



**An exploratory study of Barriers and Enablers of Strategy
Execution in the Eastern Cape Department of Education in South
Africa**

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ABSTRACT

Effective strategy execution is very important for the achievement of an organisation's goals. Because it is a difficult task to translate a strategy into action, it is imperative for leadership to prioritize its strategic plan to ensure its success. The purpose of this study is to identify barriers and enablers of strategy execution in Basic Education in the Eastern Cape; its focus is on strategic goal number six: "Efficient administration ensured through good corporate governance and management". The effectiveness of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is measured by its service delivery, how strategy is executed in providing quality education. These are guided by the norms and standards like the National Education Policy Act: Norms and Standards for educators, as set by the National Department of Basic Education and the Treasury Acts. The motivation for the study was the Department's poor performance as reported by the Auditor General (AG) in his 2015 audit report, that there has been a lack of good governance and accountability in the ECDoE. The study is qualitative: a sample of twenty-five (25) ECDoE senior managers were interviewed as the custodians of the execution of the strategic plan. Purposive sampling method selected the twenty-five from a total of forty-five (45) senior managers, some of whom were in Head Office and some in the twenty-three (23) districts. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews and responses were captured on Excel Spreadsheet, and analysed with the Thematic Analysis. Major findings relating to barriers were on Human Resource Management, Poor Leadership, Resourcing (Tools of Trade), Improper Budgeting Systems, Poor Communication, and Organisational Structure. Some variables were interchangeably identified both as barriers and enablers, such as

budgeting and resourcing. There were many recommendations, but for this study one, the Finance Section, will suffice: and that is that the Finance Section should analyse each directorate's spending for each year before the new budget is allocated.

Keywords: Strategy execution, public service organisation, enablers, and barriers to strategy execution.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AG – Auditor General

ABM – Activity Based Management

APP – Annual Performance Plan

DBE - Department of Basic Education

ECDoE – Eastern Cape Department of Education

GRAP - Generally Recognized Accounting Practice

HoD - Head of Department

OPP – Operational Plan

PAA - Public Audit Act

PFMA – Public Finance Management Act

PMDS – Performance Management Development System

SOPA – State of the Province Address

PSAM – Public Service Accountability Monitor

SI – Strategic Implementation

SOPA – State of the Province Address

SP – Strategic Plan/Planning

TA - Thematic Analysis

TQM – Total Quality Management

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is an exploratory study of Barriers and Enablers of Strategy execution in the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) in South Africa, specifically the Department of Provincial Basic Education. ECDoE is a public sector organisation, is not profit generating, and relies solely on government funding (National Treasury, 2015). National Treasury Regulations govern public-sector organisations from local, provincial, to national level (National Treasury, 2015). The National Treasury also monitors these three spheres of government (PFMA, 1999) because finance for the public sector is generated from tax revenue and government bonds the Treasury is accountable to taxpayers and civil society (National Treasury, 2015). The government introduced systems that would guide the public sector's accountability and the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) is an example of this; it prescribes measures to ensure transparency and expenditure control by enforcing (a) a Generally Recognised Accounting Practice (GRAP), (b) a uniform expenditure classification, and (c) uniform treasury norms and standards (PFMA, 1999). The PFMA imposes an effective financial accountability system over all public entities (PFMA, 1999). Important statutes for public spending through the procurement process are the General Procurement Guidelines (National Treasury, 2015) and the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act No. 5 of 2000 (National Treasury, 2015).

The PFMA is used by the Office of the Auditor General to audit and monitor performance in public offices (Public Audit Act (PAA) No. 25 of 2004). The National Treasury, consequently, not only provides the budget

for the national government, but plays a financial oversight role in all public organisations (PFMA, 1999). The research objectives of this study are to ascertain what renders the ECDoE a poor performing organisation by looking at barriers and enablers of strategy execution in the department. Strategy execution is a responsibility of the leaders of the organisation, top-level executives and senior management who understand the environment in which the organisation operates and can use that knowledge to determine strategic direction and make strategic choices (Louw & Venter, 2013, p. 416). Executing strategy and its management needs skilled leaders who turn formulated plans into actions which ensure that the vision, mission, strategy, and strategic objectives of the organisation are successfully fulfilled (Thompson & Strickland, 2003, p. 365).

The responsibility of the ECDoE leadership is to knit together planning, goals, and policies, and to redirect resources towards strategy execution. Strategy is defined by Chandler (1962, p.13) as “the determination of the basic, long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for those goals”. Hrebiniak (2006, p. 17) argues that studies done on the execution of strategy do not give clear guidelines as to how it should be achieved, but it is always incumbent upon management to ensure the development of appropriate abilities and managerial skills for effective strategy execution (Hrebiniak, 2008). As Porter (1996) concurs that strategy lies in choosing to perform activities differently to others in the industry, to coordinate planning, goals, and policies, and to redirect the company’s resources towards its execution.

Van Thiel, Sandra, & Leeuw (2002, p. 270) argue that it is not a simple matter to assess and monitor performance in the public sector, and there is some evidence that monitoring has led to figurative behaviour which means that monitoring seems to be in place, but is in fact not so a more integrated approach is necessary to ensure strategy execution; a multi-dimensional approach is called for (Pestieau, 2009). Although that may be the case the purpose or aim of the organisation should be communicated to all its members so that at all levels of the organisation, the awareness of strategy execution and what the role of each member of staff is, so systems and resources can be directed towards strategy execution (Chandler, 1962; Zagotta & Robinson, 2002). The task of communicating strategy needs effective leadership for guidance and assistance in taking strategic direction for the whole organisation. This must emanate from executives who, from a position of knowledge, can create and promote strategic change for short and long-term sustainability (Louw & Venter, 2013).

Furthermore, the ECDoE must be monitored and evaluated as are other government entities subject to audits, assessment, scrutiny, accountability, and evaluation (National Treasury, 2005). In the 2015/2016 Financial Year, the budget allocated to the ECDoE was R27, 538 billion (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2015); despite that sum being the largest portion of the Treasury of the Province of the Eastern Cape, the Auditor General (AG) noted in his 2015 audit report a lack of good governance and accountability (AGSA, 2015). The report cites three major areas of concern: (a) the lack of adequate oversight of the control environment by leadership, and its inability to produce credible and reliable financial and performance information; (b) deficiencies in human resource and performance management, as well as a lack of execution of

policies and procedures; and (c) the suspension of the Head of Department (HoD) for nine months at year-end (2014) which resulted in the E Provincial Planning & Treasury Department having to appoint an accounting officer to work side by side with the acting HoD (AGSA, 2015, p. 25). The other factor is that the Department of Education has for three Financial Years 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 has had to employ a qualified audit (AGSA, 2015, p. 64).

1.2 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research aim was to find the enablers and disablers of strategy execution in the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) by looking at their aims and objectives. The focus was on strategic goal number six: 'Efficient administration ensured through good corporate governance and management' (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2015). That aim entails four Strategic Objectives: (a) To stabilize financial management across the organisation through proper budgeting, control, and reporting. (b) To provide an appropriate service delivery model and organisational structure for improved education delivery and support. (c) To ensure that management systems for performance, information and risk mitigation are in place. (d) To develop and monitor the execution of an integrated policy management framework (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2016).

1.3 STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE ECDOE

The ECDoE strategy formulation focuses on the execution of targets expressed in: 1) Annual Performance Plan (APP) (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2016); 2) the incorporation of the new priorities

expressed in the State of the Province Address (SOPA) (Masualle, 2015); 3) the Service Delivery Plan (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2016); 4) Member of the Executive Council's (MEC) Performance Agreement with the Premier of the Province (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Operational Plan's (OPP's) purpose is to translate the APP and the provincial targets into actions that will reflect on targets found in the APP as well as targets as expressed in all the other relevant documents (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2016). The operational plan's main strategic objective is to render a receptive administration and the building of a functional schooling system as targeted in the APP. The Head Office Operational Plan informs the District Operational Plans in all the areas of priority of the Department of Education (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2016, p. 3).

A successful strategy management in the ECDoE would be achieved if the following performance indicators/measures are implemented and improved year on year:

- (a) Universalisation of Early Childhood Development focusing on learners accessing Grade R.
- (b) Continuous improvement in pass rates for Languages and Mathematics in the General Education and Training (GET) Band – Grades 1 to 9 to achieve 90% by 2030.
- (b) Improvements not only in the number of National Senior Certificate (NSC) passes, but also in the quality thereof and to be demonstrated by increased pass rates in Mathematics and
- (c) Science resulting in eligibility for bachelor's degrees.
- (d) Support quality education through the timely provisioning of qualified teachers, adequate learner-teacher support material

(LTSM), and school infrastructure, including innovatively addressing backlogs on an ongoing basis.

- (e) Continued focus on Mathematics and Science in all schools, including Dinaledi schools (Dinaledi schools are schools set aside to be utilised as focus schools for the improvement of Mathematics and Science subjects).
- (f) Facilitating access to education for learners from poor households through the School Nutrition Programme (SNP).
- (g) Focusing on learner well-being not only through nutrition but with Physical Education and the Integrated School Health Programme, as well as school culture and sports.
- (h) Continued rationalisation of very small and small schools and the realignment of Combined and Junior Secondary Schools.
- (i) Enhancing support for schools through an appropriate Service Delivery Model and the establishment of functional Circuits, realigned by Districts and Head Offices (Eastern Cape Department of Education 2016/17 Head Office Operational Plan, 2015).

1.4 RESEARCH OUTLINE

The study is divided into six chapters: the first gives the background of the study, with strategy management in the ECDoE and the objectives of the study. Chapter two is a literature review and deals with strategy execution theories and the enablers of strategy execution as well as the barriers to strategy execution. Chapter three focuses on the research methodology that deals with research paradigms, the sampling process, and the three theories for strategy execution models that this study reviewed. It also provides an explanation of the research tools, which are questionnaires

and interviews, and the data collection method, as well as how the data was analysed and interpreted. Chapter four describes the findings of the study including the factors influencing strategy execution, enablers and barriers in department sections/ units, and other factors that have impacted on strategy execution in ECDoE. Chapter five discusses the findings covered in Chapter four. The final chapter sets out the conclusions of the study; it indicates the limitations of the study, reasons for suggested further research and ends with some recommendations.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was not about strategy formulation nor its planning, but about strategy execution, focusing on enablers of and barriers to strategy execution in the ECDoE. The investigation, aimed at senior managers of the ECDoE, who are the driving force for strategy, was conducted by a member of staff and a middle manager at ECDoE. The information perforce was limited because reliant on published departmental reports on strategy management, and on senior management's willingness to share knowledge and information on the execution of ECDoE strategy.

1.6 SUMMARY

Strategy execution is essential for an effective organisation; skills, purpose, organisational structure, systems and processes, leadership style, staff, resources, shared values, and strategic performance should be aligned for successful strategy execution. Although staff at ECDoE are mostly from an education background, so are, in the main, qualified to hold their positions, more needs to be done to ensure effective strategy execution. Resources cannot improve strategy execution, nor can they

drive it, but resources and effective leadership set the tone for success. Proper budgeting is also a factor that must be managed efficiently, but the key is evaluation and assessment of performance in each section of the department.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the relevant theoretical literature on strategy execution with regard to enablers of and the barriers thereof. It begins with theories of strategy execution, a summary of strategy execution, and closes with a discussion of enablers of and barriers to strategy execution.

2.2 THEORIES OF STRATEGY EXECUTION

Strategy execution is described by Chandler (1962, p. 13) as "...the determination of the basic, long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for those goals". Hrebiniak and Joyce, (1984), defined strategy execution as a succession of interventions regarding organisational structures, key personnel actions, and control systems designed to control performance with respect to objectives. There is a view that maintains that in strategy execution not all business decisions are strategic; for these decisions to become effective, there needs to be a conscious effort to do something different from competitors or other similar organisations (Porter, 1996); and Schellenberg (1983) points out that strategy execution is a complex process.

Noble (1999, p. 120), defines strategy execution as the communication, interpretation, adoption, and enactment of strategic plans; he also claims that the importance of the execution process has been emphasized yet little research has been directed to it. Aaltonen & Ikavalko (2002, p. 416)

point to the components of strategy execution as being: communication, interpretation, adoption and action, and they cannot be disconnected. The strategy execution and strategy formulation approach adopted by the management of an organisation can determine the success of the strategy execution (Barbuto, 2002), a view that seems to be supported by Wheelen and Hunter (2012) who state that for strategy execution to be successful the environmental scanning and strategy formulation are crucial to strategic management. Barbuto, (2002) cites five approaches that could be used by organisations:

- (a) An autocratic approach refers to strategy making features, where a leader defines organisational goals and strategies by maintaining full control of most decisions in the organisation
- (b) Transformational approach, leaders implementing it become change agents for their respective organisations; and employees play the role of team players and exerting effort to play their part in attaining the articulated vision.
- (c) The rational approach, is a very detailed plan of action which features the S.W.O.T. analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) to develop strategy.
- (d) The learning approach is about constant learning between organisation and its key stakeholders.
- (e) The political approach, is the strategy being selected according to the political interplay among various internal and external coalitions of the organisation; the theory is that members of an organisation who can gain support for their ideas from colleagues or upper management will typically get

their proposals accepted, whereas politically unsupported ideas will fall by the wayside.

Hrebiniak, (2006) claims that the difficulty in execution could be because strategy execution is less exciting than strategy formulation; many academics and practitioners tend to overlook it because of a belief that anyone can do it. Thompson, Strickland, and Gamble (2007) argue that managing strategy execution is an operations manager's task, and it is time consuming, so managers must ensure that the strategy-execution process has the requisite staff with the necessary skills and expertise for its success, and that budgets are made available. The management should ensure that policies and operating procedures facilitate, and do not impede effective execution; they should install information and operating systems that enable company personnel better to carry out their strategic roles and management must motivate people to pursue target objectives and should provide rewards and incentives for the achievement of performance objectives and good strategy execution (Thompson *et al* 2007).

If the strategy-execution process is properly utilised, companies would be able to create a corporate culture and a work climate conducive to successful strategy execution (Thompson *et al*, 2007). That company culture would be led by the internal leadership who drive the execution forward, and who persistently improve strategy execution plans. Further, that the execution plans and processes should involve all managers, and a well-thought-out plan that allocate to the project enough resources, both human and financial, and should include time-frames that are adhered to by all, and lastly, it must be constantly under review (Thompson *et al* (2007).

Strategy execution deals with all aspects of management and involves all those who form part of management (Shah, 2005). Louw and Venter, (2013, p. 416) view strategy as an essential leadership function; top level executives have to understand the environments their organisations are operating in and should use that knowledge to set strategic direction. Their strategic choices create strategic changes in the organisation for both short and long-term sustainability. Although strategy execution is crucial for an effective organisation, there are many factors that impact on it, such as:

- (a) Political factors, inertia (Hrebiniak, 2015);
- (b) Resistance to change (van Schaik, 2009);
- (c) Discipline, development, and ownership (Hrebiniak, 2015);
- (d) Elements of culture, organisation, people and systems (Pryor, Anderson, Toombs and Humphreys (2007);
- (e) Resources (Sterling, 2003; Pryor *et al*, (2007);
- (f) The need to move beyond the talk and be more comprehensive in providing a detailed outline to assist those responsible for strategic execution, and that the execution plan should be communicated to employees so that all staff activities can be prioritized to be in line with the new strategy to direct resources accordingly (Allio, 2005).

2.3 STRATEGY EXECUTION

Strategy execution is vital to the process that puts into action the formulated strategy and ensures that the vision, mission, strategy, and strategic objectives of the organisation are successfully achieved

(Hrebiniak, 2008; Thompson and Strickland, 2003). Management must not only excel in planning but in closing the gap between strategy and the successful execution of that plan; in order to realise the vision there should be no gap between the strategy expressed and the actions undertaken (Hrebiniak, 2015). It is very important to ensure execution of strategy in an organisation; there may be a gap between the strategy expressed in the activities planned and the strategy expressed in the pattern of actions undertaken (Hrebiniak, 2015). Reducing that gap requires a conscious and intentional course of action and the appropriate tools, such as change of management, organisational learning, and staff-controlled processes of change (Mintzberg, 1987).

According to Pryor, *et al*, (2007), there are strategic actions and behaviours that the management can utilise in order to ensure effective strategy execution, these are: purpose for strategy; principles for internal structures; processes for external structures, people for the influence of structure on employee behaviour, and performance for equivalent results to be in place and aligned throughout the organisation. Wheelen and Hunger (2012) view strategy as the sum of the activities and choices required for the execution of a strategic plan; it is a process by which objectives, strategies, and policies are put into action through the development of programmes, budgets, and procedures. They claim that for strategy execution to be successful the execution plan must be taken into consideration as part of the strategic management during the strategy formulation stage, and not afterwards as the two are intertwined.

Some researchers' view is that management of an organisation must involve all operational managers from all levels in the strategy formulation, because the operational managers would inform them understand so as

to know what is expected at the execution stage, and resistance would be minimised (Hrebiniak, 2006; Wheelen and Hunger (2012). For an effective strategy leadership must respond to the following questions fairly: Who are the people who will carry out the strategic plan? What must be done to align the company's operations in the new direction? How is everyone going to work together to do what is needed? (Wheelen & Hunter, (2012 p 283 – 284). Rethinking and reconfiguring business models may have to shift to accommodate strategy execution plans (Prahalad & Lieberthal, 2003). Strategy is a discipline or systematic way of exposing reality and then acting on it; there are three core processes for effective execution: the people; strategy; and operations (Bossidy & Charan, 2002). An effective intertwining of people, strategy, and operations results in successful execution. Strategy has six consecutive stages: develop effective strategy; plan the execution of the strategy; align the organisation to the strategy; plan the organisation's operations; monitor and learn from operations; and test and adapt to ensure effective strategy execution (Kaplan & Norton, 2008). Kaplan & Norton (2001, p. 1) state principles for successful strategy execution:

- (a) Translate the strategy into operational terms
- (b) Align the organisation to the strategy
- (c) Make strategy everyone's everyday job
- (d) Make strategy a continual process
- (e) Mobilise change through executive leadership.

There are several explanations for strategy execution; this study has adopted Allio's explanation as shown in Figure 2.1. Allio (2005), claims that for execution to be successful there are five effective steps:

Step 1: Refine the vision and strategy, to ensure that the execution is good; the output from the strategy session should have a draft vision statement, broad strategies, performance measures, resources necessary and expected results, critical issues; and provide some justification for taking certain decisions.

Step 2: Design an implementation programme that would ensure that all managers are aware of what is required from them. The vision is bolstered, and the plan is moved from general to specifics, developing a future view of what the organisation will achieve. This stage demands collaboration among execution managers because they would be competing for the same resources of people, money, and equipment; divisions are often symbiotic and tradeoffs are to be expected.

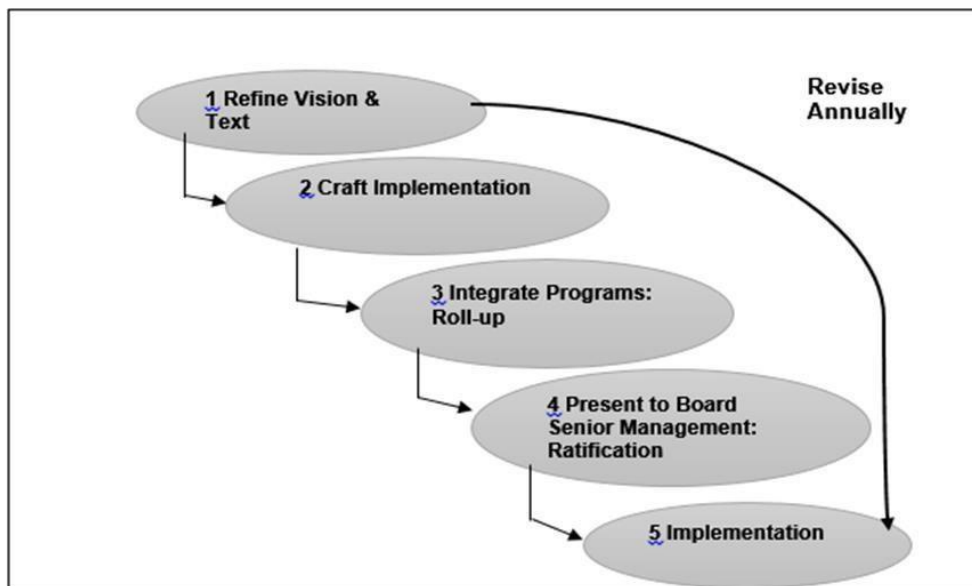


Figure 1: Strategy implementation process by Allio (2005).

Step 3: Integrate the individual programmes whereby strategy managers come together to compare notes. This stage involves developing the programmes, identifying resources required, evaluating performance metrics, and assessing the overall shape of the plan. Regarding feasibility, an adequate budget is key as is keeping focus on the original strategic goal. Other important considerations are maintaining both the time-frame and the capacity of the organisation to perform certain tasks.

Step 4: Ratifying the programmes means that the strategic team reconvene to present plans and seek managerial approval. This stage has the strategic team with its strategic goals coming together to strengthen future procedures. Objectives and key priorities are highlighted, senior management share opinions and interaction to takes place.

Step 5: Implementation (Execution): after formal ratification, execution should start. Other researchers have put up guidelines on how to manage strategy execution. Wheelen and Hunger, (2012 p 290) claim new strategy should involve new programmes and activities, and suggest the following steps towards creating an execution matrix:

- Compare the new programmes or target practices to see if they are complementary, interfering, or have no effect on each other.
- Examine existing practices and activities to assess interactions with each other.
- Compare each new programme or target practice with each existing practice or activity for interaction effects.
- Evaluate each programme or activity in terms of its importance for achieving the strategy or the execution.

- Examine the overall matrix to identify problem areas where proposed programmes are likely either to interfere with each other or with existing practices or activities.

Allio (2005 p15 - 19) maintains that an execution plan must be simple, and the language used must be a common one to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding. The roles, responsibilities, and time-frames must be clearly outlined. Straightforward quantitative and qualitative metrics must be developed. Management and the implementing team must ensure that a balance is created between short-term and long-term goals. The execution team must choose a common format to improve clarity and communication; this could be a spreadsheet used by all the managers involved, or a GANNT Chart, but it must be a working tool for all. The managers must meet regularly in structured, time-limited sessions to underpin the need to manage consistently the execution process which must be aligned with the financial infrastructure.

2.4 ENABLERS TO STRATEGY EXECUTION

This section focuses on strategy enablers and how they impact on strategy execution. Although enablers are known by most organisations, not much has been done about them because the challenges in strategy execution that were experienced over a decade ago are still felt, but 'strategy implementation is receiving more attention' than in it has in the past (Hrebiniak (2013, p. 3). Strategy can be realised when there is a shared understanding of the direction of movement throughout the organisational hierarchy so that an alignment of the intended strategy and its relative priority is accorded to it at different levels in the hierarchy (Andrews, Boyne, Meier, O'Toole, and Walker, 2012, p. 78).

Schaap (2012) claims that staff need regular training on different programmes to improve competence. A successful strategic outcome is best achieved when those responsible for execution are also part of the strategy formulation process (Hrebiniak, 2006). Porter (1991) defines strategy as a “solution to the agency problem that arises because senior management cannot participate in or monitor all decisions and to directly ensure the consistency of the myriad of individual actions and choices”. Allio (2005, pp. 11-15) provides an alternative approach that could be utilised by organisations, (a) Refine a Vision and Strategy, (b) Craft an individual plan, (c) Integrate the Implementation Programmes (d) Ratify Strategies, and Implementation Plans, (v) put the Implementation plan into action. When all these stages have been completed, reviewed, and evaluated, implementation can start.

Successful strategy execution should have strategic leadership, good organisational structure, and strategic performance and control (Louw & Venter, 2013, p. 416). For effective strategy implementation, strategy must be translated into; objectives, appropriate performance indicators, tangible and realistic goals, timeframes that are aligned with tasks and financial and nonfinancial resources (Sadowska, 2012). Turning strategy into action, an organisation needs to take the following into consideration, (a) Strategy understanding; in most organisations there is a lack of information and communication and the lack of clearly stated commitment from management and employees can result in compromising implementation and strategy, then become redundant. (b) Organisational structure: in companies with divisions working as silos and are not mindful of the whole company’s objectives which means that complex tasks that reach over the borders of a particular division are unlikely to be

completed successfully; due to this lack of communication a competitiveness between the divisions can lead to information restraint. (c) Real leadership and not only managerial skills. The role of leaders in an organisation is very significant in driving the success of a strategy; poor leadership results in lack of focus, less commitment by staff, missteps in coordination of activities, and improper allocation of resources. (Sadowska, 2012).

Good leadership is important to ensure that employees are committed to the management and so direct their capabilities and business understanding towards the success of the new strategy (Rajasekar, 2015). Leadership style affects implementation by driving the strategy, encouraging and maintaining focus, being visionary, and acting as a driver for possible change in management as necessitated by the new strategy (Rajasekar, 2015). Management is, therefore, expected to communicate constantly and precisely the strategic priority of the organisation to functional-level members (Raperta, Velliquetteb & Garretsonc, 2002).

The organisational structure explains the decision-making process, clarifies roles and responsibilities, allocates human resources, and ensures a level of flexibility in responding to unexpected circumstances. The organisational culture provides information about the internal environment and mentality, and this is reflected in the level of openness, customer orientation, quality of work, and speed of accomplishing tasks, as well as responding to changes among all employees. Information systems support the decision-making process through the quality and quantity of information available for executives to use in decision-making.

Thus, each organisation must be able to analyse and identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to equip the management team with the ability to plan properly. Sterling (2003) argues that organisational capabilities must be aligned with strategy, a view also held by Higgins (2005). Translating Human Relation policies into action is important in assessing whether an organisation is delivering according to its goals (Gratton and Truss, 2003). Resources are not valuable in isolation but because their value allows firms to perform activities that are creative (Porter, 1991). Kaplan and Norton (2004) argue that Activity-Based Management (ABM) and Total Quality Management (TQM) are some of the ways that could be used by management to help employees make improvements in their operations. Steps towards successful strategy execution, develop the business case establish priorities, provide cost justification track the benefits and measure performance for ongoing improvement; this plan is similar to that of Allio (2005).

Louw and Venter (2013) add that strategic leadership can assist the members of the company by being very familiar with the environment in which the organisation operates and the significance of its operations. Strategic leaders can therefore plan, formulate, and implement strategy by assigning the right personnel to each project, and directing financial capital to key areas in the organisation, all with the aim of achieving what has been agreed on regarding their strategic plan (Louw & Venter, 2014). Leadership should, therefore, provide individual operations managers with a clear understanding of their objectives, with significant competency and performance feedback, and with a practical approach for future personal development (Kaplan and Norton, 2004). It then becomes imperative to align the organisation, its people, and its activities to ensure the high-impact actions that will drive the organisation's most important

outcomes (Bregman, 2017; Higgins, 2005). As Allio (2005) states, the organisation should have a well thought out plan in place which stipulates responsibilities within the first six weeks after the strategic planning session.

Although ECDoE may not have intellectual property they have corporate methodologies, goodwill, and brand recognition in terms of how they conduct business, and all of which form part of their intangible assets which are human capital, information capital, and organisational capital. The strategists, Kaplan and Norton (2004) claim that these intangible assets too must be aligned with the objectives for the internal processes and integrated with each other so there are interactions among them.

2.5 THEORIES FOR STRATEGY EXECUTION MODELS

This sub-section reviewed three execution models among the many theories of strategy execution, Kaplan & Norton (2001), Allio (2005), Pryor, *et al*, (2007) to name but a few. These are selected because they seem relevant to the ECDoE Management for help in improving their strategy execution plan. The models were:

- (a) Mckinsey 7S Framework. This was developed by Robert Waterman, Thomas Peters, and Julien Philips, who, while they were working as consultants for McKinsey and Company in the 1980s, used this model to analyse over 70 large organisations. Their model concluded that underperformance in organisations was mainly due to seven levers which are: structure, strategy, systems, skills, style, staff, and shared values (McKinsey & Company, 2008).

- (b) Eight S Model. This model focuses on alignment of strategy with other elements of the organisation such as structure, system, skills, style, and superordinate goals (Higgins, 2005).

- (c) The Okumus Framework. This stresses that some of the causes of difficulty in strategy implementation is because many strategy theories do not have guidelines on how to put their planned strategies into action. This theory focuses on the importance of strategic content, strategic context, operational process, and environmental context (Okumus, 2003).

2.5.1 THE MCKINSEY 7S FRAMEWORK

The McKinsey 7S model was developed by Waterman, Peters, and Philips while working at McKinsey, to try and understand some of the causes of underperformance in their organisation. They detected that organisational structure was not the only challenge they faced, but that there were several other factors that contributed to poor strategy execution. Their investigation developed a model or framework that had seven connected elements which they term “levers”, and all begin with the letter “S”. These were structure, strategy, systems, skills, style, staff, and shared values (McKinsey & Company, 2008). A brief explanation of each lever is provided below:

- (a) Strategy deals with strategies designed for the distribution of resources in an organisation to enable it to reach its objectives.
- (b) Structure deals with the way sections relate to each other; centralized, functional divisions, decentralized, and matrix to name a few.
- (c) Systems deal with procedures, processes, and routines that describe how to manage the important work such as financial systems, human resource management, and information systems.
- (d) Skills: refer to the knowledge held by the management of the organisation about the skills that the personnel have. It organisation should be aware of the capabilities of its personnel.
- (e) Staff considers numbers and types of personnel in the organisation.
- (f) Style addresses the corporate culture of an organisation and how leadership conducts itself in achieving its goals.
- (g) Shared Values: this S is at the centre of the model, interconnecting all the other S's. It is what the organisation stands for and what it believes in (Waterman, Peters, Phillips, 1980).

The emphasis in this McKinsey model is on "Hard S's": strategy, structure, systems which are formal, tangible, and measurable. The "Soft S's" on the other hand are style, staff, skills, shared values which are both difficult to measure and informal. The shared values in the centre signify that it is core in this model, making it a central aspect of a successful strategy execution

(Waterman, Peters, Phillips, 1980). The following is a diagram showing McKinsey 7S model.

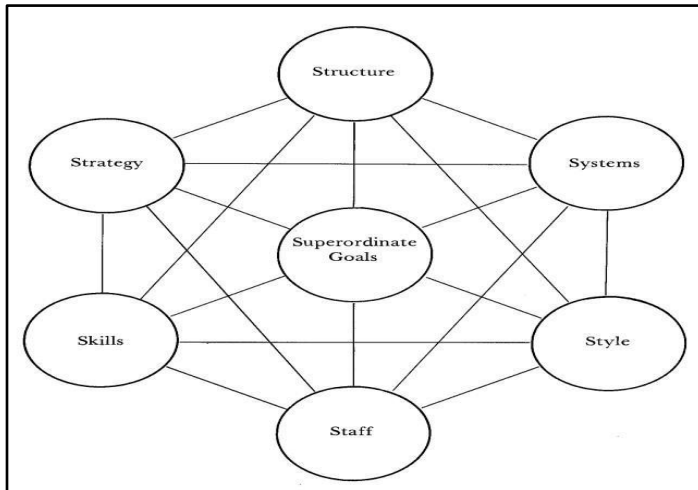


Figure 2: McKinsey 7S Model, Waterman et al. 1980

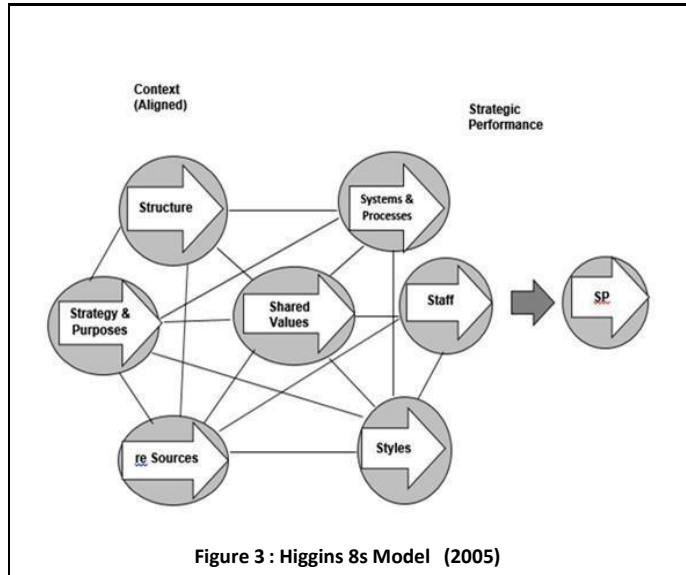
Kaplan (2005) has done a comparative study looking at the 7-S model and the Balance Scorecard (BSC) and found that they have a lot in common; they both claim that

- (a) an effective strategy implementation requires a multi-dimensional approach.
- (b) they both stress interconnectedness because all organisational features need to be connected for an effective strategy implementation.
- (c) Both models help managers align their organisation for effective strategy execution. His conclusion was that “BSC is not only fully consistent with the 7-S framework, but that it can also enhance it in use” (Kaplan, 2005).

According to Shujahat, Shujahat, Hussain, Hussain, Javed, Javed, Malik, Malik, Thurasamy, Thurasamy, and Ali. (2017), the McKinsey 7S framework emphasises interactions and connectedness among the seven “S’s” and for an organisation to achieve its objectives all these variables must be aligned. They argue that the model has particularised each of the 7 factors individually but Waterman *et al* (1980) did not give clear examples and explanations for the relationships and interactions between these factors. This model needs to be evaluated empirically to learn how the relationships among variables can make a strategy execution successful.

2.5.2 THE 8S MODEL

Higgins developed another framework (2005) which he called the 8S Model; this enables top management to enact, monitor, and assess the cross functional execution of strategies. The model is an advance on the McKinsey Model and replaces the ‘S’ for Skills with re-Sources. Higgins re-Sources refer to the finance, information, technology, and time required of top management and others in their strategy execution. The 8S model focuses on aligning these different elements with the view that, if all elements are aligned, execution becomes possible. The misalignment between function and strategy is often caused by the management of an organisation (Higgins, 2005). Strategy execution involves aligning key organisational functions with the chosen strategy which are: structure, strategy, systems, staff, skills, superordinate goals (Higgins, 2005). Figure 3 shows just such an alignment.



The Eight S Model is about

(a) Strategic purpose; which includes strategic intent, vision, focus, mission, goals, and strategic objectives. According to Higgins (2005) there are four types of strategies:

- The corporate strategy: defines the fundamental business of the company, what it is involved in, and how business will be conducted.
- The business strategy: illustrates ways in which a business can gain competitive advantage over its competitors.
- Functional strategy: should be aligned with business strategy so that functional strategies in areas such as marketing, human resources, research, and development can be allied with business strategy.

- Process strategies: are cross functional in nature and aim to integrate an organisation's processes to improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

- (b) Structure consists of five parts which are: jobs; the authority to do those jobs; the grouping of jobs in a logical fashion; the extent of managerial control; and the mechanisms of coordination. An organisation's structure must be seriously arranged in terms of tasks to be completed, the authority to complete work assignments; the grouping of jobs into departments and divisions, the scope of a manager's control, and the mechanisms of these controls.
- (c) Systems and Processes: this component is about the formal and informal procedures used in an organisation to manage information systems, planning systems, budgeting, and resource allocation systems, quality control systems, and reward systems.
- (d) Style: refers to leadership and/or management approaches displayed by senior staff when relating to junior staff members and other employees.
- (e) Staff: this deals with the number of employees required, their qualifications, backgrounds, skills essential for the achievement of strategic purposes, staff training, career management, and their promotion.
- (f) Re-Sources: management must ensure that an organisation has access to sufficient resources to ensure a successful strategy execution that is people, money, technology, and other management systems.

- (g) Shared values: relates to organisational culture, and whether the values shared by the members of the organisation distinguish it from other organisations.
- (h) Strategic performance: refers to performance measurement at all levels. Financial performance measurements are critical barometers of strategic performance (Higgins, 2005).

All these S's are interconnected to the Shared Values, which according to Higgins (2005) is a key for a successful strategy execution.

2.5.3 OKUMUS FRAMEWORK

Okumus (2003, p. 871) analyses various execution frameworks and concludes that there are similarities among them, but he also devised some of his own systems. His opinion is that there is a need for “a comprehensive execution framework in the strategic management field” and that implementation models are important measuring tools for strategy execution which can fail because and when practicing executives, managers, and supervisors lack models that they can use effectively (p. 871). This section will look at his model. From the frameworks Okumus analysed, he identified eleven (11) key implementation factors, which are: strategy development, environmental uncertainty, organisational structure, organisational culture, leadership, operational planning, resource allocation, communication, people, control, and outcome. It is helpful to bear in mind that although Okumus (2003) agrees that there are similarities in all these frameworks, his framework should not be taken as the ultimate one because each school of thought differs.

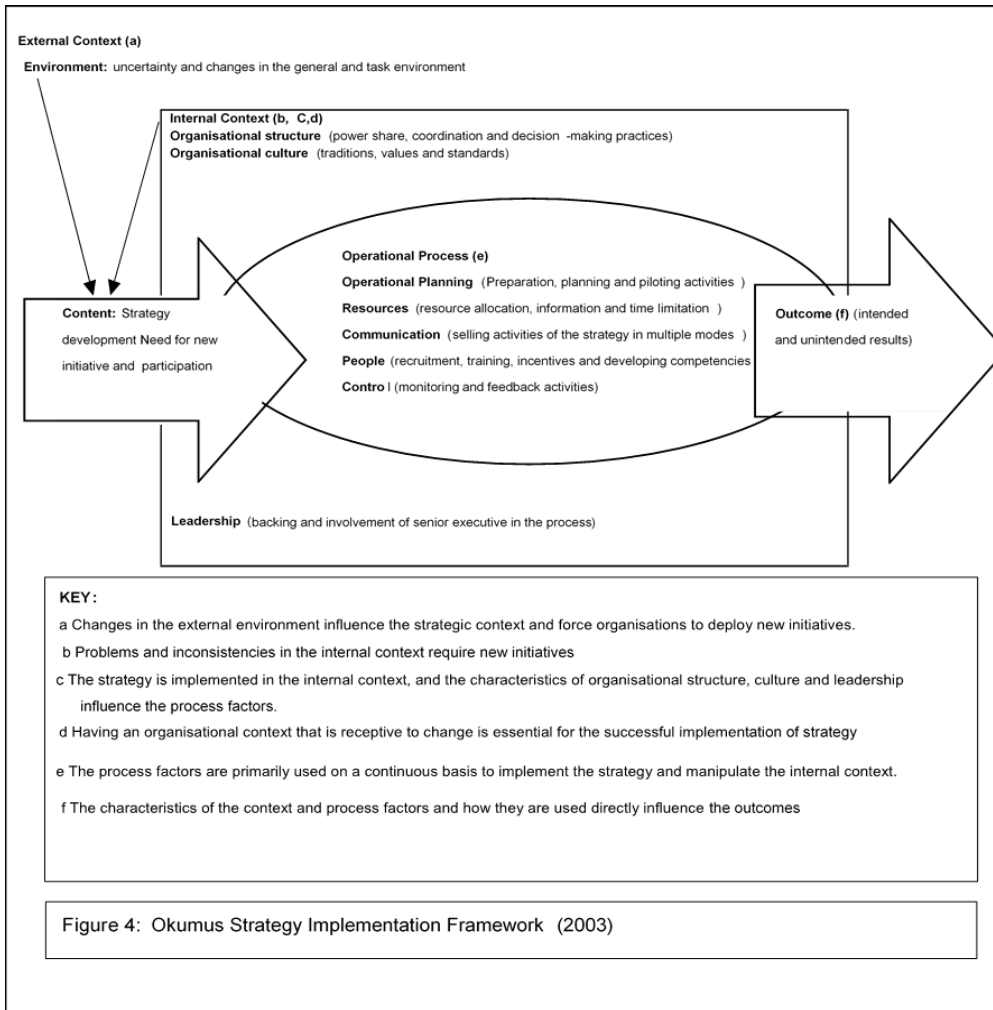
The eleven (11) implementation factors identified by Okumus (2003, p. 875) can be grouped into four further categories:

- (a) Strategic content which deals with the development of strategy.
- (b) Strategic context focuses on external that is environmental, uncertainty, while internal context refers to organisational structure, culture, and leadership.
- (c) Operational process includes operational planning, resource allocation, people, communication, and control.
- (d) Outcome comprises of the results of the implementation process. See Figure 4 (Okumus Framework).

Okumus (2001, p. 875 – 878) explains how these execution factors are linked because the strategic content deals with strategy development. The new strategy should be aligned to the direction of the company, its aims to be clearly stipulated, and strategy developers should be taken from all levels of the organisation; the impact of future projects and new initiatives and the impact of the new strategy should be assessed.

The strategic context deals with internal and external matters of structure, culture, and leadership. Such changes and developments need new strategies which should be suitable for market conditions. The operational process is about planning, resource allocation, people, communication, and control. The organisational culture is about subcultures which should be carefully considered because of the ways in which this can impact on the execution process. Vital for the success of the operations are the resources of a company, its human, financial, information skills, and its time management, together with the control and monitoring called for in

order to have effective management. The outcomes are results of the execution process.



Vital for the success of the operations are the resources of a company, its human, financial, information skills, and its time management, together with the control and monitoring called for in order to have effective management. The outcomes are results of the execution process.

Okumus does, however, acknowledge that it may be difficult to achieve and maintain coherence between execution factors and therefore he does

not prescribe a single model for organisations to adopt, but recommends that managers be placed in positions in which they can make informed decisions, and that this is best achieved by using an all-inclusive approach (2003).

Okumus's framework incorporates all the characteristics highlighted by other researchers and arranged those aspects he considered important for strategy execution into groups. Although this framework is comprehensive, it does not suggest an implementation model that is linear and prescriptive; his reason for this demur lies in his claim that strategy execution is too complex readily to be explained by prescriptive linear models. Rather his suggestion is that managers and researchers should undertake a holistic approach in strategy formulation and in its execution, thereafter to evaluate how the implementation factors interact with each other and the effect of their impact on the process (Okumus, 2003).

2.6 THE BARRIERS OF STRATEGY EXECUTION

Previous research indicates that organisations can formulate good strategies but that their execution becomes a challenge for many executives (Hrebiniak, 2006; Allio, 2005). Strategy execution represents a well-organised process or a logical set of linked activities that enables an organisation to make a strategy work; if an organisation cannot create a careful, planned approach to execution, strategic goals cannot be attained (Hrebiniak, 2013, p. 3). Wessel (1993) argues that barriers to successful execution of strategies are common in most organisations; these problems range from too many and conflicting priorities, insufficient top team functions, a top down management style, interfunctional

conflicts, poor vertical communication, and inadequate management development.

Alexander (1991) cited obstacles to execution, some are similar to those listed by Hrebiniak (2005, 2006 & 2013), giving an indication that companies have not advanced much in strategy execution:

- (a) Implementation takes more time than originally planned.
- (b) Unanticipated major problems arising.
- (c) Activities were ineffectively coordinated.
- (d) Competing activities and crises took attention away from execution.
- (e) The involved employees had insufficient skills to perform their jobs.
- (f) Lower-level employees were inadequately trained.
- (g) Uncontrollable external environmental factors created problems.
- (h) Departmental managers provided inadequate leadership and direction.
- (i) Key implementation tasks and activities were poorly defined. The information system inadequately monitored activities.

Hrebiniak (2005, 2006 & 2013) also mentions similar barriers to strategy execution: (a) Managers are trained to plan, not to execute; he cites cases of managers who lack the competence to implement a particular strategy. Emphasis is on conceptual work like planning and not on execution. (b) Successful strategy execution is dependent on strategic leadership; every organisation has some separation of planning and doing, of formulation and execution, and if such a separation becomes dysfunctional—when planners see themselves as the smart people and treat the doers as

“grunts”—there will be execution problems. (c) Planning and execution are interdependent, but strategy formulation and execution are distinct; successful strategic outcomes are best achieved when those responsible for execution are also part of the planning process. (d) Execution takes longer than formulation and it can take a few weeks to devise a plan though the actual execution could take some years, the longer time frame can make it difficult for managers to focus on and control the execution process. (e) Execution is a process; always takes time and puts pressure on management for outcomes, it is not the result of a single decision or action. (f) Execution involves more people than strategy formulation, because although planning may be done by the senior managers alone, to put the plan into effective use, all the staff in the organisation should be involved (Hrebiniak, 2005, 2006 & 2013).

Other strategists concur that strategy execution is difficult are Low & Venter (2013), who claim that execution needs a sound organisational culture in matters of routines, structures, systems, knowledge, skills and abilities, technology, and organisational culture. Kaplan and Norton (2008 p 1) also associate a company's underperformance to a breakdown in management systems and not the managers' lack of potential or their ability to perform. Management system is defined as “a set of processes and tools that a company uses to develop its strategy, translate it into operational actions, and monitor and improve the effectiveness of both” (Kaplan and Norton, 2008 p. 1). The inability, by leaders of organisations to manage change effectively and to overcome resistance to change affects the execution process; that process needs to be dynamic and adaptive, responding to and compensating for unanticipated events; above all leaders must understand that execution is a process not an event (Hrebiniak, 2006). Sterling, (2003) makes the point that a lack of

communication results in strategy having been poorly communicated to the staff. A lack of coordination and support from other levels of management also may lead to resistance from lower levels. Strategy needs to be properly communicated down and across different line functions of the organisation, and strategic objectives need to be linked with day-to-day objectives at different organisational levels and locations. This becomes a challenging task in that strategy execution requires the involvement of many people in an organisation (Hrebiniak, 2008; Louw & Venter, 2013, p. 416). In conclusion, the following table illustrates themes that became predominant in this study.

Table 2.2.1: Summary of Theories of Strategy Execution

THEMES FOR STRATEGY EXECUTION	
Communication	Sterling, 2003; Allio, 2005
Managers are trained to plan, not to execute the strategy	Hrebiniak 2006
Structure follows strategy	Chandler, 1962
Importance of matching the planned and the realizing or emergent strategies	Aaltonen, 2007
Lack of strategy implementation	Louw and Venter, 2013; Bregman, 2017
Influencing Factors for Implementation	Louw and Venter, 2013
Enablers to strategy	Andrews, Boyne, Meier, O'Toole, and Walker, 2012
Barriers to strategy	Hrebiniak, 2006
Organisational alignment, people and activities	Bregman, 2017
Successful strategy implementation is dependent on strategic leadership	Louw and Venter, 2013
Strategy implementation depends on leadership, organisational structure, and information systems	Sadowska, 2012,
Align key organisational functions with strategy, structure, systems, staff, resources, skills, superordinate goals and style	Higgins, 2005
Management systems	Kaplan and Norton,

2.7 SUMMARY

Research done on strategy execution indicates that there is a gap between the strategic planning and the execution making it difficult for organisational leaders to implement their plans. Scholars stress that the implementing managers should be involved in the strategy planning so that they know what is expected of them. Each section should have a budget, resources of human, capital, and time; but the allocation must be carried out according to the priorities of a particular organisation. Senior management must ensure that the process of distributing resources is properly managed thereby reducing misunderstandings. After execution it becomes important to re-evaluate the execution plan from time to time in order to evaluate and eliminate what is not working and to reinforce what does work.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research paradigm, sampling method, and thematic analysis used in this study. The chapter also discusses the methodology that was chosen, the data collection process, the data analysis method, and the concluding the chapter is a consideration of the ethical criteria.

3.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The ontology used is post positivism: that the knowledge consists of nonfalsified hypotheses that can be regarded as credible facts or laws. The study is based on “critical realism, or reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable because of basically flawed human intellectual mechanisms and the fundamentally intractable nature of phenomena”, ...and its epistemology is a modified dualist assumption that it is possible to approximate (but never fully know) reality” (Guba, & Lincoln, p. 109, 1994).

Qualitative research is employed as an approach that focuses on the contexts and meaning of human lives and experiences for inductive or theory-development driven research. Qualitative data help assists researchers understand processes, provides detailed information about setting or context, facilitate the collection of data when measures do not exist and provides a depth of understanding of concepts (Creswell, p. 4, 2013). A combined technique of the inductive and deductive thematic analysis approach by Boyatzis (1998) has been used.

3.3 SAMPLING PROCESS

Questionnaires were distributed to twenty-five (25) respondents who were selected by using the purposive sampling technique which ensures there is no

generalization about a population but obtains insights into a phenomenon, individuals, or events, so that the researcher then can make a purposeful selection of individuals, groups, and settings for this phase in order to maximize understanding of the underlying phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The sample of twenty-five (25) respondents was taken from a population of forty-five (45) senior managers in the ECDoE, twenty-two (22) are at head office, and twenty-three (23) are in the districts. The size of the sample was based on the theory that for large sample sizes, the normal distribution is well approximated by the t – distribution, and if one of the two conditions can be satisfied (large sample or normality) then a confidence interval for the mean can be constructed (Radlof,

2015 p. 71). (See the formula $\bar{X} \pm t \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$). This view is also supported by Onwuegbuzie & Leech, (2007) who are saying the view that qualitative research can utilise large samples, and that sample size should be informed by the research objective, research question(s), and the research design Onwuegbuzie & Leech, (2007).

3.4 RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

The respondents were selected from the Senior Management of the ECDoE; they are managers who in their operations have to

- (a) Make financial decisions,
- (b) Do resource allocation
- (c) Evaluate the performance of their subordinates
- (d) Are expected to submit accountability reports about their sections or directorates.

They were taken from a range of Sections and Directorates: The Strategic Management; Monitoring and Evaluation; Communications; Risk Management; Supply Chain Management; Fleet Management and Auxiliary Services; District Coordination; Human Resources Management; Information Technology;

Mathematics Science and Technology Sections; and five District Directors - responsible for governance, monitoring, and the basic functioning of schools in the province.

3.5 RESEARCH TOOL – QUESTIONNAIRES / INTERVIEWS

A qualitative research methodology was used and unstructured questionnaires (see **Appendix A**) were used to collect data. The types of questions asked in the questionnaire were mostly open-ended. According to Jackson and Trochim (2002), open-ended questions allow subjects to respond in their own words, and such questions are used in organisational research to explore, explain, and/or reconfirm existing ideas. The data collection process included the use of interviews: fifteen (15) Head Office based managers were interviewed, and the other ten (10) were based in the district offices, they filled in the questionnaires.

The first two (2) questions were quantitative, asking (a) the number of years the respondent has been employed by the department, and (b) how many years they have been in that senior management position. The respondents were then asked open-ended questions about “their understanding of strategy execution in relation to the goals of the organisation”. The fourth question asked the respondents about “...the role of the organisation’s management’s support to the various sections and directorates, to ensure strategy execution”. With these questions, the researcher wanted to establish whether the leadership plays an adequate support and oversight role for the achievement of the organisation’s goals. In question five (5) respondents were asked to ...explain the role of the organisation’s leadership in guiding the process of strategy execution with regard to communication, budget, and their support for the different programmes of the department systems, and the organisational structure assisting or hindering the manager’s performance.

Question six (6) asks about “...systems, and the organisational structure in assisting or hindering their performance”. Question seven (7) deals with the enablers and asks “...what are the enablers; those aspects that make it

uncomplicated to perform duties, either within one's section or the department..." and they are asked to enumerate these. Question eight (8) asks about "...barriers or those aspects that make it difficult for the managers to perform their duties, either within your section or the department", and they were also asked to enumerate these. In question nine (9) respondents were asked about resource allocation, that is training and skills development, human and financial, as some of the factors that influence the success or failure of strategy in organisations. How are these matters handled by the department? The question required respondents to supply some examples.

The tenth (10) question was on the corporate culture of the organisation; and "how does that impact the strategy execution plan?", and here too they were asked to explain. The overall performance of the ECDoE would be known by managers who are responsible for strategy execution; that includes "weakness in the department that might be contributing to poor strategy implementation"; these were posed as a question: "how would you rate the strategic performance of the department, as acceptable or unacceptable?" and an explanation with examples was requested. The concluding question requests respondents to volunteer information that might not have been covered by the questionnaire.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Research questionnaires were distributed, and structured interviews were used in cases in which the managers could not fill in questionnaires; this was done after written approval had been obtained from the ECDoE. A pre-research planning session was held with the Chief Director for Research and Planning Section. An initial questionnaire guide was carefully made based on the literature on the enablers and barriers and specifically designed to deal with the requirements of this study's research objectives (see **Appendix A**). A letter requesting managers to participate was shown to each respondent and his or her consent was requested (see **Appendix B**). Twenty-five (25) responses were received from the sampled respondents through the questionnaires and interviews. The participants' identities

were protected, and the term 'respondent' was used instead of each person's name. Each interview lasted for thirty minutes. The responses were later typed onto a spreadsheet for analysis. Secondary data are publications of the department and analysis of published material, such as their Strategic Plan, Operational Plan, and Auditor General's report.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study used an inductive thematic analysis. Boyatzis (1998) explains a theme as a pattern that is found in the information that, at the minimum, describes and organises possible observations or, at the maximum, interprets aspects of the phenomenon may be identified at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (underlying the phenomenon). Initially the themes may be generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research. Boyatzis (1998) has indicated that the thematic analysis is not another qualitative method but a process that can be used with most, if not all, qualitative methods. In analysing the data, the relevance of the themes was determined, and concepts developed, through interpretations made from the raw data by the researcher (Thomas, 2006). In the research questionnaires, and the structured interviews the questions were based on the reviewed literature, focusing on "enablers and barriers to strategy execution" and how they affected the strategy execution in an organisation.

Finally, analysis was done by noticing patterns and common themes across the data which assisted the researcher to reach some conclusions. The definition that resonated with this study was taken from Clarke & Braun (2013), that Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data, and this was used to analyse the data into themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The six phases of thematic analysis by Braun & Clarke (2006) were utilised, and they are:

- (i) Familiarisation with the data: the researcher must immerse him, or her, self in, and become intimately familiar with, their data, reading and re-reading the data and noting any initial analytic observations.
- (ii) Coding: this involves generating pithy labels for important features of the data that is of relevance to the broad research question guiding the analysis. Coding is also an analytic process.
- (iii) Searching for themes: that is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. Searching for themes is like coding your codes to identify similarity in the data.
- (iv) Reviewing themes: the researcher should reflect on whether the themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data, so s/he can begin to define the nature of each individual theme and the relationship between the themes.
- (v) Defining and naming themes: requires the researcher to conduct and write a detailed analysis of each theme, asking 'what story does this theme tell?' and 'how does this theme fit into the overall story about the data?', thereby identifying the 'essence' of each theme and constructing a concise, pithy, and informative name for each theme.
- (vi) Writing up: this involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts to give the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data, and to contextualise it in relation to existing literature.

3.8 RESEARCH QUALITY

Credibility and dependability is the degree to which the sample of test items represent the content that the test is designed to measure. Content validity is a measure of the degree to which the data collected by using an instrument such as a questionnaire represents a specific domain or content of a concept. Krishnaswamy *et al.* (2009) argue that the usual procedure in assessing the content validity of a measure is to use a professional or an expert in a field. To establish the validity of the research instrument, opinions of experts in the field of study were sought. The consistency and stability with which an instrument

measures and supplies consistent results confirms its validity (Krishnaswamy *et al.* 2009) and validity was achieved by probing the relevant respondents who were directly responsible for the strategy execution in the ECDoE. Consequently, this approach satisfied the credibility of the study. The opinions that were sought throughout the study were from senior officials who at certain times had access to some classified information pertaining to the problem at hand.

3.9 SUMMARY

The study used the qualitative research method because the aim was to get a deeper understanding of the problem at hand. A simple random sampling technique was used to identify respondents the major reason being that the interview guide was structured in such a way that only the relevant people dealing with strategy execution were the unit of interest. Upon collecting the relevant data, a thematic analysis approach was used to extract relevant themes. The next chapter provides the study findings in detail, and how a thematic analysis approach was used to prepare the coding which was later classified into relevant themes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the findings of the study and provides an insight into how its objectives were achieved. The study is inductive and focuses on fact-finding (Thomas, 2006; and Patton, 2002); Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used with its six-phase approach: familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, the writing up, and then a summary concludes the chapter.

4.2 NUMBER OF YEARS AT THE ECDOE

This section presents the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the study. Questionnaires were distributed to 25 respondents who were selected through purposive sampling (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The demographic characteristics include the number of years spent working at the education department and the number of years serving in a managerial position in the Department of Education as shown in **Appendix A**.

Table 4.1 shows that a majority, 84%, that is 21, of the respondents had been working at the ECDoE for more than 10 years, 4%, or 1 respondent, had been working for 10 years, 8%, 2 employees, had been working for 5 years, and one employee, or 4%, who had been working for 3 years.

Table 4.1: Number of years working at the Education Department

YEARS	N	PERCENTAGE
3 years	1	4%
5 years	2	8%
10 years	1	4%
>10 years	21	84%

4.3 NUMBER OF YEARS IN A MANAGERIAL POSITION

In terms of the number of years in a managerial position, table 4.2 illustrates that 15, or 60%, of the respondents had more than 10 years' experience in a managerial position; 6, or 24%, had 5 years in a managerial position, and 8% (2) had 3 years and 10 years respectively. The minimum any respondent had spent in managerial positions was three (3) years. All those who responded through the questionnaire or interview, have a good knowledge of the institution.

Table 4.2: Number of years in management position

YEARS	N	PERCENTAGE
3 years	2	8%
5 years	6	24%
10 years	2	8%
>10 years	15	60%

The first two questions are to establish knowledge of the organisation in terms of its strategy systems, its culture, and leadership.

4.4 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings. The approach to data analysis, as proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006), was the six phases of Thematic Analysis. This approach should not be viewed as a linear model in which one can proceed to the next phase without completing the prior phase because this analysis is a recursive process.

The six phases of thematic analysis are:

- (a) Familiarisation with the data,
- (b) Coding,
- (c) Searching for themes,

- (d) Reviewing themes,
- (e) Defining and naming themes,
- (f) Writing up (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The themes emerged as a result of a combined analysis of interview and questionnaire responses in conjunction with the literature review. In the paragraphs that follow, codes were identified according to the responses received, then the themes were categorised in their order of importance. The respondents are employees of the ECDoE and are accounting officers in their various sections responsible for ensuring that the goals of the organisation are met. For ethical reasons names were not used so they are referred to as 'Respondents, or 'R' 1 - 25' or 'R'. The researcher studied patterns and how codes interact with each other, making it possible to define and name the essence of each theme. This section concludes with a tabling of the findings.

4.5 COMMON THEMES ON BARRIERS

4.5.1. THEME 1: HUMAN RESOURCES

After coding, common themes were clustered to get the most dominant view. As argued by Braun & Clarke (2013), "the basic process of generating themes and subthemes, which are the subcomponents of a theme, involves collapsing or clustering codes that seem to share some unifying feature together, so that they reflect and describe a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data". In the table below, the following sub-themes constitute the bulk of human resource management issues.

Table: 4.3 Human Resource Management – Barrier

<p>HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT Recruitment Policy Vacancies Induction or Orientation Corporate Culture, Human Resources Employment of Personnel</p>
<p>HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT Re Train & Re Skill Training and development Poor performance due to lack of training,</p>

As the theme “Human Resource Management” evolved analysis found that 15 out of 25 respondents referred to the broad issues of human resources as barriers. This observation agrees with Thompson et al (2007) who conclude that the execution plans and processes must involve all managers; it must also allocate enough resources to the project, human and financial, timeframes must be adhered to by all, and the plans must be reviewed constantly. The following table reflects responses made in relation to the question on barriers or “*those aspects that make it complicated to perform your duties ... either within your section or in the department*”.

Table 4.4 Codes and Sub Themes Human Resource Management – Barrier

Respondents	Codes	Responses	Themes
R 1	Vacancies	<i>"Fill vacancies on current organogram" "a lot of vacancies not filled"</i>	Employment & Human Resources
R 3	Recruitment policy	<i>"Uncertainty among staff or low morale" (use of consultancy agents)</i>	System
R 4	HR Processes	<i>"The system is not very good, others resign, take their pension and come back as a new employee, start accumulating pensions all over". "Staff morale is low due to the over use of consultancy companies"</i>	Human Resource Management
R 7	Vacancies	<i>(poor) "Recruitment policy, high vacancy rate, lack of recruitment systems, and there is a need for re training & re-skilling, to boost staff morale, stop acting (positions) by Senior Personnel"</i>	Appointments Recruitments Training and development
R 9	Poor capacity	<i>"The staff has no capacity to do the job, hence there is always a need for consultation"</i>	Training and development
R 10	Succession policy ageing management Qualifications & skills	<i>"There is a need for restructuring of management and other staff members in the department of education in terms of age, qualifications, skills etc"</i>	Human Resource Management
R 11	Re Training & reskilling HR Matters: Induction/ orientation Communication	<i>"Ineffective PMDS: (Performance Management Development Systems) managers award the incentive bonus to their favorite employees, not to deserving employees, bring back induction to improve customer care & mannerisms in the office"</i>	Poor performance due to lack of training Corporate culture Corporate image

R 13	Unqualified personnel	<i>"Lack of capacity, personnel not properly trained and not correctly placed"</i>	Recruitment processes
R 14	Ageing workforce Up-skilling and Re-skilling	<i>"there is a need for up skilling and reskilling, the current workforce is ageing and are demoralized, make Human Resource Development effective"</i>	Training and development
R 15	Training & development	<i>"Proper recruitment processes do not absorb interns who do not qualify, allow them to get proper diplomas/degrees"</i>	Recruitment Policy communication lack of skills development
R 16	Recruitment Policy	<i>"Proper recruitment processes do not absorb interns who do not qualify (Home Economics at Finance Section)"</i>	Proper recruitment policy
R 17	Correct placement	<i>"Appointment of correct personnel because one gets displaced in his /her position or is transferred into a wrong section just to keep people on the payroll (system)"</i>	Human Resource
R 20	Vacancies	<i>"need to fill in posts, especially senior management posts"</i>	Human Resource Management
R 21	Vacancies	<i>"filling in of posts especially Senior Management Posts"</i>	Fill in of vacancies
R 22	HR Matters	<i>"Need for qualified & Competent staff for Risk Management Section" (currently 8 investigators for +5000 schools, 23 districts and +- 1500 head office staff"</i>	Proper Recruitment
R 25	Vacancies cause instability	<i>"No organisation can be effective without a permanent Accounting Officer (Head of Department)"</i>	Recruitment policy

The conclusion can be made that most respondents complained about many vacancies at the senior management level that have not been filled for many years. This leaves a vacuum in leadership while the basic values and ethics of management such as time management, low morale, and low performance are lost.

4.5.2 THEME 2: POOR COMMUNICATION

Lack of communication was mentioned by eleven (11) respondents whose responses ranged from “*lack of stability in management*” to a “*department’s inability to appoint a permanent Head of Department*” which affects how management decisions are communicated to staff. One example refers to failures of information when there was a migration from hard copy personnel files to digital. R 4 said: “*Lack of information e.g. change in management is never communicated; read from your local newspaper.*” Another example was a persistent element of antagonism when management met with internal stakeholders such as staff unions: R 25: “*There is no stable environment for department and stakeholders to communicate and agree on common issues, they always meet when there are labour challenges e.g. strikes.*”

SUB-THEMES

The following table summarises how themes emerged.

Table: 4.5 Poor Communication – Barrier

	CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lack of stability HoD changed a lot •Staff related matters not communicated •Act on risk management reports •Management should meet with staff unions and discuss amicably before a crisis
	INTERNAL COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lack of Information •Internet always down •share strategic decisions
	EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Interference by The Office of The Premier & Provincial Treasury •Need to develop partnerships with the private sector
POOR COMMUNICATION		

MAIN THEME: Poor Communication

As indicated above issues relating to internal and external communication tend to bring tension between the management and staff. Below is an analysis of the main theme.

Table 4.6: Codes and Sub Themes: Poor Communication

Respondents	Codes	Responses	Themes
R 2	· Lack of stability	"Management; HoD (Head of Department) is changed quite a lot"	Poor management Lack of stability
R 3	· Poor communication	"Lack of information and the internet is always down" "Lack of information (e.g. When changes in Management are introduced, they are never communicated to staff; read from your local newspaper)"	Bad Communication and Technology Systems
R 4	Poor communication	"Modern technology always down"	Bad communication Poor technology Systems
R 9	Poor communication	"Communication: is the ultimate for any organisation, it is not happening with ECDoE"	Poor Communication
R 8	External Communication	"Constant intervention by the Provincial Treasury and the Office of the Premier, that affects the performance of the management, because from time to time someone will be seconded to assist the ECDoE in a certain section Human Resources"	External interference
R 10	Poor communication Communication	"Clear lines of authority must be established, open door policy be practiced"	Internal Communication
R 12	Stakeholder Management	"Develop Partnerships with private sector, to ensure that there is no one who will not be investigated if there is a reason for that because it is difficult to investigate a colleague."	External stakeholder engagements Communication

R 21	Effective use of information received Communication	“Management should use the information in reports that they are get from Risk Management section to inhibit similar occurrences in the future”	Communication Accountability Trust relationship
R 22	Communication	“Senior Management must inform junior officials of their role in the strategic implementation”	Poor communication
23	Communication	(Senior) “Management owns strategic implementation, whereas they are supposed to use it to assist the middle managers in implementation”	Poor communication
R 25	Communication	“There is no stable environment for department and stakeholders to communicate and agree on common issues, they always meet when there are labour challenges e.g. strikes”	Internal stakeholder engagements Communication

In conclusion, most of the respondents who commented on communication were generally unhappy about what they saw taking place in their workspace without being informed by management of major decisions, even when those decisions affected them directly; an example cited was that the department’s personnel files had been moved from hard copy to digital without notification.

4.5.3 THEME 3: POOR LEADERSHIP

Strategy is a leadership function so that senior management should steer it by understanding the settings in which their organisation function; and with that knowledge should set strategic directions for all (Louw and Venter, 2013). The responses analysed reveals the extent to which the ECDoE is lacking in good leadership. The codes and themes on leadership developed in the following way:

Table 4.7: Poor Leadership – barrier

POOR LEADERSHIP		
<p>Poor Leadership Low staff morale Ageing Management Inability to take critical decisions No Consequence Management Managers are Rank conscious, leading to silos self - absorbed leaders Disconnected</p>	<p>Lack of Collective decision making Lack of Collective Ownership silo mentality & individualistic attitudes Lack of Leadership skills allow active discussions in order to deal with contradictions No risk assessment in order to plan better</p>	<p>Delegation to speed the service delivery Need for independence need for growth More responsibility Need for independent thinking No commitment by leadership</p>

MAIN THEME: Poor Leadership

The codes developed were mainly on poor leadership and poor leadership skills: and on management not acting on investigative reports with this resulting in an inability to implement consequence management (R 3, R 4). Lack of leadership was also associated with poor budgeting patterns; over or under budgeting patterns, ageing managers, and low staff morale, all resulting in poor performance and silo mentality (R 7, R9, R 11 & R14).

SUB THEMES

The following table portrays how the themes developed:

Table 4.8: Codes and Sub Themes Poor Leadership - Barrier

Respondents	Codes	Responses	Themes
R 4	Leadership	<i>"Poor leadership skills; management not acting on investigative reports; resulting in inability to implement"</i>	Poor Leadership
R 7	Lack leadership	<i>"Fear of / inability to taking critical decisions: a lot are in acting positions and are ageing / management leadership"</i>	Lack of leadership inability to taking critical decisions
R 9	Lack of Collective of decision making	<i>"Lack of collective decision making: each manager worries about his/her own program more than the main objectives of the department"</i>	Lack of collective decision-making Lack of unity in leadership Silo Effect
R 10	Need for independence	<i>"Program Manager (should) appoint a subordinate to sign in his absence to speedy the service delivery takeout (reduce) the red tape"</i>	More responsibility Need for independent thinking
R 11	Individualistic Silo Effect Silo Effect	<i>"Sections do not share their annual programs amongst themselves, leading to some clashes of similar activities because they are rank conscious"</i>	Self-absorbed Localised Disconnected
R 13	Decision making	<i>"Senior Management should know the vision & goal to be able to articulate strategy, and utilise collective thinking & allow active discussions to deal with contradictions"</i>	Lack of unity in Inconsistency in leadership
R 14	Silo mentality	<i>"lack of leadership, esp. top management; they act all concerned when issues are raised and when action is expected based on that, they do not apply"</i>	Lack of leadership
R 20	Delegation	<i>"Program Manager (should) appoint a subordinate to sign in his absence to speedy the service delivery takeout (reduce) the red tape"</i>	Need for growth
R 18	No assessment risk	<i>"the management do not take time to assess the risk profile of the organisation to plan likewise"</i>	Need for risk assessment. No evaluation of organisational profile

In conclusion, most responses stressed a lack of confidence in the type of leadership among the ECDoE management.

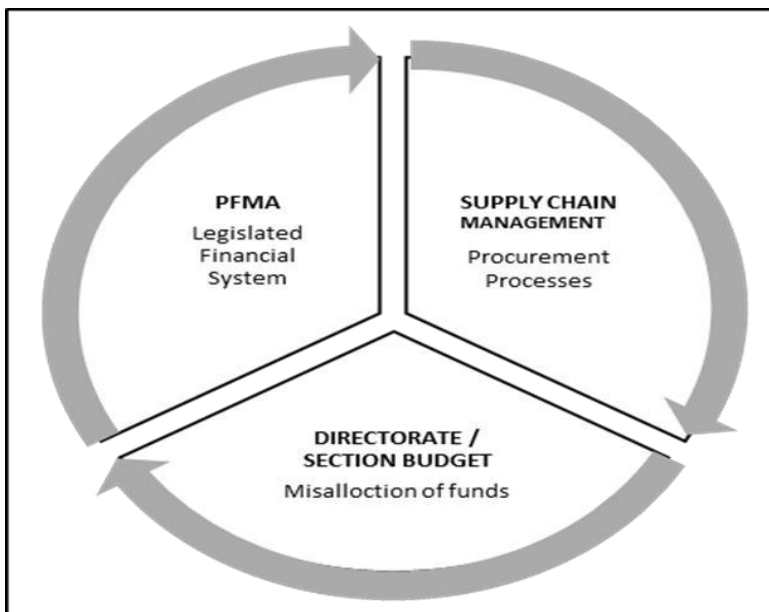
4.5.4 THEME 4: POOR BUDGETING SYSTEM

Financial services and Supply Chain Management have been fused to make a single theme of poor budgeting systems. There are Acts, Rules, and Regulations governing the stewardship of government funds, and government officials should be guided by them (Public Finance Management Act, No.1 of 1999; & General Procurement Guidelines, 2000).

SUB THEMES

The theme 'poor budgeting system' was generated from responses that varied from misallocation of funds to under-budgeting. The table below indicates these themes.

Table 4.9: Poor Budget Systems - Barrier



SUB THEMES

All operations in an organisation revolve around budgeting and planning; responses received dealing with barriers to good budgeting mention Supply Chain Management and procurement processes. The main concern was on the turn-around time for procurement with complaints of dilatoriness, that a task would take seven (7) days when, ideally, it should take three (3) (National Treasury, 2015); a tendency for budget misallocation, that is over budget in sections that are less critical, and/or under budget in critical sections. The following table shows how themes evolved.

Table 4.10: Codes and Sub Themes Poor Budgeting System - Barrier

Respondents	Codes	Responses	Themes
R 20	PFMA	<i>"Supply Chain Management: their turnaround should be reduced" (currently is 7 days ideally it should be 3 days)</i>	Financial System
R 9	System	<i>"No proper organisation by management to leading to poor"</i>	Poor budgeting system
R 13	Budget	<i>"Budget misallocation, over budget to sections that are less critical sections, or under budget to critical sections"</i>	Poor budgeting system
R14	Budget	<i>"Budget misallocation"</i>	Poor budgeting system
R 15	Budget	<i>"The budget is never sufficient, and sometimes it gets shifted without noticing the director (program director) being informed"</i>	Improper budgeting
R 11	Budget	<i>"Stop the top slicing – the shifting funds as seen fit by Chief Financial Officer without considering the effect that it may have on affected directorates"</i>	Poor budgeting system
R 18	Budget	<i>"Insufficient budget hinders performance"</i>	Improper budget

This diagram summarises how all operations revolve around budgeting and planning with key concepts being Supply Chain Management, other complaints

were on the turn-around time that it takes: it would take seven (7) days when ideally it should be three (3) (National Treasury, 2015); and budget misallocation with over budget in sections that are less critical, or under budget in critical sections.

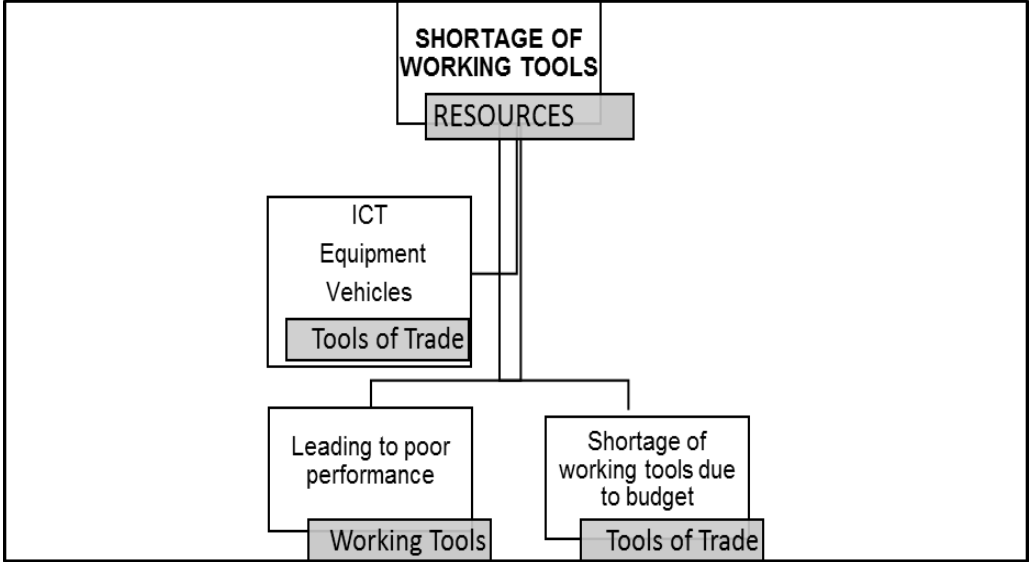
4.5 THEME 5: SHORTAGE OF TOOLS OF TRADE

The second theme of the “tools of trade” generated numerous sub-themes where problems lay with basic working tools such as, for example, desks, computers, transport for visiting schools, and information communication technology. The following constitutes the sub-themes as mentioned above.

SUB-THEMES

The following table shows how themes developed

Table 4.11: Resourcing; Shortage of Tools of Trade themes



As illustrated above responses were to the same question on enablers, with, for example, Respondent 14 indicating that although workers have computers, the intermittent disruption of electricity combined with a persistent absence of internet connection results in a loss of valuable time and money for successful service

delivery. These instances often result in clients being turned away and service providers not being paid in time. R 1 has put up a list like computers, desks and transport; transport also affects school visits by educational specialists.

MAIN THEME: Shortage of Tools of Trade. The following table shows how the sub themes were developed

Table 4.12: Codes and Sub – Themes Shortage of Tools of Trade

Respondents	Codes	Responses	Themes
R 1	Working Tools	<i>“Provide basic working tools, desks, computers, transport”</i>	Basic working tools
R 4	Working Tools	<i>“Working tools, there is always a limitation transport to do school visits, printing paper, poor ICT internet”</i>	Tools of Trade
R 6	Working Tools	<i>“Need for Proper Resourcing”</i>	Resourcing
R 7	Working Tools	<i>“Officials lack the capacity to implement due to: Limited resources like transport, budget, working tools</i>	Tools of Trade
R 20	Working Tools	<i>“Shortage of tools of trade”</i>	Tools of Trade

Based on the above, the conclusion could be drawn that many respondents agreed that the absence of the tools of the trade was a concern because it adversely affects performance and service delivery.

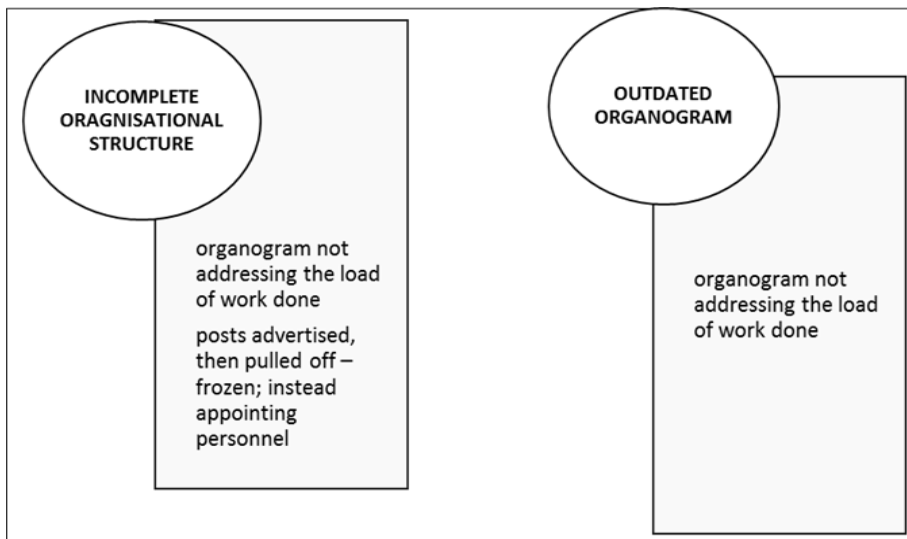
4.5.6 THEME 6: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Organisational structure is one of the key aspects of the organisation that should support an organisation in strategy execution. The respondents commented on the organogram that was not properly filled in since its inception in 2006. The high vacancy rate was regarded as a contributing factor in certain sections.

SUB- THEMES

The most common response on organisational structure was that it was last reviewed in 2006, and was not properly completed (R 3, R 4 & R 14). Following is a diagram indicating aspects that are pertaining organisational structure.

Table 4.13: Organisational Structure – Barrier



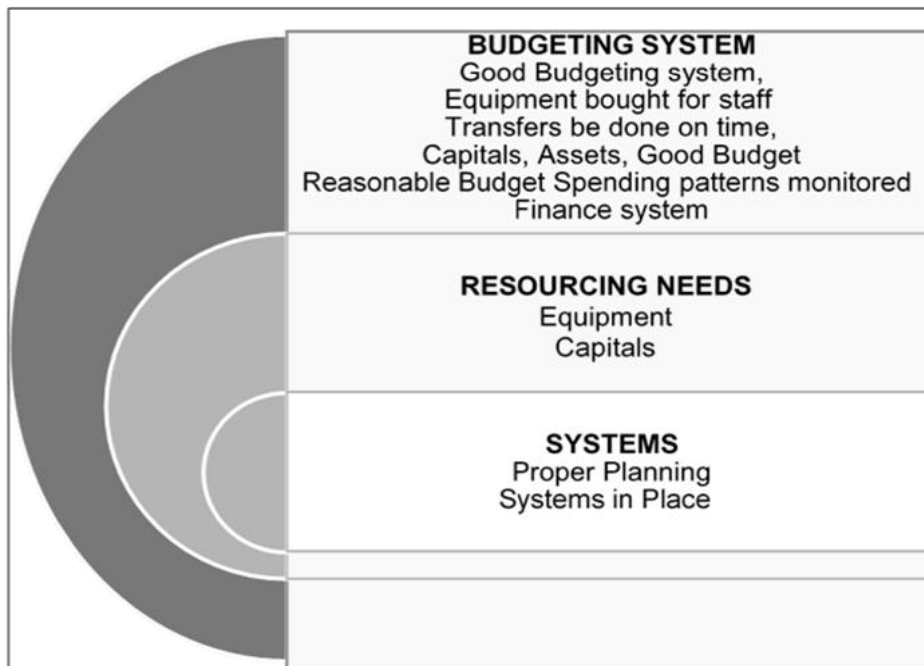
4.6. COMMON THEMES - ENABLERS

4.6.1 THEME 1: GOOD BUDGETING SYSTEMS

Budget or financial matters were mentioned eight (8) times as enablers; respondents indicated that they were content with how the budget as a system was

being handled by the leadership of the ECDoE. Their comments ranged from “reasonable levels of financial planning” by R 2, to “appropriate budget” allocations.

Table 4.6.1.1: Good Budgeting System – Enabler



SUB- THEMES

The sub-themes were developed in the following way, based on the responses shown in the following table:

Table: 4.6.1.2 Codes and Sub - Theme: Good Budgeting System - Enabler

Respondents	Code	Responses	Themes
R 2	Reasonable Budget	"Availability of reasonable levels of financial planning"	Finance
R 6	Resourcing needs	"Resourcing is done according to the needs of the section, considering the budget, personnel, and we are able to order"	Capitals, Assets Equipment
R 10	Proper budgeting	"Not complaining about budget, but tranfers must be done on time"	Good budget Transfers be done in time

R 17	Proper budgeting	"Proper Budgeting, at least for my section, it has not occurred that we were told to cancel an activity due to insufficient budget"	Good budget
R 22	Good Budget	"Budget is adequate, the only thing needing improvement are district plans, that would allow us work better"	Good budget
R 23	Proper budgeting	"Budget (is done) according to the needs of each section"	Capitals, Assets Equipment
R 24	Good budgeting system	"Budget, (is done) according to the needs of each section, our section deals with school stationery, schools in January will be without textbooks, because they did not submit their order on time"	Capitals, Assets Equipment
R 25	Good Budgeting system Spending patterns monitored	"Happy with the current way of budget system each directorate is evaluated for their spending and are given the appropriate budget"	Evaluation before new budget allocation

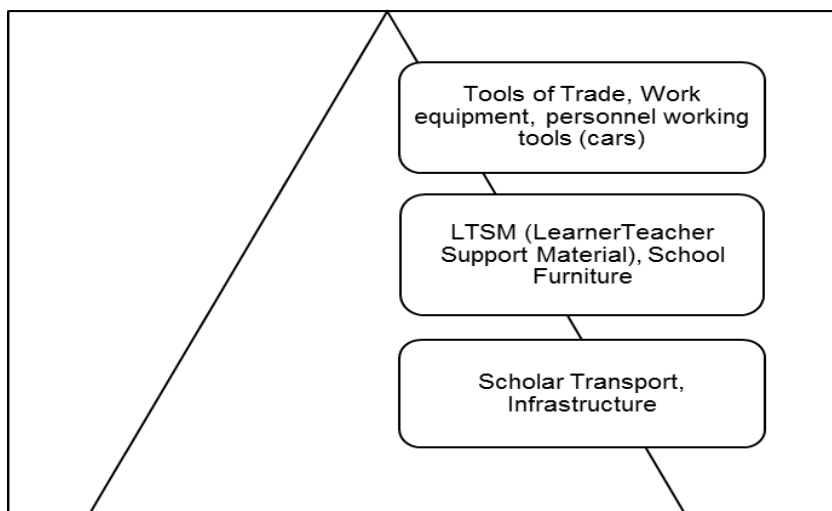
In the above table the views expressed were not from unhappy personnel who actually seem to be content with management decision-making. The respondents indicated that the ECDoE budget is sufficient if properly controlled.

4.6.2 THEME 2: SUFFICIENT RESOURCING

Strategy execution plans must be translated into objectives and measures and appropriate performance indicators should be tangible and realistic. This includes the setting of time-frames that are aligned with tasks and with financial and non-financial resources.

The table below shows how themes evolved

Table 4.6.1.3: Sufficient Resourcing - Enabler



SUB THEMES

Sub-themes developed from the following responses:

Table 4.6.1.4: Codes and Sub - Themes; Resourcing

Respondents	Code	Responses	Themes
R 6	Resourcing needs	<i>“Resourcing is done according to the needs of the section, Budget, Personnel working tools”</i>	Capitals Equipment tools of trade
R 12	Enough resources	<i>“Management provides enough resources : for strategy implementation”</i>	Capitals equipment tools of trade
R 24	Human resource management	<i>“Currently the management is correcting resourcing: buying cars for school visits”</i>	Resourcing
R 22	Good resourcing	<i>“Good resourcing: LTSM (i.e. Leaner Teacher Support Material) school furniture, scholar transport, infrastructure”</i>	Provide resources

CONCLUSION

One of the major themes was resourcing: responses indicate that resources are key for the operational side of an organisation, and examples included: planning; resource allocation; people; communication; and control.

4.6.3 THEME 3: GOOD LEADERSHIP

Although leadership is a very important aspect of any successful organisational strategy, responses received on enablers did not dwell much on this. R 25 as quoted below is the only respondent who comments on support and good leadership, while other respondents confined themselves mainly to comments on poor leadership as a barrier. As a result, the theme was not convincing, and was not considered to be an enabler.

Table 4.6.1.5: Common Codes and Sub - Themes: Leadership

Respondents	Code	Quoted responses	Themes
R 25	Good Leadership	Leadership is able take collective decision-making	Good Leadership

4.7 SUMMARY

This Chapter presents the findings arrived at based on the analysed data set; the steps taken were familiarization with the data received, which was coded by using the data coding as a step; from those codes which were common or predominating particular themes developed after this stage themes were clustered to get them into categories. Based on what comments were dominant, for or against, a conclusion was drawn. The positive themes were regarded as enablers, while negative opinions were rated as barriers. Barriers seemed to

have significant weight which affected the performance assessment in the department by its officials.

Key findings were mainly barriers; barriers to Human Resource Management, Poor Budgeting Systems, Poor Communication, Shortages of Resources and/or Tools of Trade, Poor Leadership, organisational structures, and out-of-date Old Organograms. Enablers also related to Good Budgeting Systems and Sufficient Resourcing. These findings are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 outlined the data based on responses to the Questionnaire this section discusses a breakdown of the findings of the study. The enablers and barriers to strategy execution in the ECDoE are considered first followed by some suggested further reading, and recommendations; then a conclusion. The research aim is reconsidered which was to find the enablers and disablers of strategy execution in the ECDoE by focusing on the strategic goal number six,

“Efficient administration ensured through good corporate governance and management” (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2015). That goal has four strategic objectives:

- (a) To stabilise financial management across the organisation through proper budgeting, control, and reporting.
- (b) To provide an appropriate service delivery model and organisational structure for improved education delivery and support.
- (c) To ensure that management systems for performance, information, and risk mitigation are in place.
- (d) To develop and monitor the execution of an integrated policy management framework (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2016).

In answering the research question on strategy execution in ECDoE, data from questionnaires and interviews, was typed on spreadsheet and was analysed. Its findings are presented in Chapter 4; the sample was drawn across fields of specialisation and performance areas. The motive was that the strategic goal investigated should cover budgeting control; organisational structure;

management systems for performance; information and risk mitigation; and to develop and monitor the execution of an integrated policy management framework (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2016). These indicators were very broad, and the study had to reduce them by concentrating only on the responses closely aligned to them.

The major findings were that the barriers and enablers of strategy execution in the ECDoE were very similar. In the main, the Respondents highlighted barriers more than enablers. These were: human resource management, poor budgeting systems, poor communication, poor resourcing the lack of tools of trade, and an old organisational structure. The following discusses the barriers.

5.2 BARRIERS

5.2.1. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Barriers can act as hindrances to the execution of a strategy; the lack of communication, lack of coordination, and lack of control systems are some of the most notable barriers to strategy execution (Atkinson, 2006; Okumus, 2003). Responses to the Questionnaire pointed to resistance to change through its observations on ageing management, the lack of skilled personnel, poor communications, the lack of decisive leadership, lack of commitment, and of vision, were pointed to as barriers in the department. Key dominant themes regarding barriers, as indicated in the discussion chapter, are human resource management, a shortage of the tools of trade, poor communication, poor budgeting systems, old organisational structure, and poor leadership.

- (a) Human resource management: most respondents complained about the use of consulting companies that lead to low staff morale: R 3 – alludes to “...*uncertainty among staff and low morale, due to the use of consultancy*”. Probed to dwell why this affects personnel? R 3 cites two things:

- The consultancy agents are doing tasks normally assigned to the government officials, that affects their performance and professional growth, they feel obsolete.
- Consultancy agents are paid a lot of money; the government officials will never be paid those amounts

(b) Instability in management – since the department has not appointed the HoD, the Provincial government is forced to have someone on the helm of department.

(c) Lack of training – rendering some staff members ill-equipped to perform their duties

If the organogram could be reviewed, the correct number of employees appointed, and skills audit be done timeously that would eliminate the low morale mentioned by respondents. Some of the concerns identified were personnel growth, development, training, and promotion. That also included aspects of ageing leadership, with some respondents suggesting a phasing out of the ageing managers: R 2 – *“...older employees with an old corporate culture and their resistance to change and innovation”*

The study also found that there was a lack of prioritising the limited resources available in the department which translates into strategy failure, as cited by R 22: *“Need for qualified & competent staff to quell unlawful activities, currently there are only 8 investigators for +5000 schools, 23 districts and +-1500 head office staff”*. The suggestion was that the ECDoE management should appoint more qualified staff as investigators to reinforce Risk Management in line with the annual budget the ECDoE receives from the Treasury Department (National Treasury, 2016).

5.2.2 RESOURCING: SHORTAGE OF TOOLS OF TRADE

There are four types of strategies: corporate-, business-, functional-, and process strategies. Hrebiniak (2008) states that strategy is vital in management and ensures the mission that vision strategic objectives of the organisation should be

achieved. These aspects are known by the management many of whom are graduates with diplomas in public administration (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2015), but what seems to be lacking is coordination and a selection of the key goals that would lead to successful execution. It is important for management to ensure that an organisation has access to sufficient resources for it successfully to achieve strategy execution. Resources include people, money, technology, and other management assets. Respondents view resources as a means for planning and budgeting for the organisation, which would assist in successful strategy execution.

R 1, R 4, R 6 and R 7 pointed out that there is a lack of strategy execution because the staff lacks the

- “...*basic working tools, desks, computers, transport; there is always a limitation transport to do school visits, printing paper, poor Internal Communication & Technology (ICT); poor internet connectivity*”
- This lack making “... *officials (to) lack capacity to perform their duties*”.

The results of limited resources are far- reaching.

Resources should be prioritised to assist the functionality of key projects (Hrebiniak, 2013) of the organisation. ECDoE managers complain that certain sections key to achieving some of the strategic goals of the department, such as Information Technology, Curriculum Management and Mathematics, Science and Technology Section struggle to meet their targeted plans because of limited budgets.

5.2.3 POOR BUDGETING SYSTEM

Financial services and Supply Chain Management have been fused to make a single theme of Financial and Budget Systems which aspects of the organisation seem to be serious challenges for several respondents. There Finance and Procurement Acts mentioned in the introduction are meant to minimise the challenges relating to financial matters, provide guidelines and put systems in

place, but ECDoE is still affected by poor performance and underspending. This study suggests that these are not adhered to as is corroborated by themes developed from common codes in data collected. The themes varied from Supply Chain Management, budget misallocation, poor financial systems giving certain sections more budget than they need which leads to underspending while sections such as curriculum that need more are allocated a lot less. From these themes improper or poor budgeting, became more inappropriate.

5.2.4 POOR COMMUNICATION

As it has been stated in this study that Strategy is a leadership function; the senior management of an organisation must steer it, they must understand the settings their organisation functions in, and use that knowledge to set strategic direction, for all in the organisation (Louw and Venter, 2013).

- R 25's response was: *"There is no stable environment for department and stakeholders to communicate and agree on common issues, they always meet when there are labour challenges e.g. strikes"*.
- R 3 commented on a *"... lack of information and the internet is always down, making staff to fail to make payments, leading to services not reaching the schools, and the small business person losing income"*
- R 4's response further highlighted poor communication: *"...lack of information e.g. when one of the senior managers goes to retirement, it is never communicated, that data is only known by those who were close to him/her"*.

Poor communication as a barrier also affect external engagements as R 8 indicated; because ECDoE answers to the *"Provincial Treasury and Planning Department and the Office of the Premier, and other sister departments, ECDoE would run programmes, such the staff would read about from the paper"* ... Another comment on stakeholder engagements was by R 12 who indicated that there needs to be some partnerships with the private sector to beef up skills that may not be available or are very limited in ECDoE, *"...partnerships with private sector,*

to ensure that there is no one, who will not be investigated, if there is a reason for that because it would be difficult to investigate a colleague”.

5.2.5 OLD ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Organisational structure became one of the major barriers; respondents indicated that there has never been a full complement of staff; indeed, there has always been a high vacancy rate and those who leave the system are not replaced. That leads to certain sections being under-staffed. As mentioned in chapter 3 that the organisational structure consists of five parts which are jobs, the authority to do those jobs, the grouping of jobs in a logical fashion, the managers' span of control, and the mechanism of coordination (Higgins, 2005). It emerged that hiring of outside consultants, the silo mentality in the sections and directorates affected the morale of the personnel, so managers are not seen as effective strategists who coordinate the staff effectively.

The closing of small and unviable schools by means of consulting agencies was intended to enable the organisation to execute its daily operations effectively, but to the respondents' view, those actions were in fact causing inefficiencies. The lack of coordination, an example would be the silo mentality, is highlighted by respondents (R 9, 11, 12, 13 & 14), and results in silos within the department.

5.2.6 POOR LEADERSHIP

Some responses indicated that there were no consequence management for poor performance such as a manager missing deadlines in terms of goals and due dates (R 13, R 7, R 9 & R 11). This was attributed to the lack of appointment of the HoD, respondent claimed that, because the HoD is not permanent, he/she was not empowered to take certain actions against those who deserve it.

- R 13 – *“...there are no consequences for underspending or overspending...”* resulting in AG awarding a negative audit report.

- R 7 – “...some underperforming districts in terms of matric results... the district director would be transferred to head office to get more responsibility, instead of a demotion or something”.
- R 11 – “... middle management would lead an unprotected industrial action, forcing the head offices to a complete halt, and no one would be called to account”.

It is further claimed that management is usually unavailable in their offices due to meetings held away from head office, this absenteeism further weakens leadership. Documents needing the senior manager’s signature would remain on his/her table, until he/she is able to be in the office. The repercussions vary from late payment of service providers, to postponement of events or postponement of job interviews. This is an example of lack of strategic leadership. Louw and Venter (2013), stress that leadership style affects strategy execution, if leadership drives the strategy by maintaining focus, being visionary, and acting as a driver for such change management that is necessitated by new strategies (Rajasekar, 2015); in this way strategy execution is possible. Management style is about the way in which the management treats their colleagues and other employees and on what and how they focus their attention.

Good leadership seems to be one of the weaknesses in the management of ECDoE, mainly due to the lack of filling senior positions and the hiring of consultants, resulting in most senior managers operating in acting capacity including that of the HoD (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2015; AGSA, 2015, p. 25) and over five (5) Chief Directors being in acting positions, six (6) acting District Directors and another five (5) acting Directors at Provincial Office (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2016).

Another complaint is that leadership does not seem to meet members of the organisation in order to deal with challenges, but mainly to impose compliance. It became apparent, therefore, that the actions of the ECDoE leadership do not make the necessary concerted effort to meet managers, plan each goal on the strategic

plan, and ensure these became a reality. Therefore, if the leadership of the department does not address these challenges, the implications would be dire for the ECDoE will continuously have bad reviews by the AG, the department would get a very large budget but would not improve its strategy execution.

5.3 ENABLERS

5.3.1 GOOD BUDGETING SYSTEM

The respondents were mostly satisfied with the budget allocation, but agree that, more could be done to improve the system. R 3: “*Availability of reasonable levels of financial planning*” (budget). Effective strategy execution should include the objectives, strategies, and policies put into action through the development of programmes, budgets, and procedures (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012, p. 272). Management should provide the subjective judgment of which projects in which to invest resources for the creation of strategic readiness (Kaplan and Norton, 2004). From their responses, the theme on budgeting systems and financial planning seem to be at acceptable levels, as based on the high budget the ECDoE receives from the Provincial Treasury, these respondents claim that if the department could change their priorities, the performance would improve.

5.3.2 GOOD RESOURCING

Tools of trade and availability of modern technology were also regarded as good; responses ranged from “... *communication tools and the use of modern technology, allows some flow of communication resulting in positive management decisions*” ... “*Resourcing is done according to the needs of the section...*” “*Management provides enough resources for daily operations...*” These responses indicate that some managers are not complaining about the budget, but about how it is allocated. Sadowska points out that a strategy execution plan must be translated into objectives and measures with appropriate performance

indicators in order to be tangible and realistic; this includes the setting of time-frames that are aligned with tasks and financial and nonfinancial resources. A response from

- R 12, was that the “*Management provides enough resources for daily operations and for strategy execution, they also provide training*”. These responses are positive as is that the ECDoE management is doing enough to equip the strategy execution.
- R 24 adds that there is an ongoing plan to rectify a negative situation “...*currently the management is correcting resourcing: cars to do school visits are distributed to districts*”.

5.4 SUMMARY

The findings were that the ECDoE was an administrative organisation that lacks strategic leadership and effective management, to efficiently execute strategy. The ECDoE was facing administrative and managerial challenges which led to low morale among its personnel. Some managers were too conscious of their positions, which frustrated subordinates; who could not perform certain tasks without the signatures of their managers, leaving many duties unfulfilled.

Silo mentality was also regarded as a barrier, which renders staff unable to perform at their best, as there seems to be no synergy. The work environment seems to inhibit innovation and initiative, leaving the organisation to function only by statutes, legislations, and rules. If that does not change, it may result in poor strategy execution because every organisation has its own culture which in turn influences the extent to which change can be achieved.

The key themes that emerge from the study demonstrate that there is a lack of strategy execution at the ECDoE and various factors were cited as being a hindrance to strategy execution. Some respondents were very positive, citing that the workforce of the ECDoE are highly qualified people (most are former educators, school principals and former education inspectors (Eastern Cape

Department of Education, 2015). A good human resource management, good leadership skills; and that with availability of tools of trade, good communications, and proper budgeting systems, there is a ray of hope.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has successfully answered the key research question, namely to identify barriers to, and enablers of, strategy execution in the ECDoE. The investigation was aimed at the senior managers of the ECDoE who are the custodians of strategy management.

6.2 SUGGESTED FURTHER RESEARCH

More research is needed to establish the validity of the claim by some respondents that there is both over- and under-budgeting in certain directorates, and that this in turn affects their performance; the research did not analyse each sections budget. In addition, there is a need to monitor the spending patterns and analysis of each directorate in order to establish the appropriate amounts needed per directorate and for each section. The improper allocation of funds was raised as a serious concern during the collection of data; some managers complained about what they termed “top slicing’ when the budget is cut by the Chief Financial Officer without discussion or even informing the directorate concerned. The Respondents did not give the impression that their budgets are cut because of limited budgets because, as apparently, the ECDoE sometimes returns unused millions of rands to the National Treasury (Eastern Cape Department of Education, Annual Report. 2016 / 2017).

Another area of serious concern was the high vacancy rate as evidenced in the number of managers in acting positions (Eastern Cape Department of Education/Leadership, 2016) which usually results in poor management. Related to this is the increase in the outsourcing of services to consultants leaving the employees of the department with little or no work to do and lowering morale by making them feel redundant. Further studies could be done to assess the “silo

effect” with each section functioning without recourse to other units even though the whole business of the department is the provision of quality education for learners in the Eastern Cape; Noble describes this as autonomous strategic behaviour (1999), and it should be minimised and firmly controlled.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Finance Section could analyse each directorate’s report for each end of the year and assess spending before the new budget is allocated. This would assist in levelling the complaint of overbudgeting and under-budgeting and would facilitate the department’s in prioritising certain projects according to short, medium, and long-term pressures.

Scale down the use of consultancy; consultancy because that is not sustainable, consulting companies do not transfer skills, and the staff at Head Office was very demoralized because they felt that the use of consulting companies seem to take over some of the critical sections like the Human Resources Management, Financial Management and Provisioning and Resourcing Sections.

6.4 THE CONCLUSION

The study contributes to the body of knowledge on the subject by identifying barriers and enablers in a public service organisation; this is unusual as there are many studies that focus on profit-making or private sector organisations. As mentioned in the introduction, the strategic plans of most organisations are good, but the execution can become a challenge (Hrebiniak, 2013), as has happened in the ECDoE. The lack of coordination and of control systems (Atkinson, 2006; Okumus, 2003) is evident. The silo mentality and individualist attitudes that were purported to be present as portrayed by some managers adversely influences strategy execution. This makes execution a mammoth task because autonomous strategic behaviour has the effect of directorates seeming to be in competition with each other instead of cooperating towards the achievement of the organisation’s

aims and objectives (Noble, 1999, p 121). It was unclear how different activities should be linked together to ensure effective strategy execution, so this could be explored

During the data collection and analysis, it was evident that many unhappy respondents are bothered by individualist methods of administration.

Good and positive things could still be achieved by the ECDoE leadership as most respondents indicate that the staff is highly qualified and there is a positive attitude towards work and to one another.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

The study deals with strategy execution within an organisation, and the causes of non-execution (barriers) of strategy and those aspects that make it easy to implement (enablers) the decisions taken at the strategy planning session. Studies done on strategy execution indicate that there is a gap between the planning and execution. This questionnaire seeks to find out if that is true or not in the ECDoE.

Exclusions

- This research excludes all the employees who are not in the senior management within the department.
- This research excludes all members of other government departments, and private sector as the study is targeting the ECDoE Management.

Inclusions

- All those managers who in their operations have to make financial decisions, who deal with resource allocation, and those who have to evaluate the performance of their subordinates.
- All those managers who do accountability reports about their sections or directorates.

Please answer the following questions

1. How many years have you been working at the Education Department? Please encircle:

3 years	5 years	10 years	>10 years

2. How many years in management position? Please encircle:

3 years	5 years	10 years	>10 years

3. What is your understanding of strategic execution in relation to the goals of the organisation?

4. Would you say the management supports sections and directorates, to ensure strategy execution? Please cite examples.

5. Please explain the role of the organisation's leadership in guiding the process of strategy execution, with regards to communication, budget and their support in the different programmes of the department?

6. How are systems, and the organisational structure assisting or hindering your performance as the manager?

7. In your view, what are the enablers; those aspects that make it uncomplicated to perform your duties, you can enumerate, either within your section or the department.

8. What would you say are the barriers; those aspects that make it difficult to perform your duties, that you can enumerate, either within your section or the department. Please elaborate.

9. Resource allocation; training and skills development, human and financial are some of the factors that influence the success or failure of strategy in organisations. How are these matters handled by the department? Please provide some examples.

10.
11. How is the corporate culture (shared values) of the department? How does it impact the strategy execution? Please explain.

12. How would you rate the strategic performance of the department?
Please explain; was acceptable or unacceptable? Please provide
some examples.

13. What would say is a glaring weakness in the department that you
think may be contributing to poor strategy execution. Please provide
an example.

14. Is there any additional information that you would like to share that
may help in this study?

Thank you for your participation!

4 Starling Close
West Drive
KING WILLIAMS TOWN
5600

24 February 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

I am currently registered with Rhodes Business School, doing my Masters in Business Management. I am now doing research within the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE), my topic is 'Barriers to and enablers of strategy execution within an organisation'.

I chose the ECDoE to do my research, because I feel the study could help the organisation in identifying areas that need improvement and keep doing those things that are positive in taking this organisation forward.

This is a request that you assist me by being part of this research; by allowing me to come and interview you as the member of the Management on pertinent issues on strategy implementation.

Your assistance will be highly appreciated.

Kind Regards!


N. Vena