me and allowing me time to study.

- Editorial specialist, Debbie Turrell, for your assistance with the technical and language editing.

- All my colleagues and friends who tirelessly motivated and supported me throughout this journey. Your constant encouragement and belief in my ability have played a crucial role in my career.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to evaluate middle management's perceptions of the strategic management process within Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, a provincial public entity located in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. The decision to embark on such research was due to the fact that the literature on strategic management processes thus far has focused primarily on top management and front-line staff.

The performance of the South African public sector remains of great concern, despite the various strategic management models available and research that proves that good management of organisational processes (involving development, execution, monitoring and evaluation) invariably produces improved performance. Hence, this research further aimed to understand how middle management at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife as a public entity view the organisation's strategic management process, the business model, and their role within the strategic processes; which factors are most important to that level of management; and what their level of satisfaction with those factors is.

Based on the reporting criteria used, 126 middle managers were identified and the entire population was invited to participate in the research. A quantitative research method based on postpositivist assumptions was selected, and a survey with a questionnaire containing a set of predetermined questions was administered.

Four important results emerged. Firstly, middle management had a low level of knowledge on the organisation's strategy. Secondly, middle managers considered the organisation's business model to be unsuitable, and did not believe that value was being created and delivered efficiently, effectively and economically. Thirdly, while the majority of middle managers agreed that the strategic management process assists in focusing and improving performance within the organisation, they were unsure of their role. Finally, while middle managers identified team work across the organisation as the most important factor, it was in relation to team work that they experienced the least satisfaction.

The main recommendations were to increase middle management's knowledge of organisational strategy, clarify their roles, and promote team work within and between the organisational structures.

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CHAPTER ONE

SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

The South African government's ability to deliver services to its citizens has recently been under the spotlight for all the wrong reasons. One of the main reasons why organisations fail is the inability to develop relevant strategic plans and to follow through with appropriate execution (O'Connor and O'Connor, 2015). Whilst some research has identified possible reasons for this, such as lack of resources and accountability, as well as political interference and corruption, it is high time the business world gained more insight into the role of the people who connect strategy to the staff executing it. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (Ezemvelo), a public entity responsible for providing conservation services to the province of KwaZulu-Natal, was selected for this research, as its operations provide an ideal mix of middle managers from various backgrounds working within different fields. This chapter intends to discuss the importance and focus of the study whilst providing an understanding of the problem statement and the objectives of this particular research. The hypothesis, problem statement, sub-questions, limitations, and research methodology of the study will be presented. Finally, a chapter summary concludes this chapter.

1.2 Motivation for the study

In discussing the trade union UASA's 2012 Employment Report, the *Business Times* (2012) states that "the average gross wages of government employees are higher than the average gross wages across all sectors in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a group of mostly rich countries". The same article also reported that government employs more people than the mining and manufacturing sectors combined. However, the Auditor General issued a report in January 2013 stating that the amount of money spent on consultants was alarming and had increased considerably from 2008/9 to 2010/11, with an estimate of R102 043 million being paid over those years.

In Nir Klein's (2012) research for the International Monetary Fund on the issue of wage and labour productivity in South Africa, in which he examines associated employment trends, he discusses the financial crisis that has severely affected the labour market and has caused almost 775 000 job losses in the 2009/10 financial year. This raised the already disastrous unemployment levels from an estimated 20% to 25%, despite the fact that the State fiscal policies were geared towards increasing public sector employment. Klein also points out that wages and gross domestic product output have not been on par with similar economies, whilst the unemployment figures have risen more sharply in South Africa than in those countries at the centre of the financial crisis. An interesting point that Klein (2012) raises is that this sharp increase in unemployment could be attributed to a misalignment between wage compensation and worker productivity.

In response to the rising service delivery failures and the resultant increase in the number of protests around the country (Sindane and Nambalirwa, 2012), President Zuma stated, during his July 2014 Presidency Budget Vote address, that there were plans to boost public service through structured programmes (South African Government News Agency, 2014). It is therefore important to identify ways to improve service delivery, which is primarily rendered by government through its various institutions, for example its national and provincial departments, and state-owned entities (SOEs). Balbuena (2014) points out that with over 500 SOEs in South Africa, the government has re-orientated these entities in an effort to further specific socio-economic objectives that include, for example, the provision of access to water, electricity, sanitation and transportation. It should also be noted that globally SOEs are among the main sources of employment; this is particularly the case in South Africa, where they play a major role in skills development and improving citizens' quality of life.

SOEs therefore play a vital role in South Africa. However, as Foulds (2014) warns in relation to the load shedding policy resorted to by Eskom, South Africa's electricity public utility, and the consequences thereof, one should "be prepared". In August 2015 one of the major branches of the South African Post Office, another SOE, could not function as it did not have sufficient funds to pay for fuel to run its collection and delivery vehicles (Mongoai 2015). Other examples of SOEs in crisis within the South African economy include South African Airways and Transnet.

If one considers the dire implications of these public entities not performing, it becomes clear how imperative it is that further research into the causes of poor service delivery or the failure of these SOEs to deliver be conducted. For the purposes of this study, Ezemvelo, an SOE in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, was chosen. Ezemvelo is the provincial body mandated to carry out environmental conservation and ecotourism functions within the province. The failure of this entity would therefore have far reaching and possibly irreversible consequences in terms of the ecological infrastructure that the majority of the province's rural population depends on — and in simple terms this would mean less potable water, food insecurity, an increase in disease, job losses, greater vulnerability to natural disasters, etc.

Given the great importance of researching, understanding and creating better strategies for service delivery in relation to environmental conservation and ecotourism, this study focuses on middle management as a link in the service delivery value chain of Ezemvelo.

1.3 Focus of the study

In examining the links between strategy and performance, Ibrahim, Sulaiman, Al Kahtani, and Abu-Jarad (2012) find that there is a significant relationship between the two. The focus of this study is therefore on strategy development and execution with a focus on middle managers as enablers of these processes. Whilst the literature review provides certain benchmarks in terms of the roles and functions of these middle managers, the focus of this study is on understanding their perspectives on the strategic management process and on identifying factors affecting their performance.

1.4 Problem statement

Ezemvelo aspires to be "a world renowned leader in the field of biodiversity conservation" (Ezemvelo, n.d.). As this vision suggests, most of its operations take place in the field (far from head office) where biodiversity assets need to be conserved and managed. With its parks and resorts and protected areas spread all over KwaZulu-Natal, Ezemvelo has a provincial footprint. As with other organisations whose

operations extend over vast geographical areas, proper management is of vital importance. Very often the only link that senior management, who are usually based at head office, have to the staff in the field is via middle management. These middle managers play a critical role in ensuring service delivery and carry various complex responsibilities (Townsend and Loudoun, 2015). In prior research on strategy, a great deal of attention has been given to the roles of executives and front-line delivery people, while the critical role of middle managers has been ignored. As Katoma and Ungerer (2011) point out, within the public service, middle managers play a crucial role on multiple fronts of the strategic management process. Hence, middle managers' perceptions and factors affecting their involvement require particular attention.

Recently Ezemvelo has received serious criticism from important stakeholders in relation to service delivery. The previous Chairperson of the Finance Portfolio Committee, Belinda Scott, who now occupies the position of Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Finance for the province of KwaZulu-Natal, has been very vocal about the need for Ezemvelo to be more efficient and to raise more of its own revenue through ecotourism, and about the increasing costs of personnel while staff numbers decrease. Democratic Alliance spokesperson, Radley Keys, has echoed similar sentiments but adds that there is a need to scrutinise the organisation's understanding of its core mandate. Keys states that "Contrary to what Ezemvelo officials appear to believe, hospitality is not the wildlife body's core function. Its mandate is to protect conservation within our province" (Carnie, 2012). He also alludes to Ezemvelo's financial woes, accusing the organisation of using the hospitality component as a cash cow whilst facilities and infrastructure remain largely neglected due to incompetent and self-serving management (Carnie, 2012).

Heavy criticism has been levelled at Ezemvelo's ability to deliver on its mandate and for its having neglected its core business (Sapa, 2012). One of the perceptions within the entity is that there is a 'disconnect' between head office and the staff on the front line of service delivery. Support services such as the Human Resources and Finance divisions have also been under the spotlight for not providing adequate support to the core business. This is evident in the high number of vacant posts in the field (Dardagan, 2014) and in the procurement backlog, which slows down infrastructure maintenance within the parks that are being managed by Ezemvelo (Sapa, 2012). Ezemvelo's

management was also recently summoned to the KwaZulu-Natal provincial parliament to explain an under-expenditure of about R213 million (Erasmus, 2015).

Should this situation persist, service delivery could be severely hampered. This would result in the degradation of KwaZulu-Natal's conservation estate, wastage of public funds, Ezemvelo's reputation being placed at serious risk, and an addition to the list of SOEs that are failing to perform.

Because of the grave potential repercussions of service-delivery breakdown on the part of Ezemvelo, and because of the critical role played by middle managers within the organisation, the central problem statement of this study can be framed as follows:

> How does middle management fit into Ezemvelo's strategic management process, and how can this process be improved in order to improve the organisation's performance?

1.5 Research sub-questions

In order to understand how middle management fits into Ezemvelo's strategic management process and how strategic management could be a catalyst to improve performance, the following research sub-questions need to be answered:

- Does middle management understand the strategy and the process involved?
- Is the business model conducive for middle managers to enable the creation and delivery of value in an effective, efficient and economical manner?
- What is the current role of middle managers in the strategic management process?
- What are the most important factors for middle management and their satisfaction levels with such?

1.6 Objectives

In evaluating middle management's perceptions of the strategic management process within Ezemvelo, the following objectives were set:

1. To probe how middle management views the strategic management process.
2. To examine middle managers' perceptions of the organisational business model fit.
3. To identify the role of middle managers in strategy development and execution.
4. To establish which factors are most important for improving the level of motivation of middle managers to execute strategy.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study was conducted at one SOE amongst middle managers. The employees, based on particular circumstances, may be biased and this may influence the results, which are specific to the middle management of Ezemvelo, and cannot therefore be generalised.

1.8 Research methodology

For a successful study to be conducted, it is necessary for a researcher to design a research methodology aligned to the identified problem. A proper understanding of what would constitute a suitable method for the study, the order of accuracy, and the efficiency of the method needs to be considered in determining the chosen research methodology. All the methods, which may include various procedures and schemes, utilised during the research study are termed research methods. Having said so, the research methods should be scientific and properly planned to neutrality (Rajasekar, Philominathan, and Chinnathambi, 2006). A definition from the same authors is that "Research methodology is a systematic way to solve a problem".

The research method chosen for this study is a quantitative approach which assisted in the collection of data and finding a solution to the problem. In line with best practices, the diverse components of this study were carefully examined and a pre-determined set of questions was developed, from which participants had to choose the most appropriate answer. The analysis of those answers in terms of the response quantum assisted in the quantification of the areas being studied, e.g. a level of awareness of the strategy.

1.9 Summary and outline of chapters

Ibrahim et al. (2012) find that companies pursuing financial performance on average achieve only about 63% of their target. This shortfall may be largely attributed to the fact that about 95% of employees either do not know or do not understand the organisational strategy. Furthermore, about 66% of corporate strategies are never in fact implemented. The authors allude to the danger of an implementation gap developing. This research therefore seeks to evaluate middle management's perceptions of the strategic management process to reduce such implementation gaps. Chapter 2 provides a review of the available literature on the strategic management process, which includes the formulation of strategy, the alignment of resources in terms of business models, and the execution process. The review also incorporates literature on middle management and the factors that most affect middle managers' ability to enable the strategic management process.

Whilst Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology employed in this study, Chapter 4 presents the results of the survey as well as an analysis of such. Finally Chapter 5 rounds off the study by outlining the necessary recommendations applicable within the sphere of the study and concludes with recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

A PERSPECTIVE FROM MIDDLE MANAGERS ON STRATEGY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Introduction

Austerity measures such as budget cuts are affecting most governments across the world. The public sector is required to do more with less as voters' expectations of public services keep increasing amidst the rising cost of living. As a result, the leadership of these public sector enterprises need to adapt very quickly to face these new realities, and the need to keep employees motivated has never been so important (Leslie and Canwell, 2010). Very often, as soon as the word 'motivation' is uttered, the attention shifts to Human Resources management. Indeed, Human Resources managers do have a role to play in the motivation levels of employees; however, the role of middle managers is even more critical, not only in improving motivation levels amongst employees but also in acting as enablers for the execution of strategy, which in turn improves delivery and output in general.

Line managers provide an essential link between planning and the realisation of strategy; hence, they have the potential to also positively impact employees directly. It is therefore important that line management is capacitated to offer relations-oriented management, as opposed to only task-orientated management, in an effort to improve productivity (Gilbert, De Winne, and Sels, 2011). Theodosiou, Kehagias, and Katsikea (2012) conclude that further to strategy execution, front-line and middle managers have a crucial role to play in informing the strategic direction of an organisation, as they gather valuable information whilst working at the coalface of delivery on a daily basis. The authors agree that there is a need for further research into other factors affecting unit-level strategy execution in terms of strategy formulation and implementation, that considers variables such as business models and the role of middle managers.

2.2 Strategic management

There are multiple variables that constitute the environment in which an organisation operates, and which affect its ability to perform. The complexity of the environment in

which businesses operate has increased drastically in recent years with factors such as globalisation and the unprecedented pace of technological advancement and change. Such factors or variables most definitely affect performance; however, they have the potential to affect the very survival of an organisation. It is therefore important for organisations to formulate, execute, monitor and evaluate their strategy consistently, and to revisit their strategic management framework regularly to ensure its relevance (Buys and Van Rooyen, 2014). This notion that organisations need to engage consistently in strategic management is supported by Pop and Borza (2013), who refer to the "danger of an unstable business environment" as a risk to the survival of any business. Given the difficult global and local economic climate, the need for strategic management processes to develop, execute and evaluate strategies has never been greater.

According to Poister, Pitts, and Hamilton Edwards (2010, p. 525), "strategic management is intended to enhance the entire set of managerial decisions and actions that determine the long-run performance of an organisation". Further to this, Odunlami and Ogunsiji (2011, p. 50) describe strategic management as a "dynamic process of formulation, implementation, evaluation and control of strategies to realise the organisation's strategic intent". The need for a dynamic process is an important point as rigid strategic management approaches in an uncertain, complex and rapidly changing environment can jeopardise the very existence of an organisation (Pop and Borza, 2013).

That strategic management is a vital component of an organisation has been demonstrated by many researchers. Strategic planning began to emerge as concept in the mid-1950s and has been utilised mostly by the private sector, as the public sector has focused primarily on constitutional mandates and laws. There has, however, been a shift in recent times as both the private and the public sector are now using strategic management as a developmental tool. In fact, strategic planning is now regarded as a key management component of the public sector. It is, however, noted that the reputation of strategic management in public organisations has been somewhat tainted by its inability to execute the desired results (Nartisa, Putans, and Muravska, 2012). Szymaniec-Mlicka (2014) explains that strategic management is attracting considerable attention within the public sector as part of efforts to improve service delivery in a

constantly changing and complex environment. This complexity arises from the fact that the public sector is politicised, and is unable to predict emerging social dynamics accurately whilst at the same time dealing with and satisfying many different stakeholders with divergent expectations. The debate on the positioning of strategic management and the attendant complexities within the public sector is also dealt with by Lega (2012), who expands on the high levels of bureaucracy, bureaucratic procedures, decreased managerial autonomy and low levels of organisational commitment that prevail in public organisations.

In summarising the above discussion, it is clear that strategic management is vital to both the private and public sectors. Strategic management is a process that at the very minimum entails formulation, execution, monitoring and evaluation of a strategic plan.

2.3 Strategy formulation

The formulation phase of the strategic management framework is also referred to as strategic planning (Buys and Van Rooyen, 2014). In order to better understand the concept of strategic planning, a deeper analysis of the term "strategy" reveals that it emanates from the word *strategos*, a Greek term meaning a general set of manoeuvres taken to defeat an opponent (Eden and Ackermann, 2013). Put simply, strategies are the instruments by which identified goals are realised and as such organisations need to undertake strategic planning to produce the plans or strategies that will map the way forward and enable the achievement of objectives.

In examining the definitions of strategic planning, as opposed to the broader concept of strategic management, a study of the relevant literature indicates that most researchers refer to a systematic process that assists leaders in understanding their micro and macro environments better through proper assessments, hence empowering them to make better decisions to achieve the vision of the organisation. A more comprehensive definition is provided by Ugboro, Obeng, and Spann (2011, p. 89), who state that "Strategic planning is defined as the process by which organisations determine and establish long-term directions and formulate and implement strategies to accomplish long-term objectives while taking into account relevant internal and external environmental variables".

Strategic planning is used both in the private and public sectors to promote strategic development and improved administration. The process involves identifying an ideal future state known as the vision, setting out the underlying principles that the culture is going to be built on in terms of the values, clarifying the mission which spells out what will be done to achieve the vision, addressing strategic issues, structuring programmes and plans for strategy implementation, and lastly defining the key performance indicators by which programme performance is measured. Again, the significance of understanding the internal and external factors influencing the business has been highlighted to be of vital importance (Choonhaklai and Wangkanond, 2014).

Tomky (2011) describes strategic planning as a transparent, future-focused, collaborative process that utilises many different sets of techniques that can be combined into three phases. In the first phase, an environmental assessment is performed to gain a collective understanding of external forces that may affect the business. The second phase consists of running scenario analyses in an effort to identify those success factors that will facilitate business success irrespective of which scenario plays out. During the third phase, a strategic plan with high-impact strategic actions is mapped and the vision, mission and values are revised.

In contrast to the often generalised definitions and processes, Kono and Barnes (2010) offer a more specific set of logically constructive approaches to strategic planning. The starting point should be to gain a common understanding of what or where the organisation is, what its aspirations are in terms of its ideal state, and how it intends to achieve its desired state. The authors identify four important steps within the formulation phase that would need to be carried out before the implementation of any strategy starts. The first step in developing a strategy is the crafting of a vision that outlines the core ideologies and aspirations of the entity for which the strategy is being developed. The vision would also be an indicator of the entity's values, purpose and future path. The second step is the development of an effective mission statement that conveys information such as the organisation's target markets, products, services, service locations and philosophies, amongst others. The third step is analysis, which usually involves the use of models such as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and value-chain analyses to gain insight into the entity's micro as well as

macro environment. The fourth step is the formulation of a long-term strategy, and models such as Porter's generic strategies can be very useful.

Grant, Macdonald, and Sharifi (2011) point out that despite sophisticated planning processes and good plans, many organisations fail to deliver on their strategic objectives due to a lack of proper risk management. Grant et al. propose that the strategic framework should have a component of risk management within the formulation and execution phases, as detailed in Figure 1. Whilst this diagram is titled "Strategy audit environment", it provides a good basis for a visual representation of the basic strategic framework.

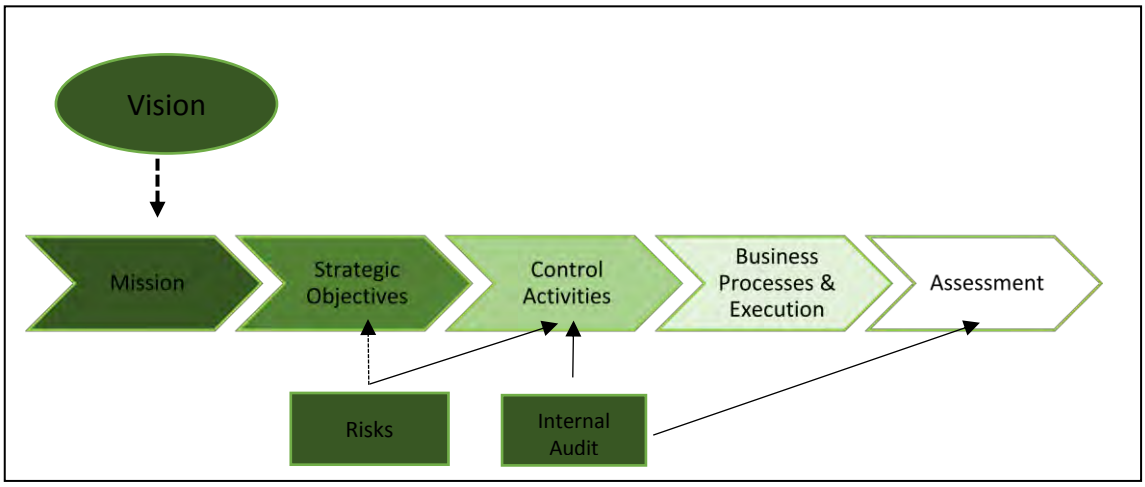

Figure 1. Strategy audit environment (Grant et al., 2011)

According to Grant et al. (2011), the framework depicted in Figure 1 enables internal auditors to assess an entity's exposure to risk in relation to its strategy, more specifically to its strategic objectives. The authors explain that a proper risk-management system is an essential component of the strategic management process. Once strategic risks have been identified, they need to be assessed, and the management controls that are in place need to be evaluated. If the existing controls are deemed insufficient, the level of control would need to be improved. Hence, combining risk identification and assessment of control activities as a risk management component, and combining other aspects of the strategic management process mentioned above, Figure 1 can be adapted as follows.

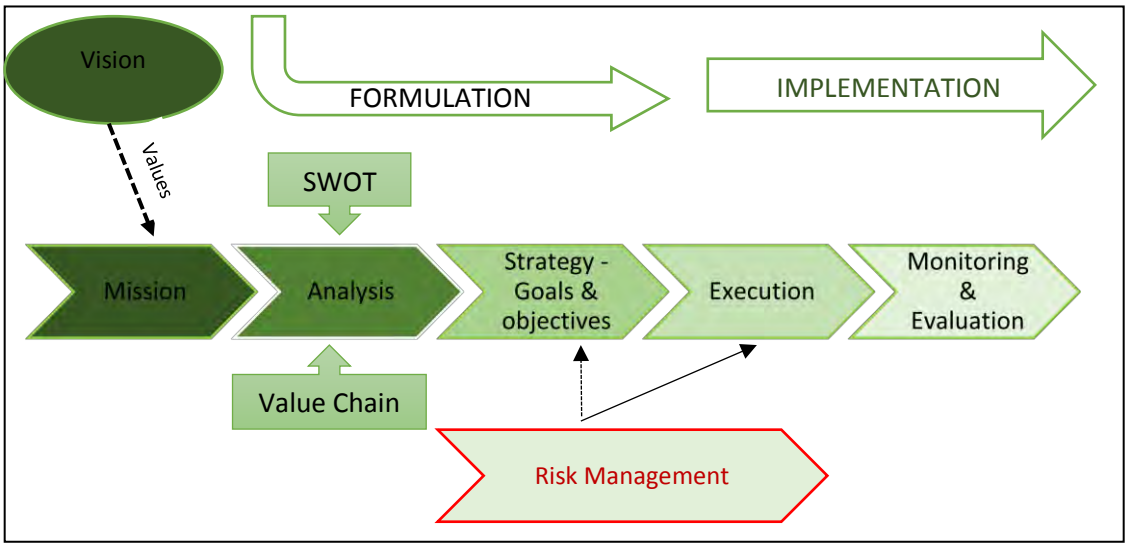

Figure 2. Adapted strategy audit environment. (Grant et al., 2011, adapted to Kono and Barnes, 2010)

Figure 2 is the framework presented by Grant et al. (2011), adapted to the research performed by Kono and Barnes (2010). It can be seen that the fourth step outlined by these authors contains the development of the strategy, as well as the goals and strategic objectives. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, this will be used as the primary framework and adapted to accommodate new research findings if necessary and where applicable. This adapted framework has been segmented to reflect the formulation and implementation phases, and also has an added analysis component. Risk and control activities have been combined into "risk management", and certain other terminology has been modified, such as "strategic objectives" becoming "strategy with goals and objectives".

In relation to the issue of goals and objectives, clear goal and objective setting is key to effective strategic planning. Jung and Lee (2013) state that "goals and performance measures in governmental agencies are decided and set while simultaneously considering internal (e.g. top leadership and senior managers) and external (e.g. constituents, service consumers and regulators) stakeholders".

Whilst some researchers use the terms "goals" and "objectives" interchangeably, MacLeod (2012) explains that goals and objectives are not the same and should be clearly distinguished. Goals tend to be general, high-level, intangible, qualitative, hard-to-validate statements, used to define corporate strategies based on long-term planning as the end result. A goal might require a multitude of objectives or sub-goals. Hence,

the starting point in crafting clear goals — the distinction between goals and objectives — must be acknowledged and understood. Once a goal statement has been crafted, objectives that enable the achievement of that goal need to be identified. The SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) principle is a popular and widely accepted tool that is commonly used to ensure that objectives are properly formulated; however, Day and Tosey (2011) argue that the SMART principle lacks the human touch. This missing human perspective is also noted by MacLeod (2012). Whilst Day and Tosey present some alternative models, MacLeod (2012) presents an improved version called the 'SMARTER' framework, which retains the original components of SMART and adds 'ER' (engage and reward). "Engage" refers to engaging the relevant stakeholders in order to create a sense of ownership, and "reward" refers to attaching the right kind of incentives to the achievement of objectives, in order to foster desired behaviour. Setting goals and objectives are the final elements of the formulation phase.

Linking strategic planning to the performance of an organisation is important in order to create an environment that is conducive to executing strategy. Research has shown that utilising a comprehensive approach, with feasibility studies and in-depth environmental analyses, as well as action plans with targets as part of the strategic plans, has proven to assist with improving the performance of an organisation. Another aspect for consideration is the debate on whether strategic planning should involve a top-down or bottom-up approach. Whilst the debate continues, the general consensus is that having more participation from relevant stakeholders, e.g. middle managers, can be advantageous in promoting and strengthening the link between strategy and organisational performance (Poister et al., 2010).

R.S. Kaplan (2015) takes a different view of the strategy development process by proposing that leaders affirm the organisational mission, values and vision as the first steps. Whilst the mission describes the purpose of the entity, the vision defines an ambitious measurable target, ideally put forward in a very concise statement. It is often useful for organisations to summarise their strategy statement for easy understanding, communication and buy-in.

Ultimately, every strategy formulation process ends up with the creation of some sort of strategic plan. Abdallah and Langley (2014) point out that strategic plan can cause strategic ambiguity if it is not written properly and too many aspects are left open to

interpretation. Whilst this can play an enabling role initially, over time it can lead to internal contradictions and over-extension. It is therefore prudent to ensure that there is little or no strategic ambiguity caused by the process as well as the plans produced as a result thereof. In general, strategic plans should clearly articulate the link between goals and measurable outcomes, and should pay particular attention to how these are communicated to the rest of the organisation. The result of such communication should be buy-in from the relevant stakeholders with simultaneous alignment to operational planning. In all these aspects, customer value should be the central point of reference (Fernley, 2012). A clear strategic plan that takes into consideration these factors will definitely assist in the next phase: strategy implementation.

2.4 Strategy implementation

Implementing strategic plans can prove to be challenging for most organisations, and this is especially so for SOEs. Whilst some strategic plans contain elements such as performance measures that assist in execution, others do not, and they rely totally on the various implementation approaches, e.g. organisation redesign and cascading to business units (Poister et al., 2010). The cascading strategy and the need for all the levels of strategy to be properly aligned is discussed by Salimian, Khalili, Nazemi, and Alborzi (2012), who explain the three levels of strategy as follows:

- Corporate-level strategy is intended to create value by deciding on corporate undertakings in multi-business activities and resource allocation.
- Business-level strategy is aimed at creating and enhancing the competitive edge of the organisation.
- Functional-level strategy is developed in order to support business-level strategies.

The concept of the three levels of strategy is supported by various other authors. Crilly (2013), however, explores an enterprise-level strategy. This strategy level is the highest in an organisation, and is positioned above corporate-level strategy in order to integrate the organisation with its wider environment. Watts and Ormsby (2015) explain an operational-level strategy which is meant to assist with the implementation of functional-level strategies, and they emphasise that the importance of each of the

strategy levels must not be underestimated. Despite the different models of cascading strategy, Kaplan and Norton, cited in Galunic and Hermreck (2012), state that 95% of employees in most organisations have no knowledge or understanding of the organisation's strategy. This is a particularly worrisome aspect in the field of strategy, as knowledge and some level of acceptance of strategy by the wider community of employees is a critical success factor for strategy implementation. Research reveals that relying on the conventional cascading methodology is simply not enough. Instead, senior managers are the most appropriate means through which awareness and acceptance of the organisational strategy can be increased. The more senior managers take an active role in communicating, explaining and listening to employees with regard to the strategy, the better will be the awareness and acceptance levels (Galunic and Hermreck, 2012).

Whilst Poister et al. (2010) agree that communication is an important component for successful strategy implementation, they add that communication must be facilitated for all relevant stakeholders, and also state that "effective public managers can use strategy to focus attention and effort on real priorities, provide a consistent framework to guide decisions and actions, and give an organisation a new or renewed sense of purpose". Others factors that can have a positive impact on strategy implementation include linking of the strategic plan to the budget process and making the strategy a central component of overall management, especially performance management, that requires extensive monitoring.

Disturbing statistics regarding failed strategy implementation continue to surface. Even as Kaplan and Norton's research found that over 90% of employees in organisations have no knowledge or understanding of their organisation's strategy, at the same time Miller cited in Kalali, Anvari, Pourezzat, and Dastjerdi (2011), stated that organisations fail to implement over 70% of their strategic initiatives.

Failures in implementation could have very severe consequences for businesses, and appropriate strategy implementation has therefore been of great concern for managers. Whilst frameworks such as the balanced scorecard have emerged to assist in strategy implementation, there is a need for people involved in strategic planning and implementation to be aware of critical success factors. Admittedly, research to determine critical success factors has been performed by the likes of Churchman (1975),

Mintzberg and Raisinghani (1976), Waterman et al. (1980), Beyer and Trice (1982), Wernham (1984), Alexander (1985), Kaplan and Norton (1996), Miller (1997), Dooley et al. (2000), Maxwell et al. (1997), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Okumus (2001), Aaltonen and Ikavalko (2002), Nutt (2207), Brenes et al. (2008) and many others.

Kalali et al. (2011) look into the critical success factors outlined in this body of research and have compiled a list of the 16 most frequently mentioned factors. These are resource availability, confidence, communications, synergies between goals and priorities, environmental certainty, coordinated activities, adequate skills capacity, clear operational plans, senior management support, necessary leadership and guidance from management, clear key performance indicators, matching of employees' values and strategic direction, appropriate organisational structure, commitment from top managers to follow through with strategy implementation, clear strategy and alignment of business processes, work systems, and other organisational dimensions. Figure 3 categorises the key success factors in terms of the balance scorecard perspectives.

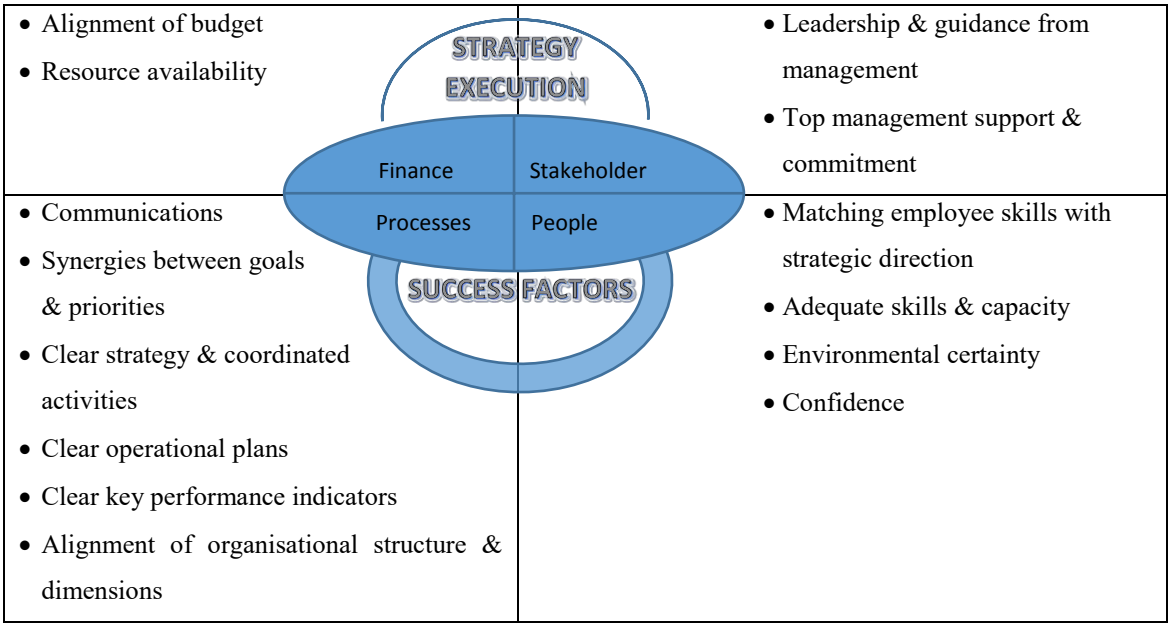

Figure 3. Key success factors for effective strategy implementation

Figure 3 illustrates the key success factors identified for effective strategy implementation by prior research. The reworking of the list was performed to

contextualise each factor and the balanced scorecard framework was utilised in the alignment.

From a financial perspective, it is of vital importance that budgets be aligned to strategy with synergised goals and priorities so that resources are allocated properly. Top management support and commitment were identified as critical from a stakeholder perspective, as the front line implements the strategy.

In relation to processes, the organisational structure needs to be aligned to the strategy, and operational plans need to contain clear key performance indicators. Other essential aspects include communication and synergies between goals and priorities. The last perspective relates to people; it would therefore be understandable to expect people to have confidence in the strategic direction, which should ideally complement the available skill set. These factors should all inform the business model of the organisation.

Hough, Thompson, Strickland, and Gamble (2011) elaborated further on the importance of strategic alignment and point out certain barriers to this, as illustrated in Figure 4.

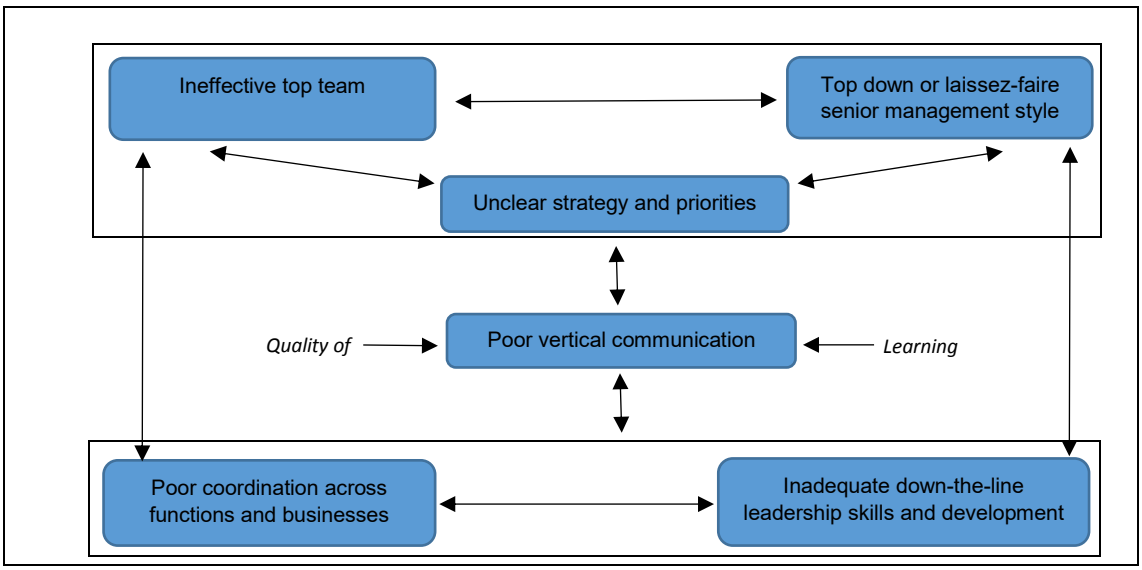

Figure 4. Barriers to strategic alignment (Hough et al., 2011)

An ineffective top team and a laissez-faire senior management style may result in unclear strategy and priorities. An ineffective top team also tends to produce poor coordination across business functions. Another important factor that has been

mentioned before is communication. Poor vertical communication will invariably contribute to strategic misalignment and may also contribute to a lack of the required skills development necessary for strategy execution.

Andrews, Boyne, Law, and Walker (2011) observe that "implementing strategy is often more difficult than formulating it, and it is widely accepted to be an aspect of management where many organisation fail". They explore the term "implementation style" and its ability to improve performance through strategy implementation.

Implementation style can be defined as "the approach that organisations adopt when putting strategies into practice". The two main elements for consideration are the level of centralisation of responsibility and the sequence of activities moving from formulation to implementation. Inasmuch as there is a positive link between an improved ability to implement strategy and a fairly centralised environment with a rational planned approach, there is no evidence suggesting that performance will definitely improve.

In order to improve performance, implementation style needs to be aligned with strategy. It is understood that an organisation's implementation style reflects of its culture; therefore, entrenched routines and behaviours need major consideration. In keeping with a rational implementation style, the author highlighted the importance of using project plans to implement strategies, and the regular review of progress against targets — in other words, monitoring and evaluation, the final step in the framework outlined earlier in this chapter.

Monitoring involves assessing the progress made towards achieving a desired target through day-to-day operations by systematically collecting relevant data and providing information to stakeholders about required interventions. Whilst monitoring is about assessing progress during implementation, evaluation is about objectively measuring the results of finalised or ongoing tasks. Evaluation identifies four aspects of a particular task and these are performance, quality, relevance and potential impact (Ijeoma, 2010).

The South African Presidency (2007), as cited by Ijeoma (2010, p. 354), defines a monitoring and evaluation system as "a set of organisational structures, management processes, standards, strategies, plans, indicators, information systems, reporting lines, and accountability relationships which enable national and provincial departments,

municipalities and other institutions to discharge their monitoring and evaluation functions effectively". Monitoring and evaluation are therefore vital components of strategy implementation.

Information provided through this process may mitigate many implementation disasters and provide an important context for strategies to follow. Figure 5 illustrates how monitoring contributes to evaluation to provide valuable insights.

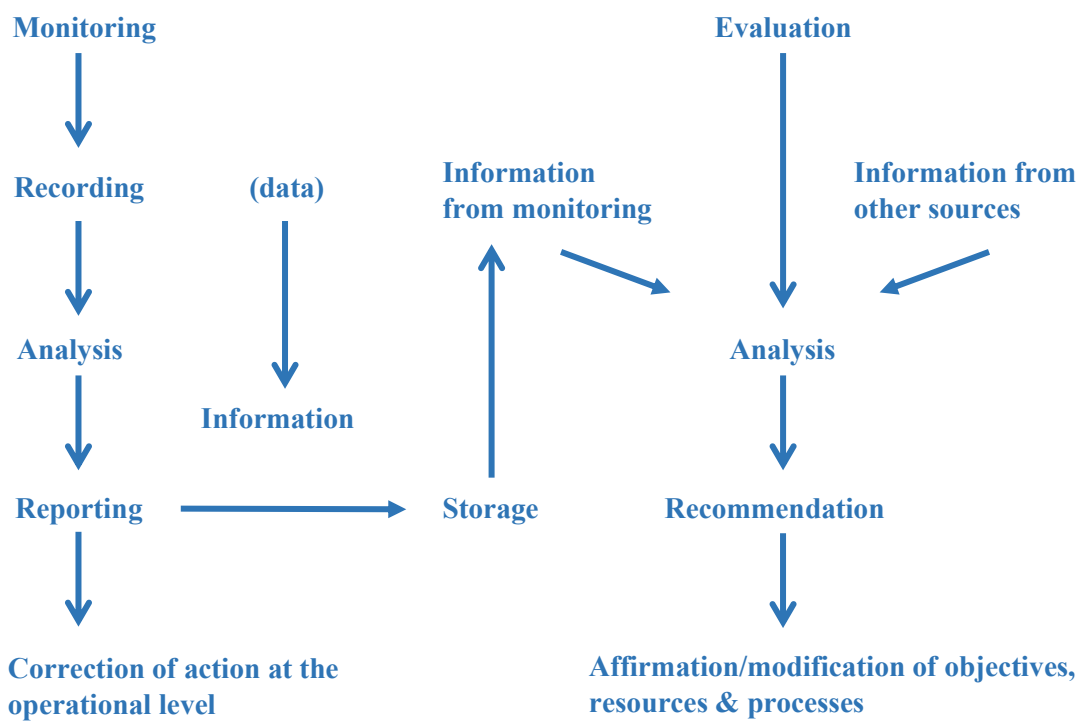

Figure 5. How monitoring links to evaluation to produce recommendations (Ijeoma, 2010)

Figure 5 provides insightful details about the link between monitoring and evaluation. It shows that, through monitoring, corrective steps are taken at the operational level as progress is being assessed during implementation, whereby evaluation provides recommendations that would modify objectives, resources and processes.

2.5 Strategic process

Meissner (2014) argues that despite strategic planning being a dominant management feature, its effectiveness is not always evident. He proposes that shifting some of the traditional thinking around strategic planning, for example by using performance goals instead of resource deployment techniques, has produced more definite positive results signifying efficiency. This shift is also accompanied by characteristic changes such as shorter planning horizons and greater flexibility, with the focus being on performance targets designed predominantly for managing, as well as directing, different segments of the organisation. The notion that strategic planning should focus on targeted performance is supported by Jung and Lee (2013).

Top management taking ownership of the strategic planning process is identified as one of the characteristics that ensures effective planning. Such ownership entails taking for responsibility of the process, which should ideally not be delegated, and clearly defining the mission as well as strategic objectives. Leadership should foster an appropriate management style that facilitates a collaborative culture in the crafting and execution of the strategic plan, which should be informed by an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. From an administrative perspective, apart from having clear procedures that the affected employees know about, the establishment of organisational coordinating structures, such as a strategy office and an appropriate reward system, has also been identified as a factor that results in increased efficiency. The debate on the effectiveness of strategic planning as a strategic management tool is also an important consideration. Whilst the arguments in favour of its effectiveness identify benefits such as improved organisational processes and better performance as a result of an increase in employee commitment, the arguments against its effectiveness assert that strategic planning inhibits creative thinking, which in turn prevents the development of the sort of innovative culture that is so necessary in the prevailing ever changing and complex environment (Ugboro et al., 2011).

2.6 Business models

Business models are a fairly new concept that has captured the interest of many management and strategy researchers. A business either explicitly or implicitly uses

particular business models that outline the process of value creation and delivery. The crux of a business model is in defining how an organisation provides value to customers, entices them to pay for it, and translates such payment into profit. The business model of a company is therefore a vital cornerstone component for success since it reflects how an organisation designs itself for value creation and delivery. Changes in the global landscape have altered the ways in which businesses operate to maximise profit. This is one of the reasons why discussions on business models have become a topical issue recently. In a logical process, the business model would flow from the strategic process as the issues involved in the design of a good business model are all interrelated (Teece, 2010).

Hough et al. (2011) explain how action plans and initiatives relate to strategy; however, the means through which an organisation produces profit by properly structuring revenue and cost streams can be referred to as the business model.

Ali Mahdi, Abbas, Mazar, and George (2015) differentiate strategy from business models by explaining that business models coordinate different parts of a business while strategy arranges factors in the quest to win the competitive struggle.

McGrath (2010) concurs with the above statements and adds that the business model concept is pivotal for strategy. Understanding the business model empowers businesses to adapt quickly to changing consumer patterns, hence providing the edge required to stay in business. In arriving at the appropriate business model, a process of experimentation is central and thus allows for a great deal of institutional learning. Another important factor that business model designs enable is early detection of weaknesses, which allows for timeous corrective steps.

Nair, Paulose, Palacios, and Tafur (2013, p. 960) propose that the concept of the business model can be defined as "a set of factors such as core logic, belief systems, cognitive environments, and competencies that effectively interact, leading to value creation from resources". The authors conclude that although the extent to which the business model affects the performance of an entity cannot be quantified due to lack of research, there is a clear link between the two factors. An inappropriate business model will most definitely affect performance negatively and could cause an organisation to lose its competitive edge.

It is interesting to note that although many authors that have attempted to define exactly what a business model is, probably just as many authors have indicated that such a definition has not been consistently agreed upon. Even though Demil and Lecocq (2010) fall into the second category, they attempt to identify the elements that are consistently mentioned in the conceptualisation of the business model. Their findings are as follows:

- The primary constructs and dimensions of a business model are the value proposition, value architecture, value network and value finance. Whilst the value position describes the business logic in terms of value creation, the architecture demonstrates how the organisation is organised to allow the provision of products or services. The value network is about how the organisation coordinates and collaborates with different parties to complete transactions, and value finance refers to how issues such as costings are managed in order to improve profit.
- Business models provide a coherent but abstract description of the value-generation process and the business logic of an organisation. Business models can be used for a variety of purposes at different levels of an organisation.
- Business models should not replace business strategy; however, the strategy needs to be sustained through the business model, which contains information that assists in translating objectives into tasks and functions. As such, the business model becomes a link between strategy and organisational processes. The strategy, business model and business processes need to be aligned.

The concept of alignment is critical in ensuring the execution of strategy. Demil and Lecocq (2010) illustrate this concept further in Figure 6 and Figure 7.

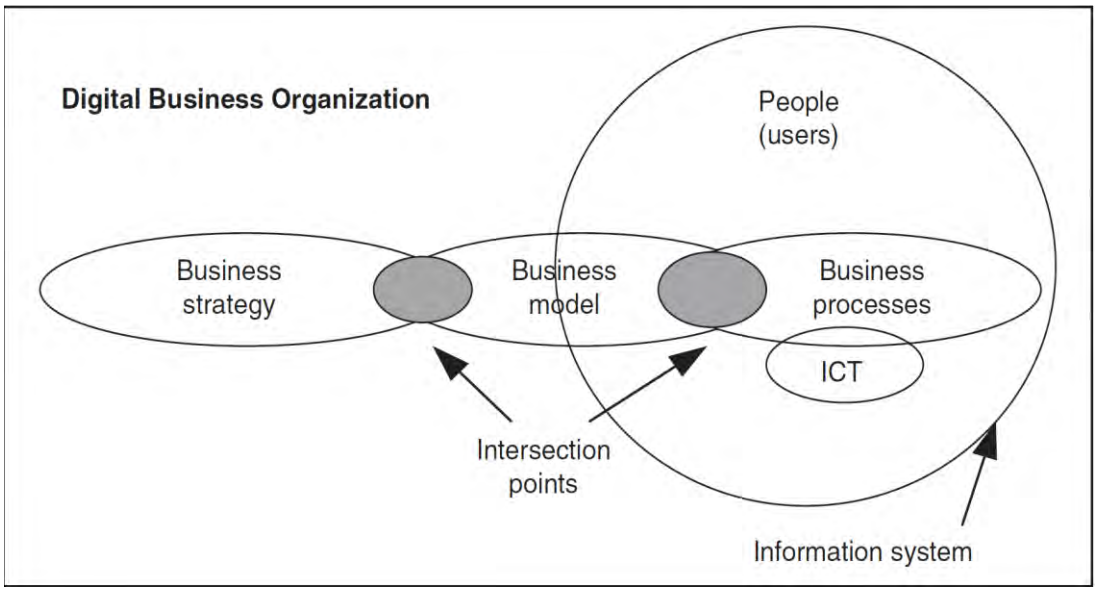

Figure 6. Business model intersection points (Demil and Lecocq, 2011)

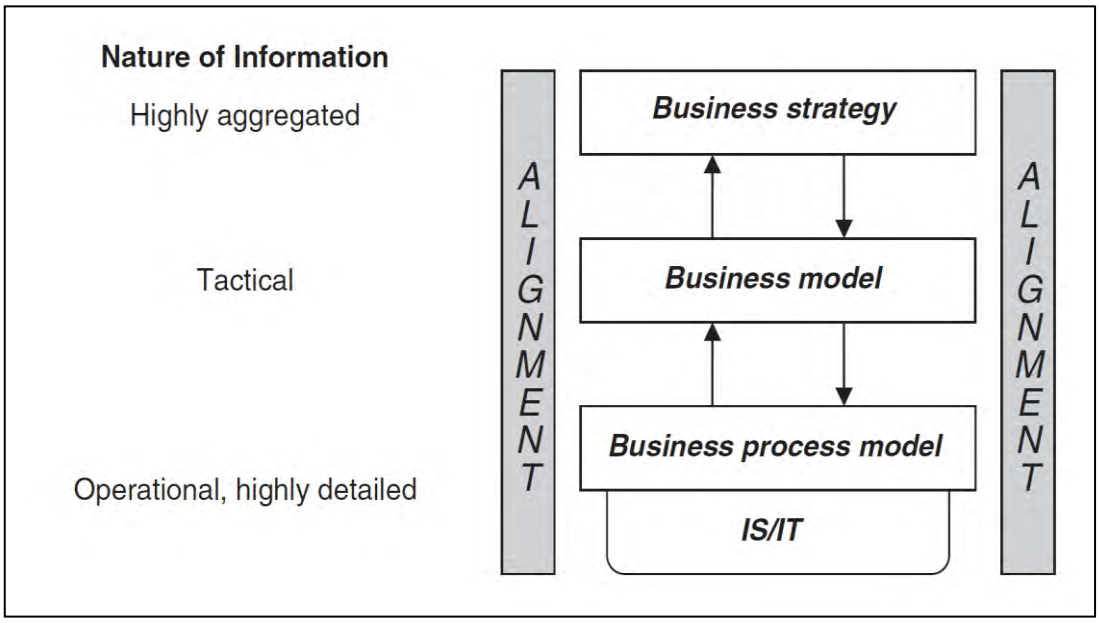

Figure 7. Digital business layers (Demil and Lecocq, 2011)

Figures 6 and 7 provide some useful insights into the positioning of business models. Although Demil and Lecocq formulated these diagrams for digital businesses, the same concepts would apply for organisations that have a diverse field of activities to manage, e.g. field operations and business functions. Figures 6 and 7 clearly indicate that there needs to be an alignment of the strategy, the business model and the business process model (operational aspect).

Following the previous authors, and primarily based on the lack of consensus, Frankenberger, Weiblen, Csik, and Gassmann (2013) attempt to provide a framework which is easy to use but at the same time comprehensive enough to depict the business model architecture. The framework consists of four central dimensions depicted in Figure 8 below, which need to be properly defined.

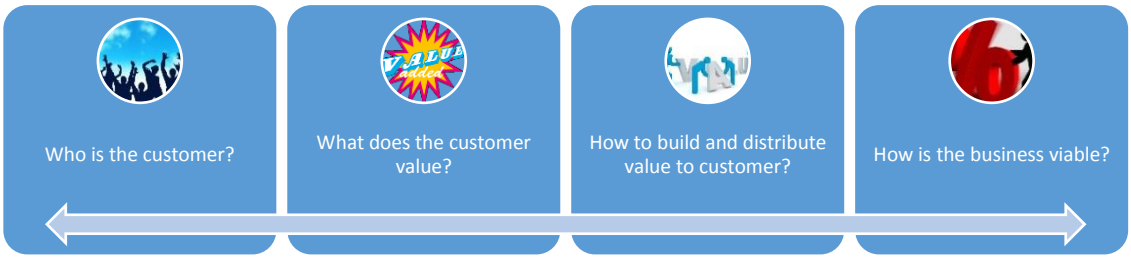

Figure 8. Business model architecture framework (author's representation, based on Frankenberger et al., 2013)

The framework presented in Figure 8 outlines the building blocks of business models. In order to develop an appropriate business model, it is important to know the target market, the value that the market requires, and how the business is going to produce and deliver such value to the customers. The last bock refers to return on investment, and looks as the viability of the organisation in terms of profit for shareholders.

A great deal of the research on business models focuses on the private sector. According to S. Kaplan (2011), most public sector organisations claim that they don't make use of tools such as business models because they are not businesses. However, the definitions of business models suggest that any entity that creates and delivers value invariably works with some sort of business model. The fact that the public sector does not seek to maximise profit for shareholders is not a good enough excuse for these entities not to start looking at viable business models that promote efficiency and effectiveness in terms of the services they render. It is crucial for public sector organisations to understand that clearly articulating and evolving their business model will foster relevance and enable better value to be provided to citizens; most importantly, they need to realise that any organisation without a clear, sustainable business model is risking its very existence.

"With reduced funding, tough decisions will have to be taken but it is thought that local authorities will look to protect front-line services and look for ways to deliver them better and cheaper," states White (2010), referring to the public sector having to do more with less. One way for these public organisations to survive is to drastically improve efficiencies. Revisiting business models should unlock potential efficiencies, which would in turn enable savings, hence reducing the impact of the budget cuts being imposed on most government agencies. There need to be radical changes in the business model of state-owned agencies in order for the latter to cope with having to do more with less. Some business model options will entail internal transformation, exploring outsourcing options, consideration of shared services, going into joint ventures and possible public-private partnerships. Another option which is normally frowned upon, privatisation, could easily be on the cards if state resources continue to dwindle.

If one applies Frankenberger et al.'s (2013) framework to the public sector, the 'who, what, how and why' start to take shape. In adapting the framework to fit state-owned agencies, which are not seeking to maximise profit for shareholders, the last element of 'why' would require some alteration. Instead of addressing the financial viability of the organisation, the public sector 'why' could be adapted to refer to economically delivered services which are also efficient and effective. The mandate in terms of legislative prescripts also informs the 'who' perspective. Figure 9 is an adapted illustration of the 'who, what, how and why' model within the public sector based on the literature thus far.

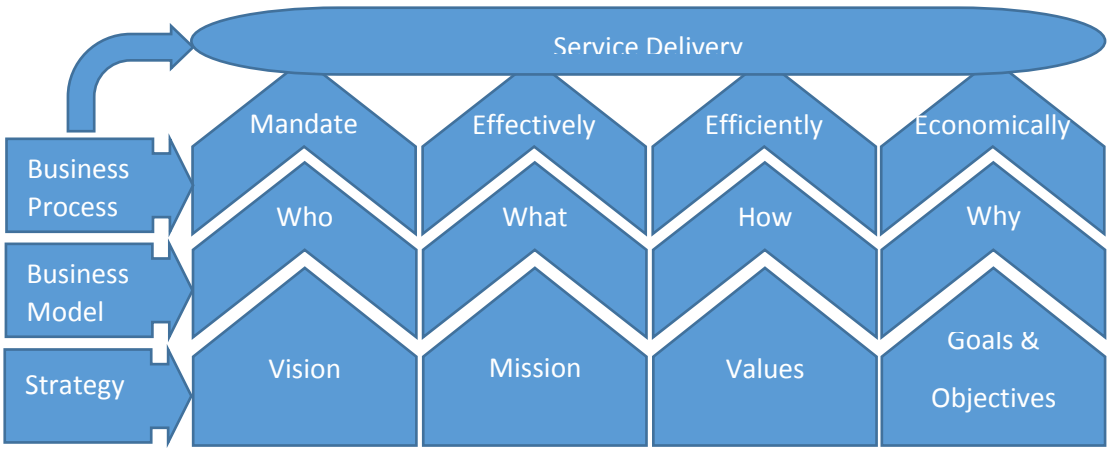

Figure 9. Adapted framework for the public sector of Frankenberger et al.'s (2013) model (own illustration of alignment)

Figure 9 illustrates an alignment of strategy, business model and business processes. Expanding each of the three components horizontally, and merging the management principles of efficiency, effectiveness and economy (3Es), provides an informed matrix of the alignment. The matrix demonstrates that a proper alignment of the strategy, business model and business processes should result in effective, efficient and economical service delivery in line with the mandate of a public enterprise. The matrix is particularly interesting as it focuses at an output level. A misalignment is very probable if an assessment of value delivered indicates a deficiency in terms of the 3Es or mandate.

2.7 Strategy and middle management

The evolving role of front-line managers is attracting a lot of attention in leadership research. Front-line managers, also referred to as middle managers, are a vital component in any organisation as they are the mechanism of interaction between employees and top management. The mechanism is primarily seen as a communication link and very often employee concerns or grievances can easily be resolved by the middle managers, preventing matters from being escalated to union representatives and becoming an industrial relations matter (Townsend and Loudoun, 2015). Bossidy, Charan, and Burck (2011) explain that in order to successfully implement strategies, a culture of execution needs to be entrenched within an organisation. Since communication is the foundation of any culture, middle managers are the ideal facilitators of such transformation. This is particularly so in public organisations where such cultures are required to improve service delivery.

2.7.1 Service delivery

Ngwakwe (2012) defines service delivery as the "provision of public goods and services by the government as the custodian of public wealth". Whilst this concept of service delivery is commonly shared, Swart (2013) argues that "service delivery" is a term that is equivalent to services being forced on people irrespective of their needs.

The author alludes to the term of "public service" which entails government listening to the citizens and providing the services required by the majority. Since this study does

not seek to clarify the terminologies and associated definitions, the important point to note is the first step outlined in delivering 'public service'. The most salient point in terms of public service is the aspect of government listening to the people. Whilst public consultative forums and the like are very helpful, very often the people working directly with the citizens have very important insights. It is therefore obvious that front-line employees are crucial in collecting invaluable feedback in order to improve the services being delivered (Dixon, Freeman, and Toman, 2010).

From a strategic planning perspective, McFarland (2008) explains that the conventional strategy model is outdated and needs to be updated. The author argues that a linear approach to strategy should be avoided, and that instead a 'spiral' approach that is centred on people rather than processes is more realistic. The spiral approach blurs the line between formulation and execution, viewing formulation as an ongoing process with modifications informed by the implementation phase. Another important aspect that needs to be reviewed is the number of employees participating in the strategic development process. According to the author, there are benefits from having people from all employee levels contributing to the process, especially those involved directly in delivering value to the customer.

Based on the perspectives discussed thus far, front-line employees have important input into the strategic cycle of an organisation. Depending on organisational sizes and structures, such input would be co-ordinated through middle managers. The latter can thus be viewed as the glue that holds the organisation together by linking senior management to its front-line people. Hope (2010, p. 195) explains that middle managers are an important component in strategy formation and implementation, and "act as linking pins and mediators between the organisation's strategic and operation levels".

2.7.2 Role of middle management

Mintzburg (1989), cited by Ren and Guo (2011, p. 3), also expresses similar views in terms of middle managers being the driving force behind strategy execution, and defines middle managers as those who "occupy positions between the strategic apex and the operating core of the organisation". It is through middle managers that strategy execution takes place, yet a recent study by Harvard Business School reveals that

middle management is one of the unhappiest categories of employees. Bridging the gap between senior management and operational staff often results in conflicting perceptions from both the parties being served, because of differing interests. Senior management, for example, may desire implementation at all costs, and may view middle management as underperforming and obstructing the achievement of objectives. On the other hand, front-line people may view middle management as having lost touch with operational realities, and as simply complying with senior management's demands without advocating on behalf of the operational side (Haq, 2015).

Irrespective of these possible differing views and understandings, the fact is that most of the strategic knowledge resides in the middle of an organisation, where all the pieces of the strategic picture come together. As such, with this strategic knowledge middle managers have a crucial ability to exert influence — upward, downwards and horizontally as well (O'Brien, Scott, and Gibbons, 2013).

In Katoma and Ungerer's (2011) research into the role of middle managers in strategy execution, they identify that middle managers have a vital role in championing strategic ideas upwards, and synthesising strategic decisions downwards. They caution, however, that there may be certain middle managers who would act in a way that subtracts rather than adds value. Reasons behind such behaviours would range from managers being disgruntled to managers lacking an adequate understanding of organisational strategy. Simms (2010) concurs on many of the points put forward thus far. Middle managers' role is crucial not only in translating strategy and leading their teams to implement associated actions, but also in providing intelligence to top management with regard to strategic directions. Simms also recognised that many organisations often overlook the importance of the information that middle managers possess, resulting in formulated strategies being produced that are not properly informed, as the middle managers, with whom crucial knowledge resides, were not part of the process. Canales (2013) explains that by involving middle managers right from the start of the strategy formation process, companies can capitalise fully on their knowledge and expertise.

In similar research, Ren and Guo (2011) identify two distinct roles of middle management. The first way of viewing middle management is as the mechanism for cascading information from top management to operations-level staff, thus enabling the implementation of strategy by obtaining the buy-in of lower levels, and essentially

acting as an ambassador for the strategy. The second way of viewing middle management is that instead of the top-down approach just described, middle management facilitates a bottom-up approach whereby operations-level staff propose potential strategic intentions and initiatives for which middle managers seek corporate support, especially from top management. If one combines both views, middle management's strategic roles can be summarised as advocating different possibilities, processing and disseminating information, enabling adaptability, and executing strategy. O'Brien et al. (2013) indicate that the role of advocating and championing different alternative strategies as well as mobilising buy-in requires strong leadership on behalf of the middle managers.

Benchmarking against McFarland's (2008) strategic process (in which the formulation and implementation lines are blurred, and the process is one that is continually adapted) and R.S. Kaplan's (2015) model, Figure 10 seems to be a most appropriate strategic management model to use going forward.

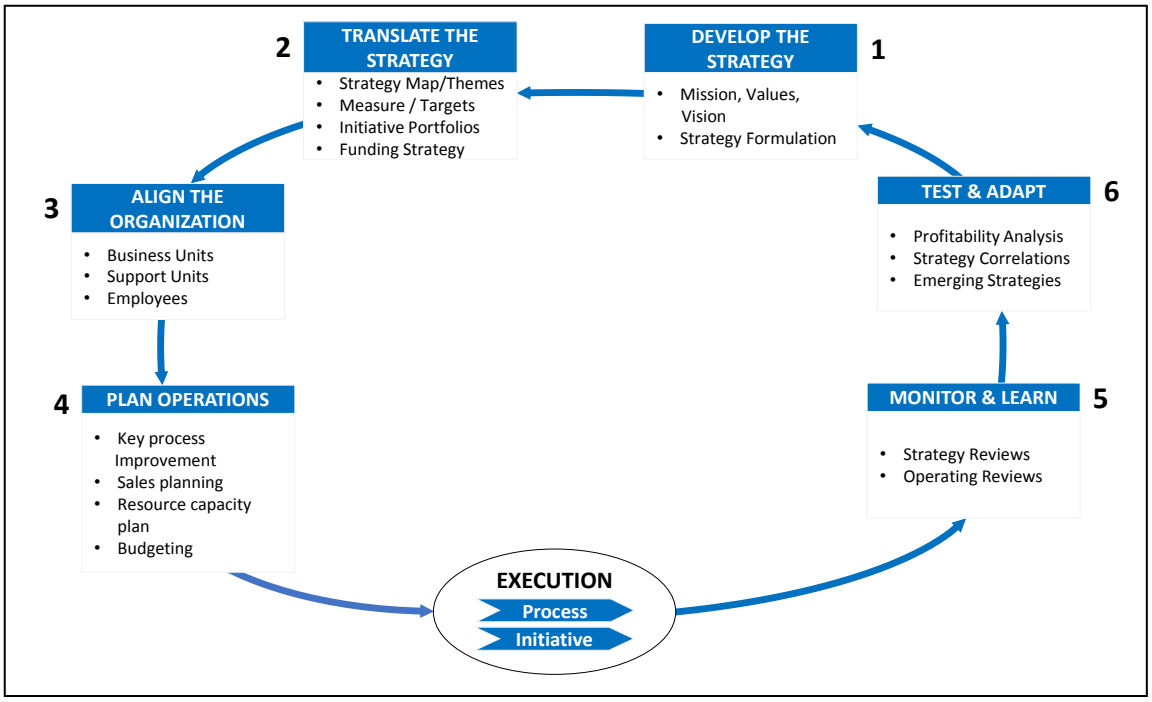

Figure 10. Strategic management process (R.S. Kaplan, 2015)

R.S. Kaplan's (2015) depiction of the different stages of the strategic management process is depicted in Figure 10. As mentioned previously, the process begins with the development of strategy through formulating the mission and vision, after which the strategy is translated by developing strategy maps, scorecards and other associated activities. Aligning of the organisation is the third step through which business units within the entity are aligned. One more level of planning that takes place before actual execution begins is operational planning, which in essence is another level of alignment. Monitoring and learning, and testing and adapting are the next stages, and are critical for informing the implementation of corrective measures during the strategy review process.

Figure 11 adapts the literature discussed thus far to present a simplified combined view that aligns the role of middle managers.

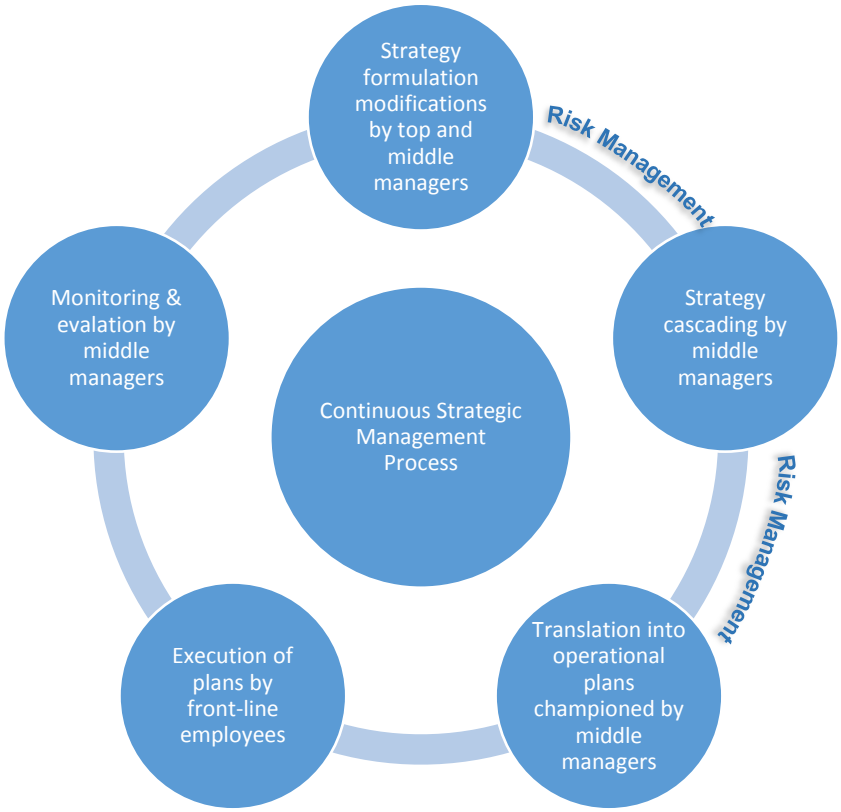

Figure 11. Simplified strategic management process (combined view)

2.7.3 Factors affecting middle managers

Katoma and Ungerer (2011) identify effective communication between organisational levels and the availability of resources as critical success factors that enable middle managers to execute strategies more effectively. From a process perspective, the factors most important for consideration are systems-level integration, alignment of organisational structures, and relevance of policies which affect the ability of middle managers to implement strategies. It should be noted that the Katoma and Ungerer's findings reveal that the major stumbling blocks for middle managers in executing strategy are silo mentalities amongst business units, outdated policies, and the bureaucratic systems that exist in the public sector. Effective performance-management systems, up-to-date regulatory frameworks and an appropriate IT infrastructure have been recognised as essential tools that aid strategy execution.

On a more abstract level, Taylor (2015) suggests that middle managers feel underappreciated for numerous reasons. They are required to be the cushion for front-line employees when top management pushes for the achievement of ambitious targets. While juggling their time and priorities, middle managers are expected to perform without taking shortcuts and to manage the related risks, while living with the fear that they are the first in the firing line when things go wrong. Very often middle managers are people who have been promoted from line functions and are expected to perform numerous additional responsibilities, such as managing human resource processes and managing stakeholders, without adequate training. It is therefore important to identify training as an important factor, especially if middle managers are to use their position of power to make decisions informed by sound knowledge, in order to influence the strategic direction of the company.

Birken, Lee, Weiner, Chin, and Schaefer (2013) suggest that while supervised by executives and in turn supervising front-line staff, middle managers play a vital role in overcoming challenges such as professional barriers, competing priorities and inertia during the implementation of any new strategic initiative. Birken et al.'s research reveals that the commitment level of middle managers is an important factor in implementing changes effectively. Highly committed middle managers are proactive in problem solving — a much needed ingredient for successful strategy implementation. Proactive behaviour and attitudes can be fostered by top management if they ensure that

such behaviours are recognised, rewarded and supported, and most importantly if they make it known that such behaviours are expected from middle management. Other factors that promote a proactive approach include clear communication of the organisation's vision and relevant information directly from executive.

In a more recent study, Giauque (2015) confirms that middle managers' complex role of controlling while being controlled, is crucial within the strategic process of an organisation. Whilst agreeing with the previous authors about the importance of the commitment of middle managers, Giauque (2015) identifies social support (relationships with colleagues and supervisors), organisational support (being heard, information dissemination and effective communication), and non-monetary intrinsic work opportunities as the factors that most affect middle managers' commitment levels. Giauque's findings also indicate that high stress levels, which may be caused by factors ranging from work-life imbalance to a lack of sufficient resources to perform tasks, result in lower levels of commitment, and therefore affecting output negatively.

Based on the literature reviewed thus far in this section, Figure 12 provides a useful summary by simplifying and combining the factors that enable middle managers to implement strategies. Figure 12 is a visual representation of the ten most common factors that affect the commitment of middle managers in the formation and execution of strategy. At the core of the framework is the commitment of middle managers, which has been identified as the driving force behind the development and execution of a well-informed strategy.

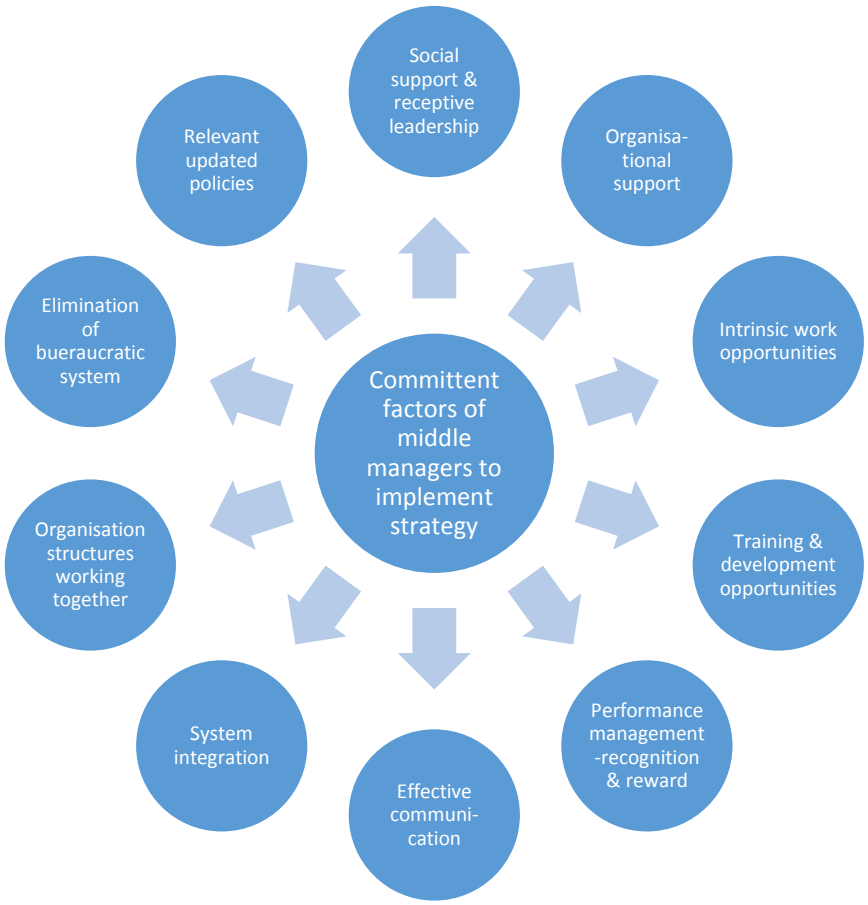

Figure 12. The ten most common factors affecting middle managers, derived from Katoma and Ungerer (2011), Taylor (2015), Birken et al. (2013) and Giauque (2015)

2.8 Conclusion

Alexander (2010) expresses concerns over the rising number of public protests taking place in South Africa. The author describes these actions as a rebellion of the poor that has numerous reasons, a prominent one being the lack of service delivery. As the frequency of public protests increases, so does the level of violence associated with them. Improving service delivery can go a long way to ease the current social tension and this objective can be achieved by public enterprises formulating and executing properly informed strategies to fulfil their mandate in an effective, efficient and economical manner.

This literature review focused on the strategy formation and execution process by identifying benchmarked approaches. One element that stood out was the need to remodel the linear approach of strategy formation and implementation into a continuous

process, during which there are constant corrective steps taken based on regular feedback. Another important aspect is risk management, which entails the identification, assessment and mitigation of risks that threaten the achievement of strategic objectives.

The alignment of strategic and business models was found to be an important ingredient for the successful implementation of strategy, hence literature on business models was explored. The combined frameworks produced the overview illustrated in Figure 11. Further analysis reveals that, in contrast with the conventional thinking that middle managers are only involved in execution of strategy, middle managers in fact have a vital role in the entire strategic management process. Figure 13 provides an overall picture of middle managers' position within the strategic context.

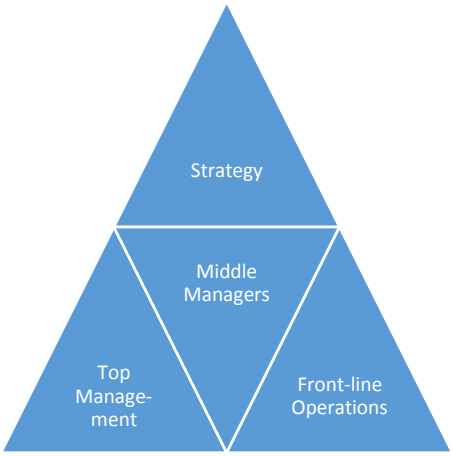

Figure 13. Overall view of middle managers' position within the strategic context

In essence, Figure 13 shows that middle managers are the link between top management, strategy and the front-line staff who implement strategy by performing strategy-related tasks on a daily basis. The role of middle managers is complex, as they have to influence and please both top management and front-line staff. It is therefore important to understand the factors that affect middle managers in order to ensure that they receive proper support. It was shown that the motivation level of middle managers is central to achieving the desired results of strategy formulation and execution. The review of prior literature has identified ten factors that affect middle managers, ranging from soft issues such as support and recognition, to structured elements like policies and procedures.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology used to conduct this research, and the techniques employed in reaching the outcomes and findings of the study. The research design, sampling, data collection, and the statistical methods used to analyse the results are presented.

The overall strategy chosen to incorporate the diverse components of this study was carefully crafted to ensure that the research problem is properly addressed. Therefore, the research method selected was a quantitative survey study designed to evaluate middle management's perceptions of the strategic management process within Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. As with previous research, such as that of Gilbert, De Winne, and Sels (2011), an investigation into middle management's enabling role in strategy formulation and execution is being performed. This will assist in understanding Theodosiou, Kehagias, and Katsikea's (2012) deliberation of the crucial role middle management should play in informing the strategic direction as well as in the execution process.

3.2 Aims and objectives of the study

The role of strategy within the public sector has received a great deal of attention. Some researchers imply that there is no need for strategy within the public sector, as it is mandate driven (Meier, O'Toole, Boyne, Walker, and Andrews, 2010). However, Meier et al. (2010) note that based on the evidence, strategic management is applicable to all organisations, irrespective of whether they are private or public, albeit with some restrictions in certain frameworks, and they define strategy as the responses produced by senior managers to the opportunities and limitations they are presented with.

With this in mind, this study was conducted to identify ways in which public entities like Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife can improve their performance through enhanced planning and execution of those plans, that is, through their strategy. The focus, following Meier

et al. (2010), is on senior managers — to be specific, those managers up to two levels below the executive. Understanding their perspectives, their roles and the factors that make them buy into the strategic management process, is deemed to be a critical success factor within the strategic management process, with the ultimate intention of improving performance.

The objectives of the research of the research are therefore as follows:

1. To probe how middle management views the strategic management process.
2. To examine middle managers' perceptions of the organisational business model fit.
3. To identify the role of middle managers in strategy development and execution.
4. To establish which factors are most important for improving the level of motivation of middle managers to execute strategy.

3.3 Participants and location of the study

Levy and Lemeshow (2013) define a sample survey as "a study involving a subset (or sample) of individuals selected from a larger population". The purpose of such sample surveys is to observe or measure the factors of interest on the sample population, aggregate the findings, and extrapolate them to generalise the results for the entire population. Issues of validity and reliability may materialise if the sample is not appropriately selected, hence there are various methods of sample selection that may be applied. Levy and Lemeshow (2013) also explain that when the entire population, i.e. the target population, is selected, the study is called a census.

Aydelotte, Fogel and Bogue (2015) assert that "what is attempted in quantitative research, as in other research, is not a full knowledge of reality but an increasingly closer approximation of it". As such, this research aims at furthering the understanding of how strategies can be better developed and implemented from the perspective of middle management. This research did not intend to find a perfect solution, but rather to formulate an improved understanding of how middle management at Ezemvelo views the strategic management process, in order to evaluate where improvements could be made to enable better service delivery through improved strategy development and execution. As such, important areas for investigation are middle management's views of

the process, the business model in which they operate, and their current role, as well as an understanding of which factors they deem to be most important.

For the purposes of this study, middle management is viewed as the two levels below the executive. Hence, the target population could be defined as people reporting directly to the executive, and the direct subordinates of these people. The target population was selected based on reporting lines, and no other criteria, apart from the exclusion of administration support staff such as assistants and secretaries, were applied. An analysis of the database revealed that the target population consisted of 126 individuals.

Taking into consideration the quantitative nature of the research and the size of the target population, the entire population was selected to be surveyed in order to eliminate potential problems related to reliability and validity. Appropriate data collection methods and techniques were employed to ensure that the research was cost and time efficient.

Since Ezemvelo is an organisation based in KwaZulu–Natal with a provincial footprint, with its head office in Pietermaritzburg and its field operations and regional offices spread all over the province, the research was conducted from head office with participants spread over the entire province.

3.4 Population

The population is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications.

In this study the target population was middle managers, that is, managers at the two levels below the Executive. The population therefore consists of managers reporting to the Executive, and managers reporting directly to this first group. Taking into consideration the number of such managers, it was decided that the entire population would be invited to participate in the survey instead of using a sample. This would provide for a much more insightful analysis.

3.5 Data collection strategies

O'Leary (2013) explains that data collection methods include interviews, surveys, observation and other unobtrusive methods. The instruments by means of which data is collected are questionnaires, observation checklists and interview schedules. Whilst all data collection methods have certain advantages and disadvantages, a closer examination of these options revealed that a survey was the best fit for this research.

Interviews, with or without a predetermined set of questions, need to be conducted in person, normally necessitates the services of a skilled interviewer, which invariably increases the cost and time required to perform the research. Because interviews are unobtrusive methods of data collection based on observation, a major advantage is that respondents are often able to communicate their messages accurately. The disadvantage is that the factors of interest must be observable, hence data which requires input from thoughts, attitudes, mental states and intentions cannot be processed. Surveys, on the other hand, make use of a pre-determined questionnaire and can be administered using a variety of media, e.g. email. By presenting a predefined set of possible answers to the set questions, the researcher is able to maintain some level of control without being present. A survey method, administered via email, with a predetermined questionnaire containing a set of predefined answers for the respondents to choose from, is cost and time efficient in this research (Blair, Czaja, and Blair, 2013). Since using an electronic survey method can accommodate the participation of a large sample, the entire target population was invited to participate in the research.

3.6 Research design and methods

3.6.1 Description and purpose

Creswell (2013) explains that the appropriate selection of research design is determined by the researcher's philosophical assumptions as well as the practical usefulness of the distinctive designs and methods to be used. He identifies four philosophical assumptions (postpositivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatic) and three types of designs (quantitative, qualitative and mixed method). Research methods include questions, data collection, data analysis, interpretation and validation. Creswell

further explains that whilst research methods are similar in most instances, careful consideration is needed in order to determine the philosophical assumption and the design.

3.6.1.1 Philosophical assumption

Working from a postpositivist perspective is similar to conducting scientific research, in which causes determine outcomes and the problems studied require the identification and assessment of such causes. Another aspect of working according to this philosophical perspective is that the process of breaking down problems into sub-components allows for a discrete set of tests and measurements of objective reality, in the "as is" situation. This research was therefore conducted from a postpositivist perspective.

3.6.2 Construction of the instrument

In deciding on a particular research method and approach, the three important criteria that need to be considered are the research problem/question, the personal experiences of the researcher, and the audience of the report. Quantitative research is one of the most viable options when seeking to identify factors and interventions, and to understand variables and outcomes. Traditionally, postpositivist philosophy is regarded as a good match with quantitative research, which advances the associations between variables and positions in terms of questions or hypotheses. With such a research method, validity, reliability and generalisability are very important. The two main types of quantitative research are experimental and non-experimental designs (Creswell, 2013).

Hewson and Laurent (2012) add that careful planning, design and testing are key to completing successful studies, and that cost and time efficiency are vital components of all research.

For the reasons discussed above, this research utilised a quantitative research method as it was deemed most appropriate in terms of the research question, researcher experience, audience, and cost and time factors. A questionnaire was designed to ensure

validity and reliability. The respondents were requested to choose the most appropriate answer from a selection provided. In addition to this, QuestionPro, an independent research firm, was contracted to provide further measures to ensure validity and reliability, as well as the confidentiality of the respondents.

3.6.2.1 Recruitment of study participants

Studies have shown that despite the use of the best recruitment strategies and techniques, the recruitment of participants for research usually takes longer than anticipated and thus results in delays and higher costs (AHRQ, 2012). Taking this into consideration, the first step was to ensure that a correct list was available. A request for a list of potential participants was therefore submitted to the Human Resources department of Ezemvelo, with the criteria mentioned above —participants report directly to the executive or must be a direct subordinate of this first group. The list obtained from Human Resources was then correlated with the payroll list provided by the Finance division and was finally submitted to IT department to obtain the participants' details, such as their email addresses. An initial email was then sent to the participants explaining the selection criteria, the importance of the study, and the advantages of their participation, both for the organisation as well as themselves. The participants were also informed of ethical issues and confidentiality arrangements, and were made aware that participation was voluntary. Following that, the main survey was sent out via email. Queries from participants were also handled with care to ensure the credibility of the process. Some senior managers were also approached directly.

3.6.2.2 Pretesting, validation and administration

Pretesting is a vital part of survey-based research and is an important tool to identify any potential problem areas, to increase measurement accuracy, to identify any areas that might negatively affect the participants' ability to respond appropriately, and to assist in improving the validity and reliability of the research. Pretesting also allows the researcher to obtain an independent opinion on the survey instrument, such as its comprehensiveness, its articulation and the time it takes to complete the questionnaire (Ruel, Wagner and Gillespie, 2015).

Taking these factors into consideration, nine people were chosen to pre-test the questionnaire. The people selected included representatives from different sections within the population as well as two from outside. These two were utilised to provide better insight and were from the administrative and executive levels. As a result of feedback from the pre-test, some grammatical errors were eliminated and the size of the logo was reduced, as the feedback indicated that the time it took to open the survey was too long. Overall, the pre-test results were satisfactory, with the average time taken to complete the survey being less than ten minutes. Another challenge experienced was that two of the pre-test participants had the email containing the survey link go directly to their junk/spam folder, which meant that this was an issue that needed to be considered and monitored during the administration of the questionnaire. As mentioned previously, the survey/questionnaire was administered electronically via email using QuestionPro. To mitigate against the challenge of emails containing the survey link being delivered to the participants' junk/spam folder of their inbox, a follow-up email was sent to participants to advise them to check the junk/spam folder if they did not receive the survey link.

3.7 Analysis of the data

Sekeran and Bougie (2013) explain that the first step of quantitative data analysis involves getting the data ready. This entails collecting the data, performing data coding, editing and categorising. It is important to note that since an electronic tool, QuestionPro, was utilised for the administration of the survey, most of this laborious work was performed by the system. The system also provided the base analysis.

3.8 Chapter summary

Research methodology is a way in which one determines the results of investigations into a given problem on a specific matter, also referred to as the research problem. In defining a methodology, researchers use different criteria and methods for solving/researching the given research problem.. The word "methodology" indicates the way in which one goes about researching or solving the research problem (Williams, 2011). The chapter, as stated, has focused on the different criteria and explored the most

efficient and effective options available in order to obtain the information required to meet the objectives of the research. A quantitative method using a survey administered electronically was utilised. In the following chapter, the researcher will present the research results and findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In the context of the research design and methodology set out in the previous chapter, this chapter describes and interprets the findings of the research. As per the research objectives, gaining an understanding of middle management's level of familiarity with and perspectives on the strategy as well as the strategic management process is the point of departure. Before proceeding with identifying the middle management's role in the strategy development and execution process, an evaluation of the business model is provided for a better perspective. It is also important to identify factors important to middle management, and their perceptions or satisfaction levels in relation to those factors. Lastly, some trend analysis through cross-tabulation is performed to identify possible areas of concern as well as divergent views.

4.2 Demographics of respondents

The entire population of 126 middle managers was selected to survey, and 88 participants responded. The following demographic analysis focuses on whether participants are involved in operations or support services, their level of management, their years of service, their education level and whether they are based at head office or work in the field. Each of these demographic factors was deemed important as they could potentially identify divergent views based on the experiences of the respondents. Figures 14–18 provide an overview of the demographic breakdown of the respondents.

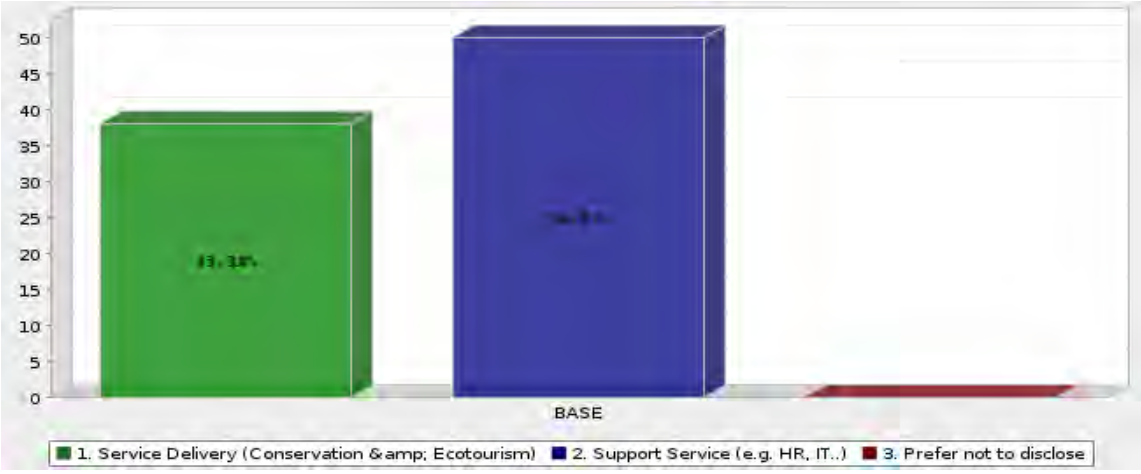

Figure 14. Service delivery respondents vs support services respondents

Figure 14 indicates that 43% of the respondents were from the service delivery component of the organisation, whilst 56% were from support services. A minority of 1% preferred not to disclose their division.

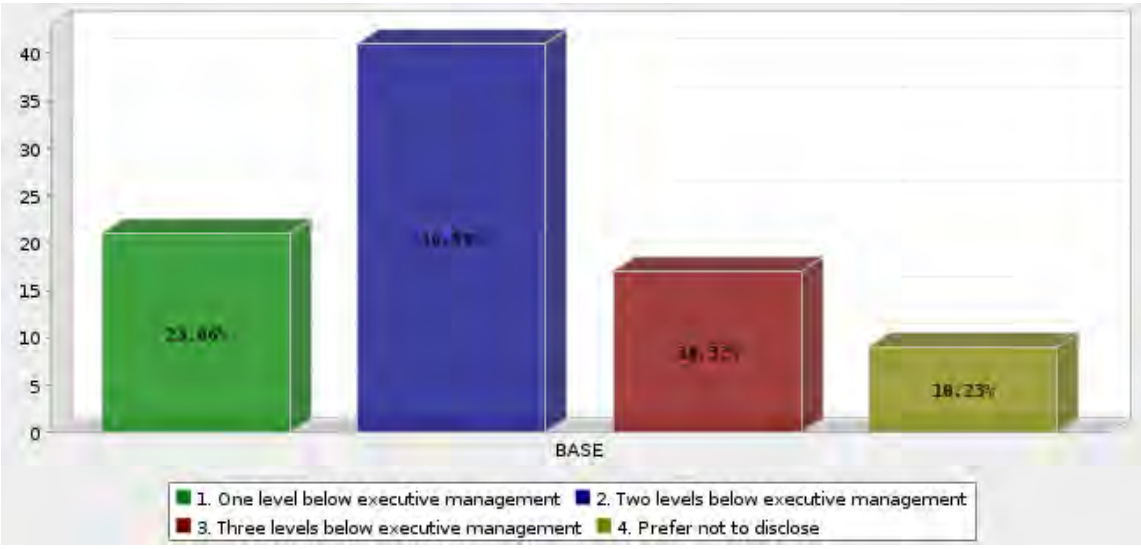

Figure 15. Respondents' management level

Figure 15 indicates that 24% of respondents were one level below the Executive, whilst 47% and 19% were two and three levels below the Executive, respectively. 10% preferred not to disclose their management level.

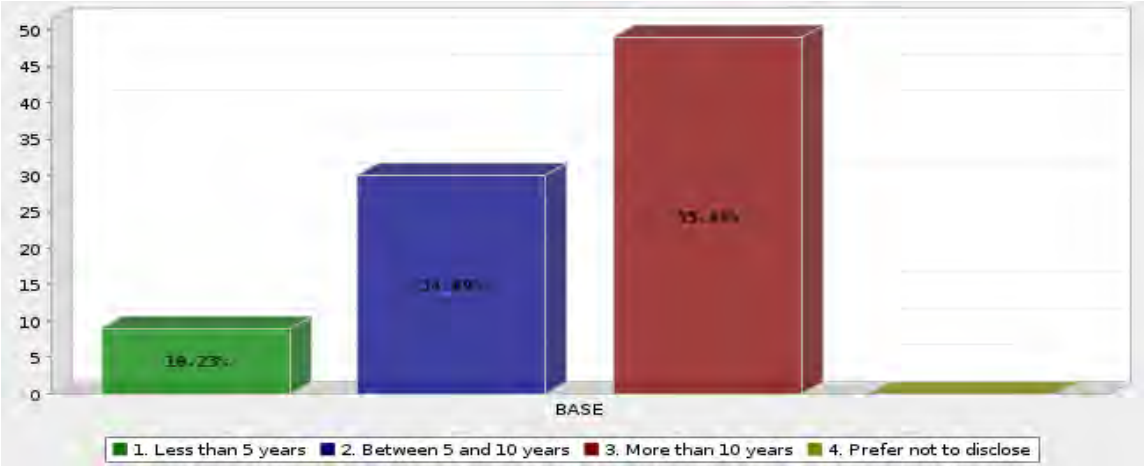

Figure 16. Respondents' years of service

Figure 16 dealt with the years of service. It indicates that 56% of respondents had more than 10 years of service. 34% had between 5 and 10 years of service, whilst 10% had less than 5 years of service.

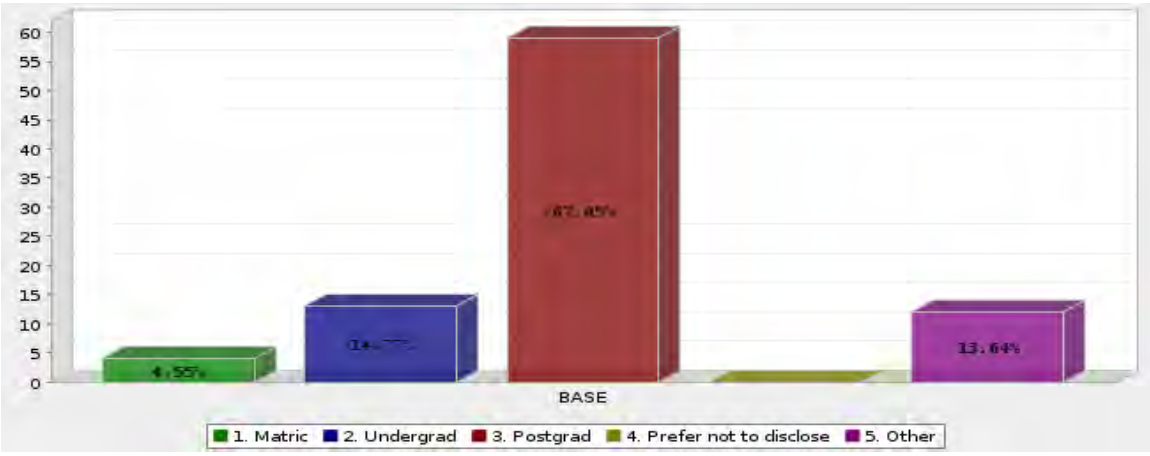

Figure 17. Respondents' level of education

Figure 17 indicates that 67% of respondents had postgraduate degrees and 15% had undergraduate qualifications. Whilst 5% stated that they only had Matric as their qualification, 14% disclosed that they had other forms of formal education.

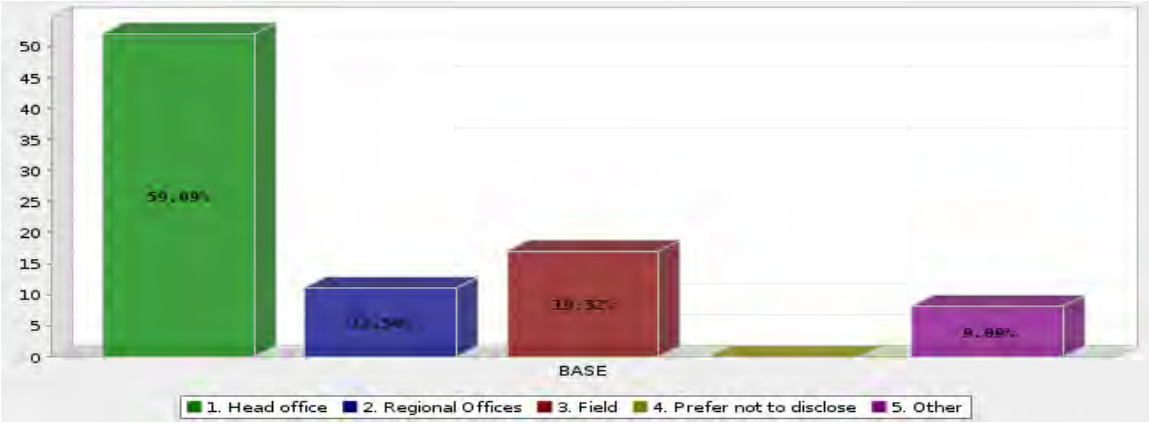

Figure 18. Respondents' work stations

Figure 18 describes the location of the respondents. 59% reported that they were based at head office, 13% that they were situated at regional offices, 9% that they operate from bases that were not listed, and 19% that they were based in the field.

4.2.1 Important characteristics

Figures 14–18 indicate the important demographic characteristics of the respondents. The analysis indicates that 57% of the respondents were from support services and 43% were part of the service delivery. In terms of management levels, 24% of the respondents were positioned just one level below the executive whilst 47% were two levels below and a further 19% were below these. 56% of the respondents had more than 10 years of service and 34% had more than five years of service, with the rest having less. Regarding education levels, 67% of the participants possessed a postgraduate qualification while 15% were graduates. In terms of their work stations, 59% of the respondents were based at head office whilst only 32% were based in the field or at regional offices.

4.3 Presentation of results

4.3.1 Knowledge of strategy

Following the demographic questions, the next part of the questionnaire was designed to evaluate how middle managers view the strategic management process. As such, the first point of call was to gain insight into their knowledge of the organisation's overall strategy, specifically the vision, mission, values, goals and objectives. Figures 19–21 present an aggregated result of this dimension.

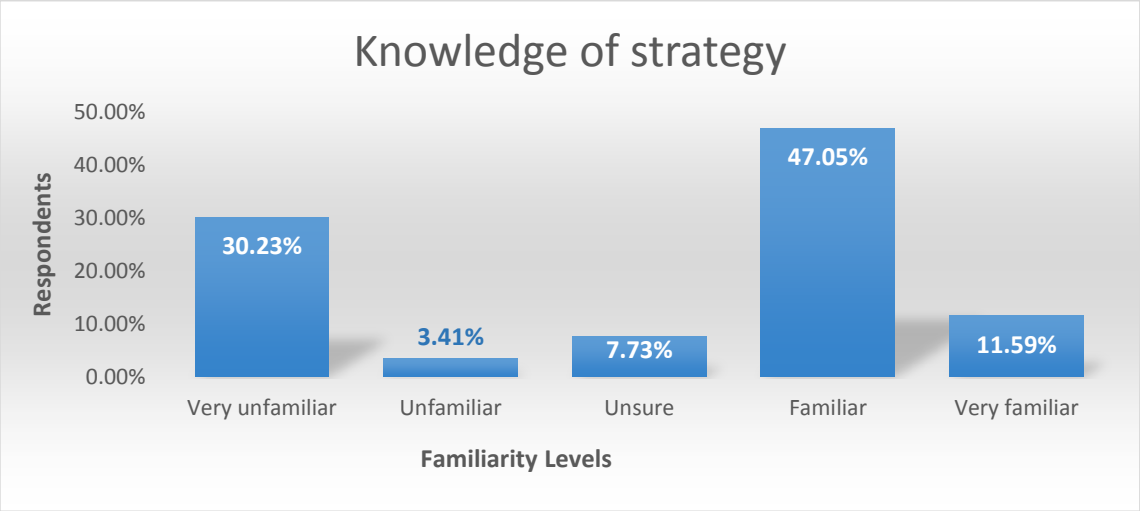

Figure 19. Respondents' knowledge level of strategy

Figure 19 indicates that about 58% of the respondents were familiar with the strategy, while the responses of about 42% ranged from unsure to very unfamiliar. These statistics are cause for concern, because 42% of the people who are supposed to be operationalising the strategy claimed to have little or no knowledge of it. This called for some cross-analysis based on the respondents' demographics to determine if any links could be identified. The two components that were deemed most important to provide an indication were the knowledge of the organisation's vision and knowledge of its objectives. Figures 20 and 21 provide the results of an analysis of the respondents' management level against their familiarity with the organisation's vision and objectives.

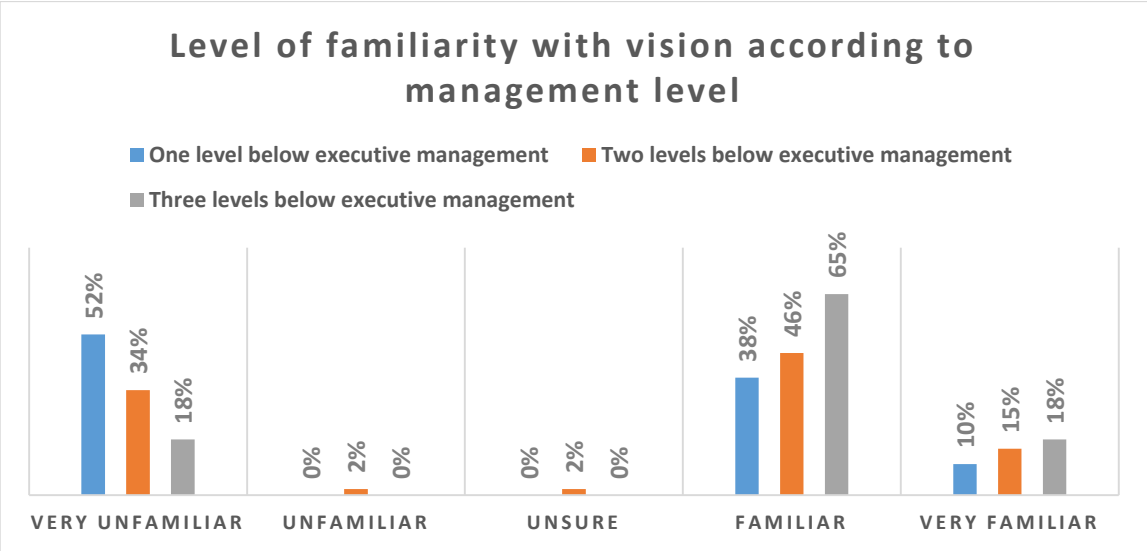

Figure 20. Level of familiarity with the vision according to management level

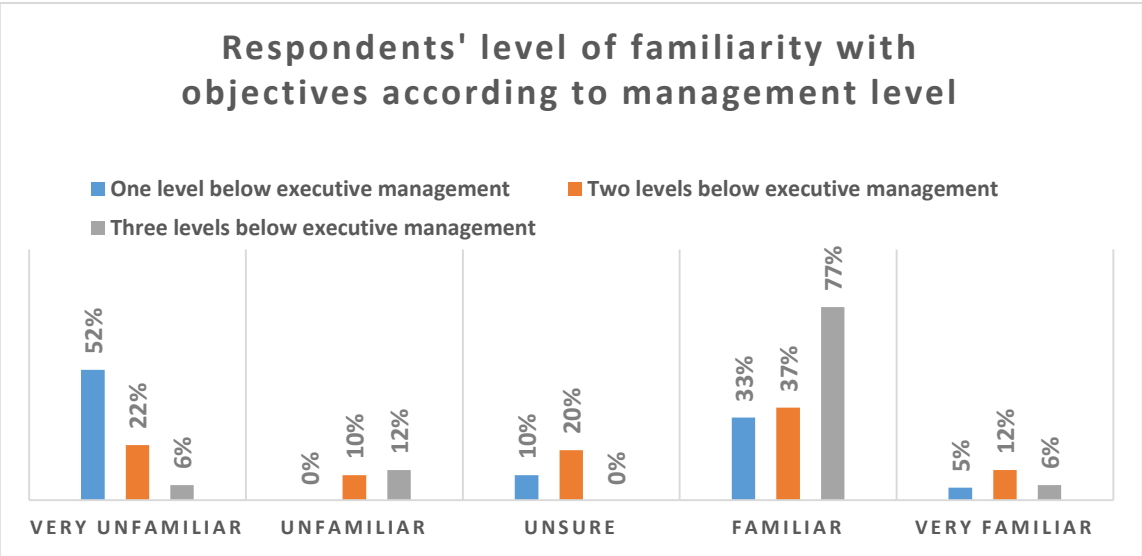

Figure 21. Respondents' level of familiarity with the objectives according to management level

Figures 20 and 21 indicate that over 50% of respondents who were one management level directly below the executive were very unfamiliar with the vision and objectives of the organisation.

4.3.2 Understanding of the strategic management process

The strategic process as described in the literature review incorporates an analysis of micro and macro factors, and risk exposures. The process also entails the development

of a strategic map and measures of achievement, alignment of the budget, cascading of processes to lower levels, project planning, monitoring and evaluation, and implementing corrective measures in the strategic direction. Figure 22 indicates the level of agreement/awareness of the respondents in an aggregated manner.

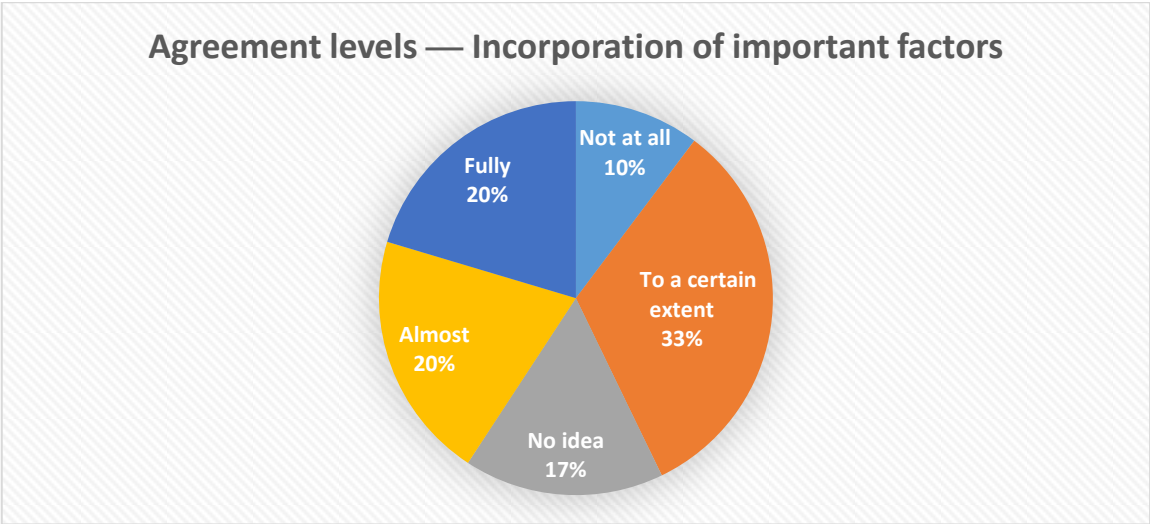

Figure 22. Respondents' level of agreement on whether important factors within the strategic process are incorporated

Figure 22 shows that on aggregate, only 20% of the respondents agreed that all the important factors within the strategic management process were incorporated. Whilst 20% indicated that almost all the factors were incorporated, 33% agreed to a certain extent and 27% either had no idea or disagreed that these steps are part of the process.

Having gained an insight into middle management's basic knowledge of those essential factors within the strategic management process, it was deemed critical for this research to understand how they view strategic management and the accompanying processes. Hence, participants were asked whether the strategic management process assists in focusing the organisation, improves organisational performance, adds no real value, is only an executive responsibility, is a hindrance to their work, or is something they do not want to be involved in. Figures 23–28 depict the results of each of the questions asked.

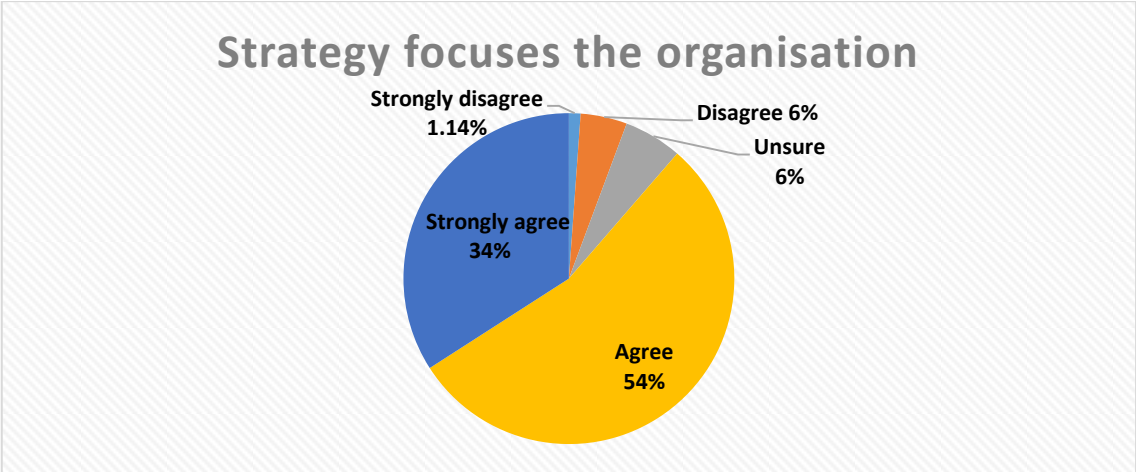

Figure 23. Respondents' opinions on whether strategy assists in focusing the organisation

Figure 23 illustrates that in terms of strategy being a tool that focuses the organisation, 34% of respondents strongly agreed, whilst 34% agreed and 6% disagreed, with 1% strongly disagreeing. 6% of respondents indicated that they were unsure.

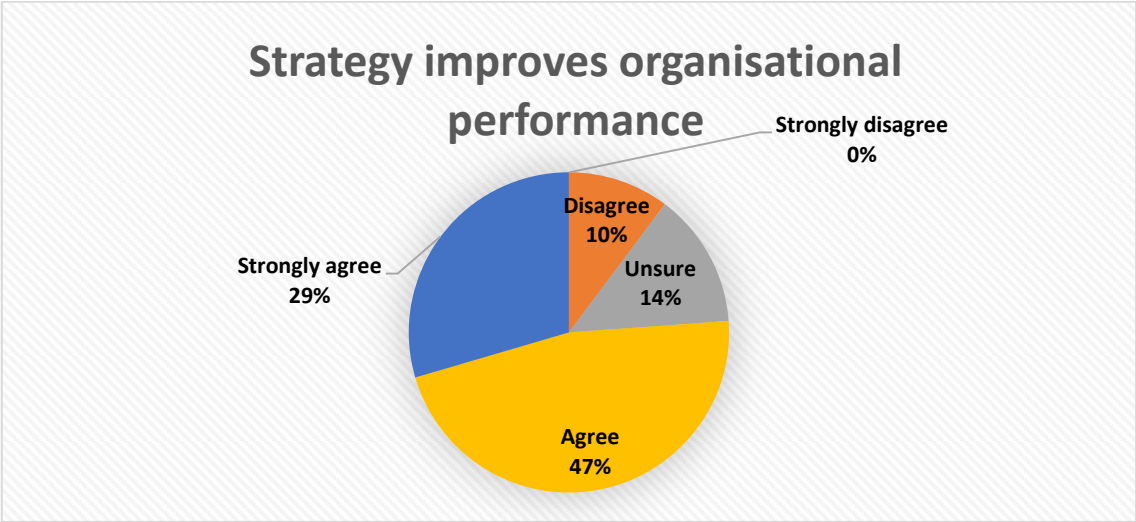

Figure 24. Respondents' opinions on whether strategy improves organisational performance

Figure 24 indicates that whilst 29% and 47% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the strategic process improved organisational performance, 10% disagreed and 14% were unsure.

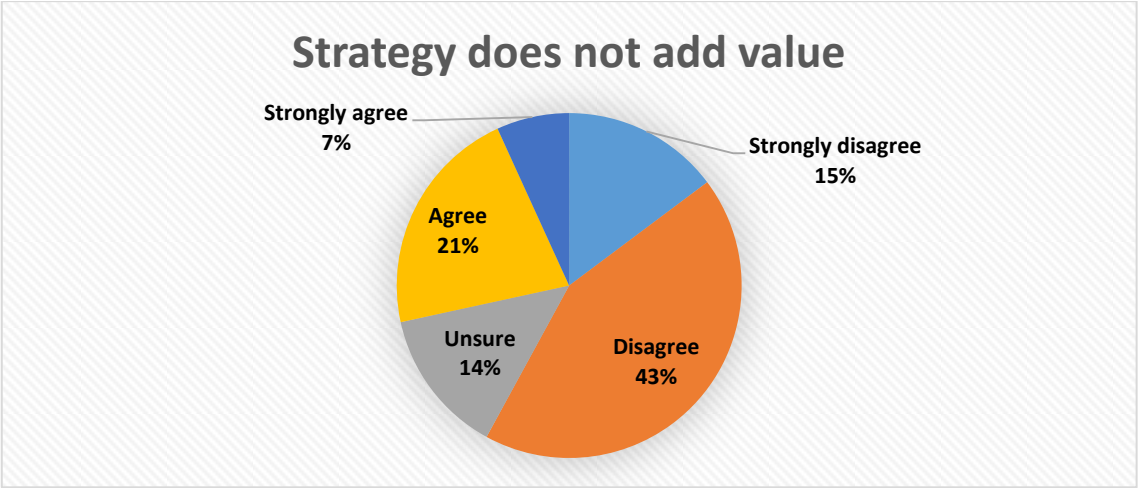

Figure 25. Respondents' opinions on whether strategy is a non-value adding activity

Figures 25 shows that 28% of respondents agreed, and 7% strongly agreed that strategy adds value to the organisation. A larger number of respondents (43%) disagreed, and a further 15% strongly disagreed. 14% of respondents claimed to be unsure.

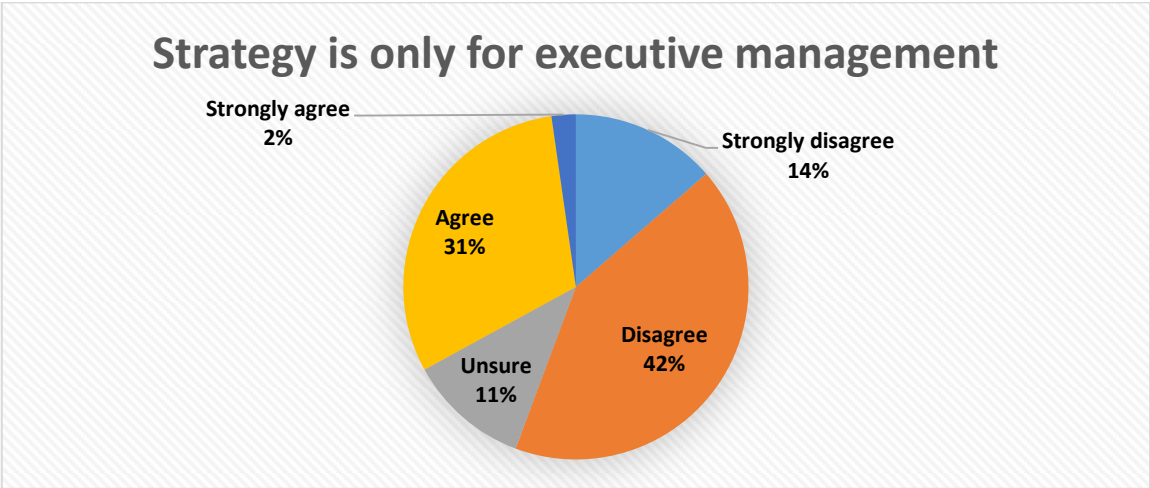

Figure 26. Respondents' opinions on whether strategy is only an executive management activity

Figure 26 illustrates that 31% agreed and another 2% strongly agreed that strategy is a matter that should be dealt with by the Executive only. However, 14% strongly disagreed and 42% disagreed with the statement. 11% of respondents were unsure.

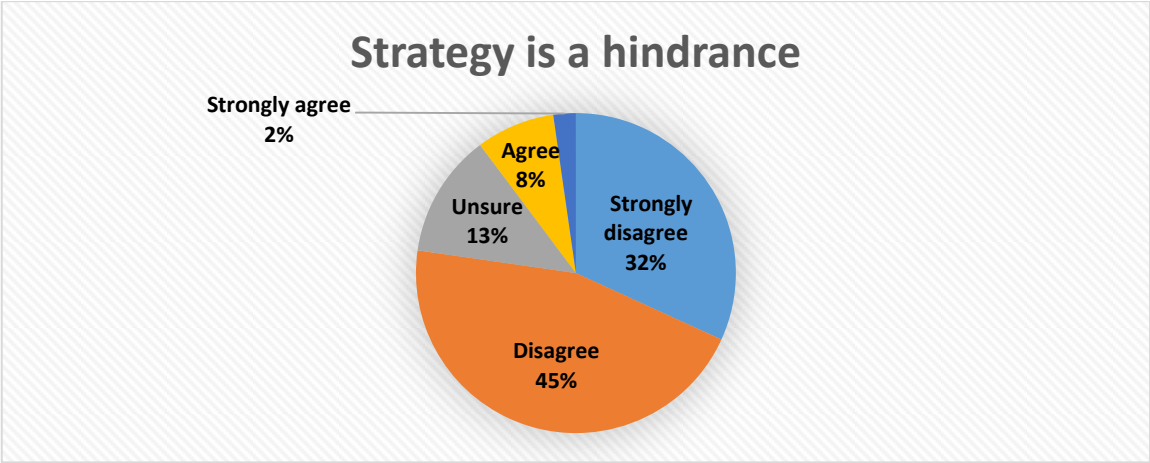

Figure 27. Respondents' opinions on whether strategy is a hindrance to performance

Figure 27 shows that only 10% of management views strategy as a hindrance, while 32% strongly disagreed and 45% disagreed with the statement. 8% of respondents were unsure.

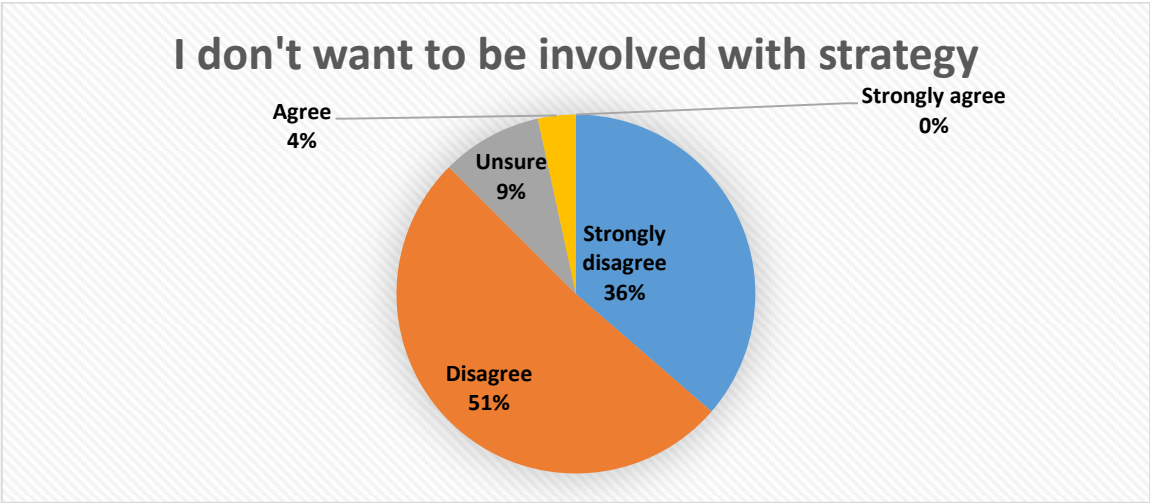

Figure 28. Respondents' level of unwillingness to be involved with strategy

Figure 28 indicates that most respondents would like to be involved with strategy, with 36% strongly disagreeing and 51% disagreeing with the statement. 4% agreed that they don't want to be part of the strategy process, and 9% were unsure of whether they want to be involved with strategy or not.

Figures 23–28 provide important insight into how middle management perceives the strategic management process. 87% of participants agreed that the strategic management process assists in focusing the organisation and 76% that it improves performance. 58% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the process in question does not add value, whilst 28% viewed it as a non-value-adding activity. On the issue of whether strategy is something to be dealt by the executive only, 56% of the participants disagreed, while 33% agreed and 11% were unsure. Only 10% of middle management regarded the strategic process as a hindrance, with 77% disagreeing (35% strongly disagreeing). Lastly, in this section respondents were asked about their willingness to be part of the strategic management process and the majority (87%) responded positively, with 36% indicating a strong willingness to be involved.

4.3.2.1 Important observations

Overall, most middle managers agreed that the strategic management process has a positive impact on the organisation. Of concern, however, was that 28% of the participants regarded the process as a non-value-adding activity and 33% felt that strategy is only an issue for executive management to deal with. Based on these results, cross-analysis was performed to gain a more detailed understanding of the responses.

Of the 28% of the participants who regarded the process as a non-value-adding activity, their work station and level of management emerged as significant factors. Looking at the different characteristics, the most notable variables that seems to make the 28% are the locations of work and level of management. Roughly 50% of the respondents from the two levels below executive management, and the majority of the participants based outside of head office viewed the strategic management process as a non-value-adding activity. Similar results were obtained in relation to the question of strategy being an issue to be dealt with only by executive management.

4.3.3 The organisation's business model from the perspective of middle management

Before identifying the respondents' different roles in the strategic management process, an understanding of how they viewed the business model of the organisation was essential in seeking to improve the development and execution of strategies. Participants were therefore asked questions regarding the organisation's mandate, customers, service delivery and field support. Figures 29–33 represent their responses.

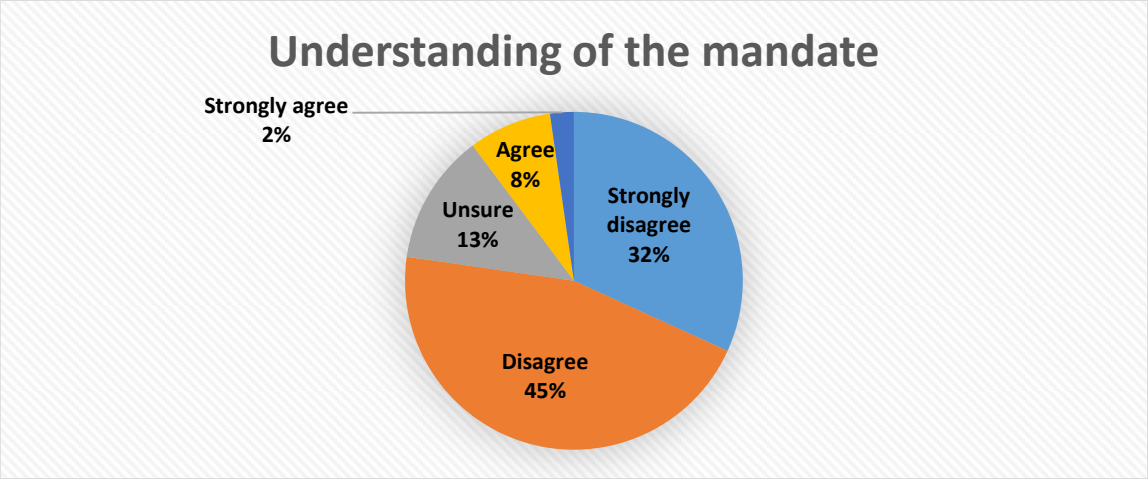

Figure 29. Respondents' level of understanding of the mandate

Figure 29 presents the results of the level of understanding of the mandate. A majority of respondents claimed that the entity does not understand its mandate, with 45% and 32% disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. Only 8% of the respondents agreed and 2% strongly agreed that the organisation understands the mandate. 13% of the respondents were unsure.

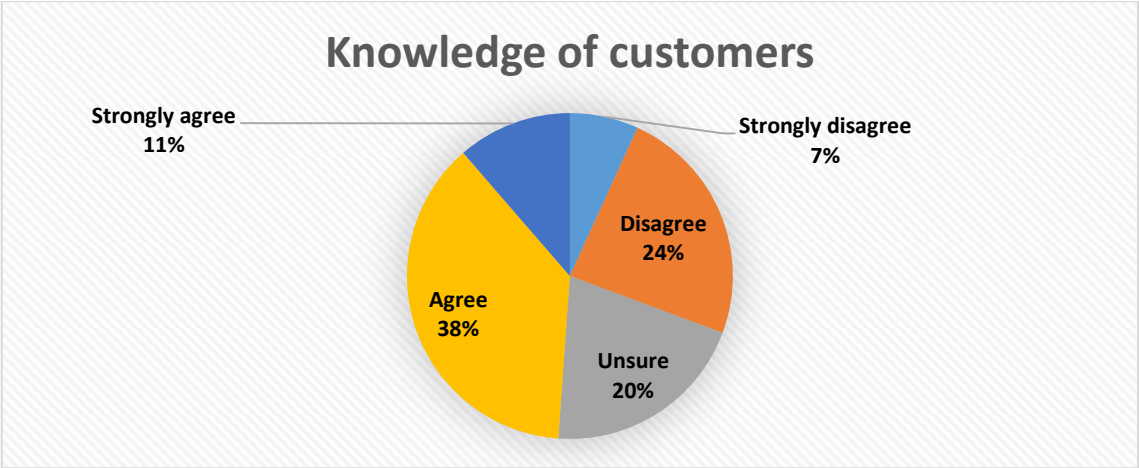

Figure 30. Respondents' level of knowledge of the customers

Figure 30 indicates that whilst 38% of the respondents agreed and 11% strongly agreed that the organisation knows who its customers are, 24% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed. 20% of respondents were unsure.

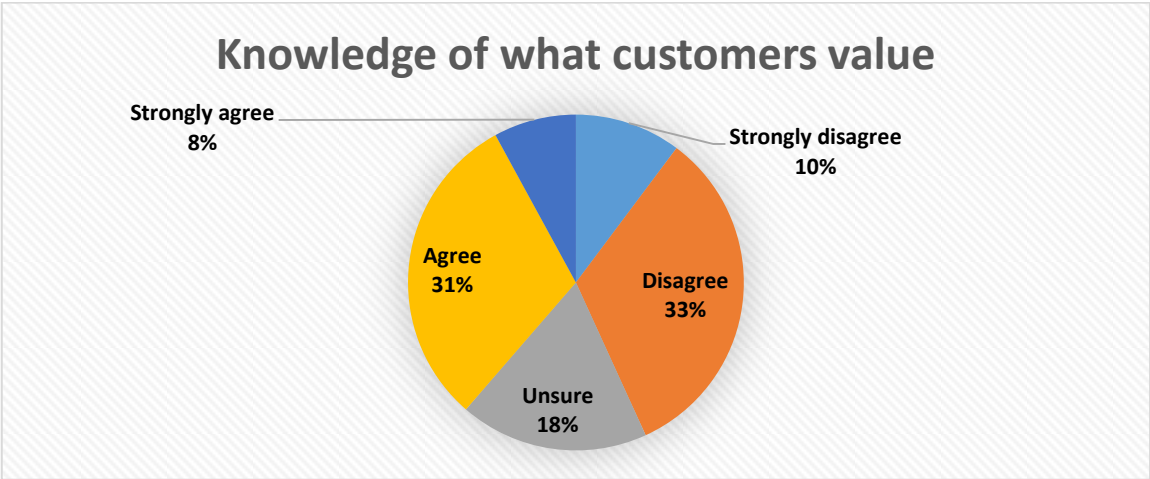

Figure 31. Respondents' level of the knowledge of what customers value

Figure 31 follows from Figure 30, as in addition to knowing its customers, the organisation should also know what its customers value. Figure 31 indicates that 31% of respondents agreed and 8% strongly agreed that the entity knows who its customers are, whilst 33% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed. 18% of respondents were unsure.

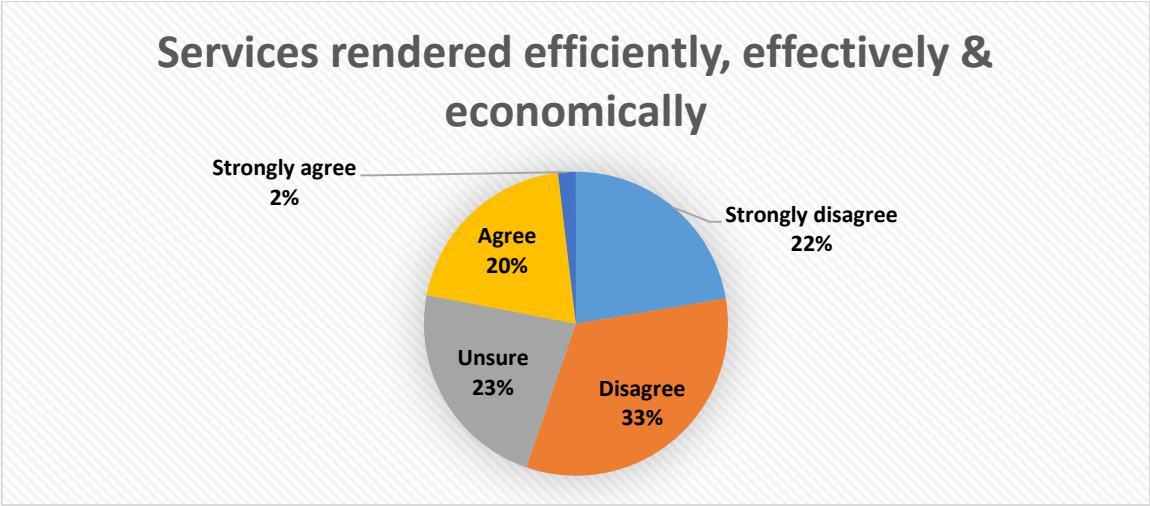

Figure 32. Respondents' opinion on whether services are rendered effectively, efficiently and economically

Figures 32 indicates that whilst 20% of respondents agreed and 2% strongly agreed that the entity rendered services effectively, efficiently and economically, the majority of the respondents thought otherwise, with 33% disagreeing and 22% strongly disagreeing with the statement. 20% of respondents were unsure.

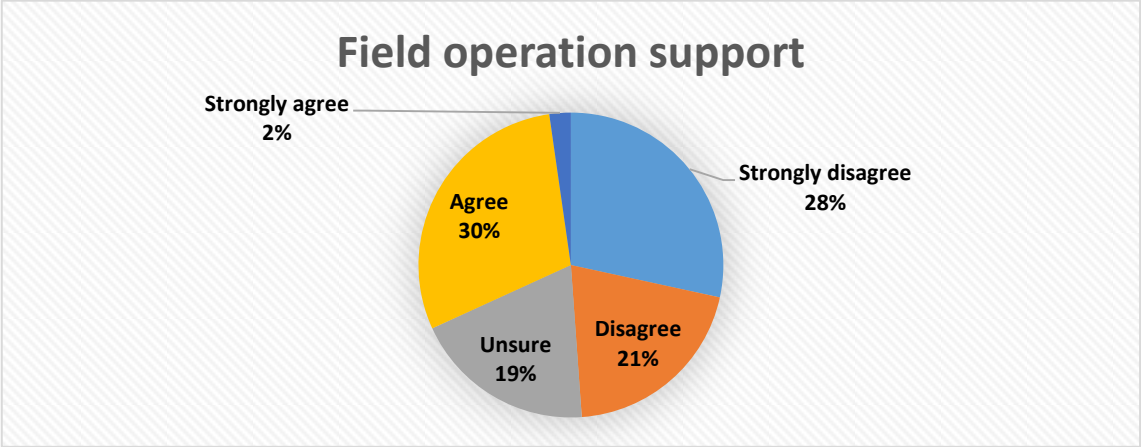

Figure 33. Respondents' opinions on whether field operations are appropriately supported

Figure 33 present the views of respondents in relation to the support of field operations. With 30% agreeing and 2% strongly agreeing, and 28% strongly disagreeing and 21% disagreeing, the majority opinion seems to be that field operations are not being supported adequately. 19% of respondents were unsure.

Only 10% of the respondents believed that Ezemvelo management understood its mandate (see Figure 29). 49% of the participants agreed that the organisation knows who its customers are; however, the rest disagreed or were unsure (Figure 30). Similarly, 39% of the participants agreed that management understands what customers value (Figure 31), while the rest disagreed or were again unsure.

In terms of the way in which value is created and delivered, participants were asked if the organisation did so efficiency, effectively and/or economically. The questions were asked individually and since the answers were similar, an aggregated result is presented in Figure 32. Only 2% strongly agreed and 20% agreed, whilst 22% strongly disagreed, 33% disagreed and 23% were unsure.

Another important component of any business model is the level of support that field operations are given in value creation or rendering service delivery. Only 2% of the respondents strongly agreed that field operations are supported, while 40% agreed, 28% strongly disagreed, 21% disagreed and the rest were unsure (Figure 33).

4.3.4 Involvement of middle management in the strategic management process

Middle management is an important link within the strategic management process. As discussed in the literature review, some of the roles middle managers play include being part of the actual strategy development process, relaying important information to and from the field, influencing the strategic direction, cascading the organisational strategy into operational plans and obtaining buy-in from lower levels. The participants were therefore asked about their involvement in strategy development, and the results are presented in Figures 34–39.

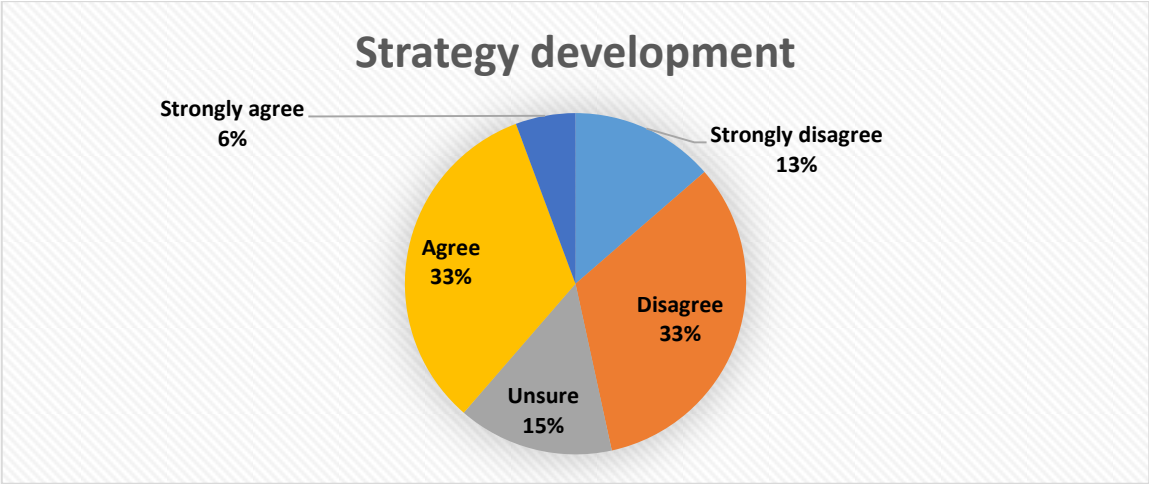

Figure 34. Respondents' opinions on whether they are part of strategy development

Figure 34 indicates that 33% agreed and 6% strongly agreed that they are part of the strategy development process, while 13% strongly disagreed and 33% disagreed. 15% of respondents were unsure.

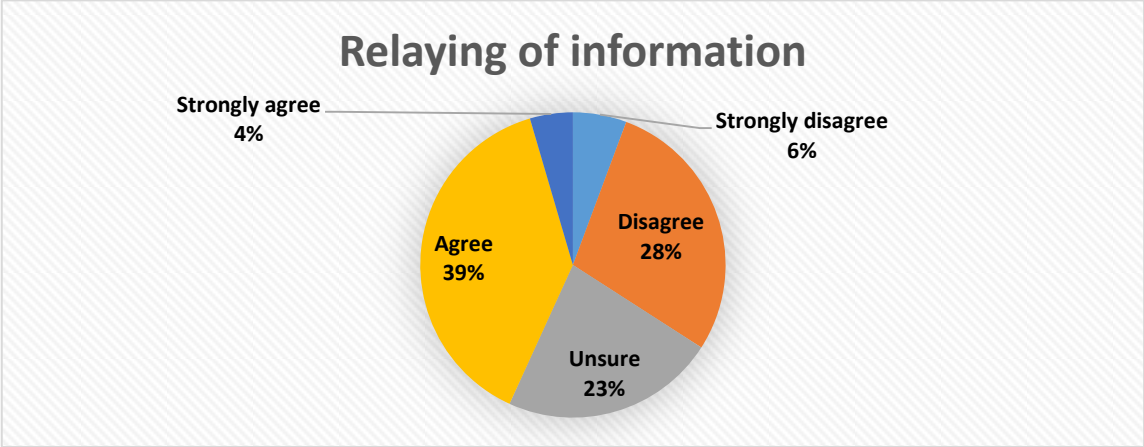

Figure 35. Respondents' indication of whether they relay information from the field

Figure 35 illustrates that whilst 39% of respondents agreed and 4% strongly agreed that middle managers play a vital role in relaying information, 28% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed. 23% of respondents were unsure.

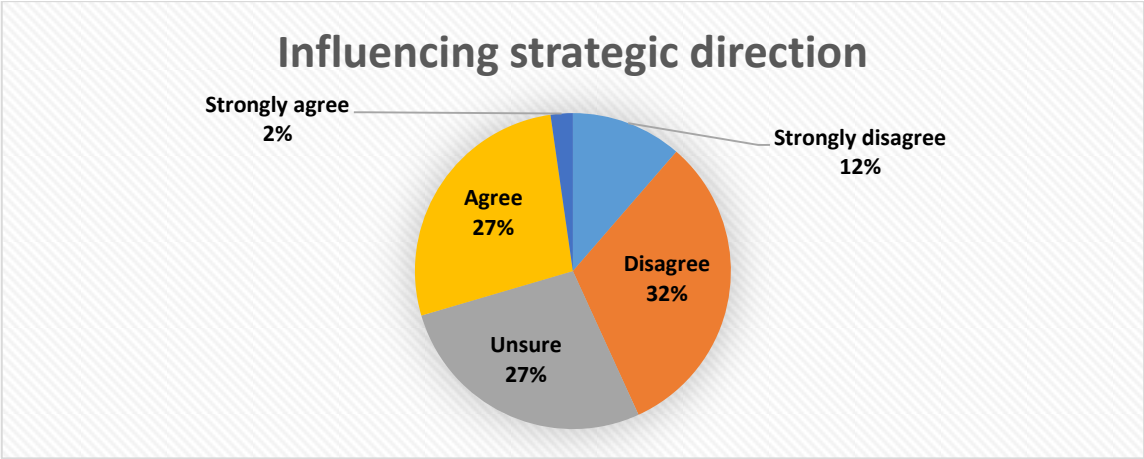

Figure 36. Respondents' opinion on whether they influence strategic direction

Figure 36 indicates that 27% of the respondents agreed and 2% strongly agreed that they influence the strategic direction, while 32% disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed. 27% of respondents were unsure.

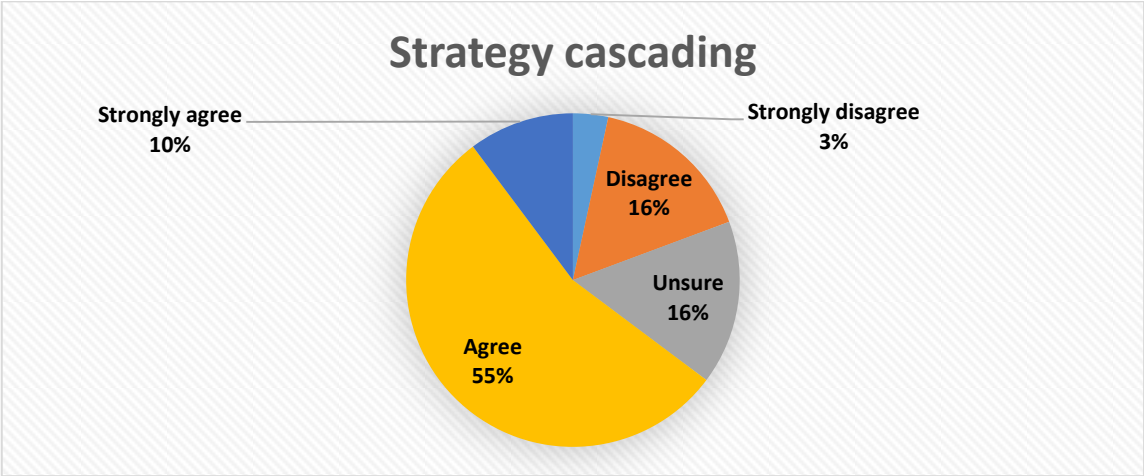

Figure 37. Respondents' opinion on whether they cascade strategy into operational plans

Figure 37 shows that whilst 55% of respondents agreed and 10% strongly agreed that they cascade the strategy, 16% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. 16% of respondents were unsure.

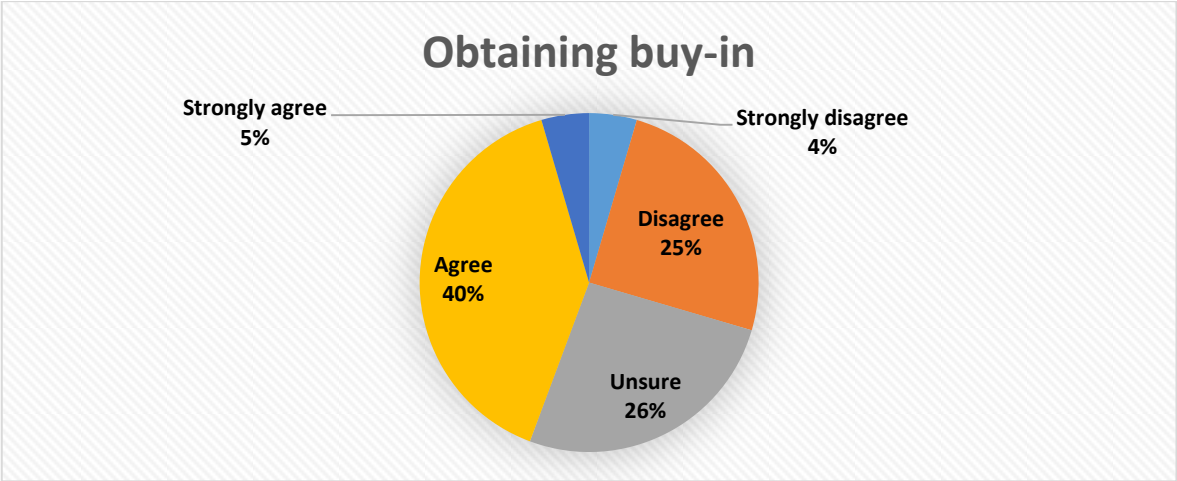

Figure 38. Respondents' opinion on whether they obtain buy-in from lower levels

Figure 38 indicates that in terms of obtaining buy-in from lower levels, 40% of respondents agreed and 5% strongly agreed that it was their role. However, 25% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed. 26% of respondents were unsure.

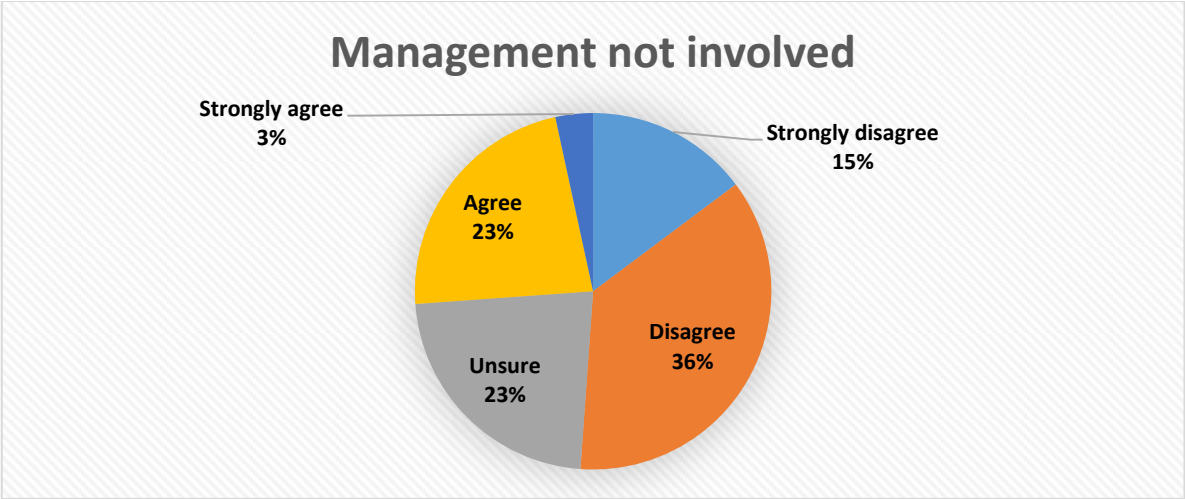

Figure 39. Respondents' opinion on whether they are involved in the strategic process

Figure 39 shows that whilst 23% of respondents agreed and 3% strongly agreed that management is not involved in the strategic process, 36% disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed. 23% of respondents were unsure.

Figure 34 presents middle management's responses on whether they are involved in the strategy development process. 39% of the participants responded positively whilst 46% stated that they are not involved. It was interesting to note that 15% of the respondents were unsure of whether they participated or not. If one contrasts these results with those in Figure 39, which shows participants' responses on whether they are involved in the strategic process, 51% reported that they are involved, while 26% stated that they do not participate and 23% were unsure.

With regard to whether they relay important information to and from the field, 43% of the respondents agreed, 34% disagreed and 23% were unsure. On the question of influencing strategic direction, Figure 36 shows that only 29% responded that they are able to do so, whilst 54% stated that they do not and 27% were unsure. The majority of respondents agreed that cascading the strategy into operational plans was one of their roles, as shown in Figure 37 where 65% agree, 19% disagree and 16% are unsure. Figure 38 indicates that 45% of the respondents agreed that they obtain buy-in for the strategy from lower levels, whilst 29% disagreed and 26% were unsure.

4.3.5 Factors considered important by middle management for successful strategic management

In the context of this research, at the core of the successful development and execution of strategy is the commitment of middle management. Common factors affecting the commitment levels of middle management were discussed in the literature review. Participants were asked to rate the importance of the factors mentioned and indicate their satisfaction levels with those factors at the time of the research. Tables 1 and 2 present the results of the responses received in relation to how important certain factors were deemed to be as motivating factors for being part of the strategic process. The results are presented in an analysis format for ease of presentation. The same format will be used in the next section.

Table 1. Importance levels of motivating factors

Motivating factors to you in being part of the strategy process [Not Important, Very Important]			
No	Question	Score	1 2 3 4 5
1.	Effective top management team	4.494	
2.	Appropriate management style	4.449	
3.	Clear strategies & priorities	4.596	
4.	Effective communication	4.640	
5.	Organisational structures working together	4.685	
6.	Elimination of bureaucratic process	4.472	
7.	Supportive and receptive leadership	4.629	
8.	Resources availability	4.607	
9.	System integration	4.449	
10.	Recognition & reward	4.382	
11.	Training & development	4.494	
12.	Intrinsic work opportunities (e.g. ability to choose meaningful task)	4.337	
Average		4.520	
Mean: 2.652	Confidence Interval @ 95%: [2.423 - 2.880]	Standard Deviation: 1.099	

Table 1 shows which factors the participants deemed to be most important. The selection process involved rating the 12 factors on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important. As can be seen, the average score was 4.52, which indicates that most of the factors mentioned were very important to the respondents. The highest scoring factor was *organisational structures working together* with a score of 4.69, whilst the factor with the lowest score of 4.34 was *intrinsic work opportunities*. Once these factors were identified and scored, an assessment of the current satisfaction levels was the next logical step and these findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondents' levels of satisfaction based on the status quo

Your current level of satisfaction based on the status quo [Not Satisfied, Very Satisfied]			
No	Question	Score	1 2 3 4 5
1.	Effective top management team	2.045	
2.	Appropriate management style	2.135	
3.	Clear strategies & priorities	2.562	
4.	Effective communication	2.124	
5.	Organisational structures working together	1.787	
6.	Elimination of bureaucratic process	1.831	
7.	Supportive and receptive leadership	2.169	
8.	Resources availability	2.022	
9.	System integration	2.090	
10.	Recognition & reward	1.899	
11.	Training & development	2.180	
12.	Intrinsic work opportunities (e.g. ability to choose meaningful task)	2.337	
Average		2.098	
Mean : 2.652	Confidence Interval @ 95% : [2.423 - 2.880]	Standard Deviation : 1.099	

With an average score of 2.10, the respondents' general levels of satisfaction are low. The factor that respondents were most satisfied with was *clear strategies and priorities* with a score of 2.56, and the factor that they were most dissatisfied with, with a score of 1.79, was *organisational structures working together*.

4.4 Analysis of results

In this section, the results presented thus far are analysed and discussed in relation to the objectives set for this research in section 1.6, recapped as follows:

1. To probe how middle management views the strategic management process.
2. To examine middle managers' perceptions of the organisational business model fit.
3. To identify the role of middle managers in strategy development and execution.
4. To establish which factors are most important for improving the level of motivation of middle managers to execute strategy.

The format of the results is similar to the previous section, except for the analysis of scores in tabular format in relation to Objective 4. Tables 3–8 provide an analysis of the results in terms of the objectives.

4.4.1 Objective 1 result analysis

The first objective of the research was to probe how middle management views the strategic management process. As such, four sets of questions were posed to the participants.

Table 3. Respondents' level of familiarity with strategy

Familiarity levels of respondents with the following:								
No	Question	Score	Very unfamiliar	Unfamiliar	Unsure	Familiar	Very familiar	
1.	Vision of Ezemvelo	3.101						
2.	Mission of Ezemvelo	3.191						
3.	Values of Ezemvelo	3.045						
4.	Goals of Ezemvelo	2.978						
5.	Objectives of Ezemvelo	3.067						
Average		3.076						
Mean: 1.888!	Confidence Interval @ 95% : [1.625 - 2.151]				Standard Deviation : 1.265			

Table 4. Respondents' opinion on whether the organisation adequately considers critical factors

According to respondents, whilst developing the current strategy, has the organisation adequately considered the following:

No	Question	Score	Not at all / To a certain extent / No idea / Almost / Fully
1.	Internal factors	2.697	
2.	External factors	2.719	
3.	Risks	2.798	
Average		2.738	

Mean: 3.067! Confidence Interval @ 95% : [2.782 - 3.352] Standard Deviation : 1.372

Table 5. Respondents' opinion on the organisation's inclusion of critical components

According to respondents, the strategy development and execution process of Ezemvelo includes the following:

No	Question	Score	Not at all / To a certain extent / No idea / Almost / Fully
1.	Strategy map	3.607	
2.	Measures of achievement	3.404	
3.	Alignment of budget	2.764	
4.	Cascading to lower levels	2.652	
5.	Alignment of resources	2.483	
6.	Project planning	3.135	
7.	Monitoring & Evaluation	3.056	
8.	Corrective measures in strategic direction	2.854	
Average		2.994	

Mean: 2.798! Confidence Interval @ 95% : [2.576 - 3.020] Standard Deviation : 1.068

Table 6. Respondents' perceptions of the strategic management process

In respondents' opinion, strategic management process			
No	Question	Score	Strongly disagree / Disagree / Unsure / Agree / Strongly agree
1.	Assists in focusing the organisation	4.157	
2.	Improves organisational performance	3.944	
3.	Is a tick in the box and add no real value	2.640	
4.	Is an issue dealt with by Executives only	2.674	
5.	Is a hindrance to me and my	2.067	
6.	Is something I want nothing to do with	1.798	
Average		2.880	
Mean: 2.854!	Confidence Interval @ 95% : [2.614 - 3.094]	Standard Deviation : 1.154	

Tables 3–6 describe how middle management views the strategic management process. The first set of questions revealed that the respondents' level of familiarity with the strategy is low, with a mean value of 1.9 (Table 3). In response to the question of whether the organisation has adequately taken into account important internal and external factors, as well risks, in developing the current strategy, participants tended to agree, but not fully, that consideration was given to these factors (the mean value is 3.1, Table 4).

In evaluating the organisation's inclusion of certain critical components (Table 5), the average score was 3.0, with a mean value of 2.8. Factors that scored above average were *strategy map*, *measure of achievement*, *project planning* and *monitoring and evaluation*. What is of concern with these results is that *alignment of budget*, *cascading to lower levels* and *alignment of resources* scored below average, which indicates that the middle managers, people who are mostly responsible for ensuring the success of these processes, have indicated otherwise. The final process, which also received a low score, is *corrective measures in strategic direction*. This is very important to note, as

corrective measures in strategic direction are implemented based on information that middle management should be providing.

The final component in relation to this objective was an evaluation of middle management's perceptions of the strategic management process, which was included to identify their opinions and feelings. As this section contained both positively and negatively phrased questions, the average score and mean value are not of much use. On an individual score basis, there was consensus that the strategic management process assists in focusing and improving the performance of the organisation. As stated in section 4.3.2.1, 28% of the participants regarded the process as a non-value-adding activity, 33% felt that strategy is only an issue for executive management to deal with, and 10% viewed the process as a hindrance. These statistics are of concern, as such an essential process is being viewed negatively by the very people who should be implementing the strategy.

As in Galunic and Hermreck (2012), the overall conclusion in relation to the first objective is that middle management's knowledge of the organisational strategy and of the strategic management process is inadequate, and that some middle managers hold negative or incorrect perceptions. Lack of knowledge of the strategy as a major issue within an organisation was supported by Kaplan (2015).

4.4.2 Objective 2 result analysis

The second objective of the research was to examine middle managers' perceptions of the organisational business model fit. This objective was geared towards identifying middle managers' views on the business components. Table 7 presents an analysis of the results of the research.

Table 7. Respondents' perceptions of the business model

Respondents rating agreement levels on the following statements based on the business model							
No	Question	Score	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.	We all understand our mandate	2.910					
2.	We know who our customers are	3.236					
3.	We know what our customers value	2.955					
4.	We deliver services economically	2.348					
5.	We deliver services effectively	2.528					
6.	We deliver services efficiently	2.494					
7.	We support the field operation	2.562					
Average		2.719					
Mean: 1.798!	Confidence Interval @ 95% : [1.644 - 1.952]		Standard Deviation : 0.741				

As indicated by Demil and Lecocq (2010) and Frankenberger, Weiblen, Csik, and Gassmann (2013), it is central to any business model that managers know who the customers are, what they value and whether the organisation delivers such value in an economic, effective and efficient manner. It is therefore very disturbing to note that only 10% of middle management agrees that management understand its mandate. Over 50% of the respondents stated that management does not know the organisation's customers or what the customers value. Most respondents also seem to believe that business is not conducted effectively, efficiently or economically, and that field support is weak. Table 7 indicates that the average score is 2.7, with a mean value of 1.8. The three components that scored above average were *we all understand our mandate*, *we know who our customers are* and *we know what our customers value*. Having said that, the mean value indicates low scores across the business model fit, which by implication means that middle management does not see the business model as a good fit.

4.4.3 Objective 3 result analysis

Identifying the role of middle managers in strategy development and execution was the third objective. Table 8 presents an analysis of the results on the role of the respondents.

Table 8. Role of middle management in the strategic management process

What is the respondents' role in the strategy development and execution process?			
No	Question	Score	Strongly disagree / Disagree / Unsure / Agree / Strongly agree
1.	You are part of the strategy development	2.843	
2.	You only relay important information from the field	3.079	
3.	You influence the strategic direction	2.775	
4.	You cascade the strategy into operational plans	3.517	
5.	You obtain buy-in from lower levels for strategy	3.146	
6.	You are not involved in this process	2.652	
Average		3.002	
Mean: 2.562!	Confidence Interval @ 95% : [2.304 - 2.820]	Standard Deviation : 1.243	

As Ren and Guo (2011) point out, middle management is the driving force behind strategy execution, and as such, need to be involved in every step of the strategic management process.

Table 8 indicates that the average score is 3, with a mean value of 2.6. It is important to note that based on Figures 34–39, only 39% of middle management indicated that they are part of the strategy development process and 26% mentioned that they are not part of the process at all. Overall, participants' responses were mostly negative, with only 43% agreeing that they relay information, 29% that they have the ability to influence strategic direction, and 45% that they obtain buy-in from lower levels for the strategy. Another important observation is the significant number of participants who are unsure of their role, or even if they are part of the strategic process or not. As shown in Table 8,

most participants indicated that they disagreed or were unsure of their role, with some even stating that they are not part of the process at all.

4.4.4 Objective 4 result analysis

The final objective was to establish which factors are most important for improving middle managers' motivation to execute strategy. Further to this, their satisfaction levels in relation to these factors were assessed. Tables 1 and 2 depicted in section 4.3.5 show a preliminary analysis. Figures 40 and 41 provide an analysis of the factors from highest to lowest in terms middle managers' perceptions of the factors' level of importance, their level of satisfaction, and the gap between the two.

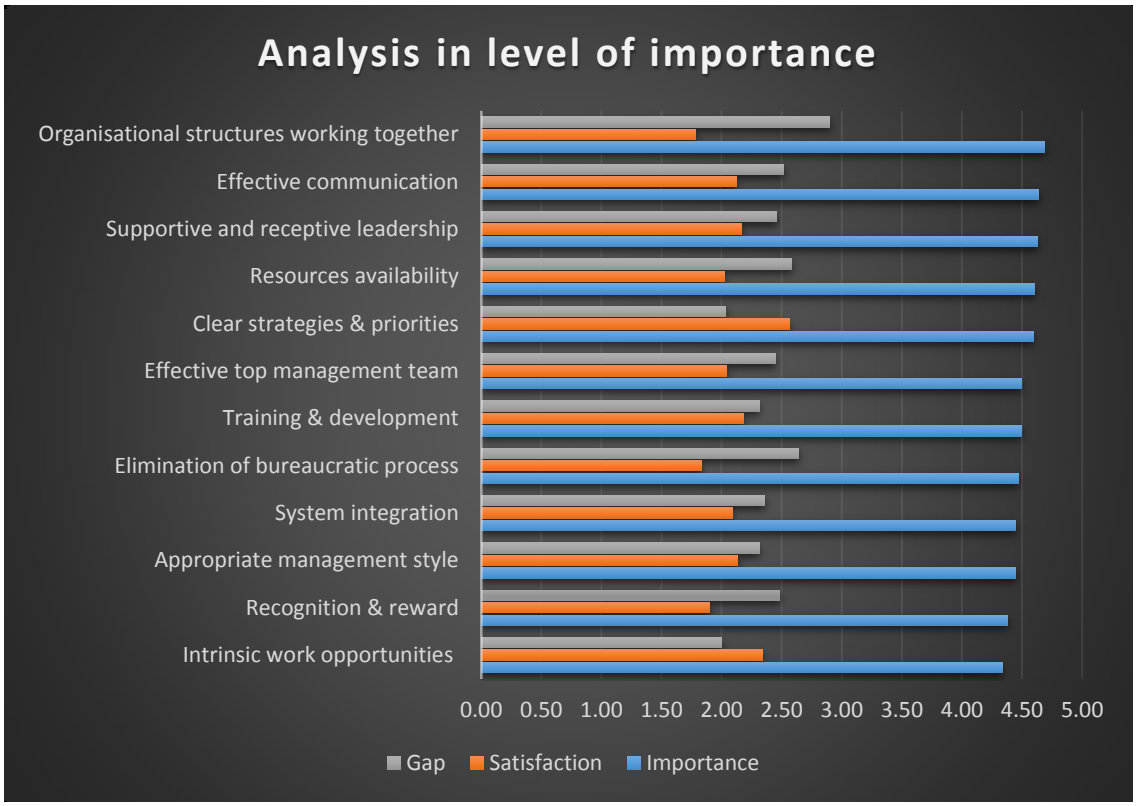

Figure 40. Analysis of motivation factors in terms of importance level

Figure 40 provides an analysis in terms respondents' assessment of the level of importance of these factors. The factor deemed most important was *organisational structures working together* whilst the factor given the least level of importance was *intrinsic work opportunities*.

Figure 41. Analysis of motivation factors in terms of satisfaction level

Figure 41 portrays the respondents' levels of satisfaction in relation to organisational factors from highest to the lowest. It is interesting to note that as with Table 40, the factor deemed most important is the factor that the participants are least satisfied with, which is *organisational structures working together*.

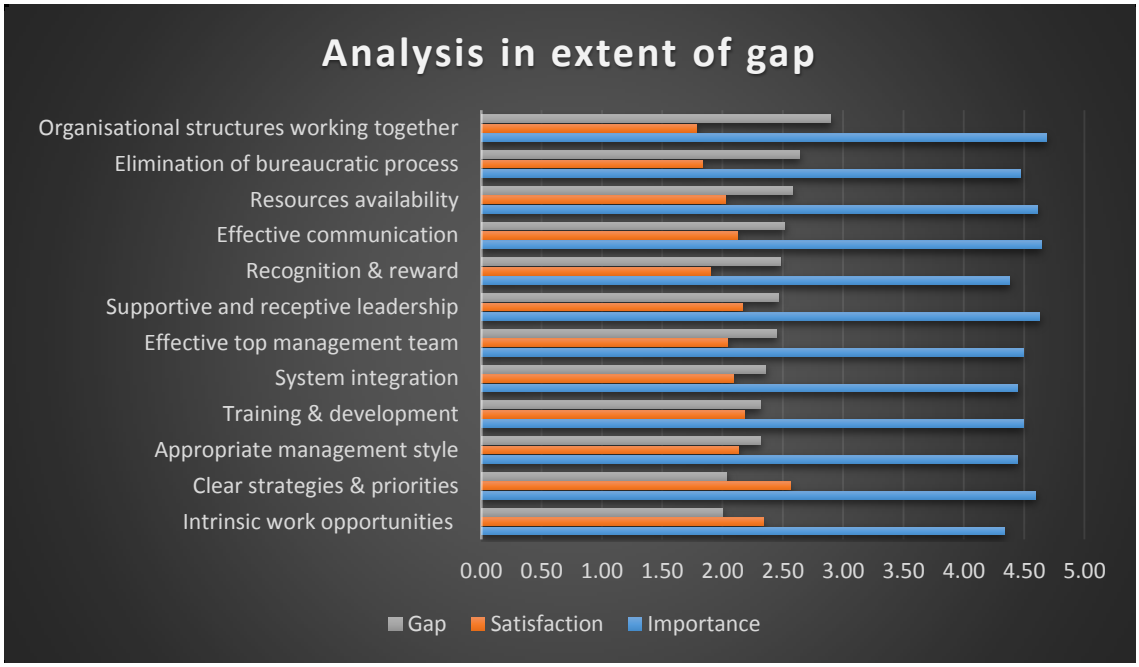

Figure 42. Analysis of extent of gap between perceived importance of and satisfaction with organisational factors

In line with the ten most common factors affecting middle managers identified in the literature review (see Figure 12, section 2.7.3), Figure 42 provides an analysis of the gap between importance and satisfaction levels, from highest to lowest. As expected, the factor that was deemed most important yet had the lowest satisfaction score was on top with the biggest gap — *organisational structures working together*. This analysis is probably the most important in this section as it provides a list of factors that incorporate the importance and satisfaction levels.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present the results of the survey conducted in a clear and logical format. Section 4.2 dealt with the respondents' demographics and identified some important characteristics of the participants in terms of their field of work, management level, length of service, education level and work stations. Section 4.3 presented the raw data in diagram form, and the analysis and discussion of these results followed in section 4.4 with the incorporation of statistics. However, the statistical component was kept as simple as possible so that a wide variety of stakeholders could understand the main features of the report being presented. The analysis and discussion were structured to respond to the objectives of the research.

Chapter 5 will summarise the results in terms of the objectives, and will provide recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

Ghorbal-Blal (2011) confirms that the interaction of the three main stages involved in strategic management (formulation, implementation and evaluation) is of vital importance. The research conducted in this study of middle management at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife confirms that the involvement of middle management is crucial, as they are the people who execute strategy and provide crucial input to the executive, and it is clear that more research is required in this regard. From another perspective, Zott, Amit, and Massa (2011, p. 1031) emphasise that it is "the business model [that] extends central ideas in business strategy and its associated theoretical traditions". Their research tends to suggest that business model concepts with a greater focus on co-operation, partnership and joint value creation are associated with improved organisational performance. Apart from focusing on middle management's perspectives on strategy, on their role and on various enabling factors, this research at Ezemvelo attempted to include elements of Zott et al.'s perspective on the business model of organisations.

5.2 Has the problem been solved?

The primary purpose of this study was to understand how the strategic management process could be improved in order to improve the performance of SEOs like Ezemvelo. As such, an evaluation of middle managements' perceptions of the strategic management process within the organisation was undertaken, and four objectives were specifically identified as critical indicators for the research. The four objectives and summaries of related findings are as follows:

1. **To probe how middle management views the strategic management process**

   Whilst most middle management agrees that the strategic management process is important because it focuses and improves the organisation, their knowledge of the content of the current strategy and of some of the tools being utilised is very limited. It is also important to note that there are middle managers who are unsure of the factors taken into consideration in the development of the strategy. The participants also seem to agree that there is a lack of alignment of resources to the strategy.

2. **To examine middle managers' perceptions of the organisational business model fit**

   Middle managers are of the opinion that the organisation does not understand its mandate. Whilst they seem to be fairly equally divided on the question of whether the organisation knows who its customers are, more than half of the respondents claim that the organisation is not aware of what the customers value in terms of services rendered, i.e. service delivery. There was a general consensus that services are not being produced and delivered efficiently, effectively and economically. This consensus was also clearly evident in relation to field operations not being supported adequately.

3. **To identify the role of middle managers in strategy development and execution**

   In terms of the role that the respondents currently play in relation to the strategic management process, less than half are currently involved in the strategy development process or relay information to and from lower levels. A small minority feel that they are able to influence the strategic direction, whilst the majority agree that they have some involvement in the cascading of the strategy to lower levels. With regard to the important role of being change agents, less than half of the respondents agree that they actually obtain buy-in for the

strategy from lower levels. They are again almost equally divided on the question of whether they are involved in the strategic management process at all.

4. **To establish which factors are most important for improving the level of motivation of middle managers to execute strategy**

   In was interesting to note that middle management identified team work (in the sense of the organisational structures working together) as the organisational factor that would most motivate them to be part of the strategic management process. The next most important factor was effective communication, followed by leadership style, resource availability, clear strategies and priorities, an effective top management team, training and development, elimination of bureaucratic processes, system integration, appropriate management style, reward and recognition, and lastly, intrinsic work opportunities.

   Based on middle management's current satisfaction levels with the organisational factors mentioned above, there are clear gaps between their ranking of the factors in terms of perceived importance, and their ranking of the factors in terms of their satisfaction levels. The resultant gaps, from widest to narrowest, are ranked as follows: team work, elimination of bureaucratic processes, resource availability, effective communication, reward and recognition, leadership style, effective top management team, system integration, training and development, appropriate management style, clear strategies and priorities, and lastly, intrinsic work opportunities.

5.3 Implications of this research

My analysis of the findings of this study responds to the research objectives and will ultimately assist in achieving the desired outcome — to improve Ezemvelo's performance by achieving a better understanding of how the critically important middle management layer perceives the organisation's strategic management process.

The objectives defined for this research have been adequately met in terms of gaining an insight into the following: how middle management views the strategic management

process; their role as it is currently; the enabling factors that motivate middle managers to become involved in strategic management processes; an assessment of the gaps between how important middle managers believe certain organisational factors to be and their level of satisfaction with these same factors; and their views on the business model of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The findings have several implications for the entire strategic management process of the organisation, most significantly in relation to the business model employed for strategy development, the alignment of resources and the implementation of processes.

From a business perspective, middle management's lack of knowledge about the organisation's overall strategic process clearly constitutes a stumbling block for crafting and executing effective strategies. Another crucial finding was that most middle managers believe that management does not understand the mandate of the organisation. This poses a considerable risk and might also account for the negative publicity that the organisation has attracted as described in Chapter 1, with politicians publicly criticising the Ezemvelo for not knowing its mandate. Regardless of whether this is true or not, the perception is prevalent and is rooted at management level. It is most likely that this perception is also filtering down to the people at the coalface of service delivery, creating a climate of confusion and uncertainty about what needs to be done.

Given middle management's negative perception of the organisation's understanding of its mandate, and given the low level of satisfaction with organisational factors deemed to be highly important, it follows logically that middle management shows a high level of agreement that the way in which Ezemvelo currently creates and distributes value is not effective, efficient or economical. In this climate of fiscus consolidation and constraints, where the buzzword is cost-cutting, resource unlocking by identifying such areas of inefficiency is critical for survival. Because Ezemvelo is a public entity, dealing with public money, it is even more critical that such issues be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Based on their responses on enabling factors, it is clear that management is unanimously asking for more effective team work within the structures of the organisation. This finding is both comforting and discomforting at the same time. It is comforting to know that management values team work and discomforting to note that

middle management is expressing such serious dissatisfaction with this crucial enabling factor. This indicates that there are some serious challenges within the organisation that need to be addressed. These challenges may be related to a lack of role clarity, diversity mismanagement or conflict mismanagement, as all quarters agree on the importance of organisational structures working effectively together and are dissatisfied with the current situation.

Another factor that needs consideration is the elimination of bureaucratic processes, which was ranked eighth in terms of importance. However, from a gap analysis perspective, this factor ranks second, after team work. Middle management expressed the view that bureaucratic processes are a challenge within the organisation that needs to be addressed. A third factor, also revealed by the gap analysis, is the issue of resource availability. This confirmation of lack of resources can be linked to the business model discussion of alignment of resources.

The last and perhaps most important implication of the findings relates to top leadership. Based on the findings thus far, middle management has highlighted, in some cases unanimously, the areas of challenges. However, in relation to all these challenges (from poor knowledge of strategy to the business model, the role of middle management within the strategic process, and enabling factors such as team work) middle management reports directly to senior management or top leadership. It is therefore important that leadership takes note of the content of this report and understands these findings and the possible negative implications and outcomes if these problem areas are ignored and the status quo is maintained.

5.4 Recommendations for solving the research problem

Haq (2015) explains in an article titled "Don't make middle managers the meat in the sandwich" that the workplace has never been so complex, and that whilst middle management is a crucial component in the strategic process in terms of execution and communication between different teams, employees are not prepared to put in discretionary effort to perform. The current focus is on top management and the front-line people, and excludes middle management. Haq mentions a 2012 study that shows that only 50% of middle managers have any kind of formal leadership training. In order

to impact the organisation's performance positively, the first overall recommendations would be that leadership:

1. Improves communication with middle management by explaining why certain crucial strategic directions have been or need to be taken, and in so doing explains the current strategy;
2. Assists middle management in understanding their role within the organisation and how important their function is; and
3. Supports and develops middle management on a continuous basis.

In the words of O'Shannassy (2014, p. 187), "middle managers are the 'doers' of strategy, with important 'analyst', 'coordinator', 'information source' and 'communicator roles'". The research that has been conducted in this study indicates that whilst executive managers tend to think that they are making the effort to involve middle management in the strategic management process, middle managers disagree. The next recommendation therefore addresses middle management's level of knowledge of the organisation's strategy and of their role in relation to this strategy:

4. The desired role of the middle managers needs to be clearly articulated in their job descriptions in order to be clearly understood from the start.

According to Casadesus-Masanell and Ricart (2010), business models consist of managements' operating choices and the consequences of such choices. Those operating choices can be categorised in terms of policies, assets and governance structures. Taking into consideration the results, the following recommendation are made:

5. Management should perform an analysis of the current business model in order to make operating changes in order to improve efficiencies in the way in which value is created and delivered. This could include the development of shared services to reduce the cost of administration and support;

6. Whilst revisiting the current components of the business model, factors such as levels of bureaucracy and deployment of assets need considerable attention based on the enabling factors identified through this research; and

7. Lastly, teamwork across the organisation appears to be an area of concern. Since the participants, as middle managers, all value team work and are most

dissatisfied with this element, there must be some element of disruption amongst top leadership that is either directly fostering this negative situation or is allowing it to develop unchecked. Executive management needs to foster a culture of collaboration and teamwork, and lead by example. Leadership needs to identify the causes of this particular problem as a matter of urgency and deal with them in a very decisive and constructive manner.

5.5 Recommendations for future studies

One of the limitations of this research is the fact that it was only middle management's perspective that was explored. This was based on the assumption that the executive are fully aware of strategy as they are part of the strategy development team. The level of knowledge about the strategy just below executive level is of concern, especially when the majority of the participants indicated that the organisation does not understand its mandate. Further to this was the fact that most middle managers agreed that value was not being created and delivered efficiently, effectively or economically. Then there was the issue of team work, which the majority agreed was the most important factor, yet at the same time it was the factor that people are most dissatisfied with.

Based on the above, on the fact that strategy in the public sector is an integral part of the South African government's push towards ensuring a high-performing public sector, and on the fact that legislation such as the Public Finance Management Act has made the strategic management process compulsory, a specific recommendation would be for a doctoral study in Business Administration to research existing practices with the aim of developing a comprehensive model for the development and implementation of strategy within public entities in South Africa. The model would involve an alignment of a sectoral service delivery framework such as the National Development Plan, the mandate, the identification and role of the strategy team, the development as well as alignment of business model / resources based on chosen strategies, monitoring and evaluation, and the reporting of the performance to various stakeholders.

5.6 Summary

This chapter draws has presented the conclusions and recommendations of this research. The aim was to evaluate how middle management views the strategic management process of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The research objectives were responded to, and based on those responses, recommendations were provided. An area of future study was also identified and proposed.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Hi,

As mentioned in the email, you have been pre-selected to participate in a survey about middle managements perception of the strategic management process within Ezemvelo. This survey specifically targets staff reporting directly to a head of division and their direct reports. Hence, when the term middle management is inferred, it does not necessarily mean that it would only apply to staff with management titles or specific grades. You have been selected because you either report to a head of division or one level below, irrespective of title and grade. This survey seeks to understand your views on the strategy, business model of Ezemvelo, your role in this equation and factors affecting you the most. It will take approximately ten minutes to complete the questionnaire and you will be automatically entered into a lucky draw to win the car navigation system. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point. It is very important for us to learn your opinions. Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact me on the details specified below We have contracted with QuestionPro, an independent research firm, to field your confidential survey responses. Please tick I Agree box, hereby declaring that your participation is voluntary, and click continue, complete the survey and have your say.

Kind Regards,
Sudhir Ghoorah
Tel: 0338451808
Email: Sudhir.ghoorah@kznwildlife.com

Ethical Clearance: Human & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee Contact Person: Mariette Snyman Tel: 031 260 8350/4609 / Email: Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

Within what division do you work?

1. Service Delivery (Conservation & Ecotourism)
2. Support Service (e.g. HR, IT..)
3. Prefer not to disclose

What is your management level?

1. One level below executive management
2. Two levels below executive management
3. Three levels below executive management
4. Prefer not to disclose

How many years of service do you have?

1. Less than 5 years
2. Between 5 and 10 years
3. More than 10 years
4. Prefer not to disclose

What is your highest education level?

1. Matric
2. Undergrad
3. Postgrad
4. Prefer not to disclose
5. Other

Where is your work station based?

1. Head office
2. Regional Offices
3. Field
4. Prefer not to disclose
5. Other

How familiar are you with the following:

	Very unfamiliar	Unfamiliar	Unsure	Familiar	Very familiar
Vision of Ezemvelo	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Mission of Ezemvelo	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Values of Ezemvelo	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Goals of Ezemvelo	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Objectives of Ezemvelo	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

According to you, whilst developing the current strategy, has the organisation adequately considered the following:

	Not at all	To a certain extent	No idea	Almost	Fully
Internal factors	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
External factors	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Risks	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

The strategy development and execution process of Ezemvelo includes the following:

	Not at all	To a certain extent	No idea	Almost	Fully
Strategy map	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Measures of achievement	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Alignment of budget	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Cascading to lower levels	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Alignment of resources	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Project planning	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Monitoring & Evaluation	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Corrective measures in strategic direction	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

In your opinion, strategic management process

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
Assists in focusing the organisation	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Improves organisational performance	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Is a tick in the box and add no real value	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Is an issue dealt with by Executives only	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Is a hindrance to me and my work	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Is something I want nothing to do with	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Please rate your agreement on the following statements based on Ezemvelo way of doing business

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
We all understand our mandate	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
We know who our customers are	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
We know what our customers value	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
We deliver services economically	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
We deliver services effectively	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
We deliver services efficiently	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
We support the field operation	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

What is your role in the strategy development and execution process?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
You are part of the strategy development	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
You only relay important information from the field	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
You influence the strategic direction	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
You cascade the strategy into operational plans	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
You obtain buy-in from lower levels for strategy	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
You are not involved in this process	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Motivating factors to you in being part of the strategy process [Not Important, Very Important]

	1	2	3	4	5
Effective top management team	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Appropriate management style	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Clear strategies & priorities	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Effective communication	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Organisational structures working together	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Elimination of bureaucratic process	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Supportive and receptive leadership	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Resources availability	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
System integration	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Recognition & reward	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Training & development	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Intrinsic work opportunities (e.g. ability to choose meaningful task)	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

Your current level of satisfaction based on status-quo [Not Satisfied, Very Satisfied]

	1	2	3	4	5
Effective top management team	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Appropriate management style	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Clear strategies & priorities	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Effective communication	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Organisational structures working together	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Elimination of bureaucratic process	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Supportive and receptive leadership	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Resources availability	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
System integration	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Recognition & reward	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Training & development	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Intrinsic work opportunities (e.g. ability to choose meaningful task)	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

APPENDIX B: GATE KEEPER LETTER

Gatekeeper Letter

14 September 2015

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Dear Dr Mabunda

My name is Sudhir Ghoorah and I am currently doing a research project for a Masters programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

Subject to approval by UKZN ethical clearance process this study will be using a questionnaire to assess middle management's perception of the strategic management process within Ezemvelo.

I am writing to ask your permission to be allowed access to your middle management (two levels below Executives) whereby they would be requested to fill out a pre-determined questionnaire. This should not take a large amount of time and would be conducted electronically through emails. All I will need is your permission to utilise the organisational email system to distribute the questionnaires to middle management and thereafter the latter is at liberty to respond at their leisure within a given period of time. Participation of the prospective respondents would be with their consent. All answers and results from the questionnaires are kept strictly confidential and the results will be reported in a research paper available to all participants on completion.

Kindly confirm that you are granting me permission by signing the bottom of this letter to conduct this research at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife as well as access to middle managers, through the corporate email system, provided they agree to take part.

Thanking you in advance

Yours sincerely

Sudhir Ghoorah

Dr David Mabunda
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Approved / ~~Not Approved~~

EZEMVELO KZN WILDLIFE
P.O. BOX 13053, CASCADES 3202
TEL.: (033) 845 1999
FAX.: (033) 845 1699

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

6 November 2015

Mr SK Ghoorah 992240962
Graduate School of Business and Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Ghoorah

Protocol reference number: HSS/1580/015M
Project Title: Evaluating middle management's perception of the strategic management process within Ezemvelo

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 27 October 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Supervisor: Mr A Kader
Academic Leader Research: Dr M Hoque
School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bullyraj

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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APPENDIX D: TURNITIN REPORT

Final thesis

ORIGINALITY REPORT

5%	3%	2%	3%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Submitted to University of KwaZulu-Natal Student Paper	1%
2	Submitted to Laureate Higher Education Group Student Paper	<1%
3	O'Shannassy, Tim. "Investigating the role of middle managers in strategy-making process: An Australian mixed method study", Journal of Management & Organization, 2014. Publication	<1%
4	Poister, T. H., D. W. Pitts, and L. Hamilton Edwards. "Strategic Management Research in the Public Sector: A Review, Synthesis, and Future Directions", The American Review of Public Administration, 2010. Publication	<1%
5	dspace.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
6	www.sowetanlive.co.za Internet Source	<1%
7	www.turnerandtownsend.com Internet Source	<1%