



# **AN EVALUATION OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ENGINEERING UNIT OF ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of**

**Master of Business Administration**

**Graduate School of Business and Leadership**

**College of Law and Management Studies**

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**2014**

Date: 10/03/15

## DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, University of KwaZulu Natal. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.



Phumla Mkhabela

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, I would like to thank the Almighty God for his wonderful grace and for holding my hand throughout this entire journey.

To my supervisor, Christopher Chikandiwa for his guidance

To my participants, for your willingness to participate in this study, particularly to the leadership of the Engineering Unit, for allowing me to pursue this study.

To my parents, Thokoza and Sibongile Msomi for instilling in me the value of education.

Many thanks to my siblings and friends for their encouragement and support.

To my children, Mpilo, Madinangwe and Nala for their loving support and enduring part-time attention from me during this period

To my husband, Mandla Mkhabela, my mentor, thank you for your insight, loving support and encouragement to pursue my studies.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the extent of strategy execution within the Engineering Unit of eThekweni Municipality and the challenges faced in strategy implementation. This research adopted a qualitative research methodology which comprised semi-structured interviews that were conducted with seven managerial personnel from the junior, middle to top levels within the Engineering Unit. Respondents were purposively selected from these levels of management for face-to-face interviews. The data collected was analysed using NVivo software.

As South Africa reaches 20 years of democracy, it has taken great strides, however it still faces major backlogs with a great need for the development of infrastructure. The eThekweni Municipality has developed various strategic plans with the aim to improve performance and to accelerate service delivery. The corporate strategic plans by the municipality are the Long-term Development Strategy as well as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The Municipal Systems Act (No.32) of 2000 (MSA), requires that local government structures prepare Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). These are regarded as a vehicle to achieve the goals of the municipality. The Engineering Unit execution of strategies has to be aligned to the corporate strategy of the municipality. Whilst there is the existence of these admirable strategies, there are still service delivery protests, outcries from communities who require improved infrastructure service and development in their areas. This raises questions in-terms of how far the Municipality is in realising its vision that, “By 2030, eThekweni will enjoy the reputation of being Africa’s most caring and liveable city.’

Findings confirm that whilst the Engineering Unit has greatly contributed to improvement in the development of infrastructure in eThekweni, there is still a lack of strategy implementation principles that could improve their performance.

The main recommendations of the study include a focus on building the strategic capabilities of the unit, improving the activities, systems and processes through interventions such as the capitalization of Information Technology, and Balanced ScoreCard. The Winning Framework to strategy implementation is also discussed as a guiding tool.

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# 1. CHAPTER1 – INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Strategy formulation is considered to be a unique domain for top management which is of value to the organization. Management undertakes strategy formulation due to the rewards this brings. Yet, strategy implementation does not receive the management attention and respect it deserves, (Cocks, 2010:260). Further to that, it is known by most experienced executives that without effective strategy execution, the well-crafted strategy is useless, (Cocks, 2010). About 60 to 80 per cent of all companies fail to meet their strategic targets states Baum and Vlok (2013). An average of only 63% of strategies' financial performance is achieved. Successful strategy implementation relies on applying all the 'know hows' - the techniques, actions and behaviors to ensure strategy operations are successful. *“Strategy execution thus requires every manager to think through the answer – What does my area have to do to implement its part of the strategic plan, and what should I do to get these things accomplished effectively and efficiently?”* (Hough et al, 2011: 247). It also requires that organizations identify the strategic resources required and they must evaluate their strategies.

Chetty (2010) mentions that there is a lack of academic theory when it comes to strategy execution with so much of focus on strategy formulation in the past. It seems that the lack of conceptual models has resulted in researchers being hesitant to pursue studies on the topic. The high rate of failure in strategy implementation presents a great need for more in-depth studies on tools for effective strategy implementation.

The public sector including municipalities is faced with a responsibility to transform their strategic goals into action in order to address issues of service delivery. The eThekweni Municipality has developed various strategic plans with the aim of improving performance and thereby to accelerate the development of service delivery. The corporate strategic plans by the municipality are the Long-term Development Strategy as well as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The Municipal Systems Act (No.32) of 2000 (MSA), requires that local government structures prepare Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). These are regarded as a vehicle to

achieve the goals of the municipality. The Engineering Unit execution of strategies has to be aligned to the corporate strategy of the municipality.

This chapter will outline the value that should be derived from this empirical research, the focus of the study and the statement of the problem. It also seeks to outline the objectives and limitations of the study.

## **1.2 Motivation for the Study**

Given the widespread of growing literature in the nature of strategic planning which incorporates strategy implementation, it was important to study the underlying factors of strategy implementation and evaluate the extent of implementation within the Engineering Unit of eThekweni Municipality. The recommendations made in the research will add value to the discipline of strategy implementation and provide guidelines for many organisations.

As South Africa faces 20 years of democracy, it has reached great strides however still faces major infrastructure backlogs with the country experiencing service delivery protests. The eThekweni Municipality vision states that “By 2030, eThekweni will be Africa’s most caring and liveable City” (IDP *Review*, 2013/2014: 75). The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for 2012/13 to 2016/17 focuses on the achievement of the vision to develop a liveable and caring city. This study seeks to determine the extent to which strategy has been implemented within the Engineering Unit and to ascertain whether or not it is being done effectively.

## **1.3 Focus of the Study**

According to studies conducted by Biahova and Knapkova (2011), the research history of strategy implementation has been fragmented which makes it difficult to achieve a perspective on the study. Yet many organizations continue to face challenges in implementing their strategies (Pella, Sumar- wan. Daryanto and Kilbrandoko: 2013).

This study evaluates the extent of strategy implementation within the unit. The central theme of this research will focus on investigating the fundamental factors required for effective strategy execution. It intends to study the challenges faced in strategy implementation and to make

recommendations for improvements. The primary data for analysis has been gathered from the unit itself.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement**

Some of the most brilliant strategies fail because they are not aligned with a framework of disciplined execution. For effective implementation, a holistic approach is essential, as part of the management process built into every step of the process of implementation (Srinivasan, M.S 2014: 142). Strategic plans made in the past were unlikely to be changed but strategic management has now reached a dynamic era where there are a lot of changes in the environment (Schaap,2012). More research is needed to cope in this field. There has been a lot written about strategy in the private sector, scholars have been slow to apply the knowledge to public organisations. Whilst the information on strategy implementation is limited in general, this has further prevented public organizations from sufficient analytical concepts which shows a gap in this field (Schaap, 2012).

South Africa is known to have a first-world infrastructure. At the same time it faces many third-world difficulties. The country is being transformed from a state under the old apartheid regime into a new entity. Whilst the country has reached great strides with regard to some infrastructure development, it still faces challenges of poverty and inequality. The National Development Plan (Commission, 2013) highlights the need for good quality public service in order to raise the living standards to the minimum level such as addressing the challenges of inadequate infrastructure.

Kuye (2014), states that to manage strategy, a systems approach to thinking is beneficial to assess whether a strategy is functional or not. Strategic management is about vision; it is about what needs to be actioned and about how our environment impacts the community being served.

The eThekweni Municipality has invested significant resources and effort into infrastructure delivery in order to eradicate existing backlogs however still fall short in fully achieving those goals (IDP, 2014/15). There is a need to increase the efforts being made on the delivery of infrastructure as it serves as a catalyst for economic development. The Engineering Unit has a

major role to play in eThekweni Municipality to contribute to service delivery. The eThekweni Municipality conducted the 2012/2013 Municipal Service and Living Condition Survey (MSLCS) to gather information on satisfaction levels with municipal services (IDP, 2013/14). It was found that 66.7 % of residents were satisfied and 33.3 % were not satisfied. Reasons for the dissatisfaction were the following:

“No services, infrastructure was not being developed, where there were services, these were not reliable and were not being maintained.” (IDP, 2013/14: 23).

This research attempts to evaluate whether or not the Engineering Unit is on the right track in implementing the strategy and it further attempts to identify areas of possible improvement. This research will hopefully evaluate strategy implementation within the Engineering Unit. The research questions are as follows:

- How effective has strategy been implemented within the Engineering Unit?
- What are the challenges faced by the unit in implementing its strategy?
- Are the organization’s activities aligned to effective strategy implementation?
- What are the fundamental factors required for successful strategy execution?

## **1.5 Objectives**

The objectives of this study are to evaluate the effectiveness of strategy execution in the Engineering Unit of eThekweni Municipality and the specific objectives are as follows:

- To determine the extent of strategy implementation within the Engineering Unit of eThekweni Municipality
- To establish the challenges faced by the Engineering Unit in strategy implementation
- To establish whether or not the organizational activities are aligned to effective strategy execution; and
- To establish the fundamental factors of effective strategy execution

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

The respondents were chosen by the researcher using the purposive sampling technique which took into consideration the accessibility of the respondents that were within the population of the study. The senior management interviewed were all part of the Engineering Unit and could be expected to possibly to view most aspects of strategy implementation as a success, unlike an impartial observer could view matters otherwise. This could result in response bias (Chetty, 2010).

The interviewees had limited time to spend during the interview due to the tight schedules of senior management.

## **1.7 Significance of this Research**

The knowledge gathered from this research will hopefully be of specific benefit to the eThekweni Municipality and to organisational strategy practitioners in general. The researcher has made recommendations on effective strategy execution that will contribute to an understanding of the executional imperatives for success in any organisation. This body of knowledge generated by the study will be of benefit to researchers.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has briefly outlined an overview of the entire study. It has presented the motivation, the focus of the study and the problem statement. It has also looked at the objectives that the researcher has focused on in this dissertation. The next chapter will investigate all relevant literature related to strategy implementation.

## 2. CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The literature review in this chapter seeks to focus on the following:

- Strategic management as a practice
- Challenges with strategy execution
- Components of strategy execution
- Alignment of strategy
- Framework of strategy execution

Strategy implementation has turned out to be of major importance among CEO's since it has been recognised that there is a correlation between successful strategy execution and high performance (Bigler and Williams, 2013). The *Conference Board 2007 CEO Challenge* mentions that strategy implementation is the no1 challenges CEO's face in organisations.

The implementation of strategy execution has often been questioned by theorists who cite the fact that there are countless of cases of good planning but poor execution. Biahova and Knapkova (2011) probed poor implementation of strategy in organisations. Why don't companies invest their time in developing their processes to help them to implement their strategies? The research history of strategy execution is fragmented which makes it challenging to place particular initiatives in perspective. It requires active participation, monitoring and good leadership. According to Pella, Sumarwan, Daryanto and Kirbrandoko (2013), the major difficulties that have a bearing on lack of strategy implementation are: a lack of information technology, insufficient financial resources, a poor corporate scorecard, troubling performance indicators and lacklustre performance. It is further mentioned that previous studies have only listed challenges and not how achievements were structured and built within the specific framework of the strategic management process.

This literature review will investigate the fundamentals that are essential for successful implementation of strategy as well as the challenges faced by organisations to implement their strategies.

## **2.2 Strategic management as a practice**

Strategic management is the fundamental process for dealing with environmental changes in the market involving an externally-oriented philosophy of managing an organisation that links strategic thinking and analysis to organisational action (Jasper and Crossan, 2012). This concept is relatively new within the scope of management literature having developed from the 1960's out of literature from economic organisations, bureaucracy and the science of work such as those of (Furrer et al., 2008) and (Ketchen et al., 2008). A lot of research was conducted in the 80's which sought to understand the link between strategy and performance with the focus on the environment and its relationship to organisations. Scholars such as (Porter, 1980) contributed to the field and the Research Management Journal was launched. This wealth of knowledge brought an understanding of the importance of the organisation's internal resources, capabilities and structures. The 90's saw a movement away from an environmental and research-based research focus back to an inside perspective. According to Lega (2012), in the past 15 years there has been a growing interest among scholars with regard to strategic management in the public sector with the focus centred on how to provide better tools to reap better performance. This view is supported by the New Public Management (NPM) reforms which emphasises the need for public sector organisations to adopt strategic management practices to progress in long term management which will improve their performance.

Strategic management has shifted into a more sophisticated and more effective approach (Bakar, Tufail, Yusof and Virgiyanti, 2011). The strategic management process requires that people who are part of the process are competent to ensure its success. Top management are ultimately responsible for the success of the organisation, however, it is important to note that people from all levels of the organisation need to be involved in strategic management; continuously finding ways to improve work methods, procedures and suggesting changes to strategies.

As mentioned by Bakar et al. (2011), the strategic management process can be divided in three stages: the strategy formulation stage that involves the planning phase of the strategy, the implementation phase that initiates activities in accordance with the strategic plan and lastly the evaluation and control phase which involves obtaining information on performance and comparing it with existing standards.

Strategic management is a process of ongoing improvement and maintenance of the company's performance by formulating and by monitoring the implementation of respective strategies Markiewicz, (2013). Consequently, strategy execution can be regarded as a process of maintaining harmony with the dynamic environment by introducing organisational changes in accordance with the prepared strategy.

An effective implementation of strategy depends on cooperation of various people within the organisation, developing and enhancing competitive capabilities, encouraging and remunerating people for good performance as well as instilling self-control in order to get things done efficiently (Hough, Thompson, Strickland and Gamble 2011: 246). Successful organisations that follow up on their strategies do reap the benefits of developing a competitive advantage as well as increase profit margins. These actions require various resources to be present. The coordination of various performance functions should be structured to promote an environment that deliver and planned strategies as well as allow for flexibility to reach the desired goal.

Strategic management has become increasingly important in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century mainly through paying proper attention to the implementation of strategy (Čater and Pučko (2010). The fact that there is minimal literature on strategy implementation has an impact on business practice.

### **2.3 Challenges faced in strategy implementation**

Multiple studies reveal that there is failure in strategy execution. About 60 to 80 per cent of all companies fail to meet their strategic targets states Baum and Vlok (2013:49). An average of only 63% of strategic financial plans are achieved. The strategy execution process is prone to failure.

Most organisations develop great strategies and still find that there is no change within the organisation. According to Cater and Pucko (2010), there are four main factors that hinder strategy implementation: change management, organisational culture, organisational power structure and leadership. These factors affect each other and if synchronised, they can bring about positive outcomes to strategy execution (Cater and Puko, 2010). The factors are:

- Managing change is one of the dilemmas that organisations face yet it is essential to strategy execution. Leaders need to identify areas that require change and overcome any foreseeable resistance to change. They are influential in transforming and managing their human resources, incentives and structures within the organisation.
- Organisational culture is defined as the attitudes, shared values and norms of behaviour that causes individuals to behave in certain ways in the work environment. The common culture-related obstacle that organisations face is the lack of trust. This causes lack of information sharing amongst individuals as well as business units therefore affects strategy implementation. The domination of the short-term activities within the company also distracts attention from strategy implementation.
- The organisational power structure is essential as it impacts on the decisions regarding the distribution of resources. Top management need to ensure that political obstacles don't prevent successful strategy execution.
- Good leadership skills are required to ensure that employees are implementing the designed strategy. One of the common challenges is lack of lack of coordination and guideline. Leaders should also sell the strategy all members in the organisation. This requires good communication so that all employees understand the strategy in order for them to implement it successfully. Studies reveal that a compensation system that rewards employees and managers leads to effective strategy implementation.

More that the above mentioned variables, if the strategy formulation is poor it leads to ineffective strategy implementation.

These factors are prevalent in the private and public sector however; the public sector faces additional distinct challenges (Rose and Cray, 2010). These are unique cycles of leadership change, multifaceted internal and external challenges, and a wide range of stakeholders, who have diverse definition of success and failure (Rose and Cray, 2010).

- The cycle of leadership changes presents challenges for strategy formulation and implementation. Government has a stipulated period of its term to implement changes due the normal five year election cycle changes. As the 5 year period comes close to its end, government are reluctant to take on controversial action as part of strategy execution.

- In terms of measuring strategic objectives, those in the private sector generally include common standards such as revenue, profit and return on investment. In the public sector, measures vary from program to program and department to department. The design of audit programs ensures the effective use of public funds on the objectives of the department rather than the overall measures of the success of the organisation. It becomes difficult to measure the success of the outcomes in certain areas that are not easy to quantify (eg., improved education). This is due to the different perspectives of stakeholders on what constitutes success.
- Governments face bureaucratic structures where people resist change and have high levels of pessimism. The middle and senior management personnel have been members of the public service long enough to experience the frustrations in the change of policy, lack of resources and this eventually leads to demotivated individuals who are resistant to strategic change.

### **2.3.1 Barriers to strategy implementation**

From a different perspective, (Niven, 2011) states that barriers to strategy execution include the vision barrier, people barrier, resource barrier, management barrier.

#### Vision Barrier

Organisations mainly have 5% of their employees who understand their strategy. Most of the employees experience difficulties in communicating their vision and strategy to the most important stakeholders. In order for individuals within the organisation to create value, they must understand the strategy so they can combine their talents with others to contribute meaningfully.

#### People Barrier

Niven (2011) states that for decades it has been debated whether incentives compensation plans improve performance however, it does tend to increase focus. The danger with the compensation plans is that managers tend to create short term objectives to reach short-term financial targets and lose focus on the longer term vision. Strategy requires long term view of the organisation.

## The Resource View

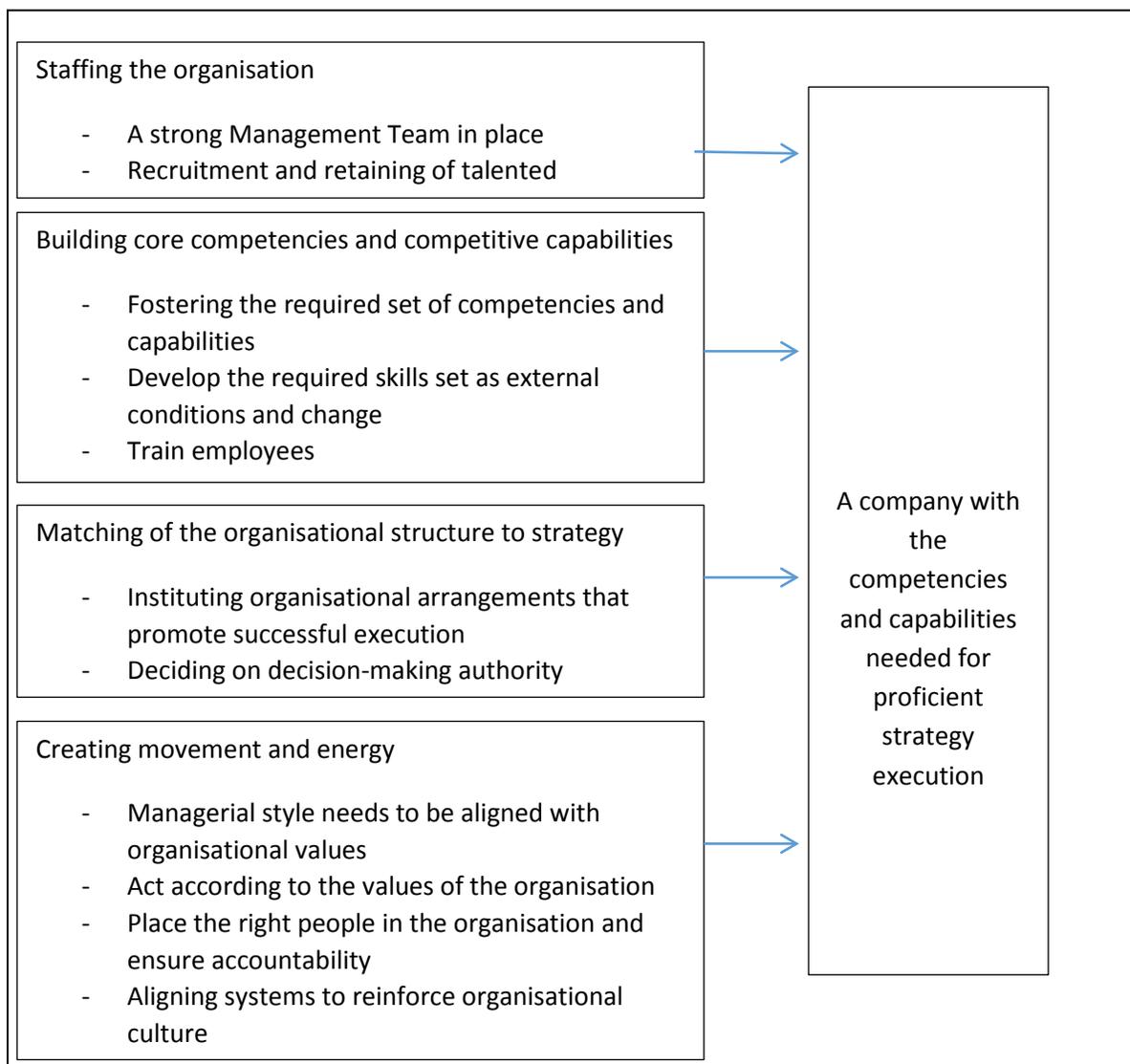
The majority of organisations don't link their budgets to their strategy. The budget must link to the strategic plans and goals of the organisation

## The Management Barrier

'Management by walking around' is important as it ensures constant communication with your employees. Further to that is "working on the business" which enables managers to examine things from a larger perspective is important for managers rather than "working in the business".

### 2.4 Building an organisation capable of good strategy execution

Good strategy execution is paramount for the success of a business enterprise. According to Hough et al (2011: 251), there are three components required for strategy execution:



**Figure 2.1** Adapted from Hough et al. 2011. **Crafting and executing strategy**. New York: Mc Graw Hill. p, 251

According to (Hough et al., 2011: 251) the components of building an organisation capable of good strategy execution embraces the following:

#### **2.4.1 Staffing the organisation**

It is imperative that the staffing of the organisation has the needed experience, technical skills and intellectual capital to perform the required tasks from top management to junior staff members. According to (Singh and Sharma, 2014), one of the challenges faced by most organisations is having a skills gap particularly of knowledge workers – people with high level expertise. Knowledge workers have grown to be more important to the economy because of the value they bring the company. To close the skills gap, companies need to focus on managing, motivating and engaging knowledge workers to tackle problems and improve their knowledge independently. Furthermore, the advancement of technology has created a dependence on knowledge workers who provide the intellectual capital to create new products and execute strategies. This has led successful companies to lean towards identifying, cultivating, and leveraging their talent base to gain a competitive advantage (Santhoshkumar and Rajasekar, 2012).

#### **2.4.2 Building core competencies and competitive capabilities**

Latest research studies reveal that organisations that have been able to sustain competitive advantage have diminished in number over time (Breznik and Robert 2014). Strategic management has been a tool used in the areas of business economics that has helped organisations to grow.. Strategic management involves building and strengthening the capabilities of the organisation. One of the important factors of an organisation is its dynamic capabilities. This is defined as the organisations ability to integrate, develop and reconfigure internal and external competencies to deal with the dynamic environment. This idea is based on the notion that an organisation needs to be able to modify the resource base to allow for constant adaptation to change (Breznik and Robert, 2014).

According to (Zheng, Yang and Mc Lean, 2010) knowledge management plays an interceding role in connecting organisational context and strategy with the organisational effectiveness. The resource-based view describes the competitiveness of the organisation to various intangible and tangible assets; these include organisational processes, management skills, information, knowledge and others. The knowledge-based view holds that an organisations capability to create and utilise knowledge is the most important factor to insure its competitive advantage. Some research studies have proven that there is a link between knowledge management and organisational effectiveness. It is on that basis that knowledge creation and sharing has been found to improve performance and innovation.

Whilst the crafting phase of strategy involves identifying the desired competencies and capabilities, good strategy execution requires acquiring the desired competencies and capabilities within the organisation, developing them as needed and modifying them as the market changes. Building and strengthening the core competencies and capabilities involves a three stage process. (Hough et al, 2011:259) describes these as:

Step 1: Improving the ability to perform the required tasks which involves selecting the right people and developing their efforts,

Step2: As the employees gain more experience, the organisation improves their efficiencies. This develops into organisational capabilities.

Step3: As the company personnel continue to develop their capabilities; these eventually become distinctive capabilities which create a competitive advantage.

(Rungi, 2014) suggests that capabilities are overwhelming elements in organisational life but their effect on performance is mostly assumed. Project-related capabilities are essential to performance. Indeed they are more important than general business capabilities. Organisations should be weary of aligning their projects with strategy alone and should put more focus on teamwork threats, as these have the most negative impact on outcomes. On the other hand, Breznik and Hisrich (2014) suggest that innovation capability is the most important asset an organisation can possess. An innovation capability can be defined as the ability to constantly transform knowledge and ideas into new systems, processes and products. For firms to be able to achieve this, they must be flexible and improve their established patterns.

As part of the development process, training of employees is a vital tool to improve performance. Employee development is often ignored due to cost factors and time off from work however when employees get the opportunity to develop their skills, it builds loyalty and loyal employees are more engaged; engaged employees are more productive which leads to success of an organisation (Lipman, 2013).

### **2.4.3 Matching the organisational structure to strategy**

An organisation's structure must match with the needs of strategy execution. This requires structuring the work efforts to ensure that it promotes successful strategy execution. One of the important decisions to make is deciding how much authority to centralise at the top and how much to delegate to managers and employees. The organisation must make decisions as to which value chain activities to perform internally and which to outsource (Hough, 2011). According to Zeng, Yang and McLean (2010) there has only been a few studies that reveal positive outcomes as a result of centralisation. Most studies have proven that decentralised organisational structure brings about organisational effectiveness. It is found that a decentralized structure promotes communication and increases employee satisfaction and motivation. It is apparent that in decentralized environments, there is free flow of vertical and lateral communication which improves the decision-making.

### **2.4.4 Creating movement and energy**

Hough (2011) also mentions the dimension of creating movement and energy which relates to how organisational culture has an influence on the implementation of strategy. Elements of organisational culture includes aligning your managerial style in support of the organisational value system, managers to lead as role models, accountability for the people that hold key positions in their department and aligning the systems of departments to reinforce organisational culture.

#### **2.4.4.1 Organisational Culture**

An understanding of organisational culture is critical as it may contribute to the strategic capabilities of the organisation, states Johnson et al (2011). Organisational culture influences what people do and how they respond to the issues they face. However it is often taken for granted. It can serve as a basis for inimitable strategic capabilities but also for hindrances to achieving strategic change. As organisations try to improve their efficiencies, they change the

usual way of doing business and this has an impact on culture. Cultural change happens over a long period of time whilst affecting the progress of implementing strategies.

In a study on managerial execution in public administration by Alpha, Vincent and Ergis (2012) strategy execution is most certainly accompanied by transformation and change which has a bearing on culture. Studies on strategy implementation in the area of public administration and management processes have pointed out the need to put emphasis on the intricacy and the multidimensional elements related to it such as the search for managerial skills. A learning environment and cooperation amongst employees is important during the execution of strategies. The value of transparency is crucial to the implementation of a strategy and will lead to increased organisational output. Outputs need to be monitored to ensure that they are in line with the overall strategy.

Organisational values must be communicated and embedded through the design and execution of a culture strategy. According to Hough et al (2011) a culture strategy that presents favourable results for the organisation ensures that leaders give priority to what is on the culture strategy, to decision-making that is influenced by the shared values and that employees are motivated as they are guided by the organisations core values.

(Akbar Ahmadi et al., 2012) suggest that a chain that leads to strategy implementation comprises communication, interpretation, adoption and enactment.

#### **2.4.4.2 Communication**

Johnson et al (2011) suggest that strategic decisions have to be communicated appropriately. Senior managers need to decide which stakeholders to inform and how they will send out the relevant messages. To formulate a communication strategy, there are four aspects that need to be considered. These include focusing on key issues to be communicated, identifying relevant media to communicate the importance of the strategy, engage the employees often in the communication strategy whilst listening and ensure that communication is influential through words and visually if necessary. These elements are to enhance the messages being sent to all stakeholders about your strategy. Getz and Lee (2011) concur with the notion of communication playing a key role in strategy implementation. It is further mentioned that it must be clearly stated where the company is heading, and how it will get there. The act of listening does not only

motivate people, it inspires them to get involved. This will ensure that there is sustained commitment from all involved in the execution of strategy. Employees that are committed create a positive culture that will enhance performance.

Speroff et al (2014) mention that an organisational culture that enhances teamwork and innovation has been found to be aligned with quality improvement which is in contrast to bureaucratic, hierarchical cultures which normally resist change and which, are less suited for quality improvements. According to Shiu and Yu (2014) organisations should view their employees as internal customers which prompts a concept of internal marketing. This form of marketing is a strategic management philosophy which attracts, develops, motivates and maintains talented employees. The internal marketing approach enables an organisation to overcome organisational resistance to change and to align, motivate and integrate employees towards effective execution of strategies in order to deliver customer satisfaction through a process of creating customer-oriented employees.

Management make decisions on a daily basis and those decisions need to be aligned with the overall strategic objectives. Making decisions goes hand in hand with accountability.

The New Public Management approach has brought acceptance of a public sector version of accountability into the public sector which has led to a more managerial style accountability which is concerned with day to day operations of the organisation. A fundamental factor of accountability is the reporting of well-documented performance information (Kluvert and Tippert, 2010). In order to promote accountability in the public sector it is imperative that they become more transparent and understandable. This will enhance accountability of decision makers, since it allows one to frame the impact of policies on performance (Bianchi, 2010).

## **2.5 Alignment of Strategy**

Price Waterhouse Coopers (2013) maintains that organisations that are likely to succeed are the ones that can align their operating model with their strategy. Optimisation of this collectively

will yield success. Considerations include strategic priorities and trade-offs, strategic risks, performance drivers and critical behaviours. (Myler, 2012) supports the notion of strategic alignment and further mentions that alignment and strategy execution is challenging due to the enormous change and innovation required to bridge the knowing/ doing gap. Hence organisations need to support their workforce through altered alignment behaviours. These include introducing innovative ways that are responsive to the market that you serve. This involves a customer-centric approach that must be at the core of alignment. Secondly, it is also important to improve the efficiencies through reducing the operating costs whilst increasing sales to ensure sustainability. Thirdly, acknowledging and incentivising those who engage in new behaviours and decision-making approaches based on strategic approaches.

It is fundamental to align business units and functional units' strategies to the corporate-level strategy in order to create corporate synergy, which results in a collection of business units that create value over and above what each unit could achieve independently (Shutibhinyo and University, 2012). The need to introduce performance management should be evident.

Frequently strategies and ideas are created without much consideration of budgets. Strategic management is therefore lacking in quality made analysis and evaluations and the people who plan and implement it lack the theory and practice of its implementation. Tools such as the Balanced ScoreCard and strategic map are used for formulation, implementation, monitoring, as well as strategy implementation evaluation (Abdel Al and McLellan, 2013) .

### **2.5.1 Performance Management**

An effective method of implementing an effective performance management tool is through the balanced score card. The balanced score card developed by Kaplan and Norton in 1992, has become an attractive tool worldwide in performance management. It contributes towards translating strategy into operational terms, aligning the organisational units into the strategy, communicating strategy to employees and providing feedback and learning (Shutibhinyo and University, 2012). The balanced scorecard evaluates the four perspectives: financial performance, learning and growth perspective, business process perspective and customer

perspective. It aims to align business activities to the overall strategy Figure 2 (Ratnaningsih et al., 2010).

The Scorecard presents a holistic approach to organisational performance management. It does not only act as of means to measuring organisational performance but also as a means of clarifying objectives and of managing the significant success factors that impact on these objectives. The Balanced Scorecard can use the following focus areas:

<b>Customers</b>	<b>Financial</b> <b>(Key Performance)</b>
<b>Internal Processes</b>	<b>Organisational Development</b> <b>(Learning)</b>

Figure 2.2

**Figure 2.2** Adapted from Bagley, A. and Lewis, E. 2014. Building a Balanced Scorecard. London: Teal Consulting.p4

The four perspectives in **Figure 2.2** are used to measure organisational performance in those areas. In the public sector, the financial perspective can be augmented by key performance areas where public bodies can incorporate a whole range of required outputs and statutory indicators as seen in **Figure 2.3** below.

<b>Customers</b>	<b>Key Performance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer loyalty</li> <li>• Customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Proportion of service users</li> <li>• Waiting times</li> <li>• Response time to enquiries</li> <li>• Number of complaints</li> <li>• Number of customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget overrun</li> <li>• Organisational goals</li> <li>• Compliance with legal requirements</li> <li>• Project milestones</li> <li>• External inspection ratings</li> <li>• Audit results</li> <li>• Performance targets</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Processes</b>	<b>Organisational Development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT Capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in research</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimisation of risks</li> <li>• Delivery/Support ratio</li> <li>• Processing time (internal)</li> <li>• Wastage rates</li> <li>• Cost of administration</li> <li>• Productivity per employee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee turnover</li> <li>• Employee competence</li> <li>• Number of staff suggestions</li> <li>• Employee competence</li> <li>• Development of new markets</li> <li>• Extent of partnership activity</li> </ul>
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Figure 2.3

**Figure 2.3** Adapted from Bagley, A. and Lewis, E. 2014. Building a Balanced Scorecard (Public Sector). London: Teal Consulting.p4

Pella et al (2013) states that the balanced scorecard serves as a management process to make known that implementing strategy is the responsibility of all members of the organisation. The paper also identifies that there are organisations that use performance indicators that do not achieve great results. This is caused by poor performance objectives that do not create high standards. The reluctance of leaders and employees to accept high standards impacts on successful implementation of strategy. According to Yuen and Ng (2012) the performance management system is required to encourage transparency and accountability. It is important to have incentives for employees to motivate them to reach their targets. This contributes to positive reinforcement and it encourages employees to stretch their capabilities.

Stakeholder theorists have criticized the Balanced Scorecard for not introducing a perspective for suppliers which forms one of their stakeholder groups. There are companies of for whom suppliers play a critical role in creating a competitive advantage. Those companies would feature supplier performance on their strategy maps (Kaplan, 2010).

It is important that organisations retain their talent as an important resource for the organisation. Talent management has been a priority for successful organisation. It should be understood that through the right people, the desired results can be achieved. (Newhall, 2012) makes the point that the demand for talent is more prevalent in some parts of the world by comparison with others. For instance some of the organisations in the Asian countries and China are experiencing a lack of suitable candidates. As a result they recruit from other countries to import skills from

around the world. High competencies within an organisation serve as a competitive advantage. The global approach can also produce challenges such as culture acceptance or intolerance. Yaprak, Xu and Cavusgil (2011) are all of the view that the resource capabilities ensure a harmonious strategy, structure and process which serve as a competitive advantage. These intangible resources and capabilities such as the competence to align structural and process dimensions with the selected strategy cannot easily be imitated. It is therefore important that leaders invest in training programmes for their employees that will develop their competencies. Leaders that are active in the execution process must ensure that all procedures and processes support the intended strategy.

Financial resources required to implement the strategies must be available to ensure that objectives are met. The competitive environment has forced many organisations to streamline their activities to reduce costs as well as improve performance. This requires proper planning to execute the strategies. In a review of Michael Porters' theories, Magretta (2011) reveals that if an organisation can reduce its costs, charge higher prices compared to its competitors, it has a sustainable competitive advantage. The causes of failure of strategy often are internal such as poor organisational structures, management prejudices and biased decision-making processes. Lack of consistency in management decisions disrupts the processes and systems in place to implement strategy.

For strategies to be successfully implemented there have to be monitored and evaluated.

#### 2.4.5 Process of evaluating strategies

Many of business strategies fail in their implementation due to the lack of evaluation and control (Vele, 2012). The process of strategy implementation not only encompasses identifying the required resources and core competencies to support the strategies but also to design the systems required to evaluate the strategic performance. Evaluation can be undertaken using the following tools (Vele, 2012).

- Financial performance: Companies have a wide variety of financial performance measures that can be used to evaluate performance such as the return on investment (ROI), profit and cash flow. As much as the evaluation of financial performance aids in presenting information on the overall performance of the business, this method lacks the

capacity to provide input on changes in organisational structure and perceptions of employees with regard to strategy.

- **Balanced Scorecard (BSC):** The BSC is a useful model not only to evaluate strategy implementation but also continuously to identify new ways to increase the levels of efficiency. The instruments in this model are divided into the four perspectives: financial, customer, internal business process and learning and growth. Companies can use this tool to transform their vision into strategy, further it will enable them to balance short term and long term objectives.
- **Audit:** An audit can be defined as a systematic and objective method of obtaining and analysing specific information and data related to different tasks performed by the organisation with the aim of comparing them with the standards previously established. An independent audit can be conducted to evaluate the financial records, an internal audit can be conducted to evaluate whether or not the companies' procedures are in line with the strategy and lastly an audit performed for management can be undertaken to evaluate the performance of the team.

### **2.5.2 Leadership**

Professor Mintberg is opposed to the view by the Harvard Business School professor Abraham Zaleznik that sees the management role as separate to leadership Allio (2011: 4). Professor Henry Mintberg states that organisations would be dysfunctional if executives lead without managing. The predicament with the concept of leadership is that it suggests that everyone is a follower. What is mostly required is a community-ship in which employees feel a sense of unity and the eagerness to work hard for it.

Leadership style is an important facet of leadership. (Hansen and Villadsen (2010)) suggests that is not only influenced and constrained by the employees personality and the nature of the tasks, but also by the managers own job context, and the acknowledgement of this factor is imperative in accounting for sector differences in leadership. The job context such as levels of complexity, autonomy and clarity of the job has an impact on managerial performance. The job context is composed of factors such as the culture of the organisation, technology and systems. These can create both opportunities and obstacles for the use of various leadership styles. The job context is

a relevant variable that influences managerial leadership style as to some extent it contributes to how managers execute their jobs. Managers need continuously to develop their leadership skills as they add great value to the organisation.

There has been a growing interest in charismatic leadership since the 80's and 90's due to the prospects of organisational change. Innovation has been found to be an important element in the social formation of charisma. It is suggested that charismatic leaders have the ability to break down, move and re-align followers 'norms and attitudes' (Levay, 2010).

According to Bigler and Williams (2013), improving the leadership capabilities is essential to successful implementation of strategy. These skills include being able to motivate the team, manage resources and to solve difficult problems. There are many dynamics that occur in this competitive environment hence a leader requires exceptional capabilities.

Human capital is a resource capability organisations should invest in to maintain a competitive advantage. Murray (2014) states that the aspirations of the organisation needs to be clearly communicated and understood by all. Further to communication, progress is to be measured and clear accountability for progress needs to be assumed. When employees buy into the vision of the organisation, all actions deliberated are towards reaching the goal of the organisation. With the various dynamics such as responding to daily challenges it becomes easy for employees to lose focus on their intended strategy. It is thus important that all members within the organisation understand where they fit into the overall strategy. Various studies have revealed that highly motivated employees perform better and retain their value as employees. This build on the expertise advantage and strategies are likely then to be effectively implemented.

As reported in the White Paper (United States of America, 2013) leaders should not only individually communicate their strategies but should create various platforms and methods for continuously creating awareness of strategy. A leadership strategy should clearly define how many leaders are required, what kind of leaders, with what competencies as required to grow the needed talent for the organisation. The leaders who are drivers of strategies need to work together to develop a more effective collaboration across functions to produce what is required in the market. Hence a culture of innovation vs a culture of risk aversion at top levels of the organisation is necessary. For any strategy to be executed successfully, it is essential that people

would want to be part of the strategy. Hence leaders need to instil a value system of trust in order to have the objectives implemented. All these aspects must be communicated by leaders.

Once strategy has been crafted, most leaders delegate the execution responsibility to their staff members states (Speculand, 2014). When they do so, the staff members might just sink back into usual method of doing things and ignore the new strategy, which is a recipe for failure. As much as staff members are assigned work in contribution to strategy implementation, managers need to ensure that the activities are aligned to meeting the objectives of the strategy. Leaders can focus on the following activities for successful implementation (Speculand, 2014):

- Motivate staff to be committed to both crafting and implementation of the strategy.
- Encourage staff to be open to sharing information and to communicating with staff members to get feedback on progress.
- Ensure that strategy is flexible enough to meet the dynamic demands of the environment.
- Create an environment for successful strategy implementation.

According to Pella et al (2013), strategy execution is not only tactical but it is more of a discipline and a system that has been built into a company. It is therefore imperative that leaders and managers who make decisions on a daily basis are deeply engaged in strategy execution. The decisions made on a daily basis can either create or destroy the company's strategy. O'Reilly (2010) mentions that there has been an overwhelming focus on leadership from a single person within the organisation; however leadership at various organisational levels is also important. Leaders at a higher level within the organisation influence the way leaders at a lower level translate and disseminate information about a new strategy. The mechanisms by which leaders provide meaning that attaches to important elements in the work setting may shape this alignment. Leaders at different levels influence how strategic initiatives are executed. The alignment or misalignment of leaders across hierarchical levels may improve or prevent the successful implementation of strategy.

### **2.5.3 Role of Information Technology in strategy implementation**

The advancement of IT has enhanced business operations. According to (Tallon and Pinsonneault, 2011) IT has played a crucial role in promoting alignment and in sensing environmental threats and opportunities and it improves knowledge-sharing. From a resource

perspective, to achieve alignment requires IT to be embedded in key business activities, the same activities that can change if external forces require rapid shift in strategic focus.

According to (Asemi and Jazi, 2010), IT and Information Systems has changed the business environment which has increased competition. Enterprise Resource Planning has helped organisations overcome many challenges in their business processes. Organisations have become more flexible and productive by coordinating their business processes more closely as well as by integrating these processes so that information-based processes within and across functional areas in the organisation can operate effectively. Tsai et al. (2010) describe an ERP system as packaged business software systems which allows for integration of common data and for accessing information in real time. The benefits of the system include increasing rapid response capabilities which accelerates decision-making as well as meeting the demands of your customers. As much as there are numerous benefits to the ERP system, there is also a high risk of failure. The complex nature and high costs of the ERP system causes managers to be reluctant to implement this system. About 60% of the ERP implementation attempts were unsuccessful in Indonesia in both public and private companies (Hasibuan and Dantes, 2012).

Many organisations have realised that the addition of Business Intelligence systems onto the ERP tools can add great value (Baltzan, 2012). The business intelligence components of ERP systems gathers information utilised throughout the organisation; coordinates it and apply analytical tools to assist managers in decision making. The well-known data warehouse is an extension to an ERP system. “The concept of Business Intelligence (BI) has been elucidated in many different ways. It has been defined as a system that serves as a combination of operational data gathering, storage of data, knowledge management with analytical tools to present information to decision makers or planners (Adelakun, 2012). Dashboards are a tool that enables reporting of Key Performance Indicators that will show a clear display of how the organisation is performing.

The use of IT has enabled public and private organisations to effectively improve their business processes and their strategic decision-making to improve performance.

## **2.6 Framework for strategy execution**

Some of the mainstream approaches to strategy execution relate to people, to the nature of the strategy itself and to processes. The following steps can be used for successful strategy execution (Barrows, 2014):

Step1: Visualise the strategy through understanding frameworks such as strategic maps by (Kaplan and Norton).

Step 2: Measure the strategy through various strategic performance management tools such as the Balance Scorecard or a dashboard.

Step 3: Report the progress of the process and on whether the strategy is yielding results or not, versus controlling performance

Step 4: Make decisions throughout the implementation process to ensure that the strategy is current and relevant

Step 5: Identify strategy projects within the organisation

Step 6: Align projects to the strategies of the organisation

Step 7: Manage projects by ensuring that the organisation has the capability in project management

Step8: Communicate the strategy to all members of the organisation, not only what needs to be done but why

Step9: Align individual roles to ensure that employees can evaluate their personal roles towards the achievement of strategic goals.

Step 10: Reward performance

The execution process requires ownership at all levels of management; they must commit to it and own the actions key to effective execution. According to Hrebiniak (2013), it would not be feasible to implement change without the commitment to the decisions and actions that define strategy execution. The implementation part of the strategy takes longer and normally puts pressure on managers overseeing the process. Hence, control measures must be put in place to provide feedback and to keep management abreast of external changes.

Rose and Cray (2010) stress the need for effective communication especially in the public-sector environment where all key stakeholders must be targeted. Communication aspects are important throughout the formulation and implementation phase of the strategy. This will ensure that all the initiatives stay prominent in the minds of the stakeholders.

Similarly, Srinivasan (2014) states that a critical element of execution begins with decision making. It is vital that decision-boundaries are clearly defined and this bring in an element of accountability. The decision-maker must also have the information, knowledge and the skill to make the right decisions. In addition, there should be systems in place for problem-solving and continuous improvement of the processes; a culture of collecting and sharing best practices within and across the organisation as well as outside the organisation, the provision of a level of freedom for employees to respond to the dynamic situation they face in the work environment and the monitoring of performance through effective tools such as the Balanced ScoreCard.

## **2.7 Summary**

Successful strategy execution relies on best practices of working with and through others, developing and strengthening competitive capabilities, motivating and compensating people (Hough et al 2011). Human resources can be a valuable asset to the organisation hence it is imperative that all personnel understand the role they play in implementing the strategy. The more geographically dispersed the organisation; the more leaders are required to drive the strategy process and to ensure cooperation by all. Leaders must manage organisational change and must ensure that the culture is supportive of the organisation. It has been mentioned that companies create excellent strategies but fail to execute them. This literature review highlights the key aspects that may lead to successful implementation.

The execution process requires participation and cooperation of all stakeholders for it to be a success. Strong leadership plays a vital role in providing direction, and in monitoring of the process to ensure delivery of the strategic goals. Some of the important factors in strategy execution include alignment of individual roles to ensure that they are geared towards the organisations vision and strategy, and alignment of processes to enhance performance and communication of the strategy to ensure that that all people within the organisation understand their roles in implementing the strategy of the organisation.

### **3. CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to give an outline of the research design and methods that were used to study the research problem. It outlines the aims and objectives of the study and it defines the participants and location of the study, data collection strategies, research design methods of data analysis.

#### **3.2 Research Methodology**

The study utilised a qualitative method to evaluate the effectiveness of strategy implementation. A qualitative research method is defined as an approach that allows you to explore people's experiences using various methods such as interviews, observations and focus group discussions (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey, 2011). The unique feature that qualitative research has is that it enables a researcher to identify issues from the viewpoint of the participant and to better understand the meanings and interpretation that attach to the material. It is on the basis of this notion that the qualitative research method was chosen. Face-to-face interviews were identified as the most desirable method for the study.

#### **3.3 Aim and Objective of the Study**

This research aims to evaluate strategy implementation within the Engineering Unit of the eThekweni Municipality. The information will, hopefully help the organization to establish whether or not it is effectively implementing its strategy in order to realize its vision of being Africa's most caring and liveable city by 2030. The objectives are as follows:

- To determine the extent of strategy implementation within the unit
- To establish the challenges faced by the unit in strategy implementation
- To establish whether the organizational activities are aligned to effective strategy execution
- To establish the fundamental factors of effective strategy execution

### **3.4 Participants and Location of the Study**

The participants for the research study were management from junior, senior to top-level management. These employees have leadership roles within the organisation with the responsibility to drive strategy execution within their departments.

According to Hough et al (2011), strategy execution and alignment is the task of the whole management team, not just a few senior managers. As much as CEOs and heads of units are ultimately responsible for successful strategy implementation, the top-level managers have to rely on the involvement of middle and lower managers to ensure strategy changes into functional areas to see whether or not operations are in accordance with the strategy on a daily basis. It was for that reason that management from junior, middle and top levels were chosen as participants for the study.

The study was conducted at the organisation's premises which were more convenient for the participants.

### **3.5 Data collection strategies**

A qualitative research methodology was identified as the most suited for this study. Chetty (2010) recommends the qualitative research approach for the following types of studies:

- Research that draws on tacit knowledge and subjective view and meanings.
- Research that probes deeper into complexities and process.
- Research on casual and unstructured linkages and processes in organisations.

With a huge focus on words rather than on quantities, a qualitative method was regarded as appropriate to present layered descriptions of relationships between people, space and objects (Cumming-Potvin, 2013). This is in contrast to quantitative research studies which uses a more logical and data-led approach that stipulates a measure of what people think from a statistical and numerical point of view. There is a reliance on numbers and data unlike qualitative research

which is more focused on how people feel, their thoughts and why they make certain choices (Business and IP Centre, 2014).

In-depth, face-to-face interviews were identified to be the most feasible, efficient method of collecting data in this study. This method is best suited to the exploratory stages of research where the researcher seeks to obtain an overarching perspective of the concepts or situational factors. This method of data collection provides rich data, offer the opportunity to establish a rapport with the participants and it helps to understand complex matters. Interview transcripts can reveal insights into the methods, processes and reasons for actions (Olsen, 2012). The study thus seeks to explore the phenomena by using in-depth interviewing strategies.

The benefit of face-to-face interviews is that the researcher can adapt the questions as necessary, clarify information received and ensure that the responses are properly understood, by rephrasing or repeating the questions if necessary (Sekeran and Bougie, 2013). The advantage of this method is also the fact that the information received is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study.

The participants were contacted via telephone and email to schedule the appointments for the interviews. The interviews were held at the Engineering Unit Buildings in Durban and Pinetown for the interviewee's own convenience. The participant and researcher were in the interview session for approximately 45 minutes.

### **3.6 Research Design and Methods**

#### **3.6.1 Description and Purpose**

This study aims to uncover and describe strategy implementation within the Engineering Unit. The desired outcomes were exploratory and descriptive with no intention of obtaining causal relationships. The semi-structured interview was seen to be an effective method to obtain the required information. According to Qu and Dumay (2011), semi-structured interviews involve planned questions that follow specific themes in a coherent and methodical manner interposed

with probes designed to provoke more responses from the respondent. These themes allow the researcher to elicit information on the topics of interest pertaining to the study. This interviewing technique is said to be flexible, comprehensible and capable of disclosing vital and often hidden aspects of human and organisational behaviour.

### **3.6.1.1 Construction of the instrument**

The semi-structured interview was constructed using a funnelling technique where initially open ended questions are asked from another perspective of a broad concept which forms an impression about a situation. There was a transition from a broad to narrow themes that were imbedded in the questions (Sekeran and Bougie, 2013). The topics were arranged in a logical sequence particularly focusing on the important themes within the subject matter and ultimately responding to the research question (Doody and Noonan, 2013).

### **3.6.1.2 Recruitment of Study Participants**

A non-probability purposive and judgemental method was adopted for this study with an element of convenience selection methods. This led to a selection of managerial level employees from the Engineering Unit of the Municipality. The participants varied from the junior, middle to top level management of the Engineering Unit. These employees also had to be working within the Municipality for no less than 3 years within the business unit. This enabled the researcher to ascertain knowledge from participants that have had considerable experience and who have been part of the process of strategy implementation within the business unit. The seven participants were chosen due to the fact that at a managerial level, they are responsible for ensuring that strategy is implemented. The population size was 133 managers comprising 8 from the executive level, 47 from senior management and 78 from junior management. However, the population size was not used as a measure to identify the number of participants considering the qualitative method used. The methods used were a combination of purposive, convenience and judgemental sampling. Considering the timeframe available, interviews had to be secured within a specific period.

### **3.6.2 Reliability and Validity**

There were various measures taken to ensure the integrity of the empirical research. This includes actions taken to ensure validity and reliability of this study.

Ventakesh et al. (2013) states that the evaluation of validity in qualitative research is often vague and argumentative with different forms of validity measures used. Validity in qualitative research is the extent to which data is plausible, credible and trustworthy. The three types of validity are: descriptive validity which responds to accuracy of information being reported by the researcher, interpretive validity which involves the accuracy of the interpretation of the views of participants by the researcher and lastly theoretical validity which is the extent to which theoretical information matches the data to enhance validity of the study. These factors are consistent with those suggested by Ali and Yusof (2011). One of the factors that they list is descriptive validity which is concerned with whether or not researchers capture what they intended to study and whether or not they report precisely on what they have heard or seen. In this study, recordings were done of the interview to ensure that the information captured was accurate. The use of NVivo software ensured accurate interpretation of the words used by the participants.

Consideration was given to the design of the questions prepared for the interview in order to acquire maximum information on the objectives set for the study. The questions were clear and avoided ambiguous words. Leading questions were also not asked. There were significant advantages to the fact that the researcher was internal to the organisation. There was easier access to information to support the study and the participants were more comfortable during the interview to share information on their experiences with someone familiar with the field which reduced issues of bias.

### **3.6.3 Pretesting**

Pretesting of the question was done to ensure validity of the questions. The literature review refined questions to add face validity. Questions were further refined with input from the

academic and professional fraternity. The interview questions were refined to further ensure that questions to gather a basic understanding of the concepts were included before focusing on the specific themes. Interviews were also conducted to participants separate from the selected participants for the study.

These participants were chosen due to their merit and expertise and long service to the Engineering Unit both at a managerial to executive level. According to (Blair and Conrad, 2011) the face validity of a number of case studies embraces the view to interview pre-test as this can add value to better designed questionnaires.

#### **3.6.4 Administration of the Questionnaire**

The interview was scheduled telephonically by the researcher. The interview took approximately 45 minutes with each of the 7 participants. There were 10 questions pre-planned for the semi-structured interview opened up opportunities for probes to ensure that information regarding the content required was fully responded to and clearly understood by the researcher.

In the beginning of the interview, the researcher established a rapport with the participant and motivated them to provide information that would benefit the organisation in effective strategy execution as stated by (Doody and Noonan, 2013). The aim was of hear the participants experience and to listen to their views on various issues. Voice recordings were used for effective data collection. The purpose of the interview was not to take notes as this can cause a barrier to the flow of information and distract the whole process. However words and phrases were noted by the researcher in order to mark important aspects that needed to be elaborated on by the participant.

#### **3.7 Analysis of the Data**

The analysis of the data was conducted using qualitative forms of thematic analysis. The analysis of qualitative data is focused on formulating valid inferences from the often overwhelming amount of collected data Sekeran and Bougie (2013). The process followed in the analysis was data reduction which refers to the method of selecting, coding and grouping of data.

The following step involved data display which refers to the ways of presenting data in an organised manner and lastly data coding that helps to draw preliminary conclusions.

NVivo software was utilised to analyse the data for this study through content analysis. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) describe NVivo as an appropriate method for almost all qualitative studies especially research that takes high regard of the participants vocal responses. NVivo coding uses words from the participants own language in the data record as codes. Words that are used frequently by participants are good leads and they often point to regularities or patterns in the setting.

A study by Cambra-Fierro and Wilson (2011) revealed that there are certain advantages for using specialised software for data analysis such as NVivo which are the following:

- It categorises information and gives researchers more time to analyse the data, identify themes and insights and develop conclusions.
- The software has the capabilities of providing graphical display of the project information, connections and findings.
- It allows the researcher to organise and store the data

The analysis was done using the coding and grouping of data using NVivo software. Firstly, interview transcripts were placed in NVivo and read line by line to ascertain the first set of nodes. In this process annotations and memos were used to record the ideas of the researcher. A fair amount of time was spent to determine how the data related to the research questions and initial theoretical assumptions (Hoover and Koerber, 2011). The accuracy of capturing information with the NVivo ensures that the risk of losing the reference information is minimised. NVivo allows for sources to be auto-coded by paragraph style. This enabled the researcher to create a node for each question; there-after auto coding ensures that everything participants mentioned in response to that question would be noted under those question nodes.

The research design sought to specifically understand peoples lived experiences, and meaning behind the way strategy has been implemented. The use of thematic and content analysis enabled themes to be identified from the data. The importance of this process was to ensure consistency

with the underlying theoretical framework of the study. Emergent cognate themes were grouped together in accordance with their relatedness which was determined on the basis of similar responses whose messages were of the same meaning. Preceding the data analysis, further research on literature was undertaken to broaden the understanding of the emergent themes (Luthando, 2012).

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations were built in and upheld by the researcher throughout the research process. The participants signed the informed consent form prior to the interview that clearly stated that the participation in the study was voluntarily and that their anonymity would be maintained.

### **3.9 Summary**

This chapter outlined the logic behind the research method and techniques employed in this study. Qualitative methods were the most suited for this study.

The non-probability purposive method was used as the sampling technique since there was a predetermined group chosen. The data collection instruments utilised was in a form of in-depth interviews. The techniques employed allowed for a deeper understanding of the context.

In Vivo software was used to analyse the data which to ensure quality of the findings. Consideration was taken to ensure reliability and validity of this study by the use of data triangulation.

## 4. CHAPTER 4 – PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the interviews conducted. It follows a brief background on how the purpose of the study was achieved through administration of the research questionnaires. It also describes briefly how the data was organised for analysis. The interview questions are then presented with the discussion of the results. This is then followed by the conclusion.

### 4.2 Purpose and Study of the Research Questions

The study aimed to solicit information on strategy implementation within the Engineering Unit particularly looking at the past 5 years of strategy implementation in the eThekweni Municipality. It also aimed to ascertain their level of understanding of the participants with regards to the strategy implementation process as well as to find out what challenges they experienced when implementing these strategies.

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- How effective has strategy been implemented with the Engineering Unit?
- What are the challenges faced by the unit in implementing its strategy?
- Are the organization's activities aligned to effective strategy implementation?
- What are the fundamental factors required for successful strategy execution?

### 4.2 Demographics

There were 7 participants with the following demographics.

Gender	Male	Female
Frequency	6	1

The researcher was amazed at the lack of females in management during the selection process. It was noted that the Engineering profession was predominately a male dominated sector but there is a growing trend of females now joining the sector.

Age (Years)	20 -30	30-40	40-50	50-60
Frequency		1	4	2

Management Level	Junior	Middle	Top
Frequency	2	2	3

Management was selected as participants because they are responsible for ensuring that strategy is executed particularly top- level management.

### 4.3 Presentation of Findings

The transcript data was loaded to the NVivo software which presented the information in the following tables. The term reference means the number of times a participant’s response referred to as a particular node (which is the item below the section of Name). The source is referring to the participants. The respondents answered the following questions put before them.

#### 4.3.1 An understanding of the organisational strategy

This question aimed to find out the participants understanding of the corporate strategy as well as the relationship between this and the functional strategic goals of the unit.

The break-down of the responses are laid in Table 4.1 below. The term reference means the number of times a participant’s responses referred to as a particular node (which is the items under the section of Name). The source is referring to the participants.

##### 4.6.3.1 Theme 1 - Understanding of the organizational strategy and its implementation

	Name	Sources	Reference
•	Integrated Development Plan	2	2
	- Varied roles dependent on Planning Phase Involvement	2 1	2 1
	- Service Delivery Implementation Plans Recently		

	Developed		
•	Service Delivery	4	4
	- Alignment to Intergrated Development Plan	1	1
	- Responsible Provision of Services	2	2
•	Establish Relationship Between Various Plans and Budgets	1	1
•	Vision of Liveable and Caring City	2	2
	- Requires Education	1	1
	- Requires Road Infrastructure	2	2
•	Balancing Basic Service Provision and Infrastructure Development	1	1
•	Road Infrastructure for Economic Development	2	3
•	Financial Constrains	1	2
•	Employment Generation	1	1
•	Balancing Demands form all stakeholders	1	1
•	Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network	1	1
•	Skill Development and Transfer	1	1
•	Collaboration With Other Departments	1	1
•	Maintain Assets	1	1
	- Work Management System	1	1

**Table 4.1: Understanding of the Organizational Strategy**

The ideas from the various participants included their understanding of the Integrated Development Plan as the strategic document of the city that focuses on service delivery.

Some of the respondents mentioned that vision of eThekweni Municipality is to create a livable and caring city. A number of participants mentioned the vision of eThekweni. The one participant stated that

*‘By 2030 eThekweni will be Africa’s most liveable and caring city, so I often look into that to determine how we’re doing as the Engineering Unit’.*

The following sentiments were made around the corporate strategy. The following was mentioned.

*‘The element of the strategy if we’re referring to the IDP is the sort of document to improve the quality of life’.*

The majority of the respondents explained that the core focus of their existence was service delivery. A selected few mentioned the vision of eThekweni *to be the most liveable and caring city by 2030*. To unpack that vision, the respondents referred mainly to issues of poverty alleviation, improving the quality of life and sustainability.

Some argued that the strategy of the organisation is *a big focus on equity*. They stated that the municipality has created plans to ensure employment equity targets are realised.

In relation to how the Engineering Unit functional goals fits to the corporate strategy on the organisation, most respondents referred to Point Plan 3 of the eThekweni Municipality’s IDP which is

*‘Creating a quality living environment with the focus on addressing community service backlogs and meeting infrastructure and household service need.’*

They were of the view that the Engineering Unit aims to improve infrastructure in a cost effective way. The argument behind this view was that that it was important for them to utilise the resources in a sustainable manner to deliver services at the same time accelerate economic development. Some mentioned asset management as a key factor to their strategy and driving issues of sustainability.

The sentiments around the mandate of the Engineering Unit in relation to the corporate strategy were as follows

*‘To provide services that are in line with the IDP’*

This was also supported by another participant

*‘We have to provide services to the community in a cost effective way’*

What was mentioned with regards to the mandate of the Engineering Unit in relation to the corporate strategy was the following: To balance service provision and infrastructure development; Service Delivery Business Implementation Plans; Road infrastructure and economic development; Balancing demands from all stakeholders; Skills development and transfer; Collaboration with other departments; Maintaining of assets and Improving the quality of life. There were also clear goals as to where the Engineering Unit’s mandate. The one participant mentioned,

*‘We have to provide basic services in terms of road infrastructure and look at various strategic infrastructure developments for economic development’.*

#### **4.3.2 The extent of strategy implementation**

The aim of this question was to determine the level of achievement from the perspective of the respondents who are in management.

The majority of the respondents referred to the Service Delivery Business Implementation Plan (SDBIP) which enables them to execute their functional strategies. There are different perspectives on whether the goals set in the SDBIP are aligned to the achievement of the corporate strategy. Some of the respondents mentioned that they had achieved their goals and this shows in the fact that their budget is always 100% spent. They are however faced with by challenges that affect their implementation. The diverse views were stated in the Table 4.2.

	Name	Sources	Reference
•	Implemented with Capacity to increase implementation	2	3
	- Resource Restriction	1	1
	- Innovative alterations to former functions and processes	1	1
	- Barriers to complete implementation	1	1
	- Delays in Implementation process	1	1
•	Budget Limitations and Requirements	2	3

	- Negative effect on community members	1	1
	- Hindrance to the fulfillment of targets and KPI's	1	1
•	Achievement of designated targets	1	1
•	Progress being made	2	2
•	Environment of operation a challenge	1	1
•	Challenge of employee capacity to deliver	1	1
•	Reconcile political vision with technical application	1	1
•	Political interference a challenge	1	1
•	Achievement of some aspects and not others	1	1
	Objectives and Mandate of the Engineering Unit	1	1
	Infrastructure Development	1	2
	- Need to collaborate with other departments	1	1

**Table 4.2: The extent of strategy implementation**

The respondents mentioned that strategy implementation was particularly challenging for the employees in the municipality as sometimes conflicting interest arise from various stakeholders such as the city administration and the political stakeholders. Most concerns regarding the implementation that were made were budget restrictions however they acknowledge that progress has been made.

Most of the respondents said yes, they have delivered on the strategy considering the enormous constraints they are faced with on a daily basis. One in particular mentioned the following.

*'They've bought into the vision and they're walking the talk, they could do more if they were not hampered by lack of resources. There has been a lot of innovative work done in all sectors of Engineering and also going green. From the traditional asphalt which is costly and energy consuming to the warm asphalt that has been recycled to create a green economy'.*

They mentioned they were operating in a dynamic environment which was constantly changing therefore they were constantly chasing moving targets due to the influx of people moving into

the city. That leads to difficulties for them executing their strategies and for them to advance to the realization of their goals.

### 4.5.3 Important factors required for successful strategy execution

The respondents had the following views regarding successful implementation of strategy, see Table 4.3.

	Name	Source	References
•	Practicality of strategy	2	2
•	Necessary resources and capacity	4	5
	- Incompetent employees	1	1
	- Inappropriate attitudes of employees	1	1
•	Strategy acceptance and endorsements	2	2
•	Lack of political support impeded strategy implementation	1	1
•	Implementation of strategy established or supported provincially or nationally	1	1
•	Information Management	1	1
	- Inappropriate information management problematic	1	1
•	Alignment of strategy components	1	1
	- Infrastructure Delivery Management Strategy Method (IDMS)	1	2
	- Need for strong reporting skills	1	1
	- Need for support	1	1
•	Strategy communication	1	1
•	Infrastructure Asset Management	1	1
•	Strong Political Leadership	1	1
	- Essential for vision acceptance	1	1

•	Financial Capacity and Budgeting	3	4
	- Insufficient budgets	1	1
•	Strategies should be devoid of political basis	2	2
•	Appropriate planning	1	2
	- Develop budgets from plan	1	1
•	Appropriate training	1	1
	- Skills development, a continuous process	1	1

**Table 4.3 Factors for successful strategy implementation**

The financial capacity and budgeting came out frequently from most participants. The necessary human resources and capacity also a priority. Some respondents mentioned that the strategy has to be practical for it to be achievable.

Most of the respondents answered this question from the viewpoint of a public sector environment. The responses were mainly the following.

- Setting realistic strategies and goals is important
- Having competent people within your organization is one of the key factors to success. Some mentioned technical capacity as key.  
*‘One key reason some of the municipalities failed to deliver was as a result of the lack of technical capacity’.*
- You need people that have the passion and the drive to carry out the strategies
- Financial resources are a critical factor as strategies cannot be carried out without sufficient budget
- The strategy needs to be endorsed politically to gain support from important stakeholders
- *‘Information management is critical as we have moved into an era where IT is everything and there is so much available in terms of IT’.*
- Most respondents felt that good leadership is important. They referred to strong political and informed leadership. One in particular strongly mentioned that

*‘the success of a strategy will rise and fall on the hands of the leadership’.*

There was a feeling that the city needs financial stability in order for it to sustain itself. Some of the factors mentioned included inculcating a culture of payment among citizens so that the municipality can get as much revenue as possible. This will lead to increased financial capacity for the municipality to deliver more services. It was also mentioned *‘that it was important for us to make eThekweni municipality a creative place to do business’.*

This will stimulate economic growth and therefore improve job creation. Some participants mentioned that it was important to unpack the strategic document such as the IDP for better understanding.

#### **4.5.4 Adherence to factors of strategy implementation and reasons**

Table 4.3 below, stipulates main items that came up when respondents were questioned the adherence of factors of successful strategy implementation

	Name	Source	Reference
•	High quantity of competent employees	1	1
•	Yes	3	3
	- Delays in the provision and attainment of information	1	1
	- Developments and progress being made	1	1
	- Variety of challenges and issues which impacts the ability to implement	2	2
•	Slow rate of service delivery	1	1
•	Several areas of strong functioning	1	1
•	Communities informed of proposed implications	1	1
•	Strong leadership challenges	1	2
•	Loss of technical capacity and competent employees	2	2
•	Continued employment of skilled personnel	1	1

	- Skills gap evident	1	1
	- Implementation of Candidate Engineer Programme	1	1
•	Strong Financial Management	1	1
•	Reduction of cumbersome processes required	1	1
•	High levels of incompetence	1	1
•	Financial constraints	3	3
•	Occurrence of appropriate planning	1	1
	- Impeded by unanticipated issues	1	1

**Table 4.4 Adherence to factors of strategy implementation**

The respondents mentioned that one of the biggest challenges facing many organisations is strategy implementation; it's a dilemma not only in the private sector but also in public organisations. In terms of the municipality adhering to those factors, most of the respondents said that whilst the unit has had a certain level of achievement, they were faced with enormous challenges that they face on a daily basis. The responses were particularly as follows:

- It is difficult to set realistic goals because we are constantly chasing a moving target.
- A lot of respondents mentioned that there was a skills gap in terms of technical capacity. There are highly skilled individuals within the higher ranks of the unit and good technical capacity within the lower ranks that have high potential however but they still need a lot of mentorship. There was a great concern that the older technical people that will soon retire will leave an even greater gap in terms of skills capacity of the unit. They did mention that with the Unit' mentorship programme of Engineers and Technologists, the unit was heading in the right direction.
- Having competent people within your organization is one of the key factors to success. Some mentioned technical capacity as an important factor.

*“One of the main reasons some of the municipalities failed to deliver was as a result of the lack of technical capacity.”*

- There are some people that get demotivated with in the work environment due to conflicting goals between the politicians and the officials. This causes employees to loose commitment to their work. Some respondents mentioned that there is also a culture of non-productivity that impact on the motivation of the personnel within the organisation.
- There are limitations to financial resources due to the major infrastructure backlogs and to the extent of the needs of the people.
- Sometimes there are a conflict of goals between the politicians and the goals of the Unit and expectations are created in the public that the unit can’t meet. It’s therefore critical that there is political endorsement of our projects so that there is no delay in their implementation. We do experience delays due to conflicting goals.
- We have good IT systems that are not integrated. We have now started to look at various technology systems to promote integration.
- Most respondents felt that good leadership is important. They referred to strong political and informed leadership. One in particular strongly suggested that *‘the success of a strategy will rise and fall on the hands of the leadership.’*

#### **4.5.5 Challenges faced by the unit in strategy implementation**

From the interviews conducted, the unit faced a lot of internal and external factors that hindered successful implementation of their strategies.

The issues that came about under the topic of challenges were as follows in **Table 4.5**.

	Name	Source	References
•	Employee, Skills and Capacity	4	5
	- Continuity of skills, Competence and Knowledge	1	1
•	Appropriate Vision	1	1
•	Efficient Service Delivery	1	1

•	Assessment of Prospective Adaptations to Improve Process	1	1
•	Financial Constraints or Issues	4	4
•	Supply Chain Management Issues	2	2
	- Impacts Speed of Service Delivery	1	1
•	Important to retain Technical Competence	1	1
	- Currently Achieving Retention	1	1
•	Lack of Appropriate Support	1	1
•	Procurement Process and Management	1	2
	- Assessment of Appropriate Procurement Strategy Necessary	1	1
	- Challenges Associated with	1	1
•	Extensive Processes and Procedures	1	1
	- Numerous Requirements to be met	1	1
•	Delays in the Replacement of Employees	1	1

**Table 4.5 – Challenges faced by the Unit in Strategy Implementation**

The respondents were of the view that the municipality is operating in a very agile, dynamic environment which presents a number of obstacles. Some of the issues raised were as follows:

A number of respondents raised the issues of inadequate resources to carry out all the required infrastructure projects. However, there is a realization of that fact; they have embarked on a number of innovative strategies to speed track service delivery. The one respondent mentioned that

*‘they have started to look at how they can maximize the existing funds and improve outputs, we identify low volume roads and we don’t construct them in a way that we would construct a high volume road however maintain quality.’*

There was a view that strategy should be devoid of political bias. One of the main stakeholders is the political stakeholders whom are a powerful lobby group. Officials are often torn between implementing their plans and meeting the needs of other stakeholders who do not always

necessarily hold of the same views. This leads to poor planning of projects, and a reactive more than a proactive approach.

Strategy acceptance and endorsement was highlighted as a major priority. This was due to the fact that the participants felt that the strategy was not easy to understand. Their strategic goal of - creating quality living environments is so broad that one can attach to it a vast number of elements. But consultation with the community and community buy-in is a crucial element that is required, if this does not happen, implementation will be extremely difficult if not impossible.

The most common factors were as follows.

- The technical skills shortage within the unit. There is a shortage of Engineers in the country. *The private sector is competing with the public for these scarce skills.* Some mentioned that there are a lot of positions from the people that have left the organization that have not been filled which leaves a gap. It takes a long time for the municipality to fill these positions which affects their capacity to deliver.
- The lack of capacity within the construction industry impacts negatively on the quality negatively on the quality of services delivered. In some instances the unit has to remove the contractor on site who is unable to produce quality work and they then have to get a new contractor on site who will finish the job.
- The red tape in this sector is time-consuming and causes major delays. From land issues to supply chain management processes that take a long time to resolve.  
*‘Our contractors face a lot of challenges such as using local labor who are sometimes not competent and that uses up a lot of additional resources that were not planned for. The joint ventures formed do not always work well and it impacts on delivery, the time spent on the project as well as the quality of work produced.’*
- External parties that have their own interests can also stall a project. All stakeholders are important and you cannot resume unless all issues have been addressed. Some mentioned that if a community is not happy with the project about to be implemented, they will stop the project.

- *‘Finances are also never enough,’*

Financial constraints were a common factor among most respondents. Infrastructure development required huge financial resources and the unit never has enough. There were a select few that mentioned that the municipality was well resourced therefore they did not face much of a challenges with getting their budgets.

- The unit also faces leadership challenges. Not all technical people possess leadership qualities. They also need leadership support from various support services to effectively implement their strategies.

#### **4.5.6 The unit’s activities, systems and processes in terms of alignment to effective strategy execution**

Table 4.6 below shows the issues that were raised when participants were asked on whether the unit’s activities, systems and processes are aligned to strategy implementation.

	Name	Source	References
•	Alignment between various hierarchical strategies	1	1
	- Different strategies emphasise specific aspects	1	1
•	Selected management personnel Accountable to SDBIP	1	1
	- Inapplicable to lower level employees	1	1
•	Use of performance management systems or plans	2	2
	- Process of implementation and change occurring currently	1	1
•	Misalignment occurring	1	1
	- Improvement to be initiated	1	1
	- Variety of independent systems	1	1
•	Strategy duplication	1	1
•	Isolated operation of systems	1	1
	- Duplication of Information Provision Occurs	1	1

•	Challenge to determine intangible deliverable of strategy	1	1
•	Issues with supply chain management processes	1	1
•	Environmental training difficulties	1	1
•	Set timeframes and timelines a challenge	1	1
•	IT infrastructure upgrades occurring and beneficial	1	1
	- Software type depends on department	1	2
•	Placement and use of various systems	2	2
	- Asset Management Register which enables proactive decision-making	1	1
	- Available when required	1	1
•	Particular responsibilities of Depots	1	1
	- A range of maintenance roads	1	1
	- Employment of contractors to fulfill roles	1	1

**Table 4.6 Units' alignment of activities, systems and processes**

The table above highlights the various aspects that came up as a process with regards to alignment. There were mixed views to matters of alignment. Some respondents felt that there are a lot of good systems and activities that are not integrated which enable everyone to work in silos within the unit. Further, *some mentioned that the SDBIP Plan is one of the plans which support the alignment of the vision and the IDP.* There were a selected few that felt that the systems and processes were fragmented and not aligned.

There were mixed responses essentially from two perspectives. Some argued that there were processes and systems in place that were enhancing service delivery. They mentioned that with the Asset Management Register, they were able to have access on all assets on the ground and determine their life span.

*'There are contractual agreements between the unit and various contractors that are long term which enables the unit to respond to urgent needs of the public therefore improve the way we operate.'*

The other view was that the activities, processes and systems were not aligned. One responded suggested the following.

*‘The systems existing were effective however they were also fragmented, duplicated and not aligned, there’s nothing that pulls it all together like an ERP system.’*

Some mentioned that there was a performance management system that promotes alignment. The IDP and the Strategic Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) creates the alignment of their activities.

Some respondents mentioned that the performance management measures the performance of the workforce which is sometime the municipality never use to have. They see it as good process however it does tend to be subjective. Some questioned whether it is done in an efficient.

*“It was mentioned by some respondents that it is time consuming they are not sure whether it really measures how close we are to the vision.”*

#### **4.5.7 The impact of institutional arrangements on strategy execution**

Throughout the literature, it was revealed that institutional arrangements play a big role in ensuring alignment for effective strategy implementation. From the day to day decision to the strategic decisions on projects have an impact on outputs. Table 4.7 below stipulate the issues raised with regards to institutional arrangements.

	Name	Source	References
•	Appropriate Structure	2	2
•	Greater knowledge and information provided in the past	1	1
•	Increased size of municipality, decreased information and detail	1	1
•	Mandate being delivered	1	1
•	Encouragement of changes to improve efficiency	1	1
•	High quality of employees in various areas of specialty	1	1
•	Numerous tasks a challenge to manage	1	1

	- Designated departments for particular functions	1	1
•	Monthly meetings and forums	1	2
•	Structure not currently aligned to strategy	1	1
•	Asset management important	1	2
•	Vacancies in crucial positions problematic	1	1
•	Increased centralization	1	2
	- Due to compliance requirements	1	1
•	Decentralisation required	2	2
	- Cross departmental functioning needed	1	1
•	Inappropriate positioning of employees	1	1
	- Lack of middle management employees	1	1
•	Balanced structure	1	1
	- Larger quantity of senior employees	1	1
	- Negative effect on strategy implementation	1	1
•	Non-biased Performance Management Tool required	1	1
•	Supply Chain Management important	1	1
	- Possibility of delays	1	1
•	Expense of empowerment perspective	1	1
•	Limited influence	1	1
•	Lack of swift decision making	1	1
•	Yearly performance target set and agreed upon	1	1
•	Particular decisions required from non-managers periodically	1	1

**Table 4.7 Institutional Arrangements**

Some the respondents mentioned that the municipality is structured fairly well. There was a view that the increase in size of the municipality has decreased the level of information which has created a vacuum at the operational level to fulfil some of the strategy. Some felt that there's inappropriate positioning of employees where some of the major projects have a lot of junior employees. The centralisation of some of the key support services sometimes delays the projects.

It was also mentioned that the red tape involved in some of the processes with so much focus on compliance often leads to management being reluctant to make decisions.

When the respondents were commenting on the structure of the unit, they mentioned that the non-replacement of the Deputy City Manager has impacted negatively on their pace of delivery because it is that role that has great influence with the top leadership of the municipality. However the current leadership of the unit has done fairly well to push the agendas of the Engineering Unit considering that barrier. From a different perspective some mentioned that the absence of a Deputy City Manager is great from a structural point of view because they have reduced the bureaucratic layer to get through to the City Manager.

The centralisation of procurement causes major delays when executing projects. The municipality is too compartmentalized.

*‘Everybody works in siloes and there isn’t freedom to assist people in what they’re doing cross departmentally.’*

Further some felt that the structure of the unit is not aligned to the strategy.

Some argued that some key Engineering Unit projects were not placed in the right place institutionally due to the lack of human resources in those sections.

In terms of decision making within the unit, most respondents felt that there is a great need for more delegation of responsibilities. The decentralisation of decision making could improve the pace of service delivery. Some mentioned that decisions were made in a democratic way.

#### **4.5.8 The effectiveness of the way performance is measured to ensure that the strategy is implemented**

The majority of respondents felt that the performance management system was highly subjective and could easily be manipulated. The argument behind this view was that it was possible for the assessor to assign a high ranking to employees they were in favor of. Apart from the subjectivity

of the system, some were of the view that the system was very time-consuming and further mentioned that the variance between the rankings of performance can be quite high. One respondent suggested the following.

*“There are numerous statistical audits that are time consuming. It leads to a change in focus from the overall strategy to the targeted numbers that have to be reached.”*

Some felt that the municipality has a good performance management system because previously there was not much in terms of evaluation of performance. There was also a feeling amongst some participants that the performance management system needs to be interrogated because of the reasonably unchallenging targets employees normally set out for themselves.

#### **4.5.9 The existence of strategic capabilities within the unit to effectively execute the strategy**

The aim of this question was to ascertain the human, financial and physical capabilities that exist within the unit. Most respondents felt that there were challenges in all those areas.

The respondents had this to say with regards to strategic capabilities, see Table 4.8.

	Name	Source	Reference
•	Employment of highly skilled and competent personnel	1	1
	- Necessary to retain and maintain employee compliment	2	2
•	Need to evaluate organizational structure	1	1
•	Lengthy procurement process	1	1
•	Greater training and employee development required	1	1
•	Employment of appropriate and qualified personnel required	1	1
•	Employment of appropriate and qualified personnel required	1	1
•	Numerous Challenges	1	

	- Financial	3	4
	- Human Skill and Capacity (large area to operate in)	2	2
	- Employee retention	1	1
	- Leadership (Emphasis on leadership development necessary)	1	1
•	Focus on the development of employees	2	2
•	Current lack of strategic resources	1	1
	- Absence of critical positions of employment	1	3
•	Sufficient operational resources	1	1
•	Unit currently experiencing issues	1	1
	- Ageing employee compliment	1	1
	- Insufficiently skilled employees	1	1
	- Skills transfer dilemma	1	1
•	Adequate employee skills and abilities	1	1

**Table 4.8 Strategic capabilities**

There was not much mentioned with regards to any physical capabilities from the responses. It was mostly stated by the respondents that there was a skills shortage of professional engineers within the Unit. There was also a skills gap of highly experienced senior professionals to the lower level employees. The fact that the older more experienced professionals will soon be out of the system due to retirement causes major concerns with regards to the technical capacity of the unit. Most of the respondents mentioned that there is a great need to focus on the development of employees.

Most of the respondents mentioned that on the major constraints if the sufficient financial resources. They also mentioned that one cannot equate how many people to service because of the influx of people coming into the urban areas. There is always a need for more budget.

They mentioned the following issues.

From human capabilities, some of the issues raised were as follows.

- There is a lack of technical capacity within the unit. There is a big experience gap between the young and the old personnel. This raised a lot of concern with regards to the future and they mentioned that there is a great need for transferring of skills. They mentioned that there was a need to maintain technical competence. The environment however does not necessarily enable the transfer of skills due to the extensive lead period in filling critical posts. There was a great concern that the unit would lose a lot of experienced workforce due to retirement.
- Some mentioned that the unit is highly recognized in the country for its technical competence.
- From a different perspective some raised concerns about the leadership. It was mentioned that the leaders focus exclusively on operational issues rather than focusing on strategic matters.

#### Financial Capabilities

Most respondents mentioned that they faced had financial constraints due to the infrastructure backlogs that require recourses that are not sufficient. The one responded stated

*‘We need to look at how we will realise this great vision with the resources that we have.’*

A few participants mentioned that as much as there are challenges in terms of finances, the municipality is well resourced.

#### Physical Capabilities

There was not much mentioned with regards to the physical capabilities.

#### **4.5.10 Role of leadership in strategy execution**

This was the one question that some of the respondents were quite hesitant at responding to this question. Initially, most respondents discussed the characteristics of good leadership and agreed

that they played a very important role in strategy implementation. They mentioned the challenges that they experience from other supporting departments that hinder successful implementation.

They require leaders that would motivate employees to improve performance. Some suggested that not all technical people are great leaders. This is a skill that needs to be nurtured amongst technical employees as it is an important trait in management. Some were of the view that there are leaders that highly motivate their staff and it's creates good working relationships.

The issue was raised regarding the lack of communication skills among some leaders and it highly affects the motivation amongst the workforce. Some mentioned that the lack of communication can sometimes cause mistrust between the leaders and employees.

The respondents argued that there is not much emphasis on leadership development amongst technical staff which is essential. They also stressed that you need strong leadership that will be able to attend to the political challenges they face as this shifts the focus of the people working on the ground.

Some respondents mentioned they had a great leader for the Unit who showed democratic leadership. All respondents were of the view that leadership skills are important to all levels of management.

## **4.6 Thematic analysis of qualitative data**

### **4.6.4 Identification of themes**

The purpose of the research design was mainly to understand people's experiences, and the way strategy has been implemented within the Engineering Unit. Thematic analysis was used and NVivo analysis was a helpful tool to code and sub- code information from the transcript.

NVivo has the following processes (O'Niell, 2013):

- 1) Descriptive: Input data sources into the NVivo
- 2) Coordinate and code the data
- 3) Analytical: Analysing and querying the data
- 4) Conclude answers from your data

#### **4.6.5 Core themes**

The themes identified were as follows: (1) Understanding of the organizational strategy and its implementation, (2) Challenges in strategy implementation, (3) Alignment for strategy execution, (4) Strategic capabilities, (5) Factors for effective strategy implementation. The first theme describes the overall understanding of the strategy and how it has been implemented within the unit. The second theme undertakes to determine the challenges faced in strategy implementation. The third theme explains alignment strategies by the unit from the various systems, activities and processes to how performance is evaluated. It further looks into institutional arrangements and its impact on strategy execution. The fourth theme identifies the strategic capabilities such as the physical, financial and human capabilities within the unit. The fifth theme explains the fundamental factors for strategy execution and seeks to understand whether the unit has adhered to those factors. The themes will be discussed in detail in relation to the research questions. The ultimate goal is to evaluate strategy implementation within the Engineering Unit.

##### **4.6.5.1 Theme 1 – Understanding the organizational strategy and its implementation**

The participants had diverse views on the organisational strategy. Most respondents mentioned that the Engineering Unit's strategic goals are related to the IDP, Point Three plan which is about creating quality living environments. The participants indicated that the unit has recorded numerous achievements in implementing the strategy however they are operating in a very dynamic environment which hinders effective strategy execution.

##### **4.4.2.1 Theme 2 - Challenges in strategy implementation**

The respondents discussed various internal and external challenges which form a barrier in their operations. The challenges include the lack of strategic resources and to political interference. It was often mentioned that both of these stakeholders have the same goal which is to deliver services however the conflicting strategies used to achieve that goal often hamper service delivery. Local government has a 5 year election cycle. The pressure mounting from election period often leads to many changes to the strategic projects initially planned.

#### **4.4.2.3 Theme 3 - Alignment of strategy execution**

The theme is responding to aspects of alignment of systems, activities and processes; institutional arrangements as well as performance management. There were similarities in the responses of the participants where most of them felt that there were good independent systems which were not aligned. There were a few participants that felt otherwise in this regard. Most respondents felt that the performance management system was time consuming and had an element of bias. The respondents felt that there was a need for more delegation and the structure needed to be improved.

#### **4.4.2.4 Theme 4 – Strategic Capabilities**

One of the main challenges that the unit is facing is the shortage in capacity with regard to human resources. The respondents were of the opinion that they have challenges with regards to insufficient human resources capacity and huge shortages in financial resources. Strategic capabilities such as the physical, financial as well as the human capabilities are important for any organization to have a competitive advantage.

#### **4.5 Summary**

The chapter gave a detailed discussion on the data collection strategy the how the interview questions were constructed. There were 10 questions asked to 7 participants from junior, middle to top level management.

The respondents were mostly open in responding to questions with a lot of similarities in responses to strategy implementation. They experienced obstacles such as the lack of technical capacity within the unit. They were mostly concerned about the skills gap that exist within the unit and felt that there is a great need for transferring of skills to not lose that technical capacity. The respondents were of the view that there were areas of improvement in leadership among technical employees as well as leadership from the support services. The unit is undertaking various initiatives to improve the systems to ensure alignment of strategy. Their understanding of the organisational strategy was mainly a focus on service delivery and improving the quality of life for eThekweni citizens.

## 5. CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion on the research findings of the study. The discussion revolves around the themes identified in the responses. The questions formulated aimed at responding to the following objectives:

- To determine the extent of strategy implementation within the unit
- To establish the challenges faced by the unit in strategy implementation
- To establish whether or not the organizational activities are aligned to effective strategy execution; and
- To establish the fundamentals factors of effective strategy execution

### 5.2 Theme1: Understanding of the organizational strategy and its implementation

In responding to the strategic documents of the municipality which are the IDP and the Long term Development Plan, the respondents had very diverse views about what the corporate strategy of the organization and the functional strategic objectives of the Unit were.

Some respondents mentioned that as Unit, they are responding to Point Plan 3 of the IDP which speaks to “Creating Quality Living Environments” (IDP Review, 2013/14). They pointed out that the wording of this document is so broad that different readers could arrive at different interpretations of its meaning. A similar comment was made with regards to the vision ‘*eThekweni will be Africa’s most liveable city by 2030*’. From a different perspective, some respondents mentioned job creation, promoting equity within the organisation. It is important for management to have a clear understanding of the strategy of their organisation. It was noted that the Engineering Unit have an SDBIP which stipulates the projects and the targets. It does not have a functional strategy which clarifies the strategic goals of the unit. Departments have individual plans for various functions within the Department. There is a need for the unit to investigate the benefits of having a strategic plan. The absence of such investigations could be

the reason why there were such diverse views when the participants responded to the question of organisational strategy.

According to Berkeley and McGregor (2014), a good strategy provides aspiration and clarity. Whether it is for business or for a function within a business, it helps to inspire change. It creates a sense of purpose, improves operations and encourages maximum value to be delivered to the overall organisation.

In terms of the implementation of the strategy, most respondents were of the view that the Engineering Unit has done well considering the obstacles that they are presented with such as the leadership challenges, lack of technical capacity, sufficient financial resources and political interference. With the acknowledgement of the fact that there are major infrastructure backlogs, progress has been made. It is also noted that infrastructure development is long term and most of the projects such as the construction of roads can take a couple of years from planning to the execution stage.

eThekwini municipality can be commended for the achievements it has made with regards to infrastructure development of which the Engineering Unit played a critical role. They have made numerous achievements ie. Receiving awards for the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and achievements with the 1<sup>st</sup> city to complete the stadium. Nandi Drive which is booming as an economic hub, one of the respondents mentioned the following.

*“One of their projects strategically identified for economic development, building sustainable jobs was the Nandi Drive.”*

The implementation of strategy can be improved with an integrated approach to planning, a more efficient way to doing business. The diverse views in terms of an understanding of the organizational strategy imply that there is a lack of clarity on the organizational strategy. There is a need to all management to communicate with one voice in defining the strategy of the organization.

### **5.3 Challenges in strategy implementation**

It has been mentioned throughout the literature that organisations that are able to overcome their challenges are more efficient and reap great rewards. The municipality is not a profit making

organisation however, an efficient municipality contributes towards building a capable state which is one of the main priorities of the current government. Brown (2010) states that a combination multifaceted policy and programmatic challenges, highly institutionalized settings and administrations systems that are rule-bound can be very limiting to managerial discretion required to develop and implement strategy. However, managers can use the information available to them to deal with the challenges they face.

The respondents mentioned that they face similar challenges to Brown and more such as the lack of resources both financial and human); the ageing skilled workforce, reducing the technical capabilities of the unit; politicians coming too much into the business which affects the way they operate.

In terms of political interference, it requires a collective of strong leadership from within the unit, to the support services. (Siegel, 2010) states that the role of a Chief Administration Officer (CAO) has many hats, from leading down (dealing with employees), leading out (dealing with the public, media and other governments) to leading up (dealing with Mayor and Council). This reveals that the leadership support of the CAO can assist their municipalities to deal with political interference. The possession and utilization of the various power basis increases the potential of a leader towards the achievement of the goals. Harold (2012), states that power is vital part of an organization. Managers cannot be efficient without understanding and using power in a suitable manner. The different forms of power basis include expert power; connection power which can have a political element enables the leader to have great influence over the surroundings. Management need to shift their approach from guiding and leading to shaping and influencing the growth in a certain manner when interacting with others. Good people skills, communication and negotiation skills are essential particularly to people in management positions to be able to tackle issues they face on a daily basis.

The unit has been able to adapt to some of the obstacles such as maximizing on the use of financial resources available. It was mentioned in previously in Chapter 4 that some of the interventions include recycling of asphalt and modifying material when choosing material to use for roads that are not high traffic. It is important that the unit does a cost benefit analysis to

projects undertaken to be able to ascertain the long-term benefits and whether every investment will bring them closer to their vision of being ‘Africa’s most liveable city by 2030.’

One of the most important resources in an organization is the human resources. It has been mentioned in the literature that strong human capabilities can be a competitive advantage to an organization. It is worrying to note that there is a large no. of highly skilled personnel that are leaving the municipality leaving a gap in the technical skills capacity of the unit. It has been noted that there are various interventions such as the Learnership Programme that mentors engineers and technologist new to the profession on the technical and soft skills to develop them into good technical personnel as well as great leaders. What remains a concern is the lack of implementation in terms of succession plan. The following was mentioned by some respondents *“Some highly skilled professionals leave the municipality due to frustrations and no longer have the motivation to stay and mentor upcoming leaders.”*

It is evident that there is no formalized implementation plan in terms of succession. Over the years, the roles of human resources have changed from merely recruiting to Strategic Human Resources functions. Human resources planning needs to be integrated with strategic planning to evaluate the personnel required to fit the strategy. This involves planning of functions such as talent management, succession planning. According Workforce (2013), making succession plan a priority needs to come from the leadership team, but implementation is the role of the Human Resources Department. Further, the HR role is to identify people who fit the culture of the organization and develop the skills to lead the organization in the right direction.

Overcoming the challenges of strategy implementation required concerted efforts within the team. The plans designed for implementation are disrupted by the above mentioned challenges that the unit face on a daily basis which hinders effective implementation. There is a need for more proactive interventions to equip the employees to operate effectively in this agile environment.

#### **5.4 Theme3: Alignment in strategy execution**

There have been various facets of alignment that has been mentioned in the literature review which include aligning of systems to improve performance, alignment of people within the organisation and the alignment of culture. In the interview questions, various facets of alignment

were investigated, from the performance management system, to the leadership, alignment of people and structure and culture of the organization.

There were mixed responses from the respondents where some of them were of the view that the strategy was not aligned and fragmented. Those that were of that view felt that there were a lot of good systems that work in isolation and there is a greater need for integration. There was also a need for alignment of personnel to the strategy such as leadership development (O'Rielly et al., 2010) states that to execute new strategic initiatives, leaders at subordinate levels must reinforce it. From allocating resources, promote buy-in to the strategy and convince employees on the importance of the strategic initiative. There have been several studies that have revealed that where lower level leaders did not support the strategy, they were able to sabotage it. This led to the realization that greater performance from strategic change required both senior and subordinate leaders to effectively communicate the strategy and ensure its implementation.

Some of the respondents mentioned that the frustrations from internal and external influences have decreased the moral and people are less motivated. Creating a positive culture in an organization is essential for greater performance. A positive culture includes open communication, encouraging innovation, various initiatives to motivate employees by rewarding performance. The eThekweni municipality has adopted 11 Batho Pele principles, the three newly added principles include 1) Encouraging Innovation and Rewarding Excellence, 2) Service Delivery Impact and 3) Leadership and Strategic Direction. Management within the unit needs to identify ways to promote these values from the top management level so that the attitudes and values will be easily adopted by all members within the organization. This will create a positive culture within the organization.

Some of the respondents mentioned that the bureaucratic environment reduces the pace of service delivery. They were of the view that there is a need for a more decentralized environment. According to (Sperof et al., 2010), an organizational culture that promotes teamwork and innovation is more aligned to quality improvements, as opposed to bureaucratic, hierarchical cultures that integrally promotes stability and resistance of change which does not promote quality improvements.

The SDBIP has been mentioned by a number of respondents to be the document that assist the unit to ensure that strategy is implemented. One respondent mentioned that *the programme managers will get a performance bonus based on how well they have done on the SDBIP*. Most respondents mentioned that the evaluation of the individual performance plan can be quite subjective. It is important that the unit aligns its business activities to the vision and strategy of the organization, evaluating the unit's performance against strategic objectives, and in the process, improves internal and external communication Stella Leadership (2014). This will assist the unit to ensure that the targets get are aligned to the vision of the organization.

#### **5.5 Theme4: Strategic capabilities**

The topic of strategic capabilities was come up in the discussion with regards to challenges. The respondent mentioned that the shortfall in terms of financial resources hinders strategy implementation and their ability for them to fulfil their vision of being “Africa’s most liveable and caring city by 2030.” At the same time, the Engineering Unit has achieved well in utilizing the existing resources. Their main concern was the diminishing technical capacity due to employees exiting the organization due to various reasons. Yet, these strategic capabilities are essential in any organization, it is important that there is a build- up of these resources within the unit.

The Engineering Unit outsources some of the technical expertise required with organization. As much outsourcing can be an added value to an organization and increase efficiency, it is important that the unit invest in training and development of its existing employees to boost the human capacity of the unit. The National Development Plan (2011) that states that the government faces challenges in terms of building its professional capacity. There is a lot of political interference when it comes to senior posts which lead to a depletion of moral of public service. There is lack of clear growth career paths to ensure reproduction of skills and. This raises questions as to where the next generation of public servants will come from and how specialist professional skills will be reproduced.

## **5.5 Theme5: Factors for effective implementation**

### **5.5.1 Practicality of the strategy**

Some respondents mentioned that there is a need for practicality of the strategy. The Engineering Unit is utilizing the IDP, Long Term Development Goals as strategic documents that guide them in their strategic initiative. They have also mentioned that the SDBIP is an important document that helps to align the IDP and their mandate as the Unit. It becomes apparent that to an extent there is a lack of understanding of the in terms of the strategy of the organization. The IDP is seen as a broad document that cuts across various units which makes it difficult for the unit to understand the strategy.

The Built Environment Performance Plan (BEPP) (eThekweni Municipality: 2014) is a new document that the city has drafted with the hope to get coordination amongst various departments within the Human and Infrastructure Cluster of eThekweni in light of setting clear goals to improve the planning and development of infrastructure. The benefits of developing a functional strategy can be evaluated so that the strategy is clearly understood by all members within the unit. It is important that the unit clearly understands how they will meet the organizations vision from the financial to the human resources required within specific time frames.

### **5.5.2 Strategies devoid of political basis**

There was a view from the respondents that the strategies should be devoid of political basis. It is quite evident that the employees get to a certain level of frustration when there is too much political interference with the abrupt projects initiated from the political stakeholders that they have not thoroughly planned. Political stakeholders are an important stakeholder in local government and there are stakeholder engagement is very important to ensure that there is clear understanding from all parties on the strategic projects that need to be done. Good communication and leadership are important factors required when an organization is working with a variety of stakeholders. Leaders that are required should have a bird's eye view on the needs and demands of the people.

### **5.5.3 Strategic resources**

Necessary resources are required from human to the financial resources. These factors have been widely discussed under challenges and strategic capabilities.

Some of the factors the respondents mentioned included strategy communication. Communication of the strategy is very important to both internal stakeholders. Every member of the organization needs to understand where they fit into the strategy. It is the responsibility of the leader to ensure that there is an endorsement of the strategy from all stakeholders. The respondents also mentioned alignment of strategy components. It is quite evident that the unit and municipality have a lot of plans that are require integration.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the results outlined in Chapter 4. A theoretical exposition was undertaken on the basis of the results and their detailed discussion. The study has found that the Engineering Unit has achieved great progress with regards to the role they have played in infrastructure development. Other municipalities have made interventions to learn from the Engineering Unit through programmes such as the EPWP. What the study has found is that strategy implementation within the unit is progressive however, there is a need for interventions to be undertaken to tackle the challenges that they face in implementing their strategies. The units' processes, systems are fragmented and there is a great need for improvement and integration. There are areas of improvement when it comes to factors of leadership, communication, developing a productive culture. There is a great need for implementation of guidelines from theory perspective to effectively implement the strategy within the unit.

The final chapter will discuss the recommendations.

## **6. CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Translating the strategy into action is a challenge many organizations' face. The translating of the strategy into results requires coordination of efforts of people and processes through various activities (Chetty: 2010). The private and public sector face similar challenges but there are also some challenges peculiar to the public sector that hinder successful implementation. This study aimed to evaluate the strategy implementation in the unit.

The objectives of this empirical research were as follows:

- To determine the extent of strategy implementation within the unit
- To establish the challenges faced by the unit in strategy implementation
- To establish whether the organizational activities are aligned to effective strategy execution
- To establish the fundamentals factors of effective strategy execution

This chapter will outline the implications of this research, recommendations to solve the research problem and recommendations for future studies.

### **6.2 Summary of Thesis**

This research began by introducing the study which was on the evaluation of strategy implementation within the Engineering Unit of eThekweni Municipality and highlights the need for the study. The second chapter reviewed the literature on strategy execution. It focused on strategy management as a practice, challenges in strategy implementation, components of strategy execution, and alignment of strategy and framework for strategy execution. The third chapter discussed the research design and methodology employed which was qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews were the data collection method utilized. The fourth chapter covered the presentation of data analysis which made conclusions under the themes of understanding of organizational strategy and its implementation, challenges with strategy

implementation, alignment of strategy execution, strategic capabilities and factors for effective strategy execution. The fifth chapter discussed various factors and findings within those themes. This chapter will reveal the conclusions on this study.

### **6.3 Implications of this Research**

This research evaluated how strategy had been implemented within the Engineering Unit of eThekweni Municipality. The information will hopefully help the organization to establish whether or not it is effectively implementing its strategy in order to realise its vision of being the most caring and liveable city by 2030. This study was significant as it highlighted the challenges faced by the organization and identified the fundamental factors required for effective strategy execution.

This study will add value to strategy professionals as well as to managers who seek to improve strategy implementation within their organizations. It will further add knowledge to the academia and identify areas of further research in strategy implementation.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

As a result of the findings, it is evident that factors for strategy execution need to be strengthened. The Engineering Unit would benefit from using factors of effective strategy implementation mentioned in the literature to build its capacity to improve its performance and service delivery. The following factors were identified:

#### **6.3.1 Institutional Memory**

Organisations face a high employee turnover rate through retirement, employees finding new jobs or relocating, which results in loss of institutional memory. Employees that are highly knowledgeable with lots of experience sometimes leave the company without the organization having programmes in place to counter the loss (Penna: 2013). This tends to affect the competitive advantage of the organization. The National Development Plan (2013), states that there is a great need to build a competent public service. Local governments are faced with an enormous task which is to deliver services and to address the infrastructure backlogs of the past.

It is evident that there is a gap in within the Engineering Unit has an ageing workforce that is highly experienced and at the same time there are employees that are new to the profession. The gap leads to the need to retain an institutional memory. It is acknowledged through the talent management strategy that programmes of succession and talent management are being designed. The process of implementation of succession plans needs to be fast-tracked so as not to further loose institutional memory. There are technology systems such as the ERP /Business Intelligence that has the capacity to store data which can be used for long-term service. Some programs can store information for the organization when employees are about to retire. This will enable the unit to forward plan the mentorship before the experienced personnel leave the organization.

Documentation of procedures is important to enable newcomers to be induced into the system so as to not affect service. Not all departments within the unit have clear procedures for system implementation. The existing procedures should further be clearly understood by all members if the organization and effectively communicated. Penna (2013) further mentions that knowledge can be transferred through observation of work units, employee communication, work processes, alternative ways to get the work done and the use of technology.

A strategic approach to maintaining institutional memory is the following (Ashkenas, 2013).

- To build an explicit strategy to maintain the knowledge of the institution, even within a team. It is important to build the knowledge base of the team as well as the business unit.
- “Identify the few key things that you want every member of your team to know and be able to do – and figure out how to turn this from an implicit assumption to an explicit expectation.” Ashkenas (2013)
- Utilize technology to develop a process where your team will automatically capture and curate institutional memory

### **6.3.2 Capacity Building**

The human resource management in local government is often weak. There are often poor recruitment practices, many posts for a critical position, and political interference in the appointment and dismissal of personnel. Municipalities struggle to attract and retain technical skills and often have poor performance management systems (Ajam, 2013). The Engineering

Unit needs to determine the kind of people they require to fulfil their strategic goals from the academic credentials, experience to personality traits. Personality influences factors such as leadership and how people respond to change.

Further, the unit needs to be selective to the training offered to employees. The goal must not just be to meet the training targets however it should be part of the long term development of their workforce. There has to be promotion of long-term studies for people to develop their skills and build a learning organization.

The unit needs to do a cost benefit analysis on projects and ensure that the focus is always on the projects aligned to the strategy.

### **6.3.3 ERP and Business Intelligence**

The use of business intelligence enables information to be collected from multiple sources such as suppliers, customers, patterns and industries that analyses relationships and trends for strategic decision making. It also has the capabilities to incorporate all types of internal and external variables to depict business performance Baltzan (2010). There has been numerous changes that have been done by ERP vendors to adapt the system to benefit the public sector (Beal and Prabhakar: 2010). Adalakun (2012) suggests that ERP can be used with a component of Business Intelligence to apply tools such as Data Warehousing. Data Warehousing is described as a database that retains information from various systems in a clean, constant format that is utilized for On-Line Analytical Processing (OLAP). Sub-tools such as dashboards can be used to show organizational performance.

The Engineering Unit would benefit from the use of these tools. ie. Tracking performance on the construction of road as well as on projects that require various inputs from several departments to provide useful information to be used for decision making.

#### **6.3.4 Strategic HR interventions**

It is suggested that an analytical scan of the workforce within the unit should be conducted which can assist HR to extract relevant information on human resources capacity. As mentioned throughout the literature, the implementation of this task should be undertaken by the HR department and initiated by the respective departments. This will assist the Unit to develop a succession plan for the unit. Information can be extracted on the statistics of staff closer to retirement and of their existing skills sets. This will minimise the challenge of non-filled posts as it will improve planning. Information technology such as the use of the ERP system is one of the tools that can be used to ensure efficiency of the process.

#### **6.3.5 Development of a functional strategy for the unit**

It is suggested that a strategic document be developed for the unit that will be aligned to the IDP to provide a strategic focus for the unit. The Balanced ScoreCard for the unit will complement the strategy. Johnson, Whittington and Scholes (2011), state that business strategy is not only important to the private sector but also to charities and to public sector organisations as they cooperate and compete. Managers need to consider how business strategies can be sustained looking at the various strategic capabilities.

A functional strategy can assist the Business Unit to clearly define what they do to support the vision of the organization, their strategic focus and what strategic capabilities they require to reach their strategic goals.

#### **6.3.6 Stakeholder Engagement**

The unit is experiencing many of challenges related to a lack of stakeholder engagement. It is suggested that the unit aligns its stakeholder engagement processes more closely to stakeholder expectations. This requires constant communication with all stakeholders to keep them in the loop with the latest developments regarding projects as well as with information on future projects. All political stakeholders need to buy-in to the strategy and future strategic projects and understand the reasons behind selecting various strategic projects. This would be undertaken to gain their full support.

Clearly defined standard operating procedures with regard to community engagement will ensure all employees fully understand the processes to follow.

### **6.3.7 Leadership**

In the opinion of (O Rielly et al., 2010) most studies of leadership have focused on the CEO and upper-level leadership. However there are various levels of leadership. The upper level leaders should influence the way the lower-level leaders translate and disseminate information on the organisation's strategy. This will enable the organisation to speak with one voice and this will translate into action. It is important that the executive leaders provide clear messages about the strategy for better implementation.

It would benefit employees at management levels to attend leadership courses frequently to hone their leadership skills. Leadership coaching is a form of personal training that enhances leadership skills through a developmental process. This emerging practice of leadership coaching has been found to increase the success of managers and to improve the quality of the workforce (Harper, 2012).

### **6.3.8 Culture**

Organisational culture has a great influence on how employees conduct themselves in the workplace. Leaders have an important role to play in creating a certain culture within the organization. The notion of organizational culture requires that management acknowledge the relationship between organizational culture and its impact on employee-related variables such as strategy implementation, performance, dedication, cohesion and satisfaction (Seyed, A.A.A., Yashars,s., Mohammadreza, D. and Jamshid A, 2012). It is further mentioned that the chain which leads to effective implementation is comprised of communication, interpretation, adoption and enactment. From a different perspective, (Sabourin, 2012), suggests that organisations need to develop a corporate culture in which people value strong leadership and strive to create it. It is essential that organisations institute a culture of leadership.

The Engineering Unit would benefit from the above-mentioned factors. Improving communication and interpretation will promote a greater understanding of the strategy and; it

will promote knowledge sharing and motivate the workforce to increase productivity. The eThekweni Municipality Batho Pele include the following values: Consultation, Service Standards, Access, Courtesy, Information, Openness and Transparency, Redress, Value for money, Encouraging Innovation and Rewarding Excellence, Service Delivery Impact and Leadership and Strategic Direction (eThekweni Municipality, 2014). These principles are service delivery principles that promote good values that will harness a positive work ethic. It is important that management lead by example to put these principles into practice.

### **6.3.9 Balanced Scorecard and Strategy Map**

The Balance Scorecard assists managers and other stakeholders to focus their attention of strategic issues and on the implementation of the strategy. The Scorecard is helpful to articulate the strategy (Hough, 2011).

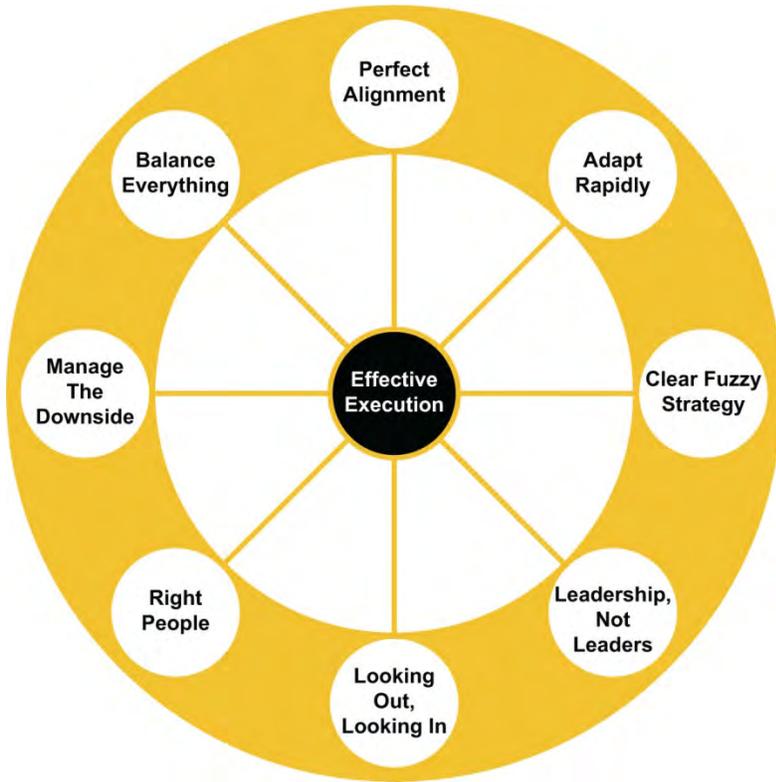
The Scorecard and strategy map have the following benefits

- Maps articulate strategy at a corporate and business level
- They illustrate integration of the strategy throughout the organization
- They aligning of the strategy with the performance to ensure coherent benchmarks and improved reporting
- They provide improved communication of the strategic objectives
- They gear all staff towards the goals of the organization

As mentioned by Bagle and Lewis (2014) in the review of literature, the Balanced Scorecard can be implemented in this fashion in the public sector. It would not only benefit the Unit however the entire eThekweni Municipality would benefit from being perfectly aligned.

In order to develop a strategic map, the managers need to outline their objectives which fit in under the various score card perspectives and describe the cause and effect chain between these objectives.

### 6.3.10 Effective strategy execution – The Winning Framework



**Figure 6.1** – The winning framework for achieving organizational excellence (Cocks, 2010: 262)

Figure 6.1 shows a model that promotes successful strategy implementation. The elements include perfect alignment, leadership, looking out-looking in, clear fuzzy strategy, right people, balancing everything, managing the downside, adapting rapidly. The elements of the wheel in this model are connected in order for it to work and lead the organisation towards its goals. The model has an integrated approach in that there is no start or finish. All elements have to work for it to be successful states (Cocks, 2010). This application of this model could reap great rewards for the eThekweni Municipality.

A lot of respondents mentioned that the municipal environment is very dynamic with so much of pressure from the political stakeholders especially closer to the elections.

## **6.4 Recommendations for future studies**

For future studies, the following suggestions are provided below:

- Opportunities exists on research on the strategy development process of eThekweni Municipality
- Empirical studies done on strategy execution to junior, middle and top management using the mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative studies to get more views from a large number of participants at a management level.
- Research can be undertaken on the evaluation of performance management system within the municipality looking at the various evaluation techniques
- A study was done on strategy execution in the public sector. Future studies can be undertaken on strategy implementation in a private sector.
- Future studies can focus on stakeholder engagement process in the public sector

## **6.5 Summary**

The study on the evaluation of strategy implementation within the Engineering Unit focused on how the implementation is undertaken benchmarking with strategy implementation principles in the literature. The data collected was very useful in a way that it did reveal some of the shortcomings in strategy implementation. It would be beneficial if the study included the performance evaluation processes to benchmark the goals and the deliverables.

The recommendations outline factors such as Institutional Memory, Capacity Building, ERP and Business Intelligence, Strategic HR Interventions, Developing a functional strategy, Stakeholder Engagement, Leadership, Culture, Balance Scorecard and Strategy Map, The Winning Framework.

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## **7. ANNEXURES**

### **7.1 Annexure 1: Interview Schedule**

1. What is your understanding of the organisational strategy?
2. In your view, to what extent has the strategy been implemented?
3. In your own perspective, what do you think are important factors that are required for successful strategy execution?
4. Do you think that the unit has adhered to those factors? Please explain your reasons?
5. What are the challenges faced by the unit in strategy implementation?
6. How are the units activities, systems and processes aligned to effective strategy execution?
7. What impact has institutional arrangements placed on strategy execution?
8. How effectively is performance measured to ensure that the strategy is implemented?
9. What strategic capabilities does the unit have to effectively execute the strategy?
10. What role has leadership played in strategy execution?



**Informed Consent Letter 3C**

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

Dear Respondent,

**MBA Research Project**

**Researcher:** Phumla Mkhabela (073 763 8788)

**Supervisor:** Christopher Chikandiwa (031-260 8882)

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

I, Phumla Mkhabela, am an MBA student, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership of the University of KwaZulu Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled **“An evaluation of strategy implementation in the Engineering Unit of eThekweni Municipality”**. The aim of this study is to evaluate the extent of strategy implementation in the Engineering Unit of eThekweni Municipality.

Through your participation I hope to understand the extent of strategy implementation within the unit as well as the challenges you have faced in strategy execution. The results of the interview are intended to contribute to effective strategy implementation in order to improve service delivery in eThekweni Municipality.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this interview. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above.

The interview should take you about 45 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to complete this interview.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

**MBA Research Project**

**Researcher:** Phumla Mkhabela (073 763 8788)

**Supervisor:** Christopher Chikandiwa (031-260 8882)

**Research Office:** Ms P Ximba 031-2603587

**CONSENT**

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

**Additional consent**

Audio-record my interview

YES

NO

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....



30 September 2014

Mrs Phumla Charmaine Mkhabela 212561994  
Graduate School of Business and leadership  
Westville Campus

Dear Mrs Mkhabela

Protocol reference number: HSS/1062/014M

Project Title: An evaluation of strategy implementation in the Engineering Unit of eThekwin Municipality

**Full Approval – Expedited**

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted **Full Approval**

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project; Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. **PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the school/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.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

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

/pm

cc Supervisor: Christopher Chikandiwa  
cc Academic Leader: Dr E Munapo  
cc School Admin: Ms Zarina Bullyraj

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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