Innovating management through strategy execution in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs

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ABSTRACT

South Africa's democratic dispensation has for 24 years focused on policies enhancing service delivery with policy development and legislation. Policy implementation amidst socio-economic realities had not produced desired outputs and outcomes. A study was conducted to determine organisational factors related to strategy execution at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environment Affairs (KZNDAE). The empirical case study explored the prevalent issues. Research theorised the content, context, clients/coalitions, commitment and capacity known as the 5C Protocol of policy implementation including the South African Excellence Model contextualised in digital preparedness of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Participatory Action Research included 260 questionnaires quantitatively through purposive sampling yielding a 90% response rate and 20 interviews qualitatively through mixed methods including focus group discussions. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test proved strong relations amongst three organisational factors, corroborated through statistical, thematic and content analysis. A Six 'Rights' Strategy Execution Model is conceptualised facilitating innovative, effective and efficient service delivery linked to organisational performance and strategy. The study found a gap exists between strategy development and strategy execution and attempted to close it. The Department is encouraged to increase skills capacity *vis-à-vis'* operational plans curbing risks hindering efficacy of strategy execution and management.

Key phrases

Business management creativity; organisational factors; performance and strategy execution

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1. INTRODUCTION

The need for effective strategy execution in public sector organisations is fundamental in enhancing service delivery and promoting good governance. South Africa's democratic dispensation has over the past 24 years focused on progressive policies to enhance service delivery, with policy development culminating in legislation and white papers (Luthuli 2007:1). An empirical study was conducted to examine the execution of strategy in the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs within the Province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZNDAE). The main concerns were level of uncertainty and doubt evident with regard to effectiveness of strategy implementation, and whether formulated strategies are successfully implemented in the KZNDAE.

Transition from policy implementation *to* strategy development and its realisation is complex, involving many people operating at different levels of the public organisation, assert Harrington and Williams (2004:297-306). Gildenhuys (2004:94) states that public policy implementation is a crucial stage, and tests skills and managerial expertise of public servants. The government, in its efforts to improve service delivery, has introduced strategic frameworks and annual performance plans to engage on strategic management processes within public sector organisations. The main role of strategy execution in public sector organisations is to determine how policies and organisational resources are maximised, and contribution to effective service delivery is realised and optimised.

The article commences with an introduction to effective strategy execution, followed by the background to the research problem impacting on organisational performance and poor service delivery. Relevant research questions and objectives are put forward. The theoretical framework commenced with some key legislation, followed by the 5C Protocol placing the study in context together with the South African Excellence model. Strategic management in the public sector is given focus in relation to KZNDAE. Methodological perspectives of Participatory Action Research relating to mixed methods and a triangulation of the study was done. Reliability and validity was ensured through appropriate tools. A conceptual model was put forward with 6 'Rights' followed by recommendations to address identified gaps. The article concludes that leadership ability to execute strategy in an organisation is the key to organisational performance and effective service delivery.

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2. BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

The research problem focused on poor strategy execution and lack of effective utilisation of organisational factors impacting on realisation of pre-determined strategic objectives. The Republic of South Africa (RSA) Constitution, 1996₁ specifies the standards that govern government services. Standards include effective, efficient and economic utilisation of resources. Public administration should be accountable, transparent and development-oriented. Despite the government's major progress in provision of public services, they have been persistently blamed for failure to deliver services to communities that culminate in ongoing protests and riots on various platforms. This also includes several local municipalities across the country. Ferlie and Ongaro (2015:84-90) concur that challenges in public organisational settings are widely theorised from decision-making perspectives and policy implementation. It depends on the particular approach that an organisation decided to adopt, which, in turn, has implications for service delivery. Consequently, a gap exists between strategy development and strategy implementation, implying what is pre-determined as objectives is not effectively realised as intended goals. The fundamental question focuses on how government can transform public service delivery into tangible strategic outputs and outcomes.

The research problem in the South African context focuses on strategy execution characterised by efficiency, effectiveness and economic perspectives regarding utilisation of scarce resources, information and skills capacity amidst increased focus on digital focus in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, interrelated governance and employees' participation in terms of service delivery, maintain Uys and Jessa (2016:184). This could be significantly attributed to deficiency in leadership competencies. Franken, Edwards and Lambert (2009: 49-50) suggest that some organisations realise only two thirds in predetermined objectives owing to deficiencies in strategy execution. Johansen (2016:333-365) observes that strategic management philosophies brought into play by governments to enhance capacities and performance amidst socio-economic and political realities are on the increase. Organisations spend considerable time allocating resources in planning strategy, yet very little of that time is ostensibly spent on implementing strategy successfully. This view is supported by Olivier and Schwella (2018:7) who submit that strategy execution is not given sufficient attention by organisational role players. Hrebiniak in Olivier and Schwella (2018:7) continues by stating that "without effective execution, no business strategy can succeed".

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According to Kamarck (2016:1), oversight is a significant management accountability and political tool. This is part of a larger trend in parliament minimising the role of parliamentarians. The authors hold the view that oversight in policy implementation is significant and could assist in identifying problems before they occur. Kamarck (2016:3-4) indicates that in the absence of capacity to do prospective oversight, government departments are at risk of not effectively realising their mandatory roles. Government has to adopt cost-cutting measures towards realising its National Development Plan, 2030 through Government's Programme of Action (POA) for 2014-2019 that measures the Medium-Term Strategic Framework guiding effective strategy execution. (Uys & Jessa 2016:201-202) maintain that leadership ought to adopt effective integration of key deliveries in order to achieve Government's POA.

3.   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions in the study focused on the following aspects:

- To what extent are strategy execution patterns emerging from the audit reports for the period 2009 to 2012 of the KZNDAE under review?
- What is the impact of the leadership behaviour and what are the organisational factors related to strategy execution at KZNDAE?
- Are public leaders and managers gaining support from other stakeholders during the strategy execution phase?

4.   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of the research was to explore the extent of strategy execution in KZNDAE as a case study, and thereby gauge its effectiveness in relation to the mandate for service delivery. The objectives pertaining to the research included:

- Establish strategy execution patterns emerging from audit reports for the period 2009 to 2012 of KZNDAE;
- Establish impact of leadership behaviour and ascertain organisational factors detracting and contributing to strategy execution amidst the Fourth Industrial Revolution at KZNDAE; and
- Determine the extent of support from other stakeholders in executing strategy.

5.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWO RK

Research undertaken was underpinned by the following theories:

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5.1 Legislative framework governing strategic intent

Existence of public service departments is drawn from the legislative mandate; submit Minnaar and Bekker (2005:120). The KZNDAE executes concurrent functions (agricultural development and environment management) as legislated in the Schedule 4 of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) Constitution, 1996[1]. The Public Service Strategic Framework offers the foundation for executing government interventions aligned with the public service department's resources. Executive authorities including heads of departments and senior management leadership are required to provide a clear 'roadmap' for implementing individual policies in relation to service delivery (Wauters 2017). Section 197(1) of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) Constitution, 1996[1] provides for the establishment of the public service within public administration practices implemented on day-to-day government programmes. Public sector organisations are mandated by the legislative framework with public interest as the primary focus. Government departments are required to be skilled and capable in achieving Government's POA, placing citizens at the core of its service delivery agenda.

5.2 Theorising the 5C Protocol for effective policy implementation

Common variables that are a significant feature of policy implementation informed the theoretical framework to the article. These variables are known as content, context, clients or coalitions, commitment and capacity that are referred to as the famous 5C Protocol Model, that emphasises the role of public policy implementation, submit Brynard in Cloete and Wissink (2000:178). It has significant growth in the development of public management science (Klijn & Koppenjan 2000:2). The 5C Protocol model is fundamental to effective policy implementation, as put forward by Brynard in Cloete and Wissink (2000:178-186). The contextual aspect is an important feature for policy execution and the institutional policy process, and Brynard (2005:659) characterises policy as distributive, regulatory or redistributive. This development has led to an integrated management approach in the implementation of public policies (Klijn & Koppenjan 2000:2). Cloete, Wissink and de Coning (2006:194), suggests that the 5C protocol model signifies the multi-faceted approach of implementation of policies that direct foreseeable relationships among features. This gives expansion to the model, which has to follow expectations of policy development and implementation. The 5C model is contextualised in the context of the research in the next discussion.

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The policy network approach carries out the transformation of stakeholders' insights regarding the nature of social challenges and possible solutions. The policy sets out to realise particular results submits Brynard in Cloete and Wissink (2000:179). The relationship is informed by two important tactics that includes policy goals, such as needs of clients that are satisfied in relation to performance-related goals. This is followed by operating policies which are formulated and aligned to support intended organisational outcomes. According to Cloete *et al.* (2006:197), the content of policy is essential not only in policy intent, but also in its purpose of the end-result. It is critical to find full support from all levels of the organisation when policy transformation is embarked upon, and this can be obtained if the Head of Department is well acquainted with the content of the policy and its importance.

The staff should be involved directly and indirectly, and must have sufficient knowledge of the policy. In this regard, Brynard (2005:649) highlights that in the South African dispensation, policy process has been undertaken through policy transformation, particularly during 1995 to 1996 as a case in point. This policy review process was followed by transformation of public service delivery (1997 to 2003) that focused on policy implementation. The policy gaps cannot be separated from the understanding of the content and contextuality of government in South Africa. Policy implementation is still seen as moving at a slow pace, not addressing prioritised needs and expectations of the public at large. This is the reason for ongoing service delivery protests as alluded earlier in the article and increasing discontent by beneficiaries of public service delivery submits Aphiri (2016:34).

Cloutier, Denis, Langley and Lamothe (2016) urged that a comprehensive study of the strategic execution and its relationship with the realisation of strategic objectives is inadequate. Forman and Argenti (2005: 255) uphold that little attention is paid to the link between strategy, communication and information management. Singh (2014:52) underscores the importance of communication as a significant variable of policy implementation, which was found lacking in the aforementioned link to poor strategy execution. This synergy is deemed fundamental for the Fourth Industrial Revolution public sector manager and the public organisation collectively. Other studies concur with this statement, as well as the influence on other processes, suggest Canning and O'Dwyer (2013) and Hupe (2014). Public sector organisations must address these challenges at strategic and operational levels in order to be effective.

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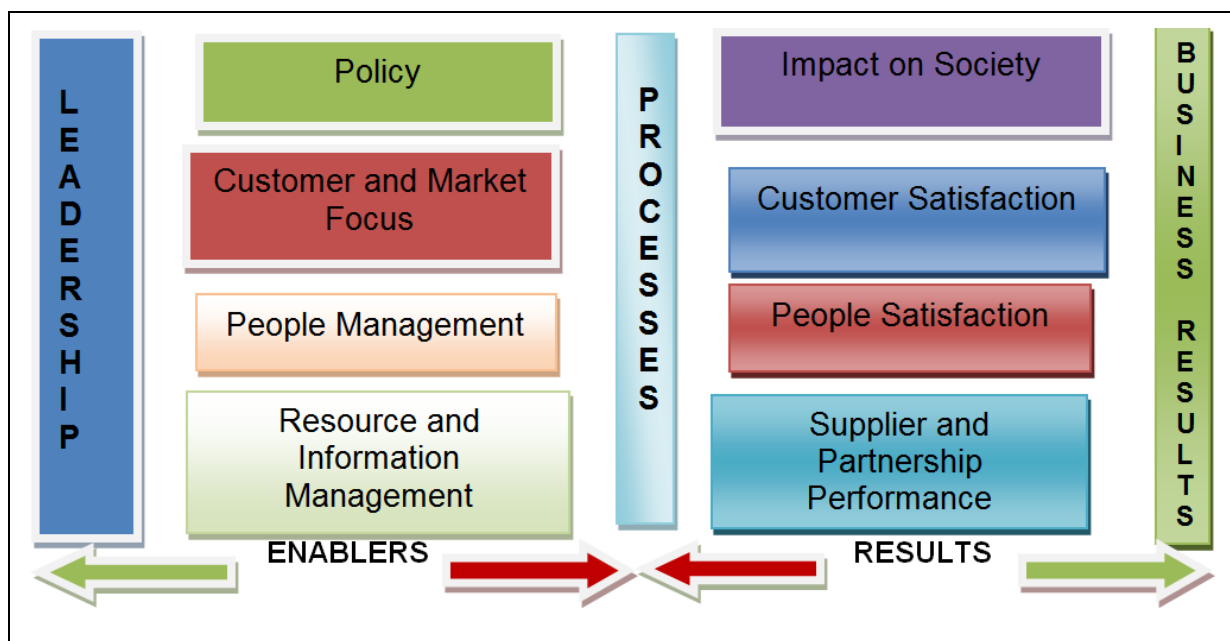
Abdullah (2008:21), maintains that strategy execution demands a diverse thoughtful of management consideration as well, with constant emphasis on managing results, in order to realise organisational objectives. According to Zondi and Reddy (2016:28), strategy application also entails a different reaction to challenges that arise in application as the public expect quality service delivery from public sector organisations. In this regard, sound ethical public leadership and competencies are expected of senior in managers making operational decisions that align with strategy, goals and objectives. Managers coordinating and managing those decisions should be able to reason both tactically and operationally in order to realise Government's Programme of Action through effective strategy execution.

5.3   South Africa Excellence Model

The South African Excellence Model is contextualised focusing on performance 'excellence' in the public sector entities due to the fact that public policy theories are not quite sufficient to explain policies of developing countries (Yang & Miller 2007:21). The South African government's current dispensation has brought the public's contribution and involvement into the budgeting processes focusing on translating political commitments into reality-based service delivery (Reuterner & Fourie 2015:7,9). According to the RSA Public Finances Management Act (PFMA), 1999$_2$ (Act 1 of 1999 as amended), systems in public organisations require transparent fiduciary accountability and effective resources management deemed crucial preconditions for sustained economic growth (Fourie 2016:71). Ensuring that public sector organisations fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with the precepts of the RSA PFMA, (1999$_2$) is fundamental to good governance in public administration. The business excellence model was developed focusing on private sector perspectives in order to enhance productivity but can be applicable to public sector performance.

In this context, Berry (2001:263) indicates that the South African Quality Institute (SAQI) explored quality awards, and the model was developed in 1997 focusing on eleven criteria of performance 'excellence'. The model continues to evolve in the South African public sector relational to performance 'excellence', and level of strategy effectiveness of senior public sector managers. Criteria in this model covers the spectrum of the business environment, submit Strydom and Struweg (2016). The eleven criteria follow in Figure 1 below:

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FIGURE 1:   The South African Excellence Model

Source: Yang and Miller (2007: 21)

Drawn from Figure 1, the South African Excellence Model has three key pillars *namely,* leadership and processes with enablers and results. Leadership focuses on policy, the customer and market, people management, resources and information management, while processes involves impact on society, customer satisfaction, people satisfaction, supplier and partnership performance. These elements have criteria that focus on effectiveness of organisations. The South African Excellence Model classifies a situation, linking facts to patterns, whilst suggesting increased attention to deliverables.

The South African Excellence Model has much complexity and major conceptual shortcomings based on experiences from the private sector often transferred to the public sector. Gaining from the South African Excellence Model's perspective, an explicit element of policy allows the strategy to be revisited and changed as circumstances change. Policy intent and effective policy implementation do not necessarily match, resulting in organisational performance gaps. It is a "private sector type" of an approach that assumes the technology system is available to all senior managers. They may be well-equipped to use information technology when they communicate, but most public sector organisations lack effective technology infrastructure to function with techno-capability and information security as required in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with information-sharing and management becoming ineffective (World Economic Forum (2017:7).

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5.4 Contextualising public sector strategic management

The research focused on execution of strategy contextualised for public sector organisations, with particular reference to the KZNDAE in realisation of pre-determined objectives. As raised earlier in the article, organisational factors relating to effective strategy execution was a focal point. The discussion focuses on the current turbulent environment emanating from the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the need to innovate. The ability to develop and execute new strategies means the difference between effective service delivery and failure on the part of public sector organisations. After comprehensive strategies are developed, significant challenges are often encountered during the strategy execution process. Majority of strategies fail in the strategy execution phase submits Ivančić (2013:199) and the World Economic Forum (2019).

Growing needs of communities coincide with shrinking resources given fiscal and cost-effective means as main concerns contributing to more effective service delivery with shrinking resources. This stimulates government departments to focus on efficiency of services. Public sector organisations have implemented different methods to improve service delivery such as introducing results-oriented approaches, review of organisational structures, introducing performance management systems, including monitoring with oversight focusing on a whole-of-government approach (Colgan, Kennedy & Doherty 2014:33-36).

Pearce and Robinson (2007:3) maintain that strategic management is regarded as the set of senior management decisions and actions, resulting in strategy development, application and monitoring strategic objectives in which organisations function. Strategy execution is regarded as a practice that transforms strategic plans into activities. Pre-determined strategic objectives of the organisation are then effectively realised cohere Thompson and Strickland (2003:365). Contemporary studies find that strategy execution is a prerequisite for effective organisational performance and service delivery is the view put forward by Wauters (2017); Ferlie and Ongaro (2015). It is a considered view that in the KZNDAE, demand for effective service delivery continues to grow as beneficiaries' expectations are continually on the rise.

6.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design and methodology approaches were linked to the objectives of the study. *V*alidity of the end-product was assured. The research emanated from strategy execution challenges observed in the KZNDAE. Understanding the role and importance of

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the research philosophy and design of the study was essential. Consequently, the concepts necessitate some clarification.

6.1   Research philosophy

According to Scotland (2012), understanding application of strategic policies such as strategic management from a research perspective as it pertains to the public service environment, requires both ontology and epistemological focus. Attempting to summarise ideas on paradigms, as highlighted by Scotland (2012:10-14), an ontological and epistemological approach underpinned the research philosophy. The study utilised these research paradigms from both understandings and interpreting them as complementary to the fieldwork investigation. The philosophical consideration informed the research methodology for the study.

6.2   Research design

The research design was to select the methodology followed during the study. The research design depends largely on the suitability and determination of the research undertaken maintains Scandura and Williams (2000: 1248). Mouton (2012:107) upholds that the research design is a schedule to be followed in conducting the study.

The study involved a literature review of contemporary data (secondary), as well as an empirical exploration (primary) data to achieve the research objectives. The methodology was viewed as a systematic process for the research design (Babbie & Mouton 2010:74). Neuman (2000:122) maintains that methodology could encompass both qualitative and quantitative and mixed approaches as applicable in the article. Anon (2003:1), indicates that the aim of qualitative analysis is a detailed description that allows for distinctions to be drawn, as it is not necessary to categorise data into a finite number of classifications. Through Participation Action Research, a mixed methods research design was chosen to conduct the research and increase probability and validity of the study to address the research problem and research questions.

Creswell (2003:211) specifies that a mixed technique is a method of investigation that combines both quantitative (through deductive reasoning) and qualitative (through inductive reasoning) approaches to provide a better understanding of the research problem by converging the mixed method to measure significant relations between variables. According to Creswell (2003:211), the study characterised concurrent triangulation, and the mixed method was viewed as being most appropriate for the study, with quantitative data focused

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on important causal relationships, whereas qualitative discussions simultaneously examined significant relationships between and amongst variables. Understanding of facts from people's experiences in their settings during interviews was significantly captured, submits Garrett (2016:17-19). The empirical study could assist KZNDAE to identify root cause(s) and potential solution(s) to addressing organisational factors for future organisational strategy execution.

6.3   Population and sampling approaches

For the purpose of population and sampling approaches, selection of the portion of people resembles targeted communities, submits Mugenda (1999:41). Describing and defining the sample is representative of the target population. UMgungundlovu District Office was selected as all departmental district services are similar throughout KwaZulu-Natal district municipalities. Two local municipality offices from the six municipalities under UMgungundlovu District Municipality were selected as all local municipalities render similar KZNDAE's services. The chosen Msunduzi Local Municipality encompasses both urban and rural elements under its jurisdiction. The Department services are rendered to communities who reside in both urban and tribal areas. UMshwathi Local Municipality as the other encompasses commercial farming and rural development where department services are rendered, and strategic plans are linked to current national imperatives of agri-reforms and sustainable rural strategies in South Africa.

The research instrument was a structured, self-administered mailed questionnaire. Questionnaires were analysed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 22.0 (SPSS). Twenty senior management services members were interviewed consisting of seventeen males and three female participants. According to Boeije (2010:62), interviews provide the scope, perspective and experiences of the interviewees. Further to twenty interviews, two hundred and sixty questionnaires were administered to senior managers from various identified sectors who are involved with strategy development and execution.

6.4   Ethical considerations

Ethical requirements are the key to ethical integrity of any research project including confidentiality. A study that involved people to provide information has to give due consideration to the way informants are treated (Motsoaledi 2015; Walliman 2005). A gatekeeper's letter granted permission for access to information contributing to the literature review. Ethical clearance was sought from the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Research and

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Ethics Division where the study was approved. Voluntary participation of participants including confidentiality was observed in the research undertaken.

6.5   Assessing reliability of research instrument

Factor analysis assessed validity and Cronbach's Alpha assessed reliability of questionnaires. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was conducted to determine whether adequate correlation exists between individual items contained in the questionnaire. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered as "acceptable". Table 1 below reflects Cronbach's Alpha reliability scores for all items that constituted the questionnaires.

Table 1:   Cronbach's Alpha Reliability

	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha		
		Employees	**Management**	**Users**
C	6 of 6	.714	.696	0.859
D	8 of 8	.871	.835	0.696
E	8 of 8	.762	.788	
F	6 of 6	.647	.747	0.714
Overall	**28 of 28**	**.840**	**.825**	**0.815**

Source: Empirical analysis (2018)

From the results presented, Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine internal reliability of questionnaires. Overall reliability scores for Employees, Management and users exceeds the recommended value of 0.700, indicating a high (overall) degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for various sections of the research. According to Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998:118), Cronbach's Alpha scores measured the reliability and .700 suggests items have relatively high acceptable reliability values yielding minimum required standards to be acceptable in the research.

6.5.1 Summary of research findings

Section C consists of six questions designed to examine opinions of respondents regarding leadership impact on strategy execution for enhancing service delivery in the KZNDAE in the period under review. Challenges of strategy execution could be extended to the current era

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given that output and outcomes linked to strategic plans are deemed ongoing concerns. Date was collated and processed empirically from questionnaires and thematically through interviews. Emerging patterns were categorised in terms of leadership impact to effective strategy execution in Cronbach's Alpha Table 1 in the preceding discussion.

Section D measured opinions of respondents regarding perceived destructive factors to effective strategy execution in KZNDAE. From Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha, respondents differ in their perceptions, as organisational factors were 0.871 for employees and 0.835 for management respectively. Viewed as a reliable instrument, key findings include respondents identifying lack of effective and competent leadership, communication and organisational culture as most important destructing factors to effective strategy execution in KZNDAE.

Section E Cronbach's Alpha revealed scores for all eight items exceeded .700, ranging between 0.762 and 0.788. Scoring indicates respondents viewed leadership behaviour, communication, training and development, performance management, organisational structure and organisational culture as significant contributing factors of strategy execution. From qualitative findings in corroboration, fourteen senior managers stated restructuring processes was not properly communicated. Employees were placed into structures without effective consultation. Restructuring not communicated with strategy resulted in service delivery challenges.

In Section F, Cronbach's Alpha scores for all six items for management and users exceeded 0.747 and 00714 respectively. Availability of information systems to support decision-making in a fast and accurate progress-tracking manner was lacking. Evidently, lack of Intervention and corrective action at the 'right' time, gave credence to the Six 'Rights' Execution Strategy Model, considered key elements of successful strategy execution.

6.5.2 Factor analysis

Quantitatively, factor analysis grouped various items in questionnaires into relevant categories of strategy execution. Results reflected that ineffective leadership was a main distracting aspect, since without effective leadership, ability to lead an organisation's vision and mission is not possible. Qualitatively, senior managers indicated middle managers failed to take necessary steps to execute strategies, and articulate the same goals as that of senior executives. For the KZNDAE's strategies to succeed, strategy should be clearly communicated to all employees and stakeholders with all persons *au fait* with the strategic

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intent of the organisation, and support for the common cause could be realised more holistically than fragmentally.

With the KMO and Bartlett's Test results, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy should be greater than 0.50 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity less than 0.05. In all instances, conditions are satisfied which allows for factor analysis reinforcing the discussion above in relation to employees and stakeholders. This is explained in Table 2 KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity as follows:

TABLE 2:   KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

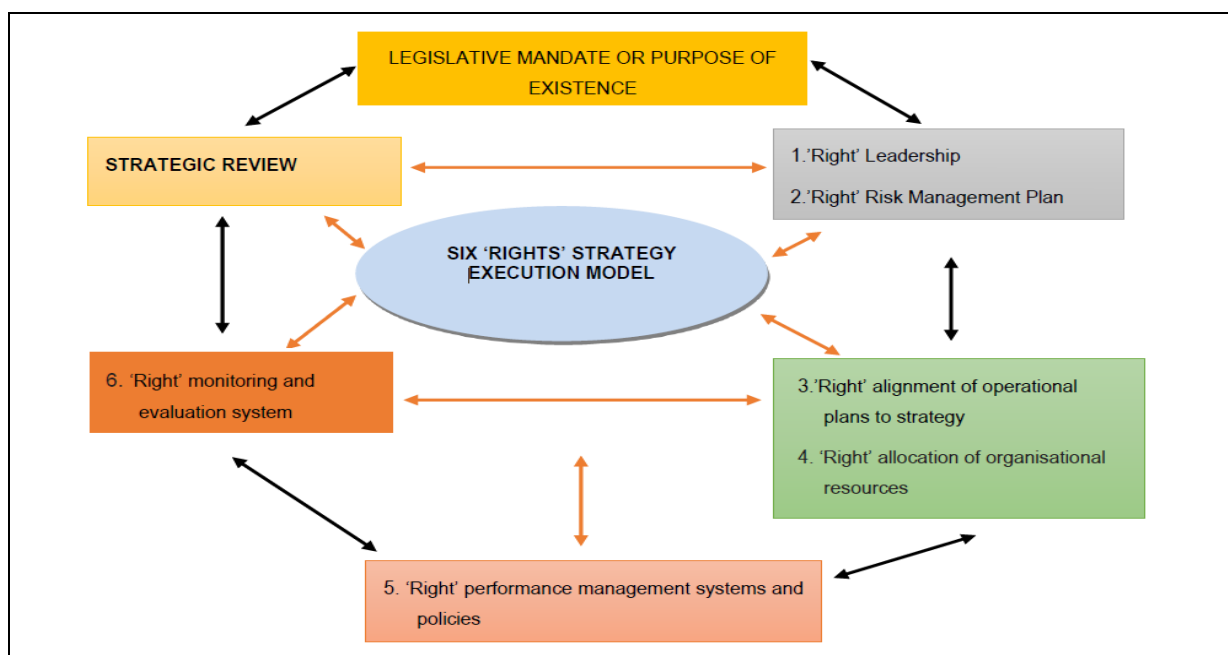| Category	Sections	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
			Approx. Chi-Square	Df	Sig.
Employees	C	.747	346.951	15	.000
	D	.838	622.842	28	.000
	E	.730	744.544	28	.000
	F	.560	216.358	15	.000
Management	C	.701	227.444	15	.000
	D	.786	613.585	28	.000
	E	.791	543.458	28	.000
	F	.563	284.881	15	.000
User	C	.724	213.848	15	.000
	D	.761	398.486	36	.000
	F	.753	149.751	15	.000

Source: Empirical analysis (2018)

Drawing from Table 2, KMO values are greater than 0.700 meaning there is a confirmed presence of sampling adequacy. Results of KMO and Bartlett's Test for all of the conditions are satisfied for factor analysis, and yielded significant levels of less than (p=001) indicating correlation and the *rotated component matrix*.

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7. A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR STRATEGY EXECUTION

This section presents key contributions of the research study, culminating in a conceptual model. The gap between strategic management and operations managers was evident in the research undertaken. Need for innovative managers in the digital dispensation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution are advocated by authors of this article. The Six 'Rights' Execution Strategy Model located in the Fourth Industrial Revolution has been conceptualised to deal with the challenges of the findings, and create value from KZNDAE's intangible intellectual skills capital. The proposed model is a key contribution to the empirical knowledge from the study, and could provide a framework to effectively manage strategy execution in the public sector organisation. The model attempts to facilitate alignment of operations to strategic imperatives so that contribution of operations are coordinated and integrated towards shared KZNDAE strategic goals and objectives. It was evident in the findings however, that few employees either do not know or understand their part within the broader contribution and intent of strategic plans. This is of concern given that public sector employees are one of the largest cost centres of KZNDAE. They did not effectively participate in improving service delivery. Through the model advocated, decisive leadership is warranted as indicated in the Six 'Rights' Strategy Execution Model presented in Figure 2 below:

FIGURE 2:   Six 'Rights' Strategy Execution Model

Source: Authors' perspective (2018)

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Drawn from Figure 2, the guiding concept holds all six key elements of strategy execution. The legislative mandate identifies public sector organisations and its purpose of existence. It clarifies the strategy model to provide the agenda of agriculture and environmental affairs services. A brief discussion of the six key elements follows in context to the focus of the article:

7.1   'Right' leadership

Given public sector organisations' 'failure' in many cases regarding policy implementation in the Republic of South Africa, building and possessing 'Right' leadership should be a priority. The model integrates components that are the key in closing strategy execution shortcomings. The model is the set of integrated strategic-decisions and actionable plans by which a 'Right' leadership expects to do in order to improve organisational performance and organisational value to its clients, as well as effective service delivery deliverables.

Contribution and emphasis in the article is to put into perspective through the key role played by the 'Right' leadership in the strategy execution stage, as an integral process to the overall realisation of the KZNDAE's legislative mandate. The intention of a 'Right' leadership ought to bring people together around a shared mission, and encourage commitment in order to produce a value-added service for all participants and the citizenry at large. The 'Right' leadership qualities required by this model includes the vision, alignment, accountability; commitment; communication both top-down and bottom-up, and the whole value chain management from all contributions. In support of this aspect, strategic development is viewed as a set of concepts, procedures, and tools intended to support leaders and managers with their tasks (Bryson & Alston 2005:3).

Another contribution of the 'Right" leadership is to give effect to information communication technology, as one of the organisational facts that KZNDAE is currently struggling with. Communication binds different stakeholders, actions and permits employees at all organisational levels to work together cohesively towards common strategic goals and results. Communication and information management play a key role during validation of the purpose of existence or legal mandates, high-level service descriptions and client expectations that should be communicated. The proposed model focuses on operations, process and control, strategy outcomes, governance, risk and compliance that must be given due consideration amidst the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Research findings also revealed that strategy development was performed well above the expectations of strategy

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execution. This implies that the strategic plan may look good on paper, but is found wanting in terms of implementation or execution. This "Right" is supported by the view of Olivier and Schwella (2018:10) who believes that poor engagement of management leadership and staff engagement in strategic management is one of the barriers to successful strategy execution.

7.2   'Right' Risk Management Plan

Among the most important strategic-decisions regarding strategy execution, it should be sufficiently broad to cover 'Right' risk management plans attached to pre-determined strategic objectives at different levels of operations. The study employed a Six 'Rights' model to identify a number of strategic risks and develop mitigation responses, including monitoring during strategy execution. The model is practical, yet a methodical perspective into key governance structures through processes required for strategy execution. Complexity of the public sector policies and systems are usually faced with complications and uncertainties that warrant and necessitate adjustments. A risk is an indeterminate incident, and if it happens, it has either encouraging or undesirable consequences on one or more operations, such as time, cost or value.

7.3   Right' alignment of operational plans and strategy

The model provides 'Right' alignment of operational plans and strategy with a thorough analysis of integration of operational plans relating to a strategy, and to identify operational activities that strategy subsumes. The 'Right' alignment processes can be categorised according to organisational components when converting inputs into outputs and outcomes, and positioning the KZNDAE in improving service delivery through executing its strategy effectively. In this discussion, Burnes (2004:503) suggests that the key variable that distinguishes successful from unsuccessful organisations is the presence of a dynamic and effective leadership. Based on 'Right' alignment of operational plans to strategy, is a set of operational activities that needs to be coordinated and aligned to common strategic objectives. According to Killic and Aktuna (2015:105), the strategic management process does not end when an organisation agrees on what strategy to pursue, but is an ongoing process to ensure that performance-oriented outcomes are achieved.

7.4   Right' allocation of organisational resources

The model expected of the leadership in KZNDAE should be knowledgeable on the importance of the 'Right' allocation of organisational resources to be attached to operational activities, and be informed by the 'Right' alignment of operational plans and strategy. It

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requires a 'fit' or 'alignment' between its operations, process and control, including continuous monitoring and evaluation. It is difficult to execute a strategy without adequate organisational resources, and the greater challenge is to realise pre-determined strategic objectives of public sector organisations (Alford & Greve 2017:6-7). One of the greatest challenges encountered in resource allocation, is the attainment of pre-determined strategic objectives as public sector institutions are expected to increase delivery with limited resources, submits the authors to this article.

7.5 'Right' performance management systems and policies

Policies and performance management systems, as well as procedures could be used to identify links between tasks, flow of work and decisions that may be taken. Principles for organisational process is based on employees understanding the systems, and possessing the necessary skills and authority to make decisions and deliver the services. This is a challenge in KZNDAE because beneficiaries are recognised as main stakeholders to effective service delivery and organisational performance; hence Reuterner and Fourie's viewpoint (2015:13) places importance on public participation for effective policy application. This study looks at new contributions proposing the linkage between performance management to operational plan: The intention is to align strategy with operations plans, which will have rules and guidelines. The intention is to map the operational plans linked to the performance management system indicating how an employee will manage tasks. The performance management system will have the performance agreement documenting tasks to be performed. The human resource and frontline services are key components that enable business performance, indicating that people ought to have a good understanding of their job requirements in order to be effective agents of effective strategy execution.

7.6 'Right' monitoring and evaluation system

Public sector organisations have a Constitutional obligation to account to the public through openness and transparency. Public sector managers should be accountable for how they spend public monies. The model can analyse the impact of the strategy execution component, as well as overall capability of the public sector organisation. It can specify strengths and faults in the ability of the public organisation to improve strategy execution. The model indicates that M&E processes follow the 'Right' performance management systems and policies according to the monitoring of performance information available as

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compared to expected results. The 'Right' M&E was introduced into the model for twofold reasons:

- Provide an overview of M&E within the strategy execution model; and
- Act as a monitoring tool to strategy execution interventions.

In the same process, M&E monitors operational plan indicators, measuring progress and reports on any deviations to plans. Effective monitoring and oversight could make it easy to integrate services from daily activities to quarterly reporting, allocate resources where needed, and define core outputs and processes.

8. APPLICABILITY OF STRATEGY EXECUTION MODEL

Given that innovation is critical to organisational success Bankins, Denness, Kriz and Molloy (2016:122), the model in this article is imperative for performance enhancement. Despite the experience of ineffective service delivery, it is possible to execute strategies effectively, and plans into individual actions that are necessary to produce effective service delivery. Public organisations know their businesses, and the strategies required for realisation. The proposed model has a clear linkage of strategic goals, operations, processes and control including M&E. These are considered as fundamental aspects for due consideration of managers required to be aware and conversant of the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, requiring thinking anew about strategy execution. It also resonates with three important focal areas, which includes governance, risk and compliance in the digital age. Several public organisations are struggling to translate their strategies into actions that would enable them to be successfully executed and sustained. It is apparent that being strategic in public organisations often entails the leader having to deal with policies while not being seen to step outside their constitutionally assigned roles. The proposed strategy execution model has the advantage of effective strategy realisation.

9. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in KZNDAE and did not include all KwaZulu-Natal Public Service Departments or other National Departments and state-owned entities. The study did not compare similarities and differences of strategy execution among private-owned organisations and state-owned entities, or multi-national organisations. This is an interesting avenue for future research.

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10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Institutionalising the strategy execution model in the public sector organisation is regarded as a significant mechanism for delivery of public services, since good governance requires effective public sector organisations that are productive, transparent and responsive, submits Fourie (2015:11). Chitiga-Mabugu (2016:166,173) urged that in order to fully comprehend the effects of the variety of public policies, their interconnectivity and cohesiveness serves as a valuable framework established as a tool to understand the policy impacts. This view is not meant to be extensive, but rather descriptive in nature. The focus is then, on the realisation of pre-determined strategic objectives as one of the main challenges facing public sector organisations. Pertinent aspects raised in the article would set the scene for an effective strategy execution model. It could improve the strategic development process by integrating two important phases, regarded as planning and execution.

Strategy execution patterns raised as one of the questions in the study revealed that staff members who are at middle management level are not fully exposed to the strategic planning process, although some are involved to a certain extent. Conversely, those who did not understand the process are more inclined to maintain the *status quo* than to adapt to a paradigm shift. While many organisational factors caused this mixed set of results, the study found that a consistent theme of inadequately linking action to theory, coupled with selected strategy planning processes and implementation of gaps had contributed to the mixed outcomes. As a result, this study supports that a more coherent linkage between strategy development and the strategy execution model could help the KZNDAE to effectively realise its strategic goals in a more successful manner. If the model could be adopted, it would produce better results in realising pre-determined strategic goals that are required of the KZNDAE in particular, and possibly that of public institutions in general if applicable elsewhere in the public sector.

Essential findings from the study revealed that inadequate leadership influences strategy execution for the enhancement of service delivery. In addition, organisational factors in relation to strategy execution at KZNDAE, and stakeholder support during the strategy execution phase remain as impediments to successful strategy execution. This is followed by weak communication in the organisational structure, lack of continuous performance management and resistance to change respectively.

Against the foreground of the results in this study, the discussion raised herein may be considered as part of a new contribution by KZNDAE to a process-based organisation so

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that effective strategy goals may be realised. Based on the outcomes of the research, the recommendations put forward includes that the rresults revealed that sound and visionary leadership is by far the one of the most essential factors influencing successful execution of strategy in the public sector organisations. The objectives of the Senior Management Service (SMS) adopted by the public service was to evaluate the productivity and efficacy of the systems in order to ascertain hindrances to service delivery, especially caused by leadership and performance deficiencies among the category of members. The 2009 SMS members' assessment focused on the impact of the SMS on government's programmes of action that was introduced relating to service delivery improvement and quality of management overall. Effective communication and information security management should be maintained at all levels when communicating. Blocked vertical communication has a particularly negative effect on an organisation's ability to execute and enhance its strategy suggest Beer and Eisenstat (2000:29). These authors addressed this issue from a different perspective, and suggested that in the absence of effective leadership, conflicting priorities will result in poor coordination because employees will suspect that senior management prefers to avoid potentially threatening and embarrassing circumstances. The need for effective leadership outweighs any other organisational factors.

The contribution in this article adds to the empirical knowledge regarding strategy and organisational performance gaps. A substantial amount of attention could be focused on the integrated strategic management processes. It seems that from the lack of coherence in responses to a lack of integration, this may be at the centre of strategy planning and strategy execution gaps in the KZNDAE. This observation in itself may also be indicative of complexities compounded by insights that need not correspond with reality. Whilst the study provides some responses to the question of what contributed to the gaps, it appears as if strategy execution might have been neglected to some extent that may at least reduce some gaps. Attention should be focused on the integrated nature of public strategic management, rather than trying to pin the challenge down to any strategic management stages in isolation and fragmentally, namely, planning, execution and control. Further research is recommended to generate added empirical knowledge in this timely area of the strategy execution and organisational performance gaps. It is also proposed, that the role of leadership and senior managers on practising strategy planning is to be integrated with that of operational planning in order to effectively and mutually contribute towards service

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delivery improvement. It is also recommended that increased attention be given to strategy execution in the public sector given the need for outcomes-based leadership.

11. CONCLUSION

Though strategy execution is more important than strategy development in public sector organisations, the ability to execute a strategy in an organisation is the key to organisational performance and effective service delivery. In addition, strategy execution was perceived to be more challenging than development, and ineffective strategy execution was perceived to result in ineffective leadership, lack of allocation of resources, non-alignment and lack of coordination. For this reason, execution of strategies is broadly identified as a critical component, with significant impact on service delivery and organisational performance. Realisation of pre-determined strategic objectives should be manifested through commitment to service delivery by effectively applying strategy execution in accordance with the vision and mission of the organisation involving all key stakeholders.

Evidently, KZNDAE requires a structured effective strategy execution focusing on sound administrative systems in directing the KZNDAE towards practicality, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness in its service delivery agenda including rights and obligations of beneficiaries of government services. It is the collective view put forward through the article that the innovative Strategy Execution Model for KZNDAE could prove to be beneficial to the organisation in improving strategy execution overall. It could also address the planned agenda for service delivery within the current information revolution as the organisation embraces the digital era for effective and efficient service delivery enhancing organisational performance. The department is encouraged to increase allocation to operational plans curbing budgetary constraints that hinder the efficacy of strategy execution and management.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS/FUNDING

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