

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PUBLIC  
SECTOR: AN APPRAISAL OF THE ZIMBABWE AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

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SECTOR: AN APPRAISAL OF THE ZIMBABWE AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

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APPROVED FOR EXAMINATION

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Date: 18/03/2024

## DECLARATION

I, Bennitta Desire MAPAONA, hereby declare that the thesis titled *Towards effective strategy implementation in the public sector: An appraisal of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation* submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management Sciences at Durban University of Technology, is entirely my own work. All the sources used in the research have been duly acknowledged, and I have properly cited and referenced them in accordance with the academic conventions and guidelines.

I affirm that this thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other degree or qualification at any university or other tertiary institution. Any contribution by others to this work is clearly acknowledged, and the extent and nature of their contributions have been specified.

I understand the consequences of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and I confirm that this thesis is an original piece of work produced by me during the course of my academic program.

Date: March 18, 2024

Signature:

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to Dr Patience Itaizvenyu Rudo HOVE, my Mentor and Spiritual Leader as well as my late parents who have always encouraged me and believed that I can fulfil the desires of my heart and dreams as long as I remained focused.

## ABSTRACT

*Public management scholarship consistently confronts the challenge of strategy implementation capabilities within the public sector, a pressing issue particularly pronounced in Zimbabwe, where institutions frequently face hurdles during implementation. Scholars lament the scarcity of empirical research aimed at improving public strategy implementation, particularly within Zimbabwe's socio-political context. Formulated in response to this invitation, this study addresses the challenges of implementing public strategies in Zimbabwe, focusing on the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) from 2013 to 2018. Using a critical realist approach and a pastiche of theories encompassing the environmental, cultural, power, and learning perspectives, the study examines the complex dynamics affecting public strategy implementation in unstable sociopolitical context such as Zimbabwe. Inspired by Sun Tsu's adaptable strategy principles, the study analyses interview data collected from participants in the Office of the President and Cabinet Permanent Secretaries, ZIMASSET implementors, and public intellectuals to examine key aspects of public strategy implementation. Findings reveal deep-rooted issues like political interference, leadership disengagement, outdated policies, and weak institutions, hindering ZIMASSET outcomes. The theoretical framework helps explain the environmental factors, cultural dynamics, power structures, and learning processes influencing ZIMASSET implementation, underscoring the need for multifaceted solutions. Challenges include limited stakeholder involvement, transparency issues, and external constraints such as economic sanctions. The study advances the discussion on public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe and proposes a framework for enhancing public strategy implementation. The proposed framework presents practical insights for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. The study hopes to contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges in translating strategic plans into tangible socio-economic outcomes, potentially extending beyond Zimbabwe's borders.*

**Keywords:** *Public strategy implementation, Zimbabwe, ZIMASSET, critical realism, power structures, learning processes, political interference, weak institutions, budget allocation, stakeholder involvement, transparency issues, socio-political environment.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and context of the study

Sun Tsu, one of the most influential thinkers on strategy whose famous military treatise *The Art of War* (Tsu, 1910) has motivated most successful managers today, conceptualised strategy not as a simple plan of action but as an appropriate response to changing conditions. For Tsu, planning can only be effective in stable environments, and sticking to a plan in a turbulent environment result in unexpected conflicts (Tsu, 1910). Could this be the bane of public strategy implementation in the unstable Zimbabwean socio-political environment?

To address this question, scholars have identified the need to address limited empirical work on how to make public strategy implementation more successful (Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Hitt, et. al., 2016). This study was formulated as a response to this invitation, especially with regards to public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. It focuses on the last national development strategy of the first Republic<sup>1</sup>, the *Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation 2013-2018* (ZIMASSET) (see GoZ, 2013) whose measures and programmes, as with previous strategies, could not be fully implemented. The aim therefore is to explore ways in which the habitual failure in public strategy implementation in the first republic can possibly be overcome and ensure that going forward, the national development strategies unleash their full potential.

In this introductory chapter, the context within which the study was conducted is provided as a way to motivate and justify the need for the study. Pertinent implementation issues that have been observed in the history of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe are highlighted. The research problem deriving from these issues is then defined as with key questions and objectives underpinning the investigation. The chapter ends by delimiting the study within the methodological and theoretical perspectives that guided its execution.

### 1.2 Rationale

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<sup>1</sup> Zimbabwe under the leadership of former president Robert Mugabe 1980 - 2017

Strategic planning, management and implementation are the **means** by which organisations can accomplish their goals. In the public sector, this is critical to the success of public policy, yet for many reasons, public institutions across the world struggle to implement their strategies (Rani, 2019). The role of government in development is primarily the role of the public sector (Abah, 2012), and the public sector is often saddled with the responsibility of policy implementation. This role includes effective implementation of government policies directed towards achieving development goals. While governments and other public institutions may have excellent policies, challenges are often encountered during the implementation process (Olson, Slater and Hult 2005; Brinkschroder 2014; Driver 2016). Empirical findings on strategy implementation suggest that success rate lies between 10 and 30% (Cater and Pucko, 2010)

Public strategy implementation difficulties continue to be an enduring threat confronting public sector administration in the developing world. Scholars have acknowledged that most organisations across the world fail to implement their strategic plans for many reasons (Olsen 2011). Franklen et al (2009) found out that organisations fail to implement about 70% of their new strategies. In the 1990s 95% of company employees were unaware of or did not understand their company strategy (Kaplan and Norton, 1996).

The above tragedy continues to be a present threat mostly in the public sector where governments across the world face similar problems (Driver 2016). Questions have arisen concerning Zimbabwe's poor implementation record, with critics citing flaws in the process, lack of policy consistency, insufficient stakeholder buy-in, and inadequate funding provisions as possible reasons. Some have suggested that many strategies fail not because of the way they are formulated, but rather because of poor implementation (Hitt et al., 2016; Merkus et al., 2019). While governments and other public institutions may have excellent policies, challenges are thus often encountered during the implementation process (Olson, Slater and Hult 2005; Brinkschroder 2014). Despite the acknowledged importance and central place of strategy implementation in institutions, there appears to be little scholarly attention that has been paid to strategy implementation (Brinkschroder 2014, Hitt, et. al., 2016).

As a multi-disciplinary concept, strategy lacks a universally accepted definition as it means different things in different contexts and to different people (Jofre, 2011). Thus, the implementation issue within strategic management theory, as Mitchell (2020: 19) argues, largely rests on the ambivalence of the definition of, and one's approach to strategy. The ambivalence accompanying the different understandings of strategy was described by Henry Mintzberg who identified five different approaches or perspective - 5Ps - of strategy, that is strategy as plans to guide future course of action with a well-defined goal and deadline; as patterns or particular way to do things that emerges from the past; as positions or best place in which to position your-self and operate; as perspectives or way we naturally do things; and strategy as ploys or manoeuvre by which we can take advantage over, or defeat a competitor (also see Bourgeois and Brodwin, 1984). .

These perspectives of strategy constitute the means implied in the common definition of strategy and have influenced different schools of thought from which strategy management, including implementation, is approached by scholars and practitioners. For example, Yarger (2006) defines strategy as a theory of natural selection or a plan of action that is based on a "calculation of objectives, concepts, and resources within acceptable bounds of risk to create more favourable outcomes than might otherwise exist by chance" (Yarger, 2006, p.1). For Pina et. al., (2011), strategy is a way or plan chosen to bring about a sought-after future, such as achievement of a goal or resolution to a problem. Candy et al (2011) elaborate this by indicating that strategy is concerned with how results or outcomes should be, rather than achieving those outcomes as products or outputs.

The above definitions approach strategy from the school of thought that construes strategy as plans. But strategy implementation is often seen as something of a craft, rather than a science, and its research history has been described as sparse, fragmented, and eclectic (Hitt et. al., 2016). While it is important for institutions to formulate best strategies in order achieve and maintain a competitive advantage, a lot of organisations fail not because their strategies are weak or improperly formulated, but simply because the strategies are poorly implemented (Hitt et al 2016).

The strategic concepts and practices originally developed in the private sector have been adopted by governments to enhance their capabilities and performance



standards in the face of growing economic and political challenges (Bryson, 2018; Alford and Greve, 2017). However, these concepts and practices may not always be suitable for government settings due to their misalignment with the unique characteristics of public sector operations, such as the emphasis on serving the public and operating within a political environment where power and resources are often shared among multiple government agencies (Alford and Greve, 2017).

A growing number of studies shed light on the nature of strategic planning in public organisations and its relationship with the performance of those organisations (Andrews, et. al., 2009; Poister et al., 2013). Despite widespread recognition of the challenges and issues associated with strategy implementation, and the crucial characteristics that contribute to successful implementation, research in the study of strategy implementation dynamics in the public sector is still developing (Andrews, Beynon and Genc, 2017).

A handful of studies have explored strategy implementation along with organisational performance in a public sector context (Andrews, Boyne, Law and Walker, 2011). There is wide acknowledgement that without proper strategic implementation, even the most superior and fine strategy will not attain its threshold to yield the expected benefits to the organisation (Aaltonen and Ikävalko, 2002). Within the strategic management literature, implementation is now seen as the most difficult phase of the strategy process because implementation activities take a longer time frame than formulation, involve more people and greater task complexity (Andrews, Beynon and Genc, 2017). Nevertheless, scholars converge on the fact that “the real value of strategy can only be recognised and accepted through execution” (Bhatti, 2011, p. 52).

Accordingly, competent managers responsible for the formulation and the implementation of strategies are needed. Hill and Jones (2009) highlight that strategy implementation involves putting strategies in practice, which entails the introduction of new service delivery models, monitoring the effectiveness of operational changes and redesigning the organisational structure, evaluation system, and culture required to fit the new strategy. Hence Rani (2019) argues that the implementation of a strategy in an organisation is akin to fight the high possibility of failure usually associated in public sectors.

Nevertheless, the public sector is not monolithic. It is constantly changing, pushed by its tasks, its environment and the capacities it needs (Alford and Greve, 2017). The problems it normally faces is its social and natural environment such as climate change, drug addiction, homelessness, or the need for economic restructuring, keep changing. At times their complexity and multi-faceted nature usually mean no single organisation has the requisite knowledge, political standing or cultural insight to tackle them on its own.

Since 1980, Zimbabwe has crafted several five-year economic development policies including ZIMASST. However, socio-economic development appears to be stagnant as the country continues to face the very same challenges that the successive strategies have attempted to address. ZIMASSET was launched in 2013 as a response to the same socio-economic challenges. However, as the ZIMASSET implementation timeline ended at the commencement of this study in 2018, there had been modest progress recorded regarding its promises (ZANU PF 2018). Official statistics indicate that by 2008, inflation had surpassed a nine (9) digit level, rising to more than a million and industrial capacity utilisation had dropped to almost zero leading to more than 50% decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GoZ 2013). In the social sector, health and education among other services were also adversely affected. People succumbed to cholera and other medieval diseases while quality of education was compromised by high staff turnover. Economically, fiscal space remained severely constrained due to poor performance of revenue inflows and capacity utilisation in the manufacturing which declined to below 39% in the third quarter of 2013 (GoZ 2013). Private and public financing was eroded by skills flight which affected quality service delivery and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The agricultural production which is the backbone of the economy was also severely affected resulting in the country importing basic commodities to meet domestic consumption.

Recent public strategy implementation scholarship has urged researchers to move on to questions of how implementation processes can be made effective. The hooker in the title of this study, *“Towards effective strategy implementation in the public sector”* captures the aim of the work in this dissertation, which is to advance our knowledge on ways that the habitual strategy implementation failure in Zimbabwean public sector can be transformed. Having worked within the public sector for many years, I have

seen first-hand the challenges and complexities involved in developing and implementing effective strategies that can bring about sustainable socio-economic transformation. Perhaps more crucially, I am therefore motivated to undertake this study on public strategy implementation within the country from a critical realist perspective. This motivation is rooted in the belief that a critical realist perspective (Bhaskar, 1978; Danermark, et al., 2002; Archer, 1995; Reed, 2016) can help to provide a deeper understanding of the underlying structures and mechanisms that can influence the effectiveness of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. By taking a critical realist approach, I hope to go beyond surface-level observations and uncover the deeper causal mechanisms that contribute to both success and failure in this area.

I also believe that this study has important practical implications for the work of government officials and policymakers in Zimbabwe. By identifying key enablers of effective public strategy implementation, we can develop more effective policies and strategies that are better aligned with the needs and aspirations of the Zimbabwean people. Overall, my motivation for this study is to contribute to the ongoing effort to improve public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, and to do so in a way that is grounded in a rigorous, critical realist approach that recognises the complexity and diversity of the social world. Meanwhile strategy implementation scholarship is replete with descriptive studies of barriers to implementation.

### **1.3 The research problem and questions**

Strategy implementation is critical to the success of government, yet for many years, public institutions across the developing world struggle to implement their strategies fully and timeously (Olson, Slater and Hult 2005; Brinkschroder, 2014; Nyamwanza and Mavhiki 2014). There is no doubt that no strategy can succeed if its implementation is poor, and without effective execution, a strategy is just an idea waiting to happen (Nyamwanza and Mavhiki 2014).

In the public sector, most selected strategies are not actually strategies at all because they miss the crucial importance of their use or benefit to the people (Driver, 2016). Strategy implementation, as observed by many scholars, remains the most complicated and time-consuming part of strategic management (Shah 2005). While governments and other public institutions may have excellent policies, challenges are often encountered during the implementation process.

The above argument finds credence when viewed against the enduring economic challenges in Zimbabwe despite successive government strategies that have been designed over the years. Zimbabwe has attempted, through several policy interventions by the government, to improve the social and economic wellbeing of its citizens since the attainment of independence in 1980. A notable feature throughout this period has been the failure to fully realise the aspirations of most of the strategies that were formulated.

It is concerning, however, that the Zimbabwean knowledge on strategy implementation remains thin and institutions are handicapped. This is not least because literature on implementation capability is sparse and grey. Be that as it may, in the available academic literature that analyses the effectiveness of government's social development strategies (Eppel and Raftopoulos 2009; Makaye and Dube 2014; Mujuru 2003; Mungai 2015; Assubuji 2016), there is concurrence that even though the Zimbabwean government may have had excellent strategies, challenges are often encountered during the implementation process. However, most of these studies provide partial truths as they are intuitive, deriving from personal biases that are associable with the polarised political situation in the country. For example, Mapuva and Makaye (2017) is a desktop study that relies on newspaper article and grey literature produced by government critics. Another relevant study Assubuji (2016) relies on one interview conducted with a known lobbyist and government critic.

The above context urges for more empirical studies with managers responsible for implementation which, as this study attempts to do, can potentially address the existing knowledge gap. There is need to develop insight not only on the effectiveness of selected strategies but also on how public institutions can strengthen their strategy implementation capabilities. In implementation science, an organisation's strategy implementation capability is considered key to ensuring the organisation's performance.

### ***1.3.1 Research questions***

Implementation research can be used to achieve different goals that include but not limited to assessing change in real-world contexts; drawing on experience; understanding complex phenomena; generating and/or testing new ideas to make a difference (Peters, Tran and Adam, 2013). The central question that this study

addresses is how public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe can be made effective. This question invites a scholarly inquiry into what needs to be considered to improve strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. To address this problem, the following three specific questions need to be probed:

- a. In what ways can the practices and process of public strategy implementation be improved in Zimbabwe?
- b. What do those responsible for public strategy implementation consider to be critical enablers of effective and successful public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe?
- c. What are the possible ways to ensure effective and successful public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe?

The above include both empirical and philosophical questions. The first two are empirical, with the first focussing on process, while the second focuses on participants' views on what is important to enable effective implementation.

The third and last question is philosophical and goes beyond ZIMASSET. It is where the contribution of the study lies: the possible ways to ensure effective and successful public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. Together, the questions address an intellectual problem that draws data from but go beyond ZIMASSET. Here, ZIMASSET is used as an instrumental case study to address a bigger question with conceptual transferability alluded in the study title.

### ***1.3.2 Aims and objectives.***

The study aimed at developing an empirical and theoretically informed framework to guide effective public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. To accomplish this aim and address the above problem and key questions, interviews were conducted with academics as well as key agents responsible for the implementation and monitoring ZIMASSET implementation to get their perspectives on the following study objectives:

- a. To explore the practices and processes involved in public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, with a specific focus on ZIMASSET.
- b. To identify possible critical enablers for effective public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

- c. To examine ways in which habitual failures in public strategy implementation in the country can possibly be overcome to ensure that national development strategies unleash their full potential.

Together, the above objectives respond to Jarzabkowski and Spee's (2009) invitation to address limited empirical work on the diffusion and institution of strategy within organisations as the major cause of unsuccessful public strategy implementation.

## **1.6 Research philosophy and design**

Alluding to Johnson and Clark (2006), Saunders et al (2019) emphasise that as researchers in the field of business and management, it is essential to recognise the philosophical undertakings we commit to when selecting our research strategies. This is crucial because these paradigms profoundly influence our actions and our comprehension of the problem under investigation. It is thus important at the outset to outline the philosophy and paradigm that underpin this study.

### **1.6.1 Research paradigm**

The ontological perspective shaping this study is critical realism as propounded by Bhaskar (1978) and Margret Archer (1995); and appropriated as a philosophy and method of social science research by Mingers (2010) and Sayer (2010); and finally explained as a paradigm for management research by Saunders et al (2019) and Anderson (2020). The foundational ontological claim of this philosophical perspective is that there is reality that is independent of our perception of it. It acknowledges that as humans, we are able to create knowledge about that reality independently (Mingers, 2010, Sayers, 2010) while emphasising the importance of identifying the underlying causal mechanisms that shape that reality (the events and phenomena that we observe) whose effects can be observed through empirical investigation (Bhaskar, 1978).

For Archer (1995) it is important to understand the complex social structures and systems that underlie social phenomena. These structures and systems are, in themselves, shaped by historical and cultural factors, as well as by social and economic processes. Thus, the critical realist ontological perspective encourages researchers to examine the underlying social structures and processes that shape social phenomena, rather than just the observable outcomes (Archer, 1995). As

Saunders et al, (2019: 147) put it, “the philosophy of critical realism focuses on explaining what we see and experience, in terms of the underlying structures of reality that shape the observable events”.

In the context of public strategy implementation, which is the focus of this study, critical realism is useful in identifying the deeper social structures and processes that shape strategy outcomes. Going beyond surface-level observations and examining the underlying causal mechanisms can help to develop a more nuanced understanding of the social, cultural, and economic factors that influence strategy implementation. (Saunders et al, 2019). Realism thus provides a paradigmatic framework that recognises the importance of empirical research in understanding the underlying causal mechanisms that shape social phenomena.

The ontological imperative for this study is the importance of scientific inquiry and empirical investigation to uncover and transform the underlying causes of the habitual failure of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. Identifying the underlying causal mechanisms is essential to developing effective policies and strategies that are aligned with the needs and aspirations of the communities they are designed to serve. This paradigmatic approach is common in critical management studies which pursue radical change through questioning both the behaviour of institutions and the broader societal systems within which that behaviour is situated, exposing their problems, weaknesses, as well as the damaging effects of these practices and systems (Saunders, et al, 2019).

### ***1.6.2 Research strategy***

The study reported in this thesis is an exploratory case study analysis into public strategy implementation processes in Zimbabwe. Approaches and methods appropriate for ‘exploratory’ implementation research are mostly qualitative (Peters, Tran and Adam 2013). For Creswell and Creswell (2017), the exploratory research ambition to gain in-depth understanding of phenomena is possible only through qualitative research approaches. The qualitative methodology employed in the execution of the study is detailed in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

It is important, however, to emphasise that qualitative research within the realist ontology uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific real-world setting (Patton, 2002). The approach derives from a fundamental

realist assumption that knowledge is relative to deep social, cultural, and economic factors that influence how people perceive and experience the world (Wahyuni 2012; Jonker and Pennink 2010; Saunders, et al, 2019). An exploratory case study research was most suited for this study not least because the key research questions require an in-depth understanding of issues from key knowledgeable players with intimate knowledge about context in which ZIMASSET was implemented, and possible factors accounting for the slow implementation progress.

### **1.6.2 Theoretical framework**

The theory and practice of public strategy implementation is eclectic. It is multi-disciplinary and cuts across political science, public policy as well as managerial fields (Alford and Greve, 2017; Tawse, 2018). There are various schools of thought informing strategic management that provide different perspectives on how public organisations should develop and implement their strategies. These have resulted in strategy being variously understood by different scholars and practitioners in different disciplines. Notable schools of thought in strategic management include the design school, planning school, positioning school, entrepreneurial school, cognitive school, learning school, cultural school, and configuration school (Mintzberg, et. al., 1998). As demonstrated in the next chapter, each school of thought has its own assumptions, approaches, and tools for strategy development. It is thus important to understand these different schools of thought in order to develop effective strategies that align with organisational goals and values (Mintzberg, 1990).

Accordingly, public strategic implementation scholarship has been approached from different theoretical perspectives with emphasis on different aspects focused on different levels of analysis. However, most researchers have analysed strategy implementation through the concept of *fit* propounded by Snow and Miles, (1986), Kimberly and Bouchikhi (1995), Porter (1996) and later by Rumelt (2011). This theoretical perspective emphasises the importance of alignment where implementation success is determined by the fit or alignment between a firm's strategy and different dimensions of the organisation and its environment (Tawse, 2018). Here, the congruence between strategy, environment, resources, and capabilities among other factors determines implementation success.



Regardless of its continued popularity even among contemporary African scholars, for example Nkala and Cant (2018), Adegbite and Oluwole (2017), Mukhayе and Namusonge (2019) and Mulumbwa and Lwamba (2017) among others, the concept of fit has been criticised for feeding into the ambivalence and lack of comprehensive understanding of strategy implementation (Tawse, 2018). This is not least because the contingency theory favours different ways through which strategy can be executed. Tawse (2018) argues that the experiential logic and inductive manner applied to fit does not provide a theoretical explanation of the fit between factors and how they influence successful implementation.

Despite this criticism, this study argues that the habitual public strategy implementation failure in Zimbabwe may as well be linked to the lack of fit. The central thesis that the study aims to demonstrate is that successful implementation of public sector strategies requires an understanding of the complex interplay and fit between organisational processes, cultural factors, external environments, and human capabilities. Grounded as it is in the realist ontology, the study further draws on four theoretical perspectives advanced by the environmental, cultural, learning and power schools of thought to explore the practices and processes of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. This quadripartite theoretical framework is useful in contributing insights required to address the implementation issue within strategic management theory that partly owes to the lack of understanding of what strategy is, and how it must be implemented.

Details of the conceptual framework underpinning this study are provided fully in the next chapter. Here it suffices to highlight the foundational assumptions and key theories aligned with each of the four schools from which this study is framed.

As already highlighted, the research problem is grounded on a quadripartite theoretical framework comprising first the environmental school perspective. This school assumes that the external environment has a significant bearing on the implementation of public strategies. The school thus emphasises the importance of external factors, such as political, economic, and social conditions, in shaping the strategies and practices of public sector organisations. One of the key theories within this school is the Institutional Theory (Fligstein 1997; Scott, 2001; Lawrence and Suddaby 2006), which highlights the importance of formal and informal rules and

norms that shape the behaviour of public organisations. Another relevant theory is the Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003), which emphasises the importance of external resources and relationships in supporting effective public strategy implementation.

Second is the cultural school that focuses on the role of culture in shaping the practices and processes of public strategy implementation (Schein, 2010 Njoh, 2016). The organisational culture of public sector organisations in Zimbabwe can affect how the implementation of ZIMASSET is approached and carried out (Bapuji and Crossan, 2004). Key theories within this school include the Cultural Theory (Alvesson, 2012; Hatch and Schultz, 2017), which emphasises the role of shared beliefs and values in shaping organisational behaviour, and the Sensemaking Theory (Weick and Sutcliffe 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012), which highlights the importance of individual and collective interpretation of strategy in shaping organisational action.

Cultural Theory and Sensemaking Theory are key theories within this school that emphasise the influence of shared beliefs and values and the importance of individual and collective interpretation of strategy on organisational behaviour (Alvesson, 2012; Hatch and Schultz, 2017; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). In the Zimbabwean context, the emphasis on the significance of traditional culture in development planning and implementation is underscored by the concept of *hunhuism*, a Shona variation of ubuntu African philosophy which emphasises the interconnectedness of all human beings and the importance of social capital (Njoh, 2016; Samkange and Samkange, 1980; Lubombo, 2015; Kanyenze et al., 2011). The principle of ubuntu/hunhu has influenced development discourse in Zimbabwe and is seen as an alternative to the individualistic and exploitative Western neo-liberal model of development (Moyo, 2012). However, the lack of concrete policy frameworks and implementation challenges have been raised as criticisms of hunhuism as a development strategy (Mkodzongi and Dube, 2020).

However, the cultural school of thought provides insights on how organisational culture and traditional culture can shape public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, emphasising as it does the importance of shared beliefs and values, individual and collective interpretation of strategy, and social capital in creating positive social change.

Third is the learning school of thought which suggests that organisations can learn from past experiences to improve their implementation processes (Mintzberg et al., 2003). The question that this school helps to address is whether there is something Zimbabwe can learn from reflecting on its past experiences with strategy implementation to identify areas for improvement.

The learning school of thought, as explained by Mintzberg et al. (2003), suggests that organisations can improve their implementation processes by learning from past experiences. The learning school encompasses two theories, namely the Organisation Learning Theory (OLT) and the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). The OLT (Lant and Mezias, 1990; Senge, 1990) emphasises the importance of learning as a key driver of organisational success in a constantly changing environment. The theory proposes that learning takes place at three levels, namely individual, group, and organisational. To create a supportive learning environment within organisations, the OLT stresses the importance of a culture that encourages experimentation, sharing of ideas, and taking risks without fear of punishment (Garvin, 1993; Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011).

The DCT, on the other hand, provides a framework for understanding how public sector organisations can sustain their competitive advantage through the development and deployment of dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007). Dynamic capabilities refer to an organisation's ability to integrate, reconfigure, and reallocate its resources and capabilities in response to changing business environments (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). In the context of public strategy implementation, DCT highlights the importance of adaptability and flexibility in responding to external changes and challenges (Friedrich and Zimmermann, 2018; Tolbert and Zucker, 1996). Leaders must be able to sense changes in the external environment and mobilise the necessary resources and capabilities to respond to these changes (Helfat et al., 2007).

The final perspective of the quad is the power school. This perspective the role of power and politics in public strategy implementation, which are used to negotiate strategies that are favourable to political interests (Mintzberg, 1990). According to Mintzberg, power is the most critical factor in decision-making and implementation processes within public organisations. He argues that power is pervasive and integral

to organisational behaviour, and it can shape the direction and outcomes of public strategy implementation.

Mintzberg asserts that public organisations are characterised by complex power dynamics that are shaped by both formal and informal relationships. In his view, power is not only concentrated at the top of the organisational hierarchy, but it is also dispersed throughout the organisation, and individuals or groups can exercise power in various ways to influence decision-making and implementation processes.

For Mintzberg, conflict plays a role in the exercise of power within public organisations. He argues that conflicts can arise due to differences in interests, values, and perceptions, and they can affect the distribution of power within the organisation. According to Mintzberg, managing conflicts effectively is crucial to ensuring that public strategy implementation is successful.

The power school of thought thus emphasises the importance of understanding power dynamics in public organisations and the need for leaders to be aware of the sources of power and how they are exercised within their organisations. Effective public strategy implementation requires leaders to be skilled in navigating power relationships, managing conflicts, and building coalitions to achieve common goals. The power school of thought is associated with several theories that emphasise the role of power in shaping organisational behaviour and decision-making, including Resource Dependence Theory, first propounded by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), Institutional Theory first developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977), Political Economy Theory propounded by Olson (1965), Contingency Theory by Donaldson (2001), and Stakeholder Theory by Freeman (1984).

Crucially, it is important for organisations to understand the different schools of thought in strategic management to develop effective strategies that align with their goals and values (Mintzberg, et. al., 1998). By drawing on these theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to identify the practices and processes that enable effective public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. They provide useful insights on the critical enablers of effective and successful public strategy implementation and help to identify possible ways to improve the practices and processes of public strategy implementation.

#### **1.4 Contribution of the study**

As already indicated, public strategy implementation is fundamental in the achievement of national goals, yet most public strategies in Zimbabwe, including ZIMASSET, were not fully implemented resulting in their failure to achieve full potential. This urges for development of new ways through which public strategy implementation can be improved to achieve goals. The work in this study attempts to make such a contribution by addressing the call to contribute to the limited empirical work on how to ensure effective and successful public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

The quadripartite framework for effective public strategy implementation proposed in Chapter 7 has potential to contribute to the knowledge economy on successful implementation and improvement of the performance of public policy in Zimbabwe. Throughout, the study provides insight into and clarity on the strategy implementation process through certain practices and processes that are not yet clearly defined, determining the specific link between formulation and implementation of strategy as well as identifying the practices and processes in use by middle managers who, as Hitt, et al., (2016) put it, have the most responsibility for meeting the goals established in the implementation strategy through acquisition, development, and configuration of quality resources required to create the capabilities needed for implementing the strategy.

### **1.7 Definition of key concepts**

As shown in this thesis, public strategy implementation involves a complex process of aligning organisational resources and actions with external environmental demands and internal cultural contexts, while also facilitating learning and adaptation. The following are key concepts underpinning this study. They warrant the need for clarity to put the reader into proper perspective. By understanding and applying these key concepts, readers, policymakers, and organisations in Zimbabwe can develop a more comprehensive and strategic approach to public strategy implementation and increase the likelihood of success in achieving goals. The following are the key concepts as defined and shall be understood in this thesis.

#### **Cultural analysis**

This is generally understood as a process of understanding the values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape organisational behaviour, and how culture

influences decision-making and strategy implementation. This thesis underscores that culture can play a significant role in shaping organisational behaviour and decision-making. For this reason, understanding the cultural context in Zimbabwe can help policymakers and organisations to develop strategies that are sensitive to local values, beliefs, and assumptions.

#### Dynamic capabilities

This relates to the ability of organisations to sense and respond to changing environments by reconfiguring their resources and capabilities. Building dynamic capabilities in Zimbabwe's public sector can help to increase the ability to sense and respond to changing environments, and to reconfigure resources and capabilities as needed to achieve strategic goals.

#### Fit

In the context of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, "fit" can be defined as the alignment between the external environment of the country and its internal resources, capabilities, and structures. This means that for the government to successfully implement its strategies, there needs to be coherence or consistency between the organisation's resources and the opportunities and challenges presented by the external environment. The concept of fit is particularly relevant in the context of Zimbabwe, where public organisations face various challenges such as limited financial resources, political instability, and socio-economic issues. Achieving fit, therefore, can help the government to overcome these challenges and achieve its strategic objectives.

#### Institutional theory

A theory that emphasises the importance of conforming to social norms and expectations in order to gain legitimacy and support from (external) stakeholders. Conforming to social norms and expectations can be important for gaining legitimacy and support from external stakeholders. Understanding institutional theory can help policymakers and organisations in Zimbabwe to identify and navigate the formal and informal rules and norms that shape the political and economic environment.

#### Knowledge management

The process of creating, storing, sharing, and utilising knowledge within an organisation in order to facilitate learning and innovation. Effective knowledge management can help to facilitate learning and innovation in Zimbabwe's public sector. Developing systems and processes for sharing and utilising knowledge can help to improve performance and build capacity.

### Leadership

The ability of individuals or groups to influence and inspire others towards a shared vision and goals. Effective leadership is critical to driving change and achieving strategic goals. Developing leadership capacity in Zimbabwe's public sector can help to foster innovation, build trust, and inspire transformation.

### Organisational learning

A continuous process of experimentation, feedback, and reflection that enables organisations to adapt to changing environments and improve their performance. Continuous learning and improvement is essential for successful public strategy implementation. Developing a culture of learning in Zimbabwe's public sector can help to promote innovation, responsiveness, and effective decision-making.

### Public sector

The public sector refers to the part of the economy that is owned and operated by the government or state. In this study public sector refers to government departments, agencies, and agencies tasked with designing and executing policies and programs that serve the public interest such as ZIMASSET implementation.

### Public strategy implementation

Refers to the process of putting public policies and programs into action and achieving desired outcomes. Effective public strategy implementation requires a range of skills and capabilities, including project management, stakeholder engagement, leadership, and communication. By applying the key theoretical perspectives of the environmental, cultural, learning and power schools of thought, Zimbabwe can develop a more comprehensive and strategic approach to public strategy implementation that not only takes into account the external

environmental context, internal cultural dynamics, and learning and adaptation processes but also increase the likelihood of success in achieving goals.

#### Resource dependence

A theory that highlights the interdependence between organisations and their external environment, and the importance of adapting to changing external demands in order to secure resources needed for survival and growth. Zimbabwe's economy has been affected by external pressures, such as sanctions and international trade restrictions. Understanding resource dependence can help policymakers and organisations in Zimbabwe to identify key resource dependencies and develop strategies to mitigate risks and secure resources needed for economic growth.

#### Sensemaking

The process of making sense of complex, ambiguous situations and creating meaning through interpretation and framing of information. Making sense of complex, ambiguous situations can help policymakers and organisations in Zimbabwe to identify opportunities and develop effective responses to emerging challenges and trends.

#### Stakeholder analysis

A process of identifying and prioritising stakeholders, and assessing their interests and concerns, to build relationships and collaborate with them in pursuit of shared goals. Stakeholder analysis helps organisations identify and prioritise key stakeholders and build relationships to address their interests and concerns. Engaging with stakeholders, including civil society organisations, business associations, and local communities, can help to build support and legitimacy for public policies and programs. Effective stakeholder analysis can help policymakers and organisations in Zimbabwe to identify and prioritise key stakeholders and develop strategies to engage and collaborate with them.

#### Strategy implementation

The term 'strategy' has been employed by scholars, professionals, military entities, politicians, and even the public to convey a wide range of meanings. One of the best definitions considered by scholars is that offered by Eccles (1994) who defines strategy implementation as “the action that moves the



organisation along its choice of route towards its goal – the fulfilment of its mission, the achievement of its vision” (Eccles, 1994, p. 14). Aligning this definition, this study goes further to bring Merkus et al., (2019) who consider strategy implementation as a performative practice that involves learning and reshaping of organisational practices and routines to align with the strategic goals of the organisation. Here, strategy implementation requires a process of translation in which strategic goals are transformed into concrete actions and practices through the creation of new norms and routines and the development of new skills and capabilities.

#### Strategy implementation capability

Refers to an organisation's ability to translate strategic plans effectively and efficiently into actions and results. It encompasses a range of skills and capacities, including project management, stakeholder engagement, leadership, communication, and organisational learning. Effective strategy implementation capability is critical for organisations seeking to achieve their strategic objectives and respond to changing internal and external environments.

#### Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET)

ZIMASSET is a public strategy framework that was launched in 2013 by the Government of Zimbabwe, with the aim of stimulating economic growth, creating employment, and reducing poverty (GoZ, 2013). ZIMASSET focuses on four main pillars: food security and nutrition, social services and poverty reduction, infrastructure and utilities, and value addition and beneficiation (GoZ, 2013).

Together, the above key concepts of resource dependence, stakeholder analysis, institutional theory, cultural analysis, leadership, sensemaking, organisational learning, knowledge management, and dynamic capabilities are useful in illuminating the complexities and opportunities that marked the implementation of ZIMASSET in Zimbabwe.

### **1.8 Structure of the dissertation**

The subject of the inquiry in this study is that the government of Zimbabwe may have had excellent policy blueprints/strategies, but challenges have often been

encountered during the implementation process. Yet there is a paucity of empirical studies on how the government can strengthen its strategy implementation capabilities. Employing a critical realist ontology, which integrates diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence, the study contends that challenges in Zimbabwe's public strategy implementation are rooted in intricate and underlying causal factors, necessitating comprehensive attention. To articulate this inquiry, the dissertation unfolds across seven chapters as follows:

#### Chapter One: Introduction

This is the first and present chapter whose focus is to provide the background and context of the study. It provides different motivations that constitute the rationale and justification for the study. This includes gaps in literature as well as personal motivations linked to my career as a government official. The research problem, research questions, aims and objectives are also outlined. The chapter ends by a note on the contribution to the field and an outline of the theoretical framework and conceptual approach employed for the study.

#### Chapter Two: Public Strategy Implementation: A theoretical and conceptual review

The chapter provides an overview of public strategy implementation and examines the practices and processes of public strategy implementation in general, with a focus on identifying ways to improve the effectiveness of implementation. The review draws on the perspectives of the environmental, cultural, and learning schools of thought, as well as relevant theories such as the capabilities approach and resource-based view theory. Key concepts such as resource dependence, stakeholder analysis, institutional theory, cultural analysis, leadership, sensemaking, organisational learning, knowledge management, and dynamic capabilities are explored with a focus on their relevance and applicability to public strategy implementation.

#### Chapter Three: Analysis of Public Strategy Implementation in Zimbabwe

This chapter situates the study within the philosophical framework of critical realism, positing that appearances often belie underlying realities (Berger, 1963). It aims to uncover the latent structures and mechanisms influencing strategy implementation, delving into the existing body of global knowledge on

public strategy implementation, identifying key themes and persistent challenges. Central to this exploration is the recognition that organizations worldwide implement strategic plans divergently, lacking a consensus on optimal approaches, resulting in recurrent implementation failures in the public sector. Through an examination of global trends and inhibiting factors, the chapter elucidates lessons and proposes future trajectories for enhancing public strategy implementation within African contexts.

#### Chapter Four: Historical Overview of Public Strategy Implementation in Zimbabwe

This chapter is a historical overview of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. It serves as a foundational framework for the examination of ZIMASSET implementation in the subsequent chapters. Anchored within the learning school of thought, which underscores the importance of continuous learning and adaptation in strategy implementation, the chapter highlights the importance of reflection on historical implementations of public strategies in Zimbabwe.

#### Chapter Five: Methodological Outline

In this chapter, the research methodology adopted for this study is delineated. Acknowledging the profound influence of our assumptions and beliefs on methodological choices, the concept of research paradigm, as expounded by Cresswell and Cresswell (2018), is introduced. One illustrative framework shaping methodological decisions, utilised in this study, is Saunders et al.'s (2019) research 'onion', which elucidates the interconnected layers of a research methodology and the sequential impact of philosophical underpinnings on methodological selection. Guided by this framework, the chapter initiates with an exploration of the critical realist research paradigm, informing the theoretically driven and objective-oriented inductive and deductive analytical approach employed in this case study research. Subsequently, it provides a comprehensive overview of the qualitative research approach, the case study design, participant selection and recruitment methods, and the procedures for data collection and analysis.

#### Chapter Six: An appraisal of ZIMASSET Implementation

This findings chapter provides insights and perspectives gleaned from presentation and discussion of findings surrounding the practices, processes, critical enablers, and enduring challenges associated with public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. Participants, including representatives from the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC), were solicited for their assessment of ZIMASSET's implementation progress and tasked with offering recommendations for enhancing effectiveness. ZIMASSET focal persons provide insights into the status of implementation, highlighting notable successes and encountered challenges. Public intellectuals contribute their views on the strategy and its execution, alongside suggestions for achieving more effective implementation in Zimbabwe. Thus, this chapter presents key insights and perspectives derived from these exchanges, particularly focusing on the dynamics of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

#### Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Contribution to the Field

Drawing from the foregoing discussion, this concluding chapter identifies political dynamics as a significant obstacle in public strategy implementation highlighting challenges stemming from the misalignment between political manifestos and strategic plans. Synthesizing insights from participants, the chapter acknowledges that the trajectory of the strategy is influenced not only by overt actions but also by entrenched cultural values, environmental factors, learning mechanisms, and power dynamics inherent in the Zimbabwean socio-economic milieu. It therefore argues that the challenges in public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe are not merely superficial, but rather stem from deeper and complex causal issues that require attention. Underscoring the necessity for a holistic approach to tackle structural, cultural, and overarching dynamics, the chapter proposes a framework that underscores the imperative for an integrated and adaptive approach to public policy implementation, that includes the establishment of informed and resilient strategies within Zimbabwe's evolving socio-economic context.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Public strategy implementation is a complex and challenging process that requires careful planning, coordination, and execution. In Zimbabwe, as in many other countries, public sector organisations including the government face numerous obstacles and barriers to effective strategy implementation. These include limited resources, bureaucratic structures, and resistance to change. In order to address these challenges and promote successful strategy implementation, scholars and practitioners have developed various theoretical frameworks and models that seek to explain how public sector organisations can improve their practices and processes.

This chapter examines the theoretical and empirical literature related to public strategy implementation. Different perspectives (**Ps**) or schools of thought are examined although the study is particularly informed by only four: the environmental school, the cultural school, power school and the learning school. The chapter explores the key concepts and frameworks used in public strategy implementation, to prepare for a discussion in subsequent chapters on the challenges and opportunities associated with the practice in Zimbabwe. Factors that enable or hinder effective strategy implementation in this context, including organisational culture, leadership, and learning processes are analysed. The chapter highlights the need to suggest possible ways to ensure effective and successful public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

#### **2.2 Theory and practice in strategy implementation**

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the theory and practice of strategy management is an interdisciplinary subject encompassing political science, public policy, and managerial fields (Alford and Greve, 2017; Tawse, 2018). This multidisciplinary nature of strategic management has led to a diverse range of schools of thought, which offer varied perspectives on how organisations should develop and implement their strategies. Mintzberg, et. al (1998) classified ten different schools of thought in strategic management listed further below in Table 2.1, each having its own assumptions, approaches, and tools for strategy development. It is imperative to

comprehend these schools of thought to develop effective strategies that align with organisational goals and values (Mintzberg, 1990).

While public strategy has accordingly been studied from different theoretical perspectives focusing on various aspects and levels of analysis, most researchers have emphasised the importance of alignment or 'fit' between a firm's strategy and different dimensions of the organisation and its environment to determine implementation success (Kimberly and Bouchikhi, 1995; Snow and Miles, 1986; Rumelt, 2011; Porter, 1996). In this study, the assumption is that the habitual public strategy implementation failure in Zimbabwe may as well be a result of the (mis)fit. To address this issue, the study draws on four theoretical perspectives: the environmental school, cultural school, the power school and learning school to explore the practices and processes of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

Before a detailed explanation on the concept of *fit*, it is apposite to first examine the theoretical perspectives on strategy implementation showing how they inform the concept of fit. Henry Mintzberg, a prominent management theorist, has proposed a number of frameworks for understanding and implementing strategy illustrated in Table 2.1 below. Each of the schools provides a unique perspective on how organisations can develop and implement strategies to achieve their goals and are described in turn below.

### **2.2.1 The design school**

The design school of thought, also known as the prescriptive approach, places significant emphasis on the formulation of strategy as a deliberate process. This school of thought advocates for a top-down approach that relies on planning and analytical models to develop strategies (Mintzberg et al., 2008). The design school approach assumes that the strategic planning process should be an intensive, highly structured process that leads to the creation of the best possible strategy. The process is driven by senior executives and is highly centralised, emphasising the use of formal strategic planning methods and analytical techniques to support decision-making.

Previous research on public strategy implementation has highlighted the relevance of the design school approach. For example, in a study on the implementation of strategic planning in Canadian municipalities, Gauthier and Rivard (2008) found that a structured strategic planning process that followed the design school was effective in

Table 2.1 Theory and practice in strategic management: Adapted from Jofre (2018)

STREAM	SCHOOL OF THOUGHT	ASSUMPTIONS	ASSOCIATED THEORIES
<b>PRESCRIPTIVE</b> <i>How strategies should be formulated.</i>	Design School	Emphasises the importance of a deliberate and systematic approach to strategy formulation, focusing on a rational and analytical process of designing the strategy. This school is based on the belief that organisations can achieve superior performance by selecting the right fit between their internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats in the environment.	SWOT analysis PESTLE analysis, Five forces analysis, Key theorists associated with this school include Henry Mintzberg, Philip Selznick, and Igor Ansoff
	Planning School	The Planning School emphasises the importance of a formal planning process as the basis for strategy formulation. This school is based on the belief that a structured and systematic approach to planning, involving the development of specific goals, objectives, and action plans, can help organisations to achieve superior performance.	Capabilities approach, strategic planning, resource-based view Key theorists associated with this school include George Steiner, Alfred Chandler, and Kenneth Andrews.
	Positioning School	Emphasises the importance of finding a unique and sustainable competitive position in the market. This school is based on the belief that organisations can achieve superior performance by positioning themselves in a way that is different from their competitors.	Competitive analysis; Value chain, Contingency theory, Sun Tzu Key theorists associated with this school include Michael Porter and Walter Kiechel.

Entrepreneurial School	Emphasises the importance of the visionary and strategic skills of the leader in creating a successful strategy. This school is based on the belief that the founder or leader of an organisation has a unique vision that can create a sustainable competitive advantage.	Strategic leadership theory Key theorists associated with this school include Joseph Schumpeter, Ted Levitt, and Richard Branson.
Cognitive School	Emphasises the role of cognitive processes in strategy formulation. This school is based on the belief that individuals and groups within an organisation have their own cognitive frameworks, based on experience, that shape their perceptions and understanding of the environment, and that these cognitive frameworks shape the strategy of the organisation.	Strategic decision making, information system. Key theorists associated with this school include James March, Richard Cyert, and Karl Weick.
Learning School	Strategies is the result of an evolving – emergent – process driven by (common) learning. Emphasises the importance of continuous learning and adaptation in the strategic management process. This school is based on the belief that organisations can achieve superior performance by constantly learning from their experiences, adjusting their strategies accordingly, and improving their ability to adapt to changing circumstances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agency theory</li> <li>- organisational learning,</li> <li>- evolutionary theorising, knowledge creation,</li> <li>- dynamic capability approach,</li> <li>- chaos theory</li> <li>- logical incrementalism</li> </ul> <p>Key theorists associated with this school include Chris Argyris, Donald Schon, and Peter Senge.</p>



Power School	<p>Strategy process is a process of influence. Considers the role of power and politics in strategy, which are used to negotiate strategies that are favourable to particular interests. This school is based on the belief that the distribution of power within an organisation and the ability of individuals and groups to exercise influence are critical factors in shaping the strategy of the organisation.</p>	<p>Agency theory</p> <p>Key theorists associated with this school include Jeffrey Pfeffer and James March.</p>
Cultural School	<p>Emphasises the importance of shared values, beliefs, and assumptions in shaping the strategy of an organisation. This school is based on the belief that the culture of an organisation is a critical factor in shaping the way that individuals and groups within the organisation think and act. The culture of a society shapes how strategies are implemented. Be that as it may, culture as a product of shared values, is dynamic and can be changed. Public officials can use culture and power to shape strategy implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Change management.</li> <li>- symbolic interactionism,</li> <li>- cultural studies, and</li> <li>- critical theory which assumes that public officials can use power and resources to shape strategy implementation.</li> </ul> <p>Key theorists associated with this school include Edgar Schein, Peter Frost, and Geert Hofstede.</p>
Environmental School	<p>Emphasises the importance of the external environment in shaping the strategy of an organisation. This school is based on the belief that the environment is a critical factor in shaping the opportunities and threats facing an organisation, and that the ability of the organisation to adapt to these changes is critical to achieving superior performance. The environment is dynamic and unpredictable; and can be influenced and managed by public officials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ecology of populations,</li> <li>- organisational theory,</li> <li>- institutionalism theory,</li> <li>- public choice theory, and</li> <li>- neo-institutionalism</li> </ul> <p>Key theorists associated with this school include Michael Porter, Jay Barney, and Paul Lawrence.</p>

**Configuration School**

Emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to strategy formulation, focusing on the interrelationships between different aspects of an organisation. This school is based on the belief that the strategy of an organisation should be seen as a configuration of different elements, including the organisation's structure, culture, resources, and capabilities. As the organisation's environment continues to change and evolve, the organisation continuously reconfigures its elements to remain effective and competitive.

Quantum change, Resource-Based View (RBV), Fit Theory, Population Ecology Theory, Ambidextrous Organisations Theory

improving performance. Similarly, a study by Kang et al. (2018) on the Korean public sector found that the use of analytical methods and a top-down approach was effective in facilitating strategic decision-making.

This approach has also been used in the development of national development plans in Africa. For instance, the Vision 2030 plan in Kenya was developed using the design school approach. Also in Africa, a study by Abu (2014) on the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) of Ghana found that the design school's analytical models and formal procedures were useful in developing the country's medium-term development plan.

However, other studies have criticized the design school approach as being overly rigid and not accounting for environmental complexities. For instance, in a study on the implementation of strategic planning in the Australian public sector, Alford and O'Neill (2009) found that a lack of flexibility in the planning process hindered the implementation of strategies. The study concluded that the design school approach was not well-suited to the complex and rapidly changing public sector environment.

### ***2.2.2 The planning school***

The planning school, also known as the analytical school, is another traditional school of thought in strategic management. Similar to the design school, it also emphasises the importance of planning in the formulation of strategies. This school of thought emphasises the importance of the rational and formal process of strategic planning (Mintzberg et al., 2008). In this school of thought, strategy is viewed as a structured process that involves a comprehensive analysis of the environment, the setting of objectives, and the development of strategies to achieve those objectives (Ansoff, 1991). This approach is driven by the belief that careful planning can lead to effective strategy development and implementation. The planning school seeks to reduce uncertainty in decision making by providing a framework for analysing information and making rational choices (Mintzberg et al., 2008).

Ansoff's (1991) work on strategic planning focused on formalising the planning process to reduce ambiguity and increase the rigor of decision making. His contribution to the analytical school was the development of a comprehensive planning framework that considers both internal and external factors that can influence strategy

formulation. Ansoff's planning framework includes four stages: environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and evaluation and control.

The Planning School is similar to the Design School in that both emphasise planning and the use of formal procedures to develop strategies. However, the Planning School differs from the Design School in that it focuses more on the analytical approach to strategy development, rather than the design of the organisation (Mintzberg et al., 2008). In this school of thought, the emphasis is on rational and systematic analysis of the external environment and internal capabilities to develop a plan of action (Ansoff, 1991).

Despite the popularity of the planning school in the early years of strategic management, critics argue that its overemphasis on rationality and analysis can lead to a lack of flexibility and adaptability in dynamic environments (Mintzberg et al., 2008). Nonetheless, the planning school remains relevant and continues to be applied in public strategy implementation. Previous research has shown that the use of the Planning School can be effective in public strategy implementation. For example, a study by Xiong et al. (2020) found that the use of a formal planning process was positively related to the success of public strategy implementation in Chinese local governments. Another study by Fung et. al., (2018) found that the use of formal strategic planning was positively related to better performance in public organisations in Hong Kong. The school has also been useful in the development of public policy and strategic plans in African countries such as Nigeria, where the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was developed using the planning school approach (Abdulkadir, 2015).

### ***2.2.3 The positioning school***

Also known as the strategic positioning school, this school focuses on the external environment, emphasising the importance of finding and maintaining a unique and valuable position in the market. It suggests that a company should analyse its external environment and identify opportunities to differentiate itself from competitors by offering a unique value proposition (Mintzberg et al., 2008). The positioning school is based on the ideas of Michael Porter, who developed the concept of the five forces that shape industry competition (Porter, 1979). According to Porter, a company can

achieve sustainable competitive advantage by either having a low-cost position or a unique value proposition that differentiates it from competitors.

In the positioning school, strategy formulation involves analysing the industry structure and the company's internal resources and capabilities to identify opportunities to create a sustainable competitive advantage (Mintzberg et al., 2008). For example, a company may focus on a narrow market segment and tailor its products or services to meet the unique needs of that segment, creating a position of differentiation. Alternatively, a company may pursue a low-cost strategy by finding ways to reduce its costs while maintaining quality.

Research has shown that the positioning school can be a useful approach to public strategy implementation. For instance, in their study of the Australian public sector, Hodgkinson and Hughes (2007) found that the use of Porter's five forces framework helped public organisations to identify opportunities for differentiation and develop effective strategies for competing in their respective markets. Similarly, in their study of the strategic planning practices of municipalities in Canada, Gertler and Wolfe (2007) found that a positioning approach helped municipalities to identify their unique strengths and opportunities and develop strategies to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

#### ***2.2.4 The entrepreneurial school***

The entrepreneurial school of thought in strategic management emphasises the importance of the individual leader's vision and intuition in creating strategy. This school sees the strategic management process as a process of discovery, in which opportunities are identified and exploited. This approach emphasises the role of the leader or entrepreneur in creating and implementing strategy.

The entrepreneurial school is often associated with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups. In Nigeria, for example, SMEs account for over 80% of the country's employment and over 50% of its GDP (Akinbobola et al., 2019). The entrepreneurial school's emphasis on the role of the leader or entrepreneur in creating and implementing strategy is also reflected in the African business environment, where the personality and vision of the founder or owner are often central to the success of the business. For example, Mo Ibrahim, the founder of Celtel, played a significant role in the company's success and eventual acquisition by Zain (Oosterhout et al., 2010).

Another example of the entrepreneurial school in Africa is the M-PESA mobile money platform in Kenya, which was launched in 2007 by the mobile network operator Safaricom. M-PESA has been widely cited as an example of successful innovation and entrepreneurship, with its rapid growth and adoption being attributed to its ability to solve a significant problem in the Kenyan market - the lack of access to banking services (KPMG, 2019). The entrepreneurial school's focus on the importance of creativity and risk-taking is evident in the development of M-PESA, as Safaricom took a significant risk in investing in a new and untested product in an uncertain market.

Furthermore, the entrepreneurial school has also been applied to the non-profit sector in Africa, particularly in relation to social entrepreneurship. For example, the Ashoka Foundation has supported several social entrepreneurs in Africa, who have developed innovative solutions to social and environmental challenges on the continent (Bacq and Janssen, 2011). The entrepreneurial school's emphasis on the identification and exploitation of opportunities is reflected in the work of these social entrepreneurs, who have often identified gaps in existing social services and developed new models to address these gaps.

### ***2.2.5 The cognitive school***

The cognitive school emphasises the role of the individual in the strategic management process. It emphasises the importance of the mental models that managers use to make decisions and form strategies. The cognitive school argues that strategic decisions are not based solely on rational analysis but are also influenced by subjective factors such as intuition, experience, and emotions (Mintzberg et al., 2008). The cognitive school suggests that the way that managers interpret the environment and make decisions is crucial to strategy development (Mintzberg et al., 2008).

An example of a study on the cognitive school is the research by Keil et al. (2002), which found that the cognitive characteristics of managers, such as their cognitive complexity and tolerance for ambiguity, influence their strategic decision-making. The study also found that managers who are more cognitively complex are better able to cope with environmental uncertainty and make more effective strategic decisions.

The cognitive school is also associated with the concept of sensemaking, which refers to the process of creating meaning out of a complex and ambiguous environment.

According to this school, managers use their mental models to make sense of the environment and formulate strategies that fit with their understanding of the situation (Weick, 1995). An example of research on the cognitive school and sensemaking is the study by Vaara and Tienari (2008), which examines the role of sensemaking in the implementation of a new strategy in a Finnish forest industry company. The study found that the managers in the company used sensemaking to interpret the new strategy and make it more meaningful to employees.

Another example of the cognitive school is the concept of framing, which refers to the process of defining a problem or situation in a particular way. The cognitive school argues that managers use frames or mental models to simplify complex issues and make sense of the situation (Bolman and Deal, 2017). An example of research on the cognitive school and framing is the study by Paauwe and Wilderom (2013), which examines how managers in Dutch hospitals use frames to interpret and respond to changes in the healthcare system. The study found that the managers used frames to simplify and interpret the changes, which led to differences in how they responded to the changes.

The cognitive school has also been useful in understanding the role of decision-makers in the development of public policies and strategic plans in African countries. For example, in South Africa, the cognitive school's approach to understanding how leaders make sense of their environment was useful in the development of the country's National Development Plan (NDP) (Khumalo, 2015).

### ***2.2.6 The configuration school***

The configuration school, also known as the organisational capability school, emphasises the importance of internal capabilities in strategy development. The configuration school suggests that firms should develop internal capabilities that align with their strategies (Mintzberg et al., 2008). The school stresses the importance of the internal and external fit of an organisation and has been useful in the development of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in Africa. For example, a study by Osei-Kyei et. al., (2017) on the Ghanaian PPPs found that the configuration school's approach to understanding the fit between public and private partners was useful in the development and implementation of PPPs in the country.

As already indicated in the preceding sections, this study, grounded as it is in the realist ontology, applies the concept of fit, drawing on a quadripartite theoretical framework comprising the environmental school, cultural school, power school and learning school to explore the practices and processes of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. These and the associated theories are explained in turn below.

### ***2.2.7 The environmental school***

The environmental school emphasises the importance of the external environment in strategy development. The environmental school suggests that firms should adapt their strategies to the external environment to achieve a competitive advantage (Miles and Snow, 1978). The environment school of strategic management argues that external factors, such as economic, political, and social conditions, play a critical role in shaping an organisation's strategy. In the context of public sector strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, the environment school can provide insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by the country's unique economic, political, and social environment.

Several scholars have emphasised the importance of environmental factors in shaping public sector strategy. For example, Kettl (2002) argues that the complex and changing nature of the public sector environment requires public managers to be flexible and adaptable in their approach to strategy implementation. He emphasises the need for public sector organisations to engage in ongoing scanning of the external environment to identify emerging trends and opportunities.

Similarly, Caiden (1991) emphasises the importance of political and institutional factors in shaping public sector strategy. He argues that public managers must be aware of the political climate in which they operate, and the constraints and opportunities presented by institutional frameworks. He suggests that public managers must be adept at navigating the political and institutional environment to effectively implement strategy.

In the context of Zimbabwe, scholars have highlighted the challenges presented by the country's unique economic and political environment. Mhloyi (2012) argues that the country's economic challenges, including high levels of inflation and limited access to foreign currency, present significant obstacles to effective public sector strategy



implementation. He suggests that public sector organisations must be creative and resourceful in their approach to strategy implementation.

Similarly, Machingambi and Mhaka (2018) highlight the importance of political factors in shaping public sector strategy in Zimbabwe. They argue that the country's political climate, characterised by high levels of corruption and political interference, presents significant challenges to effective strategy implementation. They suggest that public sector organisations must be aware of these challenges and work to develop strategies that are responsive to the country's unique political and institutional environment.

Overall, the environment school can provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by the external environment in the context of public sector strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. By being aware of these factors and developing strategies that are responsive to them, public sector organisations can increase their chances of success in achieving their goals and objectives.

The environmental school of thought in strategic management has been employed in a number of studies in developing countries, including those in Africa. This school of thought emphasises the importance of the external environment in shaping an organisation's strategy and performance. One study, for example, explored the challenges faced by public sector organisations in Zimbabwe in implementing public sector reforms, and found that the political and institutional context created significant environmental barriers to implementation (Machingambi and Mhaka, 2018). Another study evaluated the challenges and prospects of the Zimbabwean public sector performance, with a specific focus on the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, and found that external environmental factors, such as limited financial resources and weak infrastructure, posed significant challenges to effective performance (Mhloyi, 2012).

Similarly, a study in South Africa examined the role of external environmental factors, such as economic and political instability, in shaping organisational strategy and found that such factors significantly influenced the strategic decision-making of organisations in the country (Goh, Lau, and Tan, 2017). In their study on the future of research in strategy implementation in the contexts of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS), Fedato et. al., (2017) argued that “strategic management is an inherently

contextual activity, because managers develop their strategies according to the environment in which they operate, being able to change, as well as being changed by the environment” (Fedato, et al., 2017, 289). This and other studies demonstrate the relevance and importance of the environmental school in understanding and addressing strategic management issues in developing countries.

### **2.2.8 The cultural school**

The cultural school focuses on the role of culture in shaping the practices and processes of public strategy implementation (Schein, 2010 Njoh, 2016). The organisational culture of public sector organisations in Zimbabwe can affect how the implementation of ZIMASSET is approached and carried out (Bapuji and Crossan, 2004). Key theories within this school include the Cultural Theory (Alvesson, 2012; Hatch and Schultz, 2017), which emphasises the role of shared beliefs and values in shaping organisational behaviour, and the Sensemaking Theory (Weick and Sutcliffe 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012), which highlights the importance of individual and collective interpretation of strategy in shaping organisational action.

This school is instrumental in explaining the importance of traditional culture in development planning and implementation (Njoh, 2016). In post-colonial Zimbabwe, this approach is illustrated by Zimbabwean political scientists Samkange and Samkange (1980) whose work shaped the discourse around *hunhuism* as a development strategy towards the government’s broader vision of building a socialist society based on African values. Hunhuism is a Shona variation of ubuntu, a traditional African philosophy and value system that emphasises the importance of humanity or humanness, and the interconnectedness of all human beings (Lubombo, 2015).

For Kanyenze et al., (2011), Hunhuism as a development strategy emphasises the importance of social capital, which refers to the relationships and networks that individuals have within their communities. Social capital is seen as a critical resource that can be leveraged to create positive social change. Community-driven development projects are designed to build social capital and empower local communities to take charge of their development. Also emphasised is the idea of “ubuntu economics” which stresses the importance of cooperation, collaboration, and sharing within communities. It is based on the belief that economic growth should be inclusive and benefit everyone, not just a few individuals. This approach is considered

an alternative to the Western neo-liberal model of development, which was seen as individualistic and exploitative due to its prioritisation of individual wealth creation over social welfare (Moyo, 2012).

Although hunhuism as a development strategy has faced criticisms for its lack of concrete policy frameworks and implementation challenges (Mkodzongi and Dube, 2020), its principles continue to influence development discourse in Zimbabwe as ubuntu/hunhu remains an important aspect of Zimbabwean identity and a source of inspiration for those who seek to create a more just and equitable society. Its key theories such as cultural analysis, leadership, and sensemaking are insightful in public strategy implementation. Cultural analysis helps organisations understand the values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape their behaviour and decision-making. Leadership plays a critical role in shaping organisational culture and creating a shared vision for the future. Sensemaking helps organisations make sense of complex, ambiguous situations and adapt to changing circumstances.

### ***2.2.9 The power school***

At the core of power school is the emphasis of the importance of power and politics in strategy development. The power school suggests that the allocation of resources and the development of strategy are influenced by the distribution of power within an organisation (Mintzberg et al., 2008). The power school thus views strategic management as a process of negotiation and bargaining among different stakeholders, each with their own interests and goals (Mintzberg et al., 2008).

This school recognises that power relationships exist within organisations and in the broader environment, and that these relationships shape the development and implementation of strategy. The power school emphasises the importance of understanding the power dynamics at play and using these dynamics to achieve strategic goals. For example, Anand and Khanna (2000) found that strategic alliances can be a source of power for firms, allowing them to leverage the resources of their partners and gain a competitive advantage.

The power school of thought is associated with several theories that emphasise the role of power in shaping organisational behaviour and decision-making, including Resource Dependence Theory, first propounded by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), Institutional Theory first developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977), Political Economy

Theory propounded by Olson (1965), Contingency Theory by Donaldson (2001), and Stakeholder Theory by Freeman (1984). The resource dependence theory, which suggests that organisations are dependent on their environment for resources, and that this dependence creates power asymmetries that can affect strategy (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Resource Dependence Theory suggests that organisations rely on external resources to survive and thrive, and the distribution of power within an organisation is shaped by its ability to control and access those resources. This theory implies that organisations must develop strategies to acquire and manage resources effectively to remain competitive and achieve their goals.

Institutional Theory (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) emphasises the role of norms, values, and beliefs in shaping organisational behaviour. It suggests that power is exerted through the creation and enforcement of institutional rules and practices. Institutional theory also highlights the importance of legitimacy and conformity to institutional norms and practices as key factors in organisational success. Political Economy Theory emphasises the role of economic and political factors in shaping organisational behaviour and decision-making. This theory suggests that power is concentrated in the hands of those who control economic and political resources (Olson 1965). As a result, organisations must develop strategies to navigate political and economic environments effectively to achieve their objectives.

Contingency Theory on the other hand suggests that the most effective organisational strategies and practices depend on the specific context in which they are applied. This theory recognises that the distribution of power within an organisation is influenced by contextual factors, such as the size and complexity of the organisation, the level of competition in the market, and the regulatory environment (Donaldson, 2001). It is similar to the Stakeholder Theory which suggests that organisations must consider the interests and perspectives of all stakeholders in their decision-making processes (Freeman, 1984). This theory recognises that stakeholders have power to influence organisational behaviour and decision-making through their actions and opinions, and their interests must be considered in decision making.

Insights from these theories can be valuable for public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe where there are numerous economic, political, and social challenges and power dynamics and resource constraints often influence decision. By applying the

insights from these theories, policymakers in Zimbabwe can develop more effective strategies to navigate these challenges. For instance, Resource Dependence Theory can help the government understand how external resources can shape power dynamics within the government and develop strategies to acquire and manage these resources effectively. Institutional Theory can help government recognise the importance of legitimacy and conformity to institutional norms and practices to build trust and credibility with stakeholders. Meanwhile Political Economy Theory can help policymakers understand the role of economic and political factors in shaping policy decisions and develop strategies to manage these factors effectively while Contingency Theory can help them tailor their strategies to the specific context of Zimbabwe to maximise their effectiveness. Finally, Stakeholder Theory can help policymakers recognise the importance of considering the interests and perspectives of all stakeholders in policy decision-making.

Accordingly, the Power School of thought and its associated theories can provide valuable insights for public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. By considering the role of power in organisational behaviour and decision-making, the Zimbabwean government can develop more effective strategies to address the country's economic, political, and social challenges.

The power school has been useful in understanding the political dynamics of public strategy implementation in Africa where power dynamics and relationships between stakeholders can be complex and challenging to navigate. An example of this is the study by Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2017) on the power dynamics of the Nigerian National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), which showed that power and influence were important factors in the implementation of public health policies. In their study of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in Uganda, Tumuheirwe and Vian (2017) found that power dynamics between the public and private sectors, as well as between different actors within these sectors, played a significant role in the success or failure of PPPs. Understanding and managing power relationships can be critical in achieving successful public strategy implementation in this context.

#### ***2.2.10 The learning school***

The learning school, also known as the emergent school, emphasises the importance of learning and adaptation in the implementation of strategies (Mintzberg et al., 2008).

According to scholars such as Argyris and Schön (1978), learning organisations are those that continuously improve their performance through reflection and feedback. They argue that learning requires a willingness to challenge assumptions and change behaviour, as well as an open and supportive culture that encourages experimentation and learning from mistakes. Similarly, Senge (1990) emphasises the importance of systems thinking and the need to view organisations as complex, dynamic systems that are constantly adapting to change.

The idea of political learning, as defined by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), is understood as lasting changes in thought or intentions to act that arise from experiences and/or new information and are related to achieving or modifying policy objectives. This concept highlights how individual actors can adapt their perceptions through interaction with others. It is also important to note that external events can catalyse change within a particular subsystem. These events might be alterations in social, economic, and political conditions, outcomes of other public policy decisions, or influences from other policy subsystems.

In the context of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, the learning school would suggest that public organisations need to develop the ability to learn from their experiences and adapt to changing circumstances. This would involve creating a culture of openness and transparency, in which mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning and improvement. It would also require the development of systems and processes that facilitate the sharing of knowledge and the dissemination of best practices.

The learning school thus provides a valuable perspective on the implementation of public strategies in Zimbabwe, emphasising the importance of organisational learning and adaptation in a rapidly changing environment (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011). By developing a learning capability, public organisations in Zimbabwe can become more effective and efficient, and better able to achieve their strategic objectives.

Theories within this school include the Organisation Learning Theory (OLT) (Lant and Mezias, 1990; Senge, 1990) which highlights the significance of learning as a key driver of organisational success in a constantly changing and complex environment, and the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2007; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Helfat and Peteraf, 2015) which emphasises the importance of organisational flexibility

and adaptability in responding to changing environments. These theories have been applied in various organisational settings, such as businesses, non-profits, and government agencies, to improve performance and achieve strategic objectives. They provide a framework for designing learning programs and interventions, evaluating organisational learning capabilities, and implementing continuous improvement processes as well as to understand how public sector organisations can sustain their competitive advantage through the development and deployment of dynamic capabilities that enable them to adapt to changing environments and effectively implement public policies.

According to the OLT, organisations can improve their performance by expanding their capacity to learn and adapt (Argyris and Schön, 1978). The theory proposes that organisations are living systems capable of learning from their experiences, making sense of information, and adapting their behaviours accordingly. The OLT suggests that learning takes place at three levels within organisations: individual, group, and organisational. At the individual level, the theory suggests that public employees need to be provided with opportunities to acquire new skills and knowledge that can be applied to public strategy implementation. This can be achieved through training programs, mentoring, and other forms of professional development. At the group level, the theory suggests that public organisations need to facilitate the sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and other knowledge across different parts of the organisation. This can involve the use of communities of practice, cross-functional teams, and other mechanisms that promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing. At the organisational level, learning involves changes in the organisation's structure, policies, and culture in response to changing circumstances and new information (Garvin, 1993).

To create a supportive learning environment within organisations, the OLT emphasises the importance of a culture that encourages experimentation, sharing ideas, and taking risks without fear of punishment. Leadership also plays a critical role in promoting and sustaining organisational learning (Senge, 1990).

Complimenting the OLT is the Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) that provides a framework for understanding how public sector organisations can sustain their competitive advantage through the development and deployment of dynamic

capabilities that enable them to adapt to changing environments and effectively implement public policies. The DCT is a framework that seeks to explain how organisations can sustain their competitive advantage in a rapidly changing environment through the development and deployment of dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007). Dynamic capabilities are defined as the ability of an organisation to integrate, reconfigure, and reallocate its resources and capabilities in response to changing business environments (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000).

In the context of public strategy implementation, DCT highlights the importance of adaptability and flexibility in responding to external changes and challenges (Friedrich and Zimmermann, 2018). Public sector organisations need to develop dynamic capabilities to identify and respond to emerging issues, allocate resources strategically, and reconfigure their structures and processes to effectively implement public policies (Tolbert and Zucker, 1996).

Furthermore, DCT emphasises the role of leadership in developing and deploying dynamic capabilities. Leaders must be able to sense changes in the external environment and mobilise the necessary resources and capabilities to respond to these changes (Teece, 2014). This includes developing a culture of innovation and learning within the organisation, promoting collaboration and knowledge-sharing, and fostering a long-term perspective that prioritises sustainable growth and development (Helfat et al., 2007).

In recent studies, the learning school has been applied to various contexts and has been used to analyse the implementation of strategies in different organisations. For example, a study by Kuipers, Higgs, Kickert, Tummers, and Grandia (2014) examined the implementation of interorganisational networks in the Dutch public sector. The authors found that learning was an essential aspect of successful network implementation, as organisations needed to adapt to changing circumstances and learn from their experiences to effectively collaborate with others.

Similarly, a study by Kruse and Keinert (2020) analysed the implementation of digital strategies in German public organisations. The authors found that the development of a learning culture was a critical factor in the successful implementation of digital strategies, as employees needed to be able to learn new skills and adapt to new



technologies. They argued that a culture of experimentation and innovation was necessary to support ongoing learning and adaptation.

Another study by Kim and Lee (2016) examined the implementation of a new performance management system in a Korean public organisation. The authors found that the implementation of the new system was hindered by a lack of organisational learning, as employees were resistant to change and lacked the necessary skills to effectively use the new system. They argued that the development of a learning culture was essential to successful implementation and recommended the use of training and development programs to support ongoing learning and skill development.

Together, these studies highlight the importance of organisational learning in the implementation of strategies, regardless of the context or type of strategy being implemented. By creating a culture of learning and adaptation, organisations can better respond to changing circumstances and increase their chances of successful strategy implementation.

Understanding the different schools of thought in strategic management is essential for developing effective strategies that align with organisations' goals and values. By drawing on these theoretical perspectives, this study seeks to identify the practices and processes that enable effective public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. They provide useful insights on the critical enablers of successful public strategy implementation and help to identify possible ways to improve the practices and processes of public strategy implementation. But as already alluded to, one of the key assumptions for which the above four theoretical perspectives are summoned to address is that the habitual public strategy implementation failure in Zimbabwe may as well be a result of the (mis)fit which is examined in detail below.

### **2.3 The concept of fit**

In the 1990s, Kimberly and Bouchikhi developed the concept of "fit" to explain the process of strategic implementation. They argued that fit involves aligning an organisation's strategy with its environment, structure, and culture (Kimberly and Bouchikhi, 1995). Snow and Miles had earlier developed the concept of "strategic congruence," which involves aligning an organisation's strategy, structure, and control systems to achieve the desired outcomes (Snow and Miles, 1986). Porter also viewed "fit" as a means to explain the process of strategy implementation by aligning an

organisation's activities to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter, 1996). Rumelt developed the concept of "consistent strategy," which involves aligning an organisation's resources and capabilities with its strategy to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Rumelt, 2011).

Studies conducted in different countries have shown the importance of fit in achieving better firm performance. For instance, Zhang and Zhang (2021) found that organisational fit is an important predictor of firm performance in Chinese firms, and that aligning strategy with organisational structure and culture is necessary for achieving better performance. In the IT industry in China, Zhao and Lu (2018) found that resource fit is important for achieving better firm performance, and that aligning resources with strategy is necessary. In Germany, Gast and Kraus (2020) found that strategic fit between the firm and its environment is critical for successful strategy implementation, and firms need to continuously adapt to maintain fit. In Greece, Thanos and Theriou (2019) found that the fit between a firm's strategy and its internal and external environment is important for achieving competitive advantage, and that firms should continuously monitor and adjust their strategy to maintain fit.

Similarly, in Nigeria, Adegbite and Oluwole (2017) found that organisational fit is critical for successful strategy implementation, and that firms should align their strategy with their organisational structure and culture to achieve better performance. In Uganda, Mukhaye and Namusonge (2019) found that strategic fit between the firm's internal resources and external environment is important for achieving competitive advantage, and firms need to continuously adapt to maintain fit. In Zambia, Mulumbwa and Lwamba (2017) found that resource fit is an important predictor of firm performance, and that aligning resources with strategy is necessary for achieving better performance. Finally, Nkala and Cant (2018) found in a recent study in Zimbabwe that strategic fit between a firm's external environment and internal resources is an important determinant of firm performance, and that firms should align their resources with their strategy to achieve better performance.

However, while the concept of fit has been widely used and studied and applied in the field of strategic management, some scholars have raised concerns about its lack of comprehensive understanding and ambiguity. These critiques suggest that researchers should adopt a more precise and dynamic approach to the concept of fit

that considers the different levels of analysis, the multiple dimensions of fit, and the changing nature of the environment. For example, Eisenhardt and Sull (2001) argue that the concept of fit is often used in a vague and imprecise manner, making it difficult to operationalise and measure. They suggest that researchers should adopt a more precise definition of fit that considers the different levels of analysis and the multiple dimensions of fit.

Similarly, Molina-Azorín et al. (2009) argue that the concept of fit is ambiguous and lacks a clear definition. They suggest that the use of the term "fit" has become so widespread that it is often used as a catch-all term for a variety of different concepts, including alignment, congruence, consistency, and coherence. They suggest that researchers should be more precise in their use of terminology and avoid using the term "fit" as a substitute for other, more clearly defined concepts.

Another critique of the concept of fit is that it does not take into account for the dynamic and complex nature of the environment. As Zajac and Shortell (1989) point out, the environment is constantly changing, and what may have been a good fit at one point in time may no longer be appropriate in the future. They suggest that researchers should adopt a more dynamic and flexible approach to the concept of fit that takes into account the changing nature of the environment.

Despite its limitations, the concept of fit may still be relevant due to its emphasis and explanation of the importance of aligning different dimensions of the organisation with its environment in order to achieve success in strategy implementation. Furthermore, while some scholars have pointed out the lack of clarity and specificity in the concept of fit, it still provides a useful framework for thinking about the different aspects of an organisation that need to be aligned for successful implementation.

In the context of this study, the use of the concept of fit is justified because it provides a framework for examining the relationship between organisational factors and the successful implementation of strategic initiatives. By analysing the extent to which the public sector's strategy, structure, and culture align with each other and the external environment, the study can provide insights into the factors that influence the success of public sector strategic initiatives. Additionally, by examining the role of fit from different schools of thought, the study can provide a more nuanced understanding of the concept and its application.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has undertaken an examination of the theoretical literature surrounding public strategy implementation, drawing insights from various perspectives or schools of thought. While several perspectives were explored, the study particularly focuses on four key schools: the environmental school, the cultural school, the power school, and the learning school. The aim is to glean a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in the implementation of public strategy, especially within the context of Zimbabwe.

The exploration addressed the critical concepts and frameworks that underpin public strategy implementation, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities specific to the Zimbabwean landscape. Key factors influencing effective strategy implementation, including organisational culture, leadership dynamics, and learning processes, were analysed. The contextual examination sought to unearth the nuances that shape the implementation of public strategies in Zimbabwe.

The sets the stage for the subsequent discussion on empirical literature on public strategy implementation by recognising the imperative of suggesting viable approaches to ensure effective and successful public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. This acknowledgment reflects the overarching goal of not only identifying challenges but also providing actionable insights and recommendations to navigate the intricate landscape of public strategy implementation in a context-specific manner. The synthesis of theoretical perspectives and empirical insights serves as a foundation for the formulation of pragmatic strategies in the chapters that follow, aiming to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of public administration and strategy implementation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND DEBATES ON PUBLIC STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This study is grounded in the philosophical framework of critical realism whose first wisdom is that things are not what they seem (Berger, 1963). The study thus seeks to uncover the underlying structures and mechanisms that enable or constrain strategy implementation. This chapter explores the current global body of knowledge on public strategy implementation, key aspects addressed and lingering questions that persist regarding common challenges in public strategy implementation. The central argument in the chapter is that organisations across the world implement their strategic plans differently, and there appears to be no consensus on which approach is most effective, hence the continued implementation failure in the public sector where governments across the world continue to face similar problems. By exploring global trends and key aspects, factors hindering successful implementation, this chapter also highlight key lessons that could be learned and future directions for public strategy implementation in African contexts.

#### **3.2 Variables in public strategy implementation**

The term 'strategy' has been employed by scholars, professionals, military entities, politicians, and even the general public to convey a wide range of meanings (Reza, and Hui, 2013). However, be it in the private or public sectors, strategy implementation can be understood as the process of translating policies into action through the application of resources, strategies, and measures to achieve intended outcomes (Rani, 2019). One of the best definitions considered by scholars is that offered by Eccles (1994) who considered strategy implementation as “the action that moves the organisation along its choice of route towards its goal – the fulfilment of its mission, the achievement of its vision” (Eccles, 1994, p. 14). Aligning with this definition, this study further brings Merkus et al., (2019) who define strategy implementation as a performative practice that involves learning and reshaping of organisational practices and routines to align with the strategic goals of the organisation. Here, strategy implementation requires a process of translation in which strategic goals are

transformed into concrete actions and practices through the creation of new norms and routines and the development of new skills and capabilities.

Public strategies are government actions aimed at achieving goals (Ikelegbe, 2006). They are instruments to translate political vision into actions for citizen-desired outcomes (Chigumira, Chipumho and Chiwunze, 2018). Public strategies encompass macroeconomic policies expressed in development plans, budget statements, and monetary policy statements (Chigumira, et al, 2018).

Strategic plan implementation is deemed more crucial than its formulation; without it, a plan merely becomes well-documented paperwork (Jooste and Fourie, 2009). A policy does not qualify as public policy until adopted by a governmental institution (Dye, 2002).

The role of leadership is paramount in strategy formulation and implementation (Mapetere, 2012). The 2006 white paper on Chinese corporate strategy implementation emphasised the high-level challenge strategy implementation presents to organisational management. The paper reported that 83% of surveyed organisations failed in implementing their strategy smoothly, with only 17% succeeding.

Imurana, et al (2014) observe that, public policies in Africa have been developed and implemented for years in collaboration with international organisations, in particular the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). Imurana et al (2014) bemoan politicisation of public policies in Africa by political parties to win political capital coupled with excessive bureaucratic procedures. Zimbabwe may not be an exception. A public policy can be defined as ‘a purposive and consistent course of action produced as a response to a perceived problem of a constituency, formulated by a specific political process and adopted, implemented, and enforced by a public agency (The Public Policy Cycle, 2009).

The field of public policy is crammed with literature covering a wide spectrum of issues. While various ideas of public policy have materialised in literature over the years, researchers like, Anderson (1997), Fox and Meyer (1995) and Dye (1995), definitions generally localise the source of public policy to governments. Dye (1995:4) defined public policy as, “whatever governments choose to do or not to do”, Fox and Meyer (1995:107), defined public policy as, “authoritative statements made by legitimate

public institutions about the way in which they propose to deal with policy problem”, and Anderson (1997:9), saw public policy as “proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing obstacles and opportunities which the policy was proposed to utilise and overcome in effort to reach a goal, or realise an objective.

From the above quotations, public policy can be seen as an anticipated course of action by governments and their strategies to follow in achieving set goals and objectives, and this is constantly subjected to the effects of environmental change and influence. It is a statement, written or spoken, aimed at solving a particular problem by providing guidelines which are supposed to be followed to achieve set objectives as well as to promote governance.

The success story of policy implementation in Zimbabwe was arguably experienced in the first decade after attaining political independence on the 18th of April 1980 through assistance from development partners. The major policies were Growth with Equity of 1981, Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP) of 1982-1985 and the First Five Year National Development Plan (FFYNDP) of 1986 to 1990.

A public policy is a government action directed at achieving certain desired goals or objectives (Ikelegbe, 2006). Public policies translate political vision into programmes and actions to deliver outcomes desired by the citizens (Chigumira, Chipumho and Chiwunze, 2018). Macroeconomic policies which are articulated in the development plans/strategies; budget statements and monetary policy statements are components of public policies (Chigumira, et al, 2018).

Strategy implementation is combination of necessary actions and steps to implement strategic plan in organisation. Jooste and Fourie (2009) worked on the strategic plan implementation in African culture and evaluated the factors and reasons of the failure in African countries. They argued that there are many organisations which have vigorous strategies but due to lack of commitments of the policy makers and lack of strategic leadership, these vigorous strategies do not generate the fruitful results. Strategy implementation process involves necessary actions to execute a strategic plan. The success of every organisation rest on its capacity to implement decisions and execute key processes efficiently, effectively, and consistently. Strategy implementation is achieved through consistent efforts of internal and external

stakeholders in a firm. Such stakeholders include the board, senior and junior management, suppliers, customers, government, and civil society (Schaap, 2006; Lehner, 2004; Harrington, 2006). According to Katamei et al. (2015), strategy implementation involves organising a firm's resources and motivating its staff to achieve goals. Today's global competitive environment is complex, dynamic, and largely unpredictable, which has led to a greater focus on strategy implementation. Effective strategy implementation is crucial for directing the attention and actions of an organisation toward its goals. The assessment of strategy implementation processes is crucial for both practitioners and researchers to conduct and evaluate different implementation processes (Thompson et al., 2007).

Merkus et al. (2019) underscore the importance of leadership and communication in the strategy implementation process, as well as the role of organisational culture in shaping the success of implementation efforts. They note, however, that strategy implementation is a complex and ongoing process that requires the active engagement of all stakeholders and a willingness to adapt and evolve in response to changing circumstances.

Organisations have consistently sought to create greater organisational flexibility in responding to environmental turbulence by moving away from hierarchical structures to more modular forms (Balogun, 2003). In an intensifying competitive environment, successful strategy implementation becomes a critical determinant of a firm's success and survival as implementing projects is fundamental to achieving their objectives and successes (Katamei et al., 2015). Thus, Wheelen and Hunger (2012) define strategy implementation as one of four pillars that form the basic integrated elements of strategic management, namely environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and evaluation. The effectiveness of the entire planning process diminishes if the formulated strategies are not implemented (Siddique and Shadbolt, 2016). Remarkably, organisations fail to implement about 70% of their new strategies (Rollinson and Houghtby-Haddon, 2019).

Implementing a strategy involves taking ideas, decisions, plans, policies, goals, and other aspects of the chosen strategy and putting them into action (Wheelen and Hunger, 2012). Designing appropriate organisational structure and control systems to put the organisation's chosen strategy into action is crucial. According to Li et al.



(2008), the term "strategy implementation" has three distinct conceptions: the first approach concentrates on a process perspective and takes strategy implementation as a sequence of carefully planned consecutive steps. Mišanková<sup>a</sup> and Kočišová<sup>a</sup> (2014) suggest that strategic planning is an effective way to implement strategy, and it supports implementation and develops strategy into a detailed strategic plan, which is part of implementing the strategy. Strategic planning also coordinates the process of developing strategic plans at lower hierarchical levels. Rewarding is considered the most effective tool for implementation, while administrative tools help to harmonise employees' actions with the strategy.

While strategic planning has been considered an effective way of implementing strategy in the past, there is little systematic knowledge about how to implement a well-conceived strategy in the day-to-day business of an organisation (Mišanková<sup>a</sup> and Kočišová<sup>a</sup>, 2014). Organisations invest a lot of time and resources in planning strategy, but very little of it is successfully implemented. Discussing the importance of strategy implementation in organisations, Hitt et al (2016) lament that strategy implementation is often overlooked in both the strategic management process and research. They underscored the importance of strategy implementation even though strategy formulation has received the most attention from researchers. They argue that successful strategy implementation is essential for achieving organisational goals and that it requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach that involves all levels of the organisation. Be that as it may, there is wide acknowledgement that even in the available literature on strategy implementation, the actual process of implementation remains unclear and opaque.

For Merkus et al. (2019), scholars tend to concentrate on identifying potential obstacles or facilitators to the implementation of strategy, without offering a clear and comprehensive explanation of the implementation process itself. In most organisations across the world, there is often a gap between the intended strategy and the actual results of implementation, which has received a lot of attention in academic research (Merkus, et al., 2019). Scholars studying strategy implementation recognise that strategic plans are not immediately or easily integrated into organisations. These scholars focus on the steps needed to make the strategy a reality and examine why strategies are realised in organisational reality with varying degrees of success.

Accordingly, many factors have been explored to explain the failure and success of the implementation process, including corporate social networks, the importance of team-based approaches, and management competencies (Merkus, et al., 2019). However, most studies share a similar approach that focuses on identifying factors that obstruct or facilitate implementation rather than on the process itself (Powell, Fernandez, Williams, Aarons, Beidas, Lewis, McHugh, and Weiner, 2019). This approach may oversimplify the complexity of the implementation process and overlook the actual workings of a specific strategy implementation in organisations.

While strategy implementation has become the most significant challenge that all kinds of organisations face now, strategy execution is commonly the most complicated and time-consuming part of strategic management, while strategy formulation is primarily an intellectual and creative act involving analysis and synthesis (Bell, Dean, and Gottschalk, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to study the properties of successful strategy implementation.

Governments worldwide have brought strategic management tools and ideas into play to enhance capacities and performance standards in the face of increasingly challenging economic and political circumstances (Bryson, 2018). In many organisations, it is believed that the effective implementation of a strategy rests entirely with the senior management (Cater and Pucko, 2010) as they are considered responsible for every action occurring in the organisation. However, many CEOs have been blamed for failed or poor strategies, when it was often the case that the strategy implementation was the actual problem (Sterling, 2003).

Researchers interested in strategy implementation face a formidable challenge due to the general lack of research on which to base new efforts (Maotwanyane, 2017). Scholars have observed that formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult undertaking for any management team. It is often the case that significant difficulties arise during implementation, causing strategic decisions to become problematic, which are sometimes invisible to top management (Flanagin, Meetzgeer, Pure, Markov, and Hartsell, 2014). Therefore, the problem leading to the performativity of strategy (Merkus, et., al, 2019) or strategy-to-performance gap is most likely directly related to an eminent gap in the formulation-to-implementation process (Tait and Nienaber, 2010).

According to Li, Guohui and Eppler (2008), this is evidence that strategy implementation is a key challenge for today's organisations, and Aguinis (2014) believes that organisational performance can be improved. The implementation of strategies is a key driver of the emergence of strategic management in the late 20th century (Cater and Pucko, 2010). Without the right communication framework, the entire strategy implementation will be given a wrong interpretation, resulting in wrong implementation (Pearce and Robinson, 2010). Strategy implementation has become an essential part of business strategies for companies to stay internationally competitive (Jiang and Carpenter, 2013). Most large organisations have problems with strategy implementation (Zaribaf and Bayrami, 2010), and a tendency to treat formulation and implementation as two separate phases is at the root of many failed strategies.

### ***3.2.1 Research agenda on strategy implementation: A regional perspective***

Imurana et. al., (2014) note that Africa's public strategies have been shaped in collaboration with international entities, notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. They critique the political exploitation of public strategies for party interests and excessive bureaucratic processes. Zimbabwe is not exempt from these concerns. Public strategy or policy, as defined by Wilson (2009), is what governments decide to do, or not do, and their explanations for the outcomes of those decisions in the real world.

There is a wealth of literature on public policy, covering a diverse array of topics. Despite the multitude of public strategy concepts that have emerged, scholars like Anderson (1997), Fox and Meyer (1995), and Dye (1995) generally attribute the origin of public strategy to governments. Public strategy can be viewed as an intended government action plan and strategies to achieve objectives, regularly subjected to environmental changes and influences.

One of the regions that has attracted scholarly attention on strategy implementation is BRICS, a recognised emerging economic bloc with significant influence. Scholars are seeking to understand the challenges and opportunities of implementing strategies in BRICS contexts. In their recent study, Fedato et al (2017) discuss different perspectives on strategy implementation research in all the BRICS countries. Table

3.1. illustrate some of the key social, economic and cultural issues researchers have examined at an individual, interpersonal and structural levels of an organisation.

The study uses a coevolution perspective in their discussion of strategy implementation, stimulating reflections on the role of resources, internal capabilities, and alignment with organisational reality. They conclude that implementing a new strategy in the BRICS context requires adjusting resources and internal capabilities to the organisational reality, considering external impositions. This is not least because implementation success is realised through the consistent effort of internal and external stakeholders (Schaap, 2006; Lehner, 2004; Harrington, 2006). The environmental conditions facing many organisations continue to change rapidly, and today's global competitive environment is complex, dynamic, and largely unpredictable. Fedato et al (2017) however observed that studies in this area have often prioritised internal issues of organisations. They suggest that contextual factors such as the characteristics of the BRICS countries should also be considered in future research.

As with other regions, African literature on public strategy implementation also covers a broad range of topics relating to the challenges that arise during the implementation process, the importance of clear goal setting and effective communication, and the need to produce empirical and theoretical knowledge to address these challenges. One of the key themes that emerge from the literature is the importance of addressing the challenges that arise during the implementation process. Several studies emphasise the need for managers to use diverse measures to resolve issues that frustrate the implementation of strategies aimed at achieving equitable service delivery to residents (Enwereji and Uwizeyimana, 2019).

Additionally, the literature notes that public sector organisations, which are owned, funded, or operated by the state and involved in the creation, development, and implementation of ideas to address public needs, face global competition and business environment challenges, similar to the private sector (Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar, 2021). Thus, public sector organisations need to develop effective strategies that address the unique challenges they face while ensuring the successful implementation of these strategies. Other scholars have underscored the significance of producing empirical and theoretical knowledge about strategy implementation in Africa (Ridde

and de Sardan, 2017), highlighting the importance of clear goal setting and effective communication in ensuring successful strategy implementation.

*Table 3.1: Research agenda on strategy implementation in BRICS (Fedato, et al., 2017).*

	Economic aspects	Social aspects	Cultural and ethnical aspects
Structural view	To analyze organizational structures configurations and control mechanisms, destined to operate with institutional problems.	To study the relationship with markets in which: technology access is restricted, there is state interference in businesses, there is shortage of resources and innovation systems are weak.	To analyze local cultural and ethical issues that may influence the organizational structure.
Interpersonal view	To examine how the management can promote interpersonal relationships in scenarios with constant changes, rapid economic growth and institutional problems.	To explore interpersonal aspects that can exert influence on relationships and internal and external communication, in different societies, improving the understanding of actions to change, ensuring stability and alignment.	To analyze implementation processes that support the strategic consensus and promote leadership styles committed to change, considering scenarios in which business practices are peculiar.
Individual view	To explore which individual behaviors should be encouraged to enable the organization to change, considering scenarios with fragile institutions, troubled political relations and high risk.	To understand personal aspects of those involved in the change process (sensemaking, feelings, ethics) that can affect relationships in scenarios where individuals explore different alternatives, due to new possibilities of social mobility.	To explore ways to implement change with a focus on understanding individual aspects (sensemaking, feelings, ethics), from the local culture, which can affect the way individuals understand their role in the organization.

Discussing what she calls the foundations of successful strategy implementation and the obstacles that organisations may encounter in the process, Shah (2005) argued that successful implementation requires a clear understanding of the organisation's goals and strategies, as well as effective communication, leadership, and a supportive organisational culture. She identified several common obstacles to successful implementation, such as resistance to change, lack of resources, and inadequate planning and coordination and went on to suggest that organisations can overcome these obstacles by creating a shared vision of success, aligning their resources with

their goals, providing clear and consistent communication, and promoting a culture of learning and continuous improvement. Successful implementation for Shah (2005) requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that involves all levels of the organisation and a commitment to continuous learning and improvement.

Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar (2021) provide insights into the critical role played by public sector organisations in many countries and emphasises the importance of strategy implementation in achieving their goals. In their investigation on the obstacles and solutions to strategy implementation in South African public sector organisations, the authors found that the most significant barriers to strategy implementation in public sector organisations are inadequate leadership and governance, lack of resources, and resistance to change. To overcome these challenges, Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar (2021) suggest developing strong leadership, providing sufficient resources, and promoting a culture of change in the organisation.

In a study conducted at George Washington University in the USA on key drivers of strategy implementation, Rollinson and Houghtby-Haddon (2019) report the results of a survey conducted among public sector leaders to assess the challenges and opportunities in strategy implementation in the public sector. The survey found that the primary challenge in strategy implementation was the lack of adequate resources, including funding, personnel, and technology. Other major challenges included resistance to change, inadequate communication and collaboration, and political interference. The survey also highlighted several opportunities for improving strategy implementation in the public sector, such as the use of data and analytics, the promotion of innovation and creativity, and the development of partnerships and networks. The study suggests that addressing these challenges and capitalising on these opportunities will require a comprehensive and coordinated approach that involves all stakeholders and is based on a clear and shared understanding of organisational goals and priorities (Rollinson and Houghtby-Haddon, 2019).

The body of literature on strategy implementation can be broadly categorised into two groups: one that considers strategy implementation as behaviour / practice; and another that views it as a process (Li et al., 2008). In the foregoing overview, there was mention of different factors (relating to either processes and/or organisational activities or behaviour) that affect public strategy implementation. It is unarguable that

all are implicated in the four schools of thought that underpin this study. These, among other things, include the challenge of political interference in implementation (power school), the need to promote a culture of learning and continuous improvement in organisations (the learning school), the need for flexibility in responding to environmental turbulence (environmental school) as well as the role of organisational culture in shaping the success of implementation efforts (culture school). The relevance of examining this study from these multiple theoretical perspectives therefore needs no emphasis. As already mentioned in the preceding chapters, understanding these schools of thought that inform the theory and practice of strategy management provides useful insights on the critical enablers of successful public strategy implementation, and can help to identify possible ways to address the habitual public strategy implementation failure in Zimbabwe.

However, the above theoretical perspectives only may not be enough to inform an in-depth analysis of public strategy implementation, especially considering the various patterns of social relationships and institutions that exist in today's everchanging society. Margaret Archer's social realism and morphogenetic theory proposes that human society is shaped by both social structure and individual agency (Archer, 1995). According to Archer, social structure refers to the various patterns of social relationships and institutions that exist in society, while individual agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act intentionally and make choices that influence their social environment. This social realist perspective, also introduced in Chapter One, compels us to survey the world for contextual factors that may be constraining or enabling strategy implementation. The next section thus examines the global trends in public strategy implementation. The idea is to account for all possible factors that could be considered in the design of an approach that could facilitate effective public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

### **3.3 Trends in public strategy implementation**

Over the past few decades, public sector organisations around the world have been under immense pressure to improve their performance, enhance their accountability, and become more responsive to the needs of citizens. To achieve these objectives, governments have been adopting various public strategies aimed at transforming the way public services are delivered. In this section, some of the global trends in public

strategy implementation are examined. The trends reflect a broader shift towards more collaborative, data-driven, and outcome-oriented approaches to public strategy implementation.

### **3.3.1 Performance management**

Over the past four decades, performance management approaches have gained increasing attention from governments as a critical tool for implementing public strategies (Kaplan and Norton, 1996; Behn, 2003; Modell, 2005; Van Dooren et al, 2015). Performance management involves the systematic use of performance indicators to assess organisational output. Accordingly, the concept of New Public Management (NPM) has become synonymous with the transformation of the public sector worldwide where the application of performance appraisal of individual employees to reward personal effort towards strategic objectives has become the norm (Modell, 2005). NPM emphasises the use of metrics and indicators, such as the Balanced Score Card (Kaplan and Norton, 1996; Ndevu and Muller 2018; Syahdan, et al., 2018) to track progress towards desired outcomes, inform decision-making, and allocate resources efficiently. NPM has also necessitated regular review of the extent to which goals have been achieved, and the reason for performance that is better or worse than planned.

Performance management approaches are seen as effective tools for holding governments accountable for their performance in implementing public strategies, according to Kaplan and Norton (1996). By establishing clear expectations and goals through the use of metrics and indicators, governments can track progress, increase transparency, and identify areas for improvement. This data-driven approach promotes accountability, enhances decision-making, and leads to more effective and efficient public strategy implementation.

In addition to accountability, performance management approaches have been associated with enhanced decision-making by providing governments with data-driven insights (Behn, 2003; Van Dooren et al, 2015). By tracking progress, governments can identify areas of success and areas that require improvement. This evidence-based approach allows for resource allocation to strategies that are showing positive results, and adjustments to strategies that are not achieving desired outcomes (Van Dooren et al, 2015). Transparent and credible performance reports based on metrics and



indicators can also enhance trust and confidence in government performance, leading to greater support for public strategies (Hatry, 2006).

Furthermore, performance management approaches facilitate strategic resource allocation by providing governments with information on the effectiveness of different strategies (Bryson, 2018). Through metrics and indicators, governments can prioritise resources to strategies that are producing positive outcomes and reallocate resources from strategies that are not performing well. This promotes efficient use of resources and maximises the impact of public strategies. As a result, the shift towards a results-oriented approach has led governments to emphasise tangible outcomes rather than inputs or processes, demonstrating their commitment to achieving real results and outcomes for citizens, stakeholders, and funders.

Performance management approaches have thus become crucial tools for governments to implement public strategies effectively. Among other advantages, they have been lauded for promoting accountability, enhancing decision-making, and facilitating efficient resource allocation, ultimately leading to tangible outcomes and greater support for public strategies.

### ***3.3.2 Collaboration and partnerships***

Globalisation has resulted in increased competition among companies and nations, while also fostering cooperation through alliances such as the BRICS countries' coalition (Fedato et al., 2017). As a result, collaboration has become a global trend in public strategy implementation, recognising the importance of engaging and partnering with diverse stakeholders. This approach emphasises that effective strategy implementation requires active participation from various actors, including civil society organisations, private sector entities, and community groups (Favoreu et al., 2016). This approach is justified by the reduction of public budgets and resources, the increasing complexity of public issues and social problems, the need to involve civil society, and the dispersion of resources and expertise, which lead to the production of collaborative benefits (Robertson and Choi, 2012).

The concept of networks plays a central role in the collaborative approach, with decision-making supported by interactive and deliberative dialogue and consensus-building. Networks refer to arrangements of public and private actors that involve stable, horizontal, and vertical interactions based on cooperative relationships, aimed

at achieving a public purpose (Provan and Milward, 2001; Clarke, 2011). According to Favoreu et al. (2016), collaborative strategic management and network governance facilitate coordination, learning, and the development of shared knowledge. Inamdar et al., (2000) demonstrated that a Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan and Norton, 1996) can be a strategic management system used for multi-sector collaboration and strategy implementation. The Balanced Scorecard provides a framework for organisations to align their objectives, measures, targets, and initiatives across different sectors to achieve their strategic goals (Inamdar et al., 2000). The scorecard emphasises a balanced approach that considers various perspectives, including financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth, to ensure comprehensive performance measurement and management (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). Favoreu et al. (2016) argue that by utilising the Balanced Scorecard, organisations can effectively implement strategies, monitor progress, and drive performance improvement in a collaborative and coordinated manner.

Collaboration has been utilised in various sectors, including healthcare, education, and environmental conservation in Europe. For example, in Finland, a roadmap for integrated health and social care strategy implementation was developed (Korpela et al., 2012). In the United States, public-private partnerships have been used to fund and implement large-scale infrastructure projects, such as transportation and energy initiatives (Casady et al., 2016). Additionally, in the European Union, collaboration between governments, non-governmental organisations, and businesses has been used to promote sustainable development and environmental protection (European Commission, 2011).

Accordingly, collaboration has become a crucial aspect of public strategy implementation globally. Engaging and partnering with diverse stakeholders, including civil society organisations, private sector entities, and community groups, has been demonstrated to be an effective approach in various sectors and regions. These partnerships and collaborations enable a more comprehensive and inclusive implementation of public strategies, leading to more successful outcomes.

However, while collaborative governance has become widespread, there is limited research on implementation issues. Nabatchi and Emerson (2021) argue that understanding implementation is crucial for advancing research on the instrumental

and performance aspects of collaborative governance and collaborative governance regimes. They note, however, that while all collaborative governance efforts face general implementation challenges, the more specific - and potentially more significant - challenges are likely to vary depending on the type of collaborative governance regime, whether it is self-initiated, independently convened, or externally directed (Nabatchi and Emerson, 2021).

### **3.3.3 Sustainability and resilience**

Public strategy implementation research, with a focus on sustainability and resilience, has emerged as a prominent area of inquiry in recent years. Scholars have delved into various key themes in this field, drawing from literature on sustainable development goals (SDGs), resilience and adaptive governance, stakeholder engagement and participation, and policy integration and coherence.

One key theme in public strategy implementation research is the integration of SDGs into policy and decision-making processes, as outlined by the United Nations (2015). Scholars have examined how public strategies can align with the SDGs and promote sustainability in sectors such as energy, transportation, agriculture, and urban planning (Loorbach et al., 2017). This research has sought to understand the ways in which governments can integrate the principles of sustainability into their strategies, policies, and practices, and measure progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Resilience and adaptive governance have also emerged as critical themes in public strategy implementation research (Coaffee et al., 2018). Scholars have highlighted the importance of building resilience in the face of complex and uncertain challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, and social disruptions. This includes studying how governments can develop adaptive strategies, policies, and institutions that can effectively respond to changing conditions, learn from past experiences, and promote sustainable development (Berkes et al., 2003; Olsson et al., 2006). The concept of adaptive governance, which involves the ability to adapt and learn in the face of changing circumstances, has gained prominence as a key approach to promoting resilience in public strategy implementation.

Stakeholder engagement and participation have also emerged as crucial themes in public strategy implementation research on sustainability and resilience. Scholars have examined how different stakeholders, including government agencies, private

sector actors, civil society organisations, and local communities, can collaborate and participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of public strategies (Lambin and Thorlakson, 2018; Kekez et al., 2019). This research has explored the ways in which inclusive and participatory processes can lead to better decision-making, increased trust, and improved outcomes in public strategy implementation. Stakeholder engagement and participation are seen as important mechanisms for incorporating diverse perspectives, interests, and knowledge in the development and implementation of sustainable strategies.

Policy integration and coherence are also critical themes in public strategy implementation research on sustainability and resilience. Scholars have investigated how different policies and strategies can be integrated and coordinated across sectors and levels of government to promote synergies and avoid conflicts (Jordan et al., 2013; Huitema et al., 2016). This research has examined the challenges and opportunities associated with policy integration in complex governance systems with multiple actors, interests, and goals. Policy coherence has been identified as a key factor contributing to the effectiveness and sustainability of public strategies, and scholars have explored ways to achieve coherence in policy development and implementation processes (Nilsson et al., 2012; Biermann et al., 2017).

Together, this trend has contributed to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing sustainable and resilient strategies in complex governance contexts. This study set out to contribute by exploring these themes to further advance knowledge on effective strategy implementation in the public sector.

### **3.3.4 Use of technology**

The use of technology has become a critical aspect of public strategy implementation, particularly in areas such as e-governance, data analytics, and digital communication. Technology is increasingly used to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness of public services.

One of the key areas where technology has been increasingly used in public strategy implementation is e-governance (Mungai and Gasthungu, 2017). E-governance refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to transform and improve the delivery of government services, as well as the interaction between

governments and citizens (United Nations, 2019). E-governance has gained significant attention in recent years, with many governments around the world implementing various e-governance initiatives to streamline administrative processes, enhance service delivery, and increase citizen participation (Moon, 2002). For example, digital platforms and online portals have been developed to facilitate online service delivery, such as filing taxes, applying for permits, and accessing government information (Heeks, 2006). These initiatives are aimed at improving the efficiency of public services, reducing administrative costs, and increasing citizen engagement (Bannister and Connolly 2014).

Data analytics is another area where technology is being used to drive public strategy implementation. Data analytics involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of large and complex data sets to inform decision-making and policy development (Chen, Chiang, and Storey, 2012). In the context of public strategy implementation, data analytics has been used to gather insights from vast amounts of data, including social, economic, and environmental data, to inform evidence-based policy making (Salas-Vega et al., 2015). It can also be used to analyse social and economic data to identify patterns and trends, forecast future scenarios, and evaluate the impact of policy interventions (Azzone, 2018). Additionally, data analytics can facilitate monitoring and evaluation of public policies and programs, providing real-time feedback on their effectiveness and enabling policymakers to make informed decisions (Azzone, 2018).

Digital communication is also a prominent area where technology is being utilised to support public strategy implementation. Digital communication refers to the use of digital technologies, such as social media, online platforms, and mobile applications, to facilitate communication and engagement between governments and citizens (Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai, 2015). Digital communication enables governments to interact with citizens in a more direct and interactive manner, providing opportunities for feedback, participation, and collaboration (Yildiz, 2018). For example, social media platforms can be used to disseminate information about government policies and initiatives, gather public feedback, and engage citizens in public discussions (Wong and Alhabash, 2014). Digital communication also allows for greater transparency and accountability in public strategy implementation, as it enables governments to communicate their actions, progress, and outcomes to the public (Gil-Garcia, 2012).

The use of technology in public strategy implementation has been noted to have significant implications for public administration, policy development, and governance. Be that as it may, scholars have recognised the necessity of addressing the scarcity of empirical research on enhancing the effectiveness of public strategy implementation (Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Hitt et al., 2016), a call this study was formulated in direct response to.

In the context of public strategy implementation trends outlined in the foregoing, strategy implementation can benefit from different models or methods. Nevertheless, scholars have cautioned that a models' success is not guaranteed as it depends on the accuracy and appropriateness of the model for the organisation (Mišanková and Kočíšová, 2014).

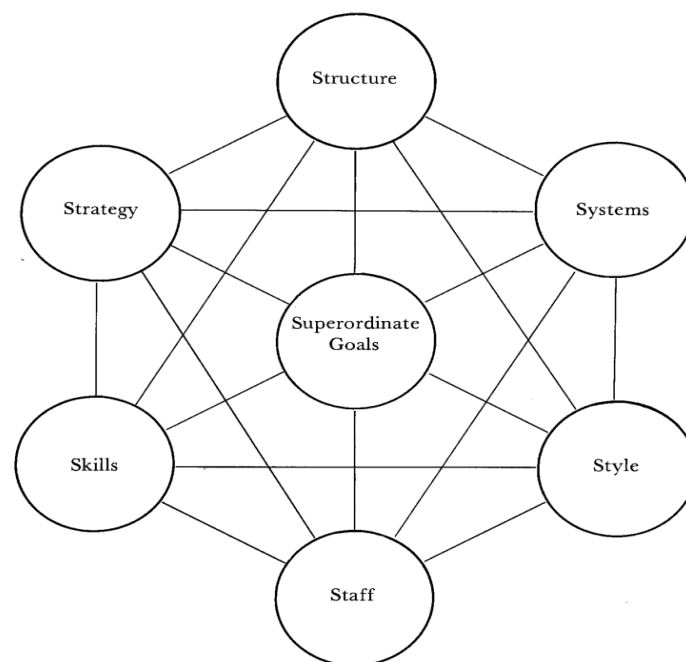
### **3.4 Models of strategy implementation**

As with its definition, the realm of strategy implementation lacks a universally recognised and predominant framework that enjoys consensus and widespread acceptance (Siddique and Shadbolt, 2016). Scholars from a variety of theoretical backgrounds have proposed distinct models for strategy implementation, reflecting the heterogeneity of perspectives in the field. These models have been variously adopted and operationalised by practitioners and organisations to facilitate their strategic initiatives, further emphasising the lack of a dominant model.

The following pages provide a critical analysis of select, influential models of strategy implementation. This analysis begins with the McKinsey 7S Model of organisational change, renowned for its comprehensive framework that encapsulates key variables influencing both organisational goal attainment and strategy implementation. This model's distinctive feature is its exploration of multiple factors, ranging from strategy and structure to shared values, that aligns well with the critical realist focus on structure, culture, and agency. The conference proceedings of the British Academy of Management identify nine models that explicitly mention strategy implementation (Reza and Hui, 2013). In an attempt to contribute to the ongoing academic conversation around these models, this review outlines of a few of these models, contextualising them in relation to the McKinsey 7S Model and the critical realist perspective underpinning this study.

#### **3.4.1 The McKinsey 7-S Model (1980)**

The McKinsey 7-S Model was initially formulated by Robert Waterman, Thomas Peters, and Julien Philips during their tenure at McKinsey and Company (Waterman et al., 1980). The McKinsey 7S Model illustrated in Figure 3.1 was developed with the specific intention of shifting the managerial focus from structure to coordination (Waterman et al., 1980; Bryan, 2008) to enhance effective organisational change. The underlying premise of the model is around the notion that effective organisational change hinges upon the interrelationships among seven interconnected factors, namely structure, strategy, systems, style, skills, staff, and a concept referred to as superordinate goals (Waterman et al., 1980).



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*Figure 3.1: The McKinsey 7S Model (Waterman Jr, et al., 1980, p. 18)*

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**Structure**, refers to the hierarchical arrangement of functions and positions within an organisation, encompassing responsibilities, authorisations, and role descriptions. While structure is crucial in strategy implementation, it alone is insufficient without a well-defined **strategy** (Waterman et al., 1980; Bryan, 2008). Strategy encompasses the activities aimed at attaining organisational goals and creating unique value, distinguishing the organisation from its competitors. It outlines the company's approach, such as low-cost production, superior customer value, or market dominance.

However, Waterman et al. (1980) observed that many companies possess robust strategies but struggle with implementation, despite having sound structures. This observation underscores the significance of the **systems** component in the model. Systems encompass formal and informal procedures that enable daily and long-term organisational functioning. They encompass various processes, including capital budgeting, training, cost accounting, and budgeting. Understanding and evaluating these systems are crucial for comprehending organisational operations and facilitating strategy implementation (Waterman et al., 1980; Bryan, 2008).

Leadership **style** also plays a pivotal role in shaping the implementation of organisational strategy. Leaders are responsible for selecting **staff** members who possess the requisite **skills** to effectively execute the strategy. Style refers to the allocation of rights and responsibilities within the organisation, while staff refers to the individuals employed by the organisation, each possessing unique knowledge, experience, intelligence, ability, and training (skills) (Suwanda and Nugroho, 2022).

The final element of the model is the **superordinate goals**, which are fundamental values and ideas that underpin the organisation. These goals are often unwritten and go beyond formal corporate objectives. In subsequent versions of the model (see Higgins, 2005), they are referred to as shared values. Superordinate goals encompass the beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and communication regarding the organisation, work, and acceptable behaviour shared by the majority of employees. They also encompass the vision, mission, and values that define a collective goal for all employees (Bryan, 2008; Waterman et al., 1980).

While the McKinsey 7S Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interconnected factors influencing strategy implementation, its major drawback is that it solely offers the advantage of utilising internal variables to assess organisational performance, without considering external factors (Suwanda and Nugroho, 2022). Be that as it may, the model has been and continues to be applied in both the private and public sector to analyse and improve strategy implementation in various contexts (Gyepi-Garbrah, and Binfor, 2013; Chmielewska et al. 2022; Suwanda and Nugroho, 2022). Twenty years ago, Higgins suggested a revision of McKinsey's 7S model by proposing "8S" model, which includes Strategy, Structure, Systems and processes, leadership Style, Staff, reSources, Shared values, and Strategic performance, as a



framework to assist managers in enhancing their focus on strategy execution (Higgins, 2005). For Higgins (2005), successful executives dedicate significant time to strategy implementation, and a crucial aspect of strategy execution involves aligning key organisational functions and factors with the chosen strategy. Further models that provide different approaches for how organisations can effectively implement their chosen strategy have been proposed.

From a critical realist perspective, this model offers valuable insights into the complex dynamics at play and can inform efforts to address habitual public strategy implementation failures in the context of Zimbabwe. Examining the relationships among structure, strategy, systems, leadership style, staff, and superordinate goals, organisations can gain insights into the underlying mechanisms that either facilitate or hinder successful strategy execution.

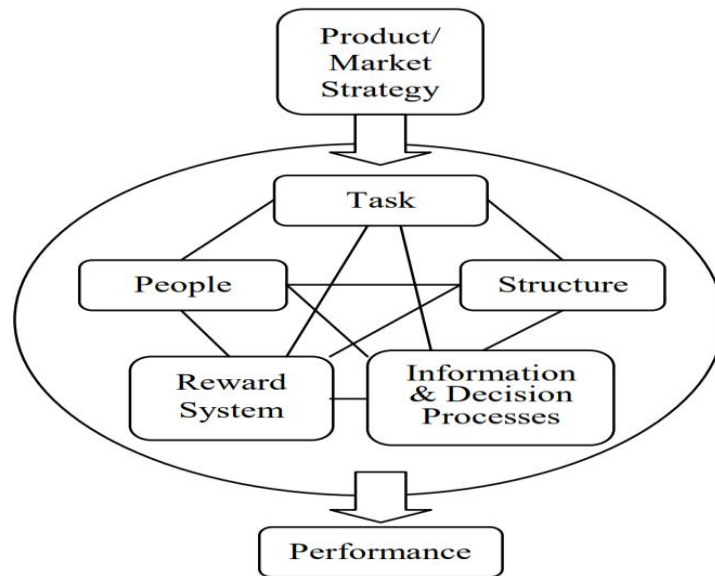
In addition to this model, other approaches to strategy implementation have been suggested, which collectively encompass various perspectives on strategy implementation and align with the key factors discussed in the foregoing.

#### **3.4.2 Galbraith and Nathanson's Model (1978)**

Considered to be the first framework on strategy execution (Reza, and Hui, 2013), Jay Galbraith and Daniel Nathanson's 1978 adopts a process perspective that incorporates input, process, and output elements. The model suggests that there a combination of interconnected factors that, together with organisational structure, collectively contribute to the creation of performance (Galbraith and Nathanson, 1978).

The important factors that contribute to performance, as shown on Figure 3.2 are task, people, structure, reward system, as well as information and decision processes. (Galbraith and Nathanson, 1978, p. 2). As with other strategic management scholars of the 1960s, 1970s, and even 1980s, Galbraith and Nathanson were influenced by Chandler's doctrine (1962), which placed significant emphasis on organisational structure during strategy formulation and implementation (Reza, and Hui, 2013).

However, the Galbraith and Nathanson's Strategy Implementation Model, considers other variables in addition to structure that must be considered during strategy implementation (Galbraith and Nathanson, 1978).



*Figure 3.2: Galbraith and Nathanson's Model of Strategy Implementation*

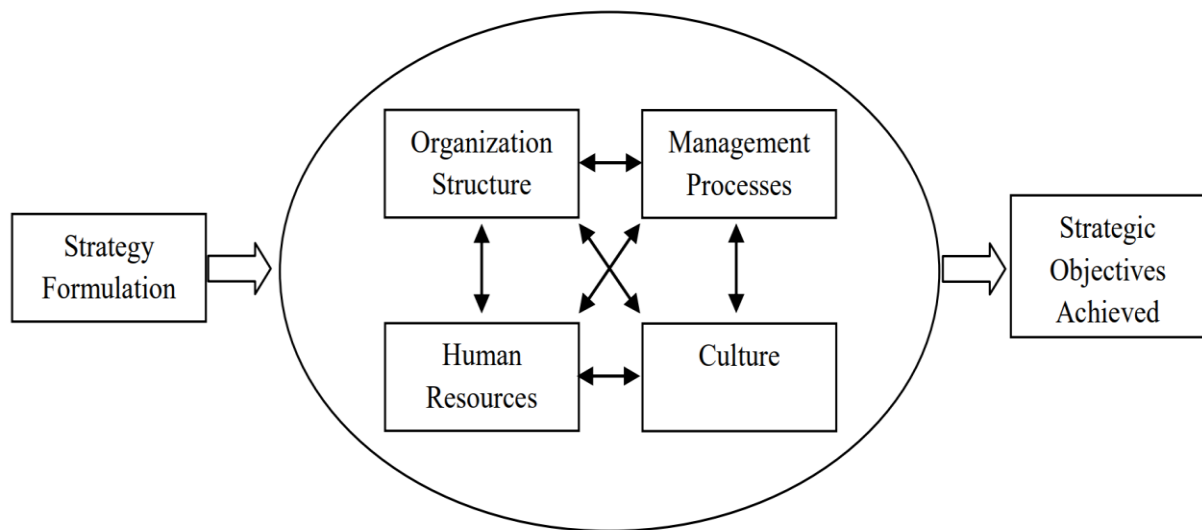
It is important to note that all the variables in this model are encompassed in McKinsey 7S Model in which 'strategy' may be likened to 'task'.

### **3.4.3 Stonich Model (1982)**

The second Strategy Implementation Model was introduced by Paul Stonich in 1982 (Reza, and Hui, 2013). A notable addition in this model, relative to Galbraith and Nathanson, is the element of culture.

As with Galbraith and Nathanson's model, Stonich's model is also system-based, where the input of strategy formulation is processed through four interconnected elements of organisational structure, management processes, human resources, and culture to achieve strategic objectives as outputs. Stonich emphasises the concept of **fit** discussed in the previous chapter.

The model shown on Figure 3.3 highlights that effective strategy implementation demands a continuous effort to match and fit together these fundamental elements that drive the organisation's functioning (Stonich, 1982). According to Stonich (1982), the process of strategy formulation plays a crucial role in its success. It is not only important to develop an economically sound strategy but also to ensure its implementation feasibility within a specific context.



*Figure 3.3: Stonich Model of Strategy Implementation (Stonich, 1982, p. xviii)*

Stonich argues that a successful strategy should be both analytical and fact-based, as well as implementation-oriented and consensus-oriented.

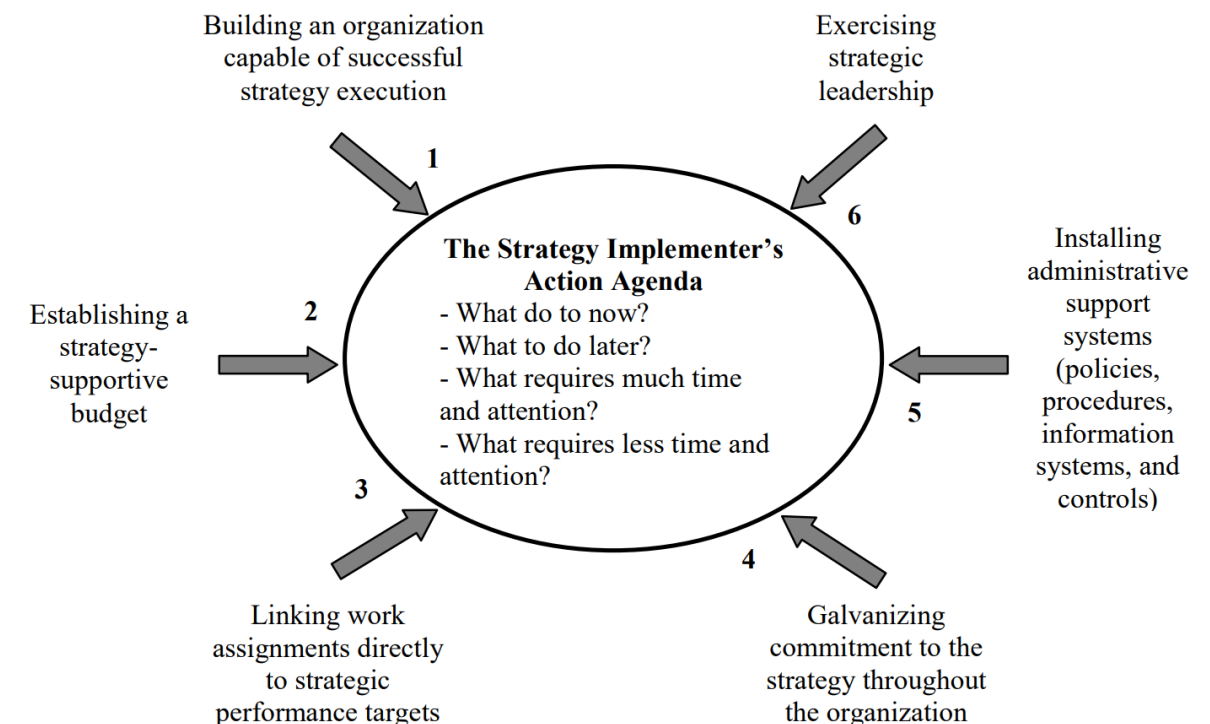
Therefore, the strategy formulation process needs to emphasise these two critical dimensions (Stonich, 1982). All the elements of this model are also encompassed and have been discussed under McKinsey 7S Model.

#### **3.4.4 Thompson and Strickland's Model of Strategy Execution (1986)**

Thompson and Strickland's model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and executing strategy implementation, addressing a series of steps involved in the process and the crucial tasks undertaken by general managers during each step of the strategy implementer's action agenda.

The model, illustrated in Figure 3.4, comprises six stages or tasks namely a) building an organisation capable of successful strategy execution; b) establishing a strategy-supportive budget; c) linking work assignments directly to strategic performance targets; d) galvanising commitment to the strategy throughout the organisation; e) installing administrative support systems; and f) exercising strategic leadership. Unlike other models, this model considers strategy implementation as a step-by-step process with a cause-and-effect relationship between each element and strategy execution (Reza, and Hui, 2013). According to Thompson and Strickland (1986), the initial stage

is developing an organisation that can effectively implement the strategy. In accordance with the other models already outlined,



*Figure 3.4: Thompson and Strickland's Model of Strategy Execution (Thompson and Strickland, 1986, p. 264)*

Thompson and Strickland (1986) argue that a company's successful strategy execution depends on having a responsive internal organisational structure, nurturing the necessary skills and competences, and selecting competent personnel. A distinctive feature of the model here is its overly idealistic assumption that a company must possess advanced structure and top staff, which according to Reza and Hui (2013) may limit its applicability.

The second stage of the model involves creating a strategy-supportive budget, where budgets and action plans are aligned. Thompson and Strickland (1986) emphasise the importance of allocating resources effectively while considering cost-effectiveness. The notion of 'reSources' is the 8<sup>th</sup> S added to the subsequent versions of the original McKinsey 7S Model (see Higgins, 2005).

The third stage focuses on connecting assigned tasks with performance objectives, linking job definitions to strategic outcomes rather than just duties and functions. This

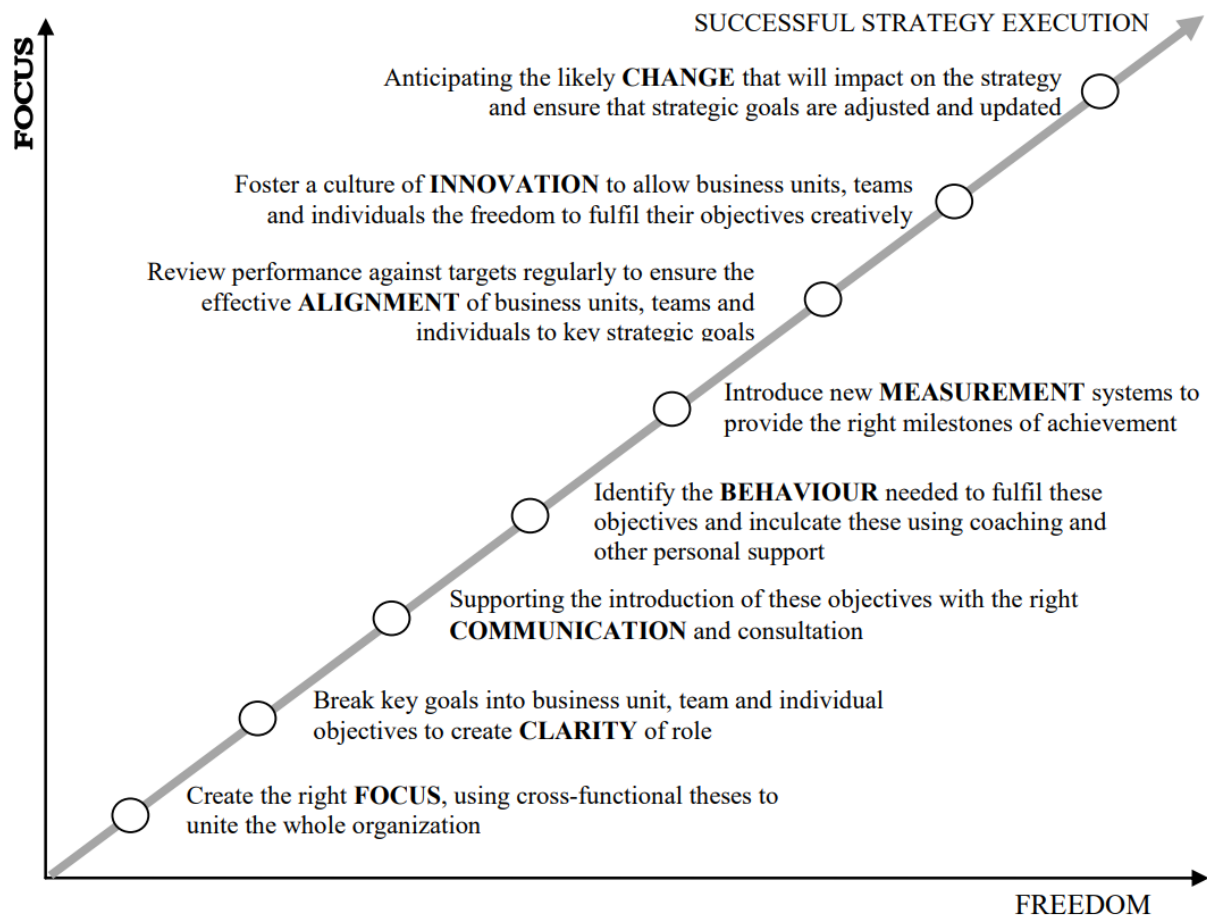
is followed by generating organisational commitment to strategy implementation through various aspects such as motivating units and individuals, fostering a strategy-supportive culture, and aligning the reward system with strategic performance.

Installing internal administrative support systems tailored to the needs of the strategy is the fifth stage, involving the establishment of appropriate policies, information systems, and controls to guide and monitor progress. Then the final stage of the model is exerting strategic leadership, where managers take on multiple roles such as chief entrepreneur, crisis solver, and resource allocator. This is another shortcoming that may limit the model's applicability as strategic leadership should be exercised throughout all stages of strategy formulation and implementation (Reza, and Hui, 2013).

### **3.4.5 Pathway to Strategy Execution (Syrett, 2007)**

The other relevant model to consider is Syrett's Pathway to Strategy Execution, presented in his book *Successful Strategy Execution* published in 2007. The model offers a strategy implementation process consisting of eight distinct steps within two dimensions namely focus and freedom (Syrett, 2007, p. 132). Explaining these dimensions, Syrett argues that successful strategy execution relies on the organisation's **focus** on the right strategic goals and granting **freedom** to all parts of the organisation (Syrett, 2007, p. 131).

The eight steps illustrated in Figure 3.5 include: forming cross-functional teams to establish the appropriate focus, clarifying roles by dividing main goals into business unit, team, and individual objectives, communicating these objectives effectively, identifying and supporting behaviour that aligns with the objectives, developing measurement systems to track progress, ensuring the organisation aligns strategic goals and performance, fostering an innovative culture that supports objective attainment, and adjusting strategic goals in response to potential changes (Syrett, 2007). Critics have contended that while the model claims to be on strategy implementation, its constitutive steps primarily focus on preparing for strategy implementation, while the actual execution of the strategy is not adequately addressed in this model (Reza and Hui, 2013).



*Figure 3.5: Syrett's Pathway to Strategy Execution (Syrett, 2007, p. 132).*

Of particular interest to this study, however, is the model's emphasis on the need to anticipate changes that are likely to impact the strategy, and the provision to adjust strategic goals. The environmental and learning schools of thought from which this study draws (see Chapter Two) emphasise this point. This important factor is also emphasised in Kaplan and Norton's model outlined below.

#### **3.4.6 Management System for Strategy Execution Model (2008)**

The Management System for strategy implementation model was introduced in 2008 by Kaplan and Norton, the renowned authors of the Balanced Scorecard framework mentioned earlier in this chapter, and which also features in this model. The model is a cyclic step-by-step process comprising six phases shown on Figure 3.6.

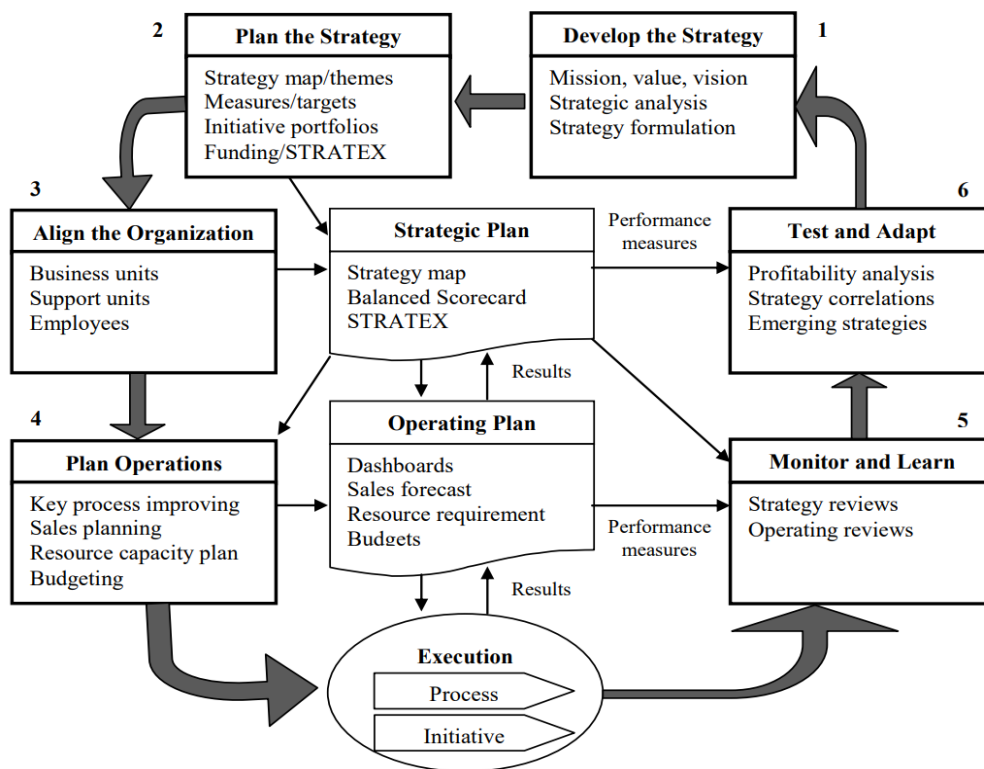


Figure 3.6: Management System for Strategy Execution Model (Kaplan and Norton, 2008, p. 8)

As the figure illustrates, the first stage involves strategy development, followed by strategic planning to create a strategic plan. The organisation is then aligned with the strategy, and operational planning is carried out to formulate an operating plan. The execution of the operational plan is monitored, and lessons learned from the results and challenges encountered are gathered. This informs the last stage involving testing and adapting the strategy based on the lessons learnt.

It is beyond doubt that the influence of the learning school to strategy implementation discussed in the previous chapter has traces in this model. One of the weaknesses of this model noted by Reza and Hui (2013) is that the model overlooks the impact of the external environment on the various stages of strategy implementation. This is a critical component emphasised in this study as illustrated by the environmental school discussed in Chapter Two. The importance of the external environment is addressed in MacLennan's Inverted Pyramid Framework (MacLennan, 2011), the final model of this section outlined below.

### 3.4.7 The Inverted Pyramid Framework for strategy implementation (2011)

As with other strategy execution models, MacLennan's model follows a step-by-step process with thirteen logically sequential tasks divided into two phases shown on Figure 3.7 further below. The first phase includes three tasks aimed at translating the organisation's general objectives into a series of activities.

These tasks include defining the overall objective, making strategic choices, and identifying critical activities (MacLennan, 2011). The second phase involves aligning organisational designs and systems and encompasses ten leadership or management roles that include managing processes and projects, allocating resources, designing the organisation structure, managing interfaces, assigning roles and responsibilities, setting performance criteria, building commitment, capacity, and capability, identifying strategic risks and performance measures, and conducting internal and external environmental analysis.

This model focuses on aligning organisational resources and control systems with the implementation of a new strategy while recognising the impact that the external environment, including stakeholders might have on the success of the strategic plan.

Lubombo (2012) illustrated the importance of building alliances with influential stakeholders to gain their support. There is need therefore to identify and mobilise key stakeholders who have different interests and political influence. Both the political and environmental schools to strategy implementation highlight the need to navigate the political landscape and engage in negotiation and persuasion to gain support for the strategic plan.

Together, the above models of strategy implementation provide different perspectives and approaches for organisations to implement their strategic plans, depending on the nature of the organisation, its stakeholders, and the strategic context. The models conceivably alert organisations to important underlying factors and structures that can enable or constrain strategy implementation. All these aspects are embedded in the 8S model, rendering the most comprehensive models on strategy implementation. Understanding the 7-S Model, as with others reviewed above, enables organisations to assess and align the key elements of an organisation, thereby increasing their chances of successful strategy execution and achieve their strategic objectives.



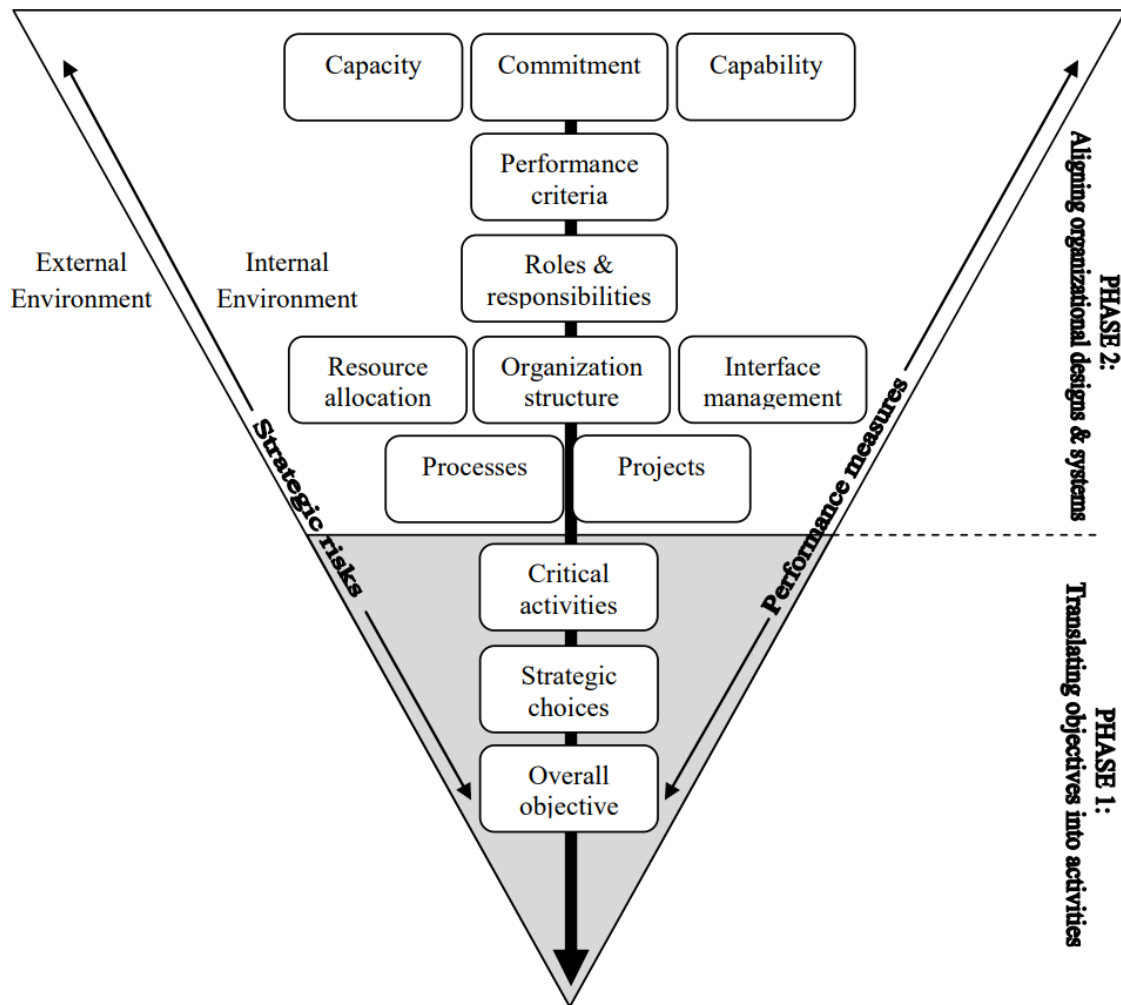


Figure 3.7: MacLennan's Inverted Pyramid Framework (MacLennan, 2011, p. 57)

Ironically, with all these models and frameworks, a significant number of strategies fail to be implemented successfully (MacLennan, 2011, Reza and Hui, 2013). Numerous studies and reports reviewed in previous chapters indicate that a considerable portion of strategies do not achieve their intended objectives or fail to be executed effectively. It may be important, however, to note that the above foregoing review evinces some fundamental concepts, principles, concepts, or themes consistently recur or overlap across several models. Notables are the following six (6) variables arguably considered in this study as key determinants of strategy implementation.

### 3.5 Key factors affecting strategy implementation

Jooste and Fourie (2009) studied the execution of strategic plans within African cultures and identified key factors and reasons that could lead to failure in African

nations. They argued that despite the presence of robust strategies, a lack of commitment from policymakers and strategic leadership often leads to underwhelming outcomes. The primary causes of strategy failure are often lack of interest, commitment, and effective leadership.

Mapeter et. al., (2012) identified a lack of accountability and commitment among strategy executives as the primary reasons why even the best strategies failed to produce desired outcomes in Zimbabwe. They pointed to a negative leadership behaviour, where those responsible for executing strategies were not held accountable or committed to the strategy.

For Altonen and Ikavalko (2002) the importance of effective communication between the executing team and top management, strategic action, identification, support, and assistance to key strategy implementers, and establishing a coherent relationship between the organisational system and structure, and the content and context of the strategy are key factors for successful strategy implementation. Brenes et. al., (2008) pinpointed the execution process, strategy formulation procedures from internal to external scanning, strategy control process, and the motivation of top-level management and strategic leaders to achieve organisational objectives. They also highlighted the role of corporate governance issues in the organisation.

Although scholars have struggled to agree upon a common standard on strategy implementation, there are areas of overlap that are consistent in the models reviewed in the preceding sections, which can arguably be considered as critical factors that can underpin strategy implementation in different contexts. These are examined below under the following headings: a) people; b) management; c) resources; d) structure; e) systems; and f) culture, and environment. Some previous scholars, for example Mišanková and Kočišová (2014), Rani (2019) among others suggests that the success of strategy implementation depends on factors such as the composition and effectiveness of the implementation team, the availability of necessary resources to support the process, and the organisation's culture, systems, and structure. These factors bear resemblance not only to the seminal McKinsey 7S Model for strategy implementation that has garnered widespread usage and adoption among both practitioners and academics (Gyepi-Garbrah and Binfor, 2013; Chmielewska et al., 2022) but also consistently bear in all the other models outlined above.

### **3.5.1 People**

All, the above models underscore the importance of staff as a critical determinant of public strategy implementation success. Researchers argue that effective strategy implementation relies on a skilled and high-performing workforce (Michlitsch, 2000; Kohtamäki, et al., 2012; Rani, 2019). The models reveal that having the right people with the necessary skills, expertise, motivation, understanding, and commitment to the strategy is crucial for effective implementation. A skilled and knowledgeable workforce with the right skills, knowledge, and capability needed in implementing the task that would execute the strategy greatly enhances the likelihood of success, hence it is imperative for organisations to cultivate and retain employees who excel in their roles and are dedicated to meeting the needs of their target customers (Michlitsch, 2000; Rani 2019).

But employees at all levels of the organisation need to understand the strategy, their roles in executing it, and be committed to its success. Motivated employees are more likely to be committed to the goals of the strategy and take ownership of their roles in its execution (Cater and Pucko, 2010). It is thus crucial for organisation management to ensure that their employees comprehend the strategy, their roles, and responsibilities in its implementation (Cater and Pucko, 2010). A strong and effective pool of skills involving engaged employees with the necessary skills, expertise, and strong moral values are extremely important resources for strategy success (Upadhyay et al., 2013; Rani, 2019).

Engaged employees have been highlighted to be integral to inclusive decision-making, a necessary ingredient for effective strategy execution. They are also believed to be emotionally connected to their work and are willing to go the extra mile to contribute to the success of the strategy (Saks, 2006; Kahn, 1990). Organisations can foster employee engagement. According to Upadhyay et al (2013), when leaders and employees have strong moral values, they impact strategy implementation positively. This takes us to another determinant, which is management.

### **3.5.2 Management**

The role of management in the implementation process is also emphasised in all models. Literature has noted that effective management practices are essential to ensure that people in their organisation are aligned with the strategy and motivated to

achieve the strategic goals. For Zaribaf and Bayrami (2010), there are three key roles of management that include managing the strategic process, managing relationships, and managing manager training. Similarly, based on research conducted on Slovenian companies, Cater and Pucko identified what they call “commonly addressed strategy implementation activities” (Cater and Pucko, 2010, p.211) that can be categorised into the four traditional functions of management namely planning, organising, leadership and controlling (POLC) shown on Table 3.1.

*Table 3.1: Strategy implementation activities associated with Management  
(Adapted from Cater and Pucko, 2010. p. 212)*

MANAGEMENT FUNCTION	ASSOCIATED PRACTICE
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formulating and implementations of programmes,</li> <li>- Developing budgets and procedures</li> <li>- Establishing operating level objectives</li> <li>- Action planning</li> <li>- Tactical or annual planning</li> </ul>
Organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Designing organisational structures</li> <li>- Fitting the organisation to the strategy</li> <li>- Organising for strategy implementation</li> <li>- Organising for action</li> <li>- Allocating responsibility for strategy implementation</li> </ul>
Leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using leadership to direct employees</li> <li>- Triggering employee motivation or enthusiasm</li> <li>- Directing employees</li> <li>- Leading the change</li> <li>- Emphasising communication</li> <li>- Managing human resources activities</li> </ul>
Controlling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using efficient control system</li> <li>- Creating incentives and control mechanisms</li> <li>- Controlling implementation of strategies</li> <li>- Monitoring and controlling</li> <li>- Implementing control and follow up actions.</li> <li>- Applying the balanced score card</li> <li>- Consistently measuring progress and performance</li> </ul>

The study by Cater and Pucko (2010) revealed that managers predominantly utilise planning and organising activities during strategy implementation. However, for them, the primary hindrance to effective strategy implementation and execution is poor leadership.

Table 3.1 illustrate some of the common implementation activities that have attracted scholarly attention. Cater and Pucko (2010) argue that that for effective strategy implementation to occur, managers should among other things be able to plan for implementation, organise structures, systems and resources needed for implementation, motivate, and persuade employees to execute the strategy, and use efficient control systems to ensure effective strategy implementation (Cater and Pucko, 2010). The management activities include but go beyond leadership, one aspect that has dominated reasons implementation success.

As Rani (2019) puts it, leadership, being a critical factor in the successful implementation of strategies, has enjoyed top focus among other determinants that may contribute to strategy implementation failure. This is not least because even if a team has skilled members, weak leadership can easily derail even the best-laid plans, and the type of leadership employed has also been observed to impact the success of strategies (Rani, 2019). Successful strategy implementation involves management that empowers others to act on doing all the things needed to put the strategy into place and to execute it proficiently (Thomson and Strickland, 2014).

Accordingly, successful management requires effective use of power in overcoming barriers to change. Communication has been identified as an important factor in strategy implementation, thus managers must be aware of people's beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, demands and arguments in order to effectively communicate the message of strategic plan implementation to the employees (Pearce and Robinson 2010).

### **3.5.2 Resources**

Another important determinant of effective strategy implementation that emerge from the above models is the availability and effective utilisation of resources. The study of resources, competences, and capabilities originated from Barney's (1991) seminal work on the resource-based view of the firm. The study emphasised the significance of resources such as assets, capabilities, organisational processes, firm attributes, information, and knowledge in achieving sustained competitive advantage in dynamic

markets. Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) further defined resources as firm-specific assets that are difficult to imitate, whether tangible, such as infrastructure, or intangible, such as know-how and know-who (Alfaro, Mejía-Villa, Recalde, and Rodriguez-Ferradas, 2017).

An organisation's implementation capability rises when resources are integrated to perform one or multiple tasks within the organisation (Nilsen and Bernhardsson, 2019; Prieto-Sandoval, 2019). In implementation science, availability of adequate financial resources is considered crucial for executing strategic initiatives (Nilsen and Bernhardsson, 2019). Financial resources enable organisations to allocate funds for strategic projects, hire skilled employees, and implement necessary changes in the organisation's structure and processes to align with the strategic goals (Nilsen and Bernhardsson, 2019). Institutions must thus ensure provision of sufficient resources, including funding and time, for successful strategy implementation (Fedato, et al., 2017; Rani, 2019).

For Rani, resources can be in the form of monetary or non-monetary assets that are necessary for the organisation to carry out its strategic plans. Accordingly, economic, and non-economic resources may also be required for strategy implementation, and their availability should be considered (Fedato et al., 2017; Nilsen and Bernhardsson, 2019). Money, time, skilled personnel (people discussed above), culture, structure, technology and systems are equally vital institutional resources or factors in strategy implementation success (Rani, 2019). Resources, including financial, human, technological, and organisational assets have been found to play a crucial role in enabling organisations to execute their strategies effectively, and effective allocation of these resources is a critical activity in strategy implementation (Eisenhardt, 2002; Gavurová, 2010; Hashim, 2008; Mohamed et al., 2013).

### **3.5.3 Structure**

Another key factor consistently stressed in the models is the concept of structure. In the past, strategy was considered as a military science about planning and directing military operations. In the civilian context, company strategy was introduced by Alfred Chandler in the 1960s when he argued that problem solving by managers in American companies was based on their ability to connect long-term objectives with resource allocation and an enabling organisational structure to support implementation of these

objectives (Mišankováa and Kočišová, 2014). According to Cristian-Liviu (2013), the organisational structure plays a crucial role in cultivating the right attitude, providing necessary tools, and establishing a framework that supports effective strategy implementation. For Rani (2019), it is imperative that the structure of the organisation is comprehensible and aligned with the capabilities and accountabilities of the employees, in line with the organisation's objectives. As already stated in the preceding sections, all members of the organisation should have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and be held accountable for them.

The organisational structure should therefore be aligned with the strategy to ensure that the roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines are clear and supportive of the strategic goals. According to Cater and Packo (2010) and Rani (2019), the structure should enable efficient communication, decision-making, and coordination to ensure that the strategy is implemented smoothly across the organisation. Studies on the importance of processes and structures in the successful implementation of strategies have suggested that creativity, innovation, and perception of an organisation as processes are very important in implementing strategies (Markiewicz, 2011). According to Slater et al (2010), the most influential perspective needed for business success is a fit between strategy and organisational structure (also see Cater and Pucko, 2010). Organisational structure and design are important as they entail decisions related to resource allocation for various units and activities within the business ecosystem (Brenes, Mena and Molina, 2008). Organisational structure ensures that the firm has the right system, that is attitude, tools, and structure that support the implementation of the strategy.

#### **3.5.4 Systems**

Organisations are political and cultural systems, and strategies must be implemented in their context. The complex systems encompass political and cultural dynamics, and any strategy must be implemented within the context of their social, economic, political, and competitive environment (Daft, 2018). Thus Higgins (2005) suggested that strategy implementation must revolve around aligning certain organisational factors withing the rapidly changing environment. To effectively adapt to new environmental conditions and successfully implement strategic changes, organisations must carefully consider both the internal and external factors that impact

their operations (Cameron and Green, 2015). Understanding the interplay between the external environment, such as market conditions and competition, and the internal environment, including the organisation's structure, culture, and resources, is crucial in guiding the trajectory of strategy implementation (Hitt et al., 2019). By considering both internal and external influences, organisations can proactively align their strategies with the changing environment and increase the likelihood of successful implementation. Accordingly, implementation is regularly reviewed to keep pace with the changing environment (Higgins, 2005, Bhatti, 2011). Systems refer to the formal and informal procedures used in an organisation to enable an organisation to execute daily activities (Higgins, 2011; Rani, 2019). These include among others information systems, planning systems, budgeting and resource allocation systems, quality control systems and reward systems (Bhatti, 2011).

### **3.5.5 Culture**

Another important factor that is understood to certainly bear on successful strategy implementation is organisational culture. Its importance is underscored in its definition as a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that guide and shape the behaviour of (individuals within an) organisations (Dimitrantzou, et al., 2021). In other words, organisational culture encompasses the collective understanding of what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behaviour within the organisation and plays a significant role in strategy implementation. Research has found that a culture that is aligned with the strategic goals, values, and norms of the organisation can greatly support the implementation process (Rani, 2019; Dimitrantzou, et al., 2021). For Hit et al (2019), organisational structure, control systems and culture directly affect the behaviour, values and attitudes of people and also help them in implementing the organisation business model and strategies.

In terms of cultural context, every organisation has its own little culture (Fedato, et al 2017). An organisational culture model propounded by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1981) comprises two dimensions that are typically present in most organisations: one that reflects the competition between flexibility and control, and the other that reflects the competition between the internal organisation and the external environment (Dimitrantzou, et al., 2021). There are four types of organisational culture representing



distinct set of values, as defined below (Gambi et al., 2013; Gimenez-Espin et al., 2013; Karimi and Kadir, 2012; Valmohammadi and Roshanzamir, 2015):

1. Group culture emphasises flexibility and the internal organisation, with a focus on human relations.
2. Developmental culture prioritises flexibility and creativity, with an orientation towards adaptation to the external environment. Emphasis is placed on individuality, risk-taking, and future anticipation.
3. Rational culture centres on the external environment, but is control-oriented, with a primary focus on getting the job done.
4. Hierarchical culture relies on stability and control, with an internal focus. Emphasises rules, regulations, and standardisation to achieve control and stability.

The above illustrate internal aspects of agreement that constitute a concise set of essential concepts whose alignment can define success of strategy implementation. Literature also underscores that other factors affecting strategy implementation emanate from the external environments of organisations (Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar, 2021).

### **3.5.6 External forces**

Scholars have widely discussed the importance of external factors in the implementation of public strategies. The external dimensions in public strategy implementation encompass the political environment, economic environment, social and cultural environment, technological factors, and other external stakeholder dynamics (Hendrick, 2003; David, 2011; Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar, 2021). For Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar (2021), public organisations need to adapt their strategic plans to the changing external environment and establish mechanisms to monitor environmental trends and respond accordingly. The influence and involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes, resource allocation, and policy implementation can significantly impact the success or failure of strategic initiatives. This aligns with arguments by Elbanna, Andrews and Pollanen (2016) as well as Johnsen (2015) who emphasise the importance of considering environmental uncertainties, such as dynamic environmental factors when designing and

implementing strategies to effectively navigate challenges and capitalise on opportunities in the external environment.

The challenge with public sector organisations is that they face the task of delivering on their mandates despite environmental challenges, making strategy implementation a complex and challenging endeavour (Rose and Cray, 2010). Continuous evaluation of environmental barriers is thus necessary to avoid strategic failures (Kinyua, Njeri, and MukiriKanyaru, 2018). As Harrington (2006) illustrates, strategy implementation is an iterative process that involves implementing strategies to leverage resources and seize opportunities in the external environment. As the environmental school discussed in previous chapters show, the success of strategy implementation depends on managers' ability to overcome barriers arising from changes in the environment (Jooste and Fourie, 2009). Strategic leadership discussed above also plays a crucial role in effective strategy implementation, especially in navigating the challenges posed by the external environment (Jooste and Fourie, 2009). The practice of strategic management in the public sector requires considering strategic planning as a continuous process that accommodates the dynamic nature of the environment (Johnsen, 2015).

Most of the foregoing internal and external factors have been drawn upon to explain failure and success of the implementation process (Li et al., 2008; Slater et al., 2010; Mišanková and Kočíšová, 2014; Merkus et al., 2019). Understanding these factors is essential for formulating meaningful recommendations to address implementation failure, the task that this study set out to accomplish. Crucially, what both the internal and external factors seem to suggest is that effective strategy implementation requires a comprehensive understanding of both the external environment and the internal operations of the organisation.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

As previously emphasised in Chapter One, the primary challenge of implementation arises from the lack of clarity in defining and approaching strategy. Chapter Two followed by underscoring and explaining the multidisciplinary nature of strategic management that has resulted in various schools of thought, which offer diverse perspectives on how organisations should develop and implement their strategies. This chapter has focused on the concept of strategy implementation, highlighting key

trends in implementation, important factors that affect the process, and different models that have been proposed to guide the execution of strategy. While there are different models guiding strategy implementation, the seminal work of McKinsey 7S's model has contributed to the structure of the implementation framework espoused in most of the subsequent models. The chapter notes, however, that despite all this knowledge and guidelines, implementation failure continues to be the hallmark of strategy execution in the public sector across the world, the premise upon which this study is based. It may be pertinent to now turn to the Zimbabwean context to demonstrate the nature and extent of this challenge.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN ZIMBABWE**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an historical overview of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe to lay a foundation for the examination of ZIMASSET implementation in subsequent chapters. The importance of this chapter consists in the expectation that public organisations gain the ability to learn from past experiences and adjust accordingly in the face of change. The learning school of thought, which has been discussed in previous chapters and serves as one of the theoretical perspectives underpinning this investigation, emphasises the significance of learning and adaptation in implementing strategies. Learning organisations are those entities that continually enhance their performance through self-assessment and feedback. Therefore, reflecting on the historical implementation of public strategies in Zimbabwe is essential to analyse the consistencies and modifications in the execution of public strategy in the country.

The chapter begins by providing an overview of the Zimbabwean context to establish the backdrop against which strategy implementation occurs. This is followed by a historical review of strategy implementation in the country, with emphasis on significant public strategies that have been implemented, their efficacy, encountered challenges, and identified opportunities.

#### **4.2 The Zimbabwean context**

The Zimbabwean context serves as a crucial backdrop for comprehending the implementation of public strategies within the country. Zimbabwe, situated in Southern Africa, possesses abundant natural resources, including minerals, wildlife, and arable land (Chigumira et al., 2019). The nation has a complex history that traces back to its time as a former British colony, enduring nearly a century of British occupation from the late 19th century until 1980. During the era of British colonial rule, the economic focus primarily revolved around resource extraction for the benefit of the colonisers. For Ndlela (2019), initially the emphasis was on mineral extraction through the concessionary model of the British South Africa Company, which granted mineral

rights to white individuals. However, when this approach proved unsuccessful, the focus shifted towards an agricultural economy, with a particular emphasis on tobacco, maize, and cattle ranching. Under the colonial government, policies were implemented that allocated fertile land to white farmers, while the black majority was relegated to less fertile regions and designated areas (Ndlela, 2019).

The issue of land grievances became central to the liberation armed struggle led by ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) and ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union), supported by the Soviet Union and China, respectively (Helliker et al., 2021). This protracted war of liberation eventually led to the negotiated Lancaster House constitution of 1979, resulting in Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 (Mararike, 2019). The adoption of a new constitution and subsequent elections brought Robert Mugabe, leader of ZANU, to power as the Prime Minister.

Mugabe governed Zimbabwe for almost four decades, during which the country embarked, to varying degrees of success, on a transformation agenda aimed at addressing the remnants of colonialism and restoring the dignity of the black population (Matamanda et al, 2021). In the first decade of independence (1980-1990), moderate social democratic policies were pursued to reconstruct a country that had been ravaged by the war of liberation and foster economic growth (Chitongo, Chikunya, and Marango, 2020). During this period, socio-economic development policies were implemented, leading to significant improvements in education and healthcare. However, land redistribution was hindered by the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979, which imposed restrictions on changes to land ownership until 1990 (Moyana, 2002). The agreement also stipulated Britain's responsibility to compensate white farmers by providing funding to the Zimbabwean government for land redistribution among the black majority (GoZ 1981).

The second decade of independence was characterised by attempts to involve Britain in financing land reform, but these efforts were disrupted by the transition of power within the British government in 1997 (Moyana, 2002). The rise of the Labour Party marked a shift in dynamics between the two countries, with the administration under Tony Blair adopting a more critical stance towards Mugabe's government, particularly regarding land reform. As Mugabe argued, Tony Blair reneged on the previous administration's commitment, prompting the Zimbabwean government to expropriate

land for redistribution through the Compulsory Land Acquisition Act of 2000 (The Guardian, April 12, 2015).

The reluctance of Zimbabwean white farmers and the international community to support equitable land reform eventually necessitated the implementation of the Fast-Track Land Reform Program (Moyana, 2002). This program involved the state seizing farms previously owned by white individuals, which was accompanied by instances of violence and fatalities on certain farms (Makaye and Munhande, 2008; Chigora and Dewa, 2009). These actions led to allegations of lawlessness, property rights infringements, and human rights violations, culminating into Zimbabwe's isolation from the international community (GoZ, 2013).

The country's international isolation commenced with the enactment of the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA) by the United States in 2001, aimed at creating an economic crisis by limiting its access to international finance (Makaye and Munhande, 2008; Chigora and Dewa, 2009). Subsequently, the European Union imposed sanctions in 2002 based on allegations of human rights abuses and breaches of the rule of law. In 2003, Zimbabwe was suspended from the Commonwealth over human rights concerns, leading to its withdrawal from the organisation (Makaye and Munhande, 2008; Chigora and Dewa, 2009). Nonetheless, Zimbabwe maintained diplomatic relations with African countries and pursued a Look East Policy, which aimed at strengthening ties with East Asian nations such as China and Russia (Ojakorotu and Kamidza, 2018).

The radical land reform policies implemented from 2000 resulted in a decline in agricultural productivity (Ojakorotu and Kamidza, 2018). There is acknowledgement that these challenges were exacerbated by international sanctions, political instability, corruption, and fiscal mismanagement (Makaye and Munhande, 2008; Chigora and Dewa, 2009). Consequently, Zimbabwe faced economic contraction, the collapse of public services, and continues to grapple with economic difficulties, including hyperinflation, unemployment, and foreign currency shortages. Critics argue that while the economic sanctions aimed to pressure the Zimbabwean government for reforms, they also contributed to the country's economic challenges and humanitarian crises that are currently disproportionately affecting vulnerable segments of the population.

Notwithstanding the challenges, the period between 2008 and 2018, which encompasses the introduction of the ZIMASSET strategy (the subject under investigation), has been viewed by scholars such as Matamanda, Chirisa, and Rammile (2021) as a period of revival. This phase witnessed the stabilisation of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe, primarily through the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) between 2008 and 2013 (Raftopoulos, 2010).

The historical trajectory of Zimbabwe leading up to the implementation of ZIMASSET has been periodised into distinct eras of public strategy execution shaped by an array of political, social, and economic influences. Economic policies, seen as crucial instruments for controlling and influencing the behaviour of the economy, were developed to achieve positive development (Bonga, 2014). Table 4.1 presents five broad epochs, including the period during which ZIMASSET was implemented, highlighting the period, key strategies, and their thrusts.

### **4.3 Public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe**

The journey of public strategy execution in Zimbabwe since its independence is multifaceted. Various strategic initiatives have been put into action to stimulate economic growth, advance social development, and foster political stability, among other objectives.

#### ***4.3.1 1980s - Early independence and reconstruction***

Upon achieving independence in 1980, Zimbabwe experienced a period of economic growth and development, due in part to sound public strategy implementation (Nyoni, 2018). Although the strategy was top-down, there was increased interest and participation from local communities who complemented government efforts to transform the country's education, healthcare, and infrastructure (Mutenga, 2021).

The early independence and reconstruction phase in Zimbabwe witnessed the implementation of strategies aimed at achieving socio-economic development and addressing inequalities (Nyoni, 2018; Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012). This period was characterised by significant economic growth and development. However, the inherited economy faced embedded inequalities in income and wealth distribution, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, education, industry, and banking (Sachikonye, 2003).

*Table 4.1 Public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe (see Nyoni, 2018; Mutenga, 2021)*

PHASE	PERIOD	KEY STRATEGIES	THRUST
Early Independence and Reconstruction	1981	Growth with Equity Policy (GWEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To create a socialist egalitarian society by addressing the past colonial dispossession of land and economic assets and improve local participation in the economy.</li> <li>- Alleviate the consequential impoverishment of the masses of the people.</li> <li>- Heavy investment in health and education, leading to an increase in public expenditures (GoZ, 1981).</li> </ul>
	1982 - 1985	Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed to drive the GWEP's goals and objectives (GoZ, 1983)</li> <li>- Too ambitious to achieve in a short space of time. Many programs could not be implemented within the plan's tenure.</li> </ul>



	1986 - 1990	First Five-Year National Development Plan (FFYNDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Addressed challenges such as the need for economic diversification, poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and improvement in the quality of education and healthcare.</li> <li>- Aimed at creating a conducive environment for economic growth and social development by addressing key challenges and promoting sustainable development across various sectors of the economy.</li> <li>- Growth in GDP lagged population growth</li> </ul>
A Framework for Economic Reform (FER), also known as Economic Adjustment Programs (ESAP)	1991 - 1995	Zimbabwe's Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Complete departure from the GWEP's focus.</li> <li>- Set out to transform Zimbabwe's tightly controlled economic system to a more open, market-driven economy.</li> <li>- launched to stimulate investment and remove impediments to growth and achieve all round economic growth by bringing the private sector.</li> <li>- Foreign financing of the national budget (GoZ, 1991a).</li> <li>- Most FER targets were not met.</li> </ul>
	1991 - 1995	Second Five-Year National Development Plan (SFYNDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implemented simultaneously with FER (GoZ 1991b).</li> <li>- To improve living conditions, reduce poverty, increase and restructure investment; expand and liberalise trade, stabilise public finances, reduce inflation among other targets.</li> </ul>

	1996 - 2000	Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aimed to correct the mistakes of ESAP.</li> <li>- Sought to create a stable macro-economic environment by controlling prices of goods and services.</li> </ul>
Land Reform and Economic Crisis	2001 - 2002	Millennium Economic Recovery Programme (MERP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuation of the commitments and targets of ZIMPREST (GoZ, 2000).</li> <li>- Developed to build confidence in the economy through stabilisation of prices, exchange rate and the political environment.</li> <li>- Failed to achieve most of its objectives due to non-implementation of recommended policies</li> </ul>
	2002	Ten Point Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presidential proclamation to inform a</li> <li>- land reform programme.</li> <li>- Agriculture-led economic revival through agro-based industrialisation programme</li> <li>- Recognised indigenous entrepreneurs and the informal sector (GOZ, 2003).</li> </ul>

	2002- 2004	National Economic Recovery Programme (NERP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restoration of macro-economic stability (NERP 2003).</li> <li>- Address the viability of producers and the survival of exporters.</li> <li>- Response to economic sanctions and opposition to land reform.</li> <li>- Restore conditions necessary for full agricultural production and reversal of de-industrialisation.</li> </ul>
	2005 - 2006	Macro-Economic Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aimed to address the country's economic challenges and promote stability.</li> <li>- Focused on seven areas namely: agriculture development, industrialisation, infrastructure, development, social services delivery, poverty reduction (MEPF, 2004).</li> <li>- Success depended on the sustained macro-economic stability, foreign exchange generation, improved public service delivery, investment promotion; improved corporate governance and public service conditions.</li> </ul>

	2007	National Economic Development Priority Program (NEDPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed to guide economic development and address key priority areas for development including agriculture and food security.</li> </ul>
	2008	Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy (ZEDS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reaction to the worsening macro-economic conditions in the country</li> <li>- Acknowledged past failures in strategy implementation and rooted in experiences and lessons from the implementation of the NEDPP.</li> <li>- To create a favourable business environment and attract both domestic and foreign investment.</li> <li>- Strengthening institutional frameworks for policy formulation and implementation (GoZ, 2007)</li> </ul>

Government of National Unity	2009	Short Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An emergency short term programme focusing on the restoration of economic stability and growth.</li> <li>- Pricing and hyper-inflation stabilisation; currency reforms, improved availability of basic commodities, productive capacity, foreign exchange mobilisation, empowerment and indigenisation</li> <li>- Positive economic developments</li> </ul>
	2010	Short Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP II)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustain macro-economic stabilisation and consolidating STERP.</li> <li>- Support rapid growth and employment creation; ensure food security, restore basic services, encourage public and private investment, promote regional integration, restore basic freedoms, and restore international relations Bridge between STERP and the Medium-Term Plan</li> <li>- Success factors were political will, commitment by all stakeholders to implement agreed policies, public ownership and effective participation in the implementation, and adequate funding of projects</li> </ul>

	2011 - 2015	Medium Term Plan (MTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The economy was broadly in a recovery phase and capacity utilisation had gained pace.</li> <li>- Aimed at supporting the restoration of economic stability and growth, focusing among other things on infrastructure development, entrepreneurship development, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), good governance, and resource utilisation.</li> <li>- GDP increased; inflation reduced.</li> <li>- Abandoned when ZANU-PF won the 2013 elections.</li> </ul>
PERIOD UNDER REVIEW	2013 - 2018	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developed from a ZANU PF political campaign manifesto</li> <li>- Focused on sustainable development and social equity anchored on indigenisation, empowerment and employment creation underpinned on natural resources exploitation and human capital (GoZ, 2013).</li> <li>- Abandoned in November 2017 when the new Robert Mugabe was deposed from power.</li> </ul>

The strategies implemented during this phase sought to address these inequalities and injustices, with a focus on promoting sustainable growth across various sectors of the economy (Sachikonye, 2003; Zhou and Masunungure, 2006; Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012; Nyoni, 2018). One of the key strategies implemented during this period was the Growth with Equity Policy (GWEP), which aimed to create a socialist egalitarian society by addressing the past colonial dispossession of land and economic assets and improving local participation in the economy (GoZ, 1981). Heavy investment in health and education was also prioritised during this time (GoZ, 1981).

Another key strategy was the Transitional National Development Plan (TNDP) introduced from 1982 to 1985 to drive the goals and objectives of the GWEP (GoZ, 1983). However, due to its ambitious nature, many programs within the plan could not be fully implemented within the designated timeframe (GoZ, 1983).

The First Five-Year National Development Plan (FFYNDP) followed from 1986 to 1990 and aimed to address challenges such as economic diversification, poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and the improvement of education and healthcare (Nyoni, 2018; Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012). While notable progress was made in the social sectors, such as education and health, the productive sector faced challenges (Assubuji, 2016; Mutenga, 2021), with the growth in GDP lagging behind population growth (Nyoni, 2018).

At independence, the new government faced the pressing challenge of reconstituting and realigning the inherited national policy making structures in line with the new socio-politico-economic dispensation that had set in (Zhou and Zvoushe 2012). Inherited national policy making systems and processes needed to be transformed from minority-focused to majority-focused institutions.

The inherited economy was also fraught with embedded inequalities in income and wealth distribution, with the agricultural, education, industrial and banking sectors among the most visibly affected (Sachikonye, 2003). Against this background, the need to address inequalities and injustices wrought by yesteryear policies underpinned policy making during the first decade. It also underlined the state-centric nature of policy making in parastatal, agricultural, health, education, labour and social welfare sectors (Sachikonye, 2003). The new government viewed itself first and foremost as the central instrument through which previous imbalances were

redressed. While there was significant success on the social front, the productive sector of the economy was subdued (Assubuji 2016, Mutenga, 2021).

#### **4.3.2 1990s - Economic Structural Adjustment Programs**

The second decade encompassed the implementation of different strategies for economic reform to address the lagging productive sector of the economy subdued by socialist policies. New strategies included Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) 1991 - 1995, Second Five-Year National Development Plan (SFYNDP) 1991 – 1995, and Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) 1996 – 2000. This period marked a notable shift in Zimbabwe's economic ideologies, moving away from socialist pursuits towards more capitalist approaches (GoZ, 1991a; Matamanda et al., 2021). The government recognised the limitations of the socialist ideology and the constraints it imposed, leading to the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), implemented from 1991 to 1995 under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Matamanda et al., 2021).

ESAP aimed to transition from a tightly controlled economy to a more market-driven and open economic model (GoZ, 1991a) that encouraged private sector participation (GoZ, 1991a). The program saw the liberalisation of trade, removal of subsidies, reduction of the size of the government, and relaxation of exchange controls (Matamanda et al., 2021). Foreign financing played a crucial role in supporting the national budget and facilitating economic restructuring and development during this period (GoZ, 1991a). However, instead of advancing the welfare of the Zimbabwean people, ESAP had adverse effects, exacerbating social inequalities and undermining peace and social justice as workers suffered massive job losses while essential social services were no longer provided to those in need. Accordingly, many of the targets were not met (Mutenga, 2021), highlighting the complexity of implementing far-reaching economic reforms. Simultaneously with ESAP was the Second Five-Year National Development Plan (SFYNDP) developed to complement the economic reform efforts by providing a comprehensive framework for the economic reforms (GoZ, 1991b).

Realising the shortcomings and challenges of ESAP, another strategy, the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) was introduced



from 1996 to 2000 (Mutenga, 2021). ZIMPREST focused on stabilising the macroeconomic environment by re-introducing measures to control the prices of goods and services (Mutenga, 2021). Together, these strategies reflect the evolving nature of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe as the country navigated economic reforms and pursued sustainable development.

#### **4.3.3 2000s - *Land reform and economic crisis***

The implementation of strategies during the 2000s in Zimbabwe was marked by turmoil, uncertainty, and a socio-politico-economic meltdown (Mutenga, 2021; Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012). The period witnessed a crisis that peaked in 2008 (Zhou and Zvoushe, 2012), resulting not only in the strategies not being fully implemented (GoZ, 2009) but also in the reshaping of the strategy implementation landscape (Zhou and Masunungure, 2006).

One notable strategy of this period was the Fast Track Land Reform, which aimed to redistribute land to indigenous people and address the concentration of land ownership among a few white commercial farmers (GoZ, 2013). However, the Fast Track Land Reform received mixed reviews both within and outside the country, culminating in the imposition of economic sanctions (Kanyenze et al., 2011). However, the government justified the program as a means of empowering its people and rectifying historical land disparities (GoZ, 2013). This phase also witnessed severe hyperinflation, ranked among the worst in human history (Matamanda et al., 2021).

In response to economic challenges and external pressures, several strategies were implemented. The Millennium Economic Recovery Programme (MERP) launched in 2001 aimed to build confidence in the economy through price stabilisation, exchange rate stability, and a conducive political environment (GoZ, 2000). However, the MERP faced challenges in achieving its objectives due to non-implementation. The Ten Point Plan, introduced in 2002, focused on a land reform program and agricultural-led economic revival through agro-based industrialisation, while recognising the importance of indigenous entrepreneurs and the informal sector (GoZ, 2003).

To address the adverse effects of sanctions and foster economic recovery, the National Economic Recovery Programme (NERP) was implemented from 2002 to 2004. The NERP aimed to restore macroeconomic stability, support producers' viability, ensure the survival of exporters, revitalise agricultural production, and reverse

de-industrialisation (NERP, 2003). It targeted key sectors such as agriculture and industry to promote sustainable economic growth.

The Macro-Economic Policy Framework (MEPF) of 2005-2006 focused on addressing the country's economic challenges and promoting stability. It emphasised areas such as agriculture development, industrialisation, infrastructure development, social services delivery, and poverty reduction (MEPF, 2004). The success of the MEPF relied on sustained macroeconomic stability, foreign exchange generation, improved public service delivery, investment promotion, and enhanced corporate governance and public service conditions.

In 2007, the National Economic Development Priority Program (NEDPP) was introduced to guide economic development and address priority areas, including agriculture and food security. Subsequently, the Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy (ZEDS) was implemented in 2008 as a response to worsening macroeconomic conditions. The ZEDS acknowledged past failures in strategy implementation and drew on lessons from the NEDPP, aiming to create a favourable business environment, attract domestic and foreign investment, and strengthen institutional frameworks for policy formulation and implementation (GoZ, 2007).

Throughout this period, the implementation of strategies in Zimbabwe was influenced by the challenging socio-political and economic circumstances faced by the country, which eventually led to inconclusive elections, occasioning the formation of a Government of National Unity between ZANU-PF and MDC in September 2009 (Raftopoulos, 2010).

#### **4.3.4 2009-2013 - Government of National Unity**

During the Government of National Unity in 2009, the Short-Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP I) was implemented as an emergency measure to restore economic stability and growth. It focused on pricing and hyper-inflation stabilisation, currency reforms, improved availability of basic commodities, productive capacity, foreign exchange mobilisation, empowerment, and indigenisation. This program resulted in positive economic developments (GoZ, 2009), and in 2010, the Short-Term Economic Recovery Programme (STERP II) was introduced to sustain macro-economic stabilisation and consolidate the achievements of STERP I. Its objectives included supporting rapid growth, restoring basic services, restoring basic freedoms,

and improving international relations (GoZ, 2010, Mutenga, 2021). The program served as a bridge between STERP I and the Medium-Term Plan introduced in 2011. Notable STERP's success factors included political will, commitment by all stakeholders to implement agreed policies, public ownership and effective participation in the implementation, and adequate funding of projects (GoZ, 2010).

As the economy entered a recovery phase, the Medium-Term Plan (MTP) was introduced in 2011, expected to run until 2015. The MTP aimed to support the restoration of economic stability and growth by focusing on various aspects such as infrastructure development, entrepreneurship development, information, and communication technology (ICT), good governance, and resource utilisation (Mutenga, 2021). During this period, the country witnessed an increase in GDP and a reduction in inflation. However, the MTP was abandoned when ZANU-PF won the 2013 elections, paving way for ZIMASSET.

#### ***4.3.5 2013-2018 – The period under review***

During the period under review from 2013 to 2018, the Zimbabwean public sector implemented ZIMASSET (Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation). Apparently, ZIMASSET was developed from the ZANU PF political campaign manifesto and was seen as a repackaging of previous policies, centred around the principles of sustainable development and social equity, with a focus on indigenisation, empowerment, and employment creation, natural resources exploitation and human capital (GoZ, 2013; Makaye and Mapuva, 2016). While ZIMASSET as with previous strategies faced challenges, it was ultimately abandoned in November 2017 following the unceremonious removal of Robert Mugabe from power (Matamanda et al., 2021). Building upon this context, the purpose of this study is to examine the implementation of ZIMASSET to gain valuable insights needed to address the fundamental question: how can public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe be made effective? To answer this question, an empirical study was deemed necessary to analyse the intricacies of strategy implementation that characterised ZIMASSET, especially considering the many existing desktop studies on ZIMASSET (see Bonga, 2014; Makaye and Mapuva 2016; Chuma 2020).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an analysis of Zimbabwe's experience in implementing macroeconomic strategies since 1980, showing a consistent divergence of policy targets and the out turn. There has been a consistent difference or gap between what the government aimed to achieve through successive macroeconomic strategies and what was realised in practice as the strategies implemented did not always yield the intended or expected outcomes. The chapter evinces that public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe is dependent on various factors, and the fluctuations in success registered during each period owe to certain factors linked to implementation. From a learning theory perspective, the challenges facing public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe present opportunities for improving the effectiveness of public strategies. The question becomes, has Zimbabwe demonstrated any learning during ZIMASSET implementation? The next chapter is a methodological outline that describes the research methodology employed for the study, and the overarching philosophical thinking underpinning the methodological choices made.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The research reported in this dissertation is a qualitative study aimed at addressing a pressing question on how the efficacy of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe can be enhanced. Considering the frequently observed failures in the nation's public strategy implementation presented in previous chapters, this question signals a transformative trajectory, which can be achieved by adopting a critical realist research paradigm. This paradigm operates on a sociological wisdom that things are not always what they seem (Berger, 1963), hence the need to unearth, as this study attempts to do, the underlying causes of implementation failure in Zimbabwe, and what must be done to address this perennial problem.

The fundamental assumption of the transformative paradigm rooted in critical and social realism is that “research inquiry needs to be intertwined with an action agenda for reform that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life” (Creswell and Creswell 2018: 9). The political and ideological orientation of researchers working with this assumption is that research is collaborative process with the participants in a process in which participants either help design questions, collect data, analyse information, or reap the rewards of the research (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Although this philosophical underpinning to research is usually associated with the agenda to address inequalities marking lives of marginalised communities (Mertens, 2010), its commitment to transformation is applied in this study with a focus on transforming a habitually ineffective practice regarding strategy implementation in Zimbabwean public sector where political or social systems may be linked to such ineffectiveness.

In this chapter, the research methodology adopted to carry out this study is described. It is widely acknowledged that our assumptions and beliefs about knowledge significantly impact the methodological choices we make during our research. These beliefs and assumptions about knowledge development collectively form what is known as the research paradigm (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018). One compelling typology that illustrates the thinking process informing methodological choices, and adopted for this study, is Saunders et al.'s (2019) research 'onion' presented in Figure

5.1. The research onion depicts various facets or layers that make up a research methodology and how, reading from right - to - left, a particular philosophy and paradigm influences subsequent methodological choices.

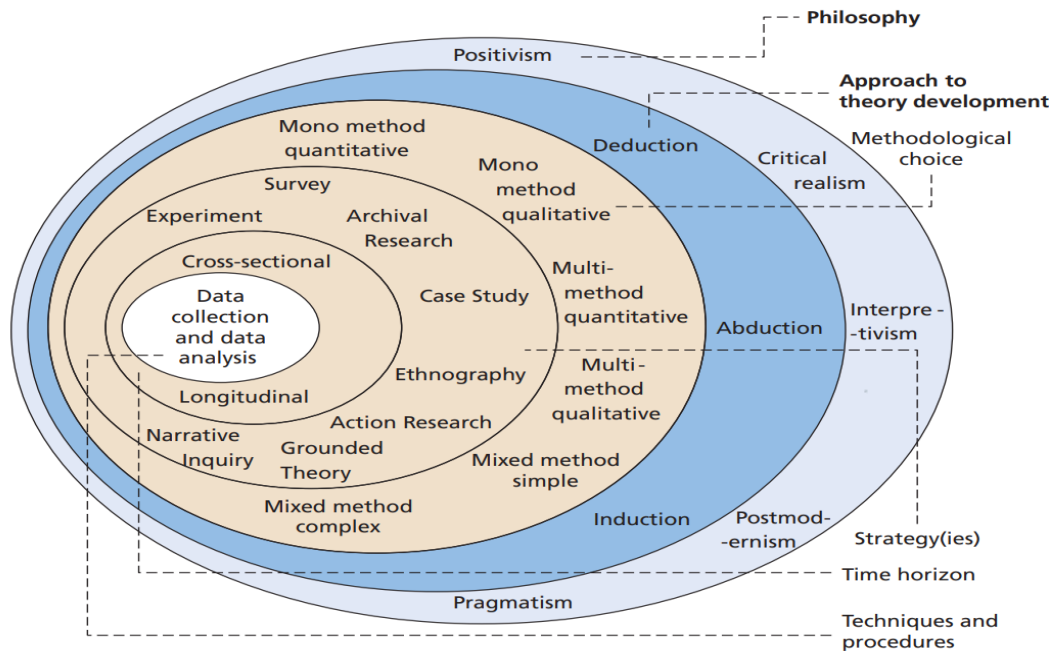


Figure 5.1: The 'research onion' (Saunders, et al., 2019: 130)

Informed by the above framework, this chapter commences with a discussion on the critical realist research paradigm that informed the theoretically and objective driven inductive and deductive analytical approach employed for this case study research. It then describes in detail the qualitative research approach, the case study design, participants involved in the study, and the methods used their selection and recruitment, data collection and analysis.

## 5.2 Research paradigm

A generally accepted definition of research paradigm is that it is fundamental framework or set of beliefs, assumptions, and methodologies that guide and inform research practices within a particular field of study. Seminal works that have contributed to the understanding of research paradigms include Thomas Kuhn's *"The Structure of Scientific Revolutions"* (1962). Kuhn argues that research paradigms provide models or lenses through which researchers view and interpret the world,

shaping scientific practice, that is, the questions they ask and the methods they use to answer them.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), a research paradigm thus encompasses coherent traditions of scientific research such as the researcher's epistemology (the theory of knowledge), ontology (the nature of reality), and methodology (research methods and approaches), which Saunders et al (2019) research onion depicts. Guba and Lincoln (1994) defined a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that guide action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry. Perhaps another comprehensive recent definition is that by Bryman (2008) who likens research paradigm to a cluster of beliefs and dictates which, for scientists in a particular discipline, influence what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted.

According to Starbuck (2003), business and management studies, which became a recognised academic field in the 1900s, derived its foundational cluster of beliefs and dictates from a diverse range of disciplines. These included social sciences such as sociology, psychology, and economics, natural sciences like chemistry and biology, applied sciences including engineering and statistics, humanities encompassing literary theory, linguistics, history, and philosophy, as well as the practical area of organisational behaviour (Starbuck 2003; Saunders et al., 2019). Today, the discipline incorporates elements from these various disciplines, embracing an array of research philosophies.

Saunders et al (2019) research onion (Figure 5.1) shows a variety of research philosophies or paradigms that include positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism and pragmatism, each of which is characterised by own ontological (nature of reality), epistemological (what counts as valid knowledge) and methodological (how to know) assumptions (Guba and Lincoln,1994). The research paradigm underpinning this study is critical realism. Initially propounded by Bhaskar (1978), critical realism was revised by Archer (1995), appropriated as a philosophy and method of social science research by Mingers (2010) and Sayer (2010).

Scholars such as Saunders et al (2019) and Anderson (2020) recently explained critical realism as an appropriate paradigm for management sciences research. Critical realism was selected as an appropriate paradigm because of its analytical tools that can provide insights and unique perspectives on the habitual failure of public

strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. It demands a deeper understanding of issues that goes beyond surface-level measurable and observable patterns and correlations and acknowledge the role of underlying processes and structures in shaping the observable reality (Saunders, et al, 2019, Anderson, 2020). The ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of critical realism that further illustrate why the paradigm was deemed appropriate for this study are explained below.

### 5.2.1 Ontological assumptions

The foundational ontological assumption of critical realism, which derives from the sociological wisdom ‘things are not always what they seem’ (Berger, 1963), is that reality is layered or stratified (Saunders, et al., 2019), and there is hidden reality that is independent of our perception or experience. The three layers or domains of reality are depicted in Figure 5.2, namely the real, the actual, and the empirical.

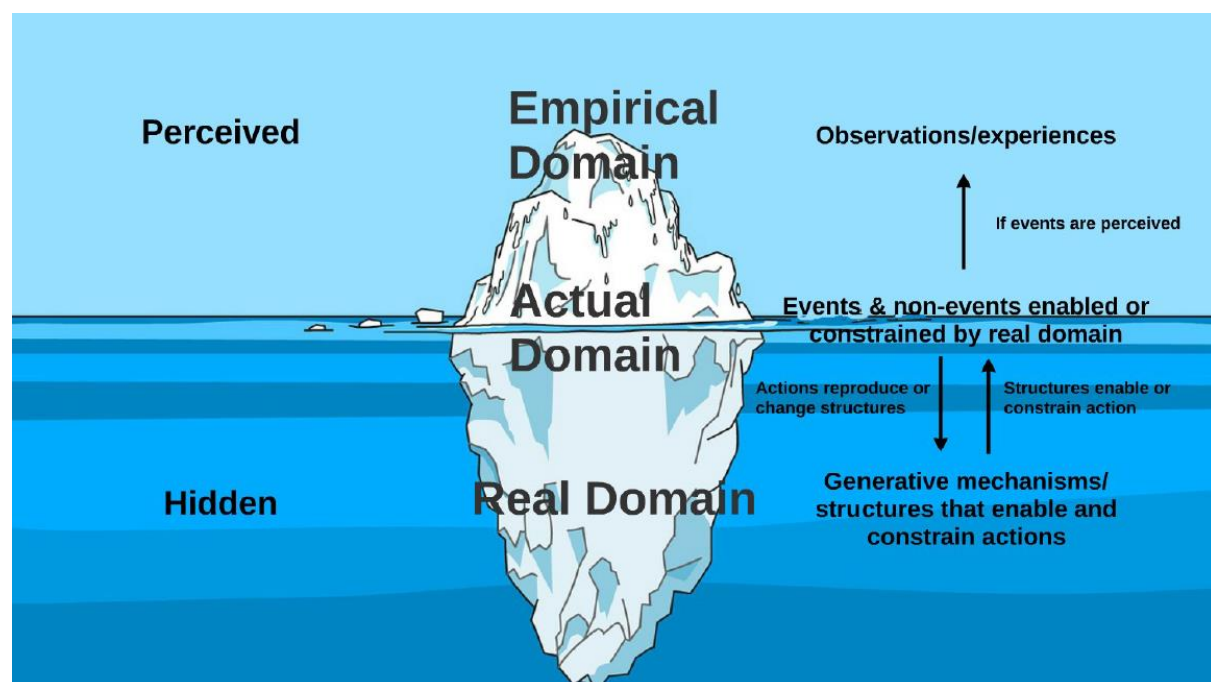


Figure 5.2: Critical realist stratified ontology (Anderson, 2020: 148).

As researchers, we can create knowledge about that reality by exploring the underlying causal mechanisms (at the real domain) that shape that the events that we can observe and experience through empirical investigation (the empirical domain) (Bhaskar, 1978; Mingers, 2010; Sayers, 2010; Saunders et al, 2019, Anderson, 2020).



At the actual domain, Anderson (2020: 46) notes that “individuals perform actions (or refrain from performing actions) leading to events (or non-events)” This is because the complex web of structures within the deeper real domain governs (enables or constrains) individuals’ actions or non-actions that may or may not be observed in the actual domain (Saunders, et., al, 2019). The structures and systems at the actual domain are, in themselves, shaped by among other things, the historical, social and cultural factors, economic processes, power dynamics and institutional structures (Anderson, 2020).

From the above perspective, critical realism encourages researchers at the empirical level to look beneath the experiences and observations to understand what drives them. The critical realist framework thus enables researchers to peep “deeper into our social environment to gain insights into what is creating the experiences we have” (Anderson, 2020: 48). In the context of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, which is the focus of this study, critical realism is useful in identifying the deeper social, cultural, geo-political and economic structures and processes that shape strategy implementation behaviours.

By going deeper than the surface-level observations, into examining the underlying causal mechanisms, critical realism can help to develop an in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, and economic factors that influence policy implementation. It is for this reason that critical realism was deemed suitable to provide a theoretical framework that recognises the importance of empirical research in understanding the underlying causal mechanisms that shape social phenomena. By emphasising the need to go beyond surface-level observations to develop a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the public strategy implementation environment by identifying deeper causal mechanisms that influence events or non-events, critical realism can provide insights that are essential to inform the development of effective policies and strategies for public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

The ontological imperative for this study is the importance of scientific inquiry and empirical investigation to uncover the underlying causes of social phenomena (Sayer, 2010). This assumption is particularly relevant in public strategy implementation, where identifying the underlying causal mechanisms is essential to developing

effective policies and strategies that are better aligned with the needs and aspirations of the communities they are designed to serve.

Now that we have examined the ontological assumptions of critical realism and their relevance to this study, let's now turn to its epistemological position, that explains what constitutes valid knowledge accepted by scholars working from a critical realist perspective.

### ***1.6.2 Epistemological assumptions***

Critical realism, as a research paradigm in management science, is founded on various epistemological assumptions. One of the key tenets of critical realism is epistemological relativism, which suggests that knowledge is neither universal nor absolute but is contextually situated and transient, changing over time and varying across different social and historical contexts (Mingers, 2010). In relation to this study, this indicates that understanding of public strategy is situated within the historical and socio-political context of Zimbabwe, and such understanding evolves over time, and is subject to interpretation. What this suggests is that the problems of public strategy implementation are not standalone issues but may be deeply entrenched in the country's unique historical and socio-political realities whose uncovering is possible through interaction with individuals situated in that context.

Another significant assumption of critical realism is that facts are social constructions, not just objective realities that are "out there" to be discovered. In this view, the 'facts' about public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe are not merely objective occurrences. They are constructed through social processes and interactions, and are interpreted through various social, political, and historical lenses of involved agents (Sayer, 2010).

In providing explanations, critical realism places a strong emphasis on historical causal explanations. Rather than simply describing patterns or correlations, critical realism seeks to uncover the underlying causes that bring about certain outcomes, with a focus on historical contingencies (Saunders, et al., 2019). In the context of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, a critical realist would not just document the repeated failures but would focus "on explaining what we see and experience, in terms of the underlying structures of reality that shape the observable events" (Saunders, et al., 2019: 147), that is peeping into the deep-seated historical political decisions, socio-

economic trends, or cultural norms and geo-political relations that influence how public strategy is implemented in the country. How then does this epistemological assumption translate into actual research? The qualitative research approach deriving from this position is explained next.

### **5.3 Research approach**

As already acknowledged in the foregoing, researcher assumptions and beliefs bear strongly on the methodological choices they make to execute their research. Considering the epistemological assumptions of critical realism that I share as a researcher, a qualitative research approach emerged as a suitable method to investigate public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. The understanding that knowledge is historically situated and transient, and that facts are social constructions, necessitated an approach that appreciates the depth and richness of the social context. Qualitative research, with its emphasis on understanding phenomena in their natural settings and interpreting them in terms of the meanings people bring to them, align very well with these assumptions (Saunders et al., 2019).

Qualitative research is an approach to knowledge construction that is naturalistic and interpretive, focusing on understanding the significance people attach to phenomena within their societal contexts (Snape and Spencer, 2003: 3). There are six noteworthy features of qualitative research shown in Table 5.1 further below. These traits contrast with quantitative research, which believes that knowledge exists independently of the research process and that researchers should go out to measure whilst maintaining a distance from the phenomena being measured.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) acknowledge that qualitative researchers are dedicated to the naturalistic viewpoint and the interpretative comprehension of the world or human experiences. Unlike quantitative research, which is dedicated to numerical data, qualitative research seeks to understand or interpret phenomena through the subjective spoken or written expressions of meaning provided by research participants, offering insights into their inner worlds.

Since poststructuralists contend that there is no unobscured view into an individual's inner life as any observation is filtered through both the researcher's and participants' personal experiences, qualitative research acknowledges the presence of a

researcher in the study, whose interpretations are influenced by many factors including their language, gender, class, race, and ethnicity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Table 5.1: Common characteristics of qualitative research (Snape and Spencer, 2003: 3):

<i>Purpose</i>	To provide a deep and interpreted comprehension of the societal world of the individuals being studied, through learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, viewpoints, and histories.
<i>Participants</i>	Are typically fewer in number and are purposefully chosen.
<i>Data collection methods</i>	Usually involve a high degree of interaction between researcher and participants and allow emergent issues to be explored.
<i>Type of data</i>	It garners detailed data, rich and comprehensive information.
<i>Data analysis</i>	Enables the emergence of concepts and ideas, may yield detailed descriptions and classifications, identification of patterns, development of typologies, and explanations.
<i>Output</i>	Generally, focuses on the interpretation of social meaning through illustrating and re-presenting the societal world of research participants.

In accordance with the qualitative research whose characteristics are described above, and approached from a critical realist ontology, the study used a naturalistic approach that sought to understand strategy implementation in context-specific real-world setting (Patton, 2002). The approach derives from a fundamental realist assumption that knowledge is relative to deep social, cultural, and economic factors that influence how people perceive and experience the world (Wahyuni 2012; Jonker and Pennink 2010 and Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009). Consistent with this research tradition, the study was executed as follows.

## 5.4 Research Strategy

A repertoire of strategies that researchers can deploy for their investigations have been shown in the third – fifth layer of the onion shown in Figure 5.1. These include,

among others experiments, surveys, archival research, case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, and narrative enquiry (Saunders, et al., 2019). As this study title suggests, a particular strategy (ZIMASSET) is examined at a particular historical period (2013 – 2018), and in a particular context (Zimbabwe). Such an investigation lends itself into a case study strategy, which - according to Creswell and Creswell (2018) - is appropriate for evaluative studies in which researchers seek in-depth analysis of a case, for example a program, event, activity of process through collection of detailed information through a variety of procedures.

As noted in the foregoing, the call for historical causal explanations underscores the value of a research design that can unearth deep, nuanced insights into the underlying causes of observed phenomena. An exploratory case study approach was particularly suited to this task. A case study allowed for an intensive, detailed examination of a specific instance or instances (in this case, public strategy implementation failures in Zimbabwe), affording a level of depth and detail than what other approaches could have provided. This strategy, consistent with the critical realist's emphasis on historical causal explanations enabled the study to probe unique historical, socio-political, and cultural factors that contribute to the recurring public strategy implementation failures in Zimbabwe.

The exploratory case study strategy was also most suited for this study not least because the key research questions require an in-depth understanding of public strategy implementation from key knowledgeable agents with intimate knowledge about context in which ZIMASSET was implemented. Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasise that the exploratory research ambition to gain in-depth understanding of phenomena is possible only through qualitative research approaches.

Most crucially, the qualitative approach employing an exploratory case study strategy provided the necessary tools and flexibility to explore the complex and context-dependent realities of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, faithfully reflecting the principles of critical realism. This strategy underscores the unique nature of this study in comparison with many other similar studies which relied on textual analysis such as the work of Bonga (2014), Sibanda and Makwata (2017), Chipaike and Matarutse (2018) and Nyoni (2018) among others. A recent empirical study by Mutenga (2021) added interviews and observations to a document review to explore

the determinants of economic policies in Zimbabwe. Not entirely unprecedented in Zimbabwe, the approach and strategy adopted for this study is also not uncommon in management sciences where quantitative methodologies are popular.

## **5.5 Study participants**

The participant pool comprised government officials involved with ZIMASSET implementation (n=12) as well as academics from the country's institutions of higher learning (n=3). A total of fifteen purposely selected participants (N = 15) took part in the study. The technique of purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on their ability to provide the most relevant and rich information (Saunders et al., 2019), was utilised to select participants who met the required inclusion criteria described further below. This selection strategy was appropriate because of the nature of the research question, which required detailed insights from specific groups with deep understanding of strategy implementation in the Zimbabwean public sector, specifically ZIMASSET.

### **5.5.1 Inclusion criteria**

Participants qualified to participate in the study if they were:

- a. Representative from the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) responsible for coordination and evaluation. Of these (n=2) were interviewed.
- b. Permanent Secretary or their representative in ministries representing four ZIMASSET cluster areas of focus. Of all the twenty government ministries that constituted clusters, only (n = 10) were available.
- c. Academic with research interests in strategy implementation in the public sector. There are several in the country but only (n = 3) were available.

Inclusion was contingent on the willingness of participants to take part in the study. The two participants in the OPC were the relevant people responsible for coordination, monitoring, and evaluation. For academics, the three who participated gave almost similar responses, leading to a determination that perhaps saturation had been reached (Fusch and Ness, 2015). Saturation is considered the best metric one can use to identify when they have hit the right number of participants. Data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study or when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained (Fusch and Ness, 2015). Given

that literature had been obtained from the same scholars, it was deemed futile to persist interviewing academics whose views appeared repeating. The total number of 15 participants is deemed adequate for a qualitative sample. Previous research, for example Lubombo (2015) had a total of 13 participants in his doctoral research. Literature on qualitative research observed that at least seven (7) participants may be sufficient to reach saturation (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

The above criteria were pivotal in generating both vested and objective insights that could provide a comprehensive and balanced view of ZIMASSET implementation and other important considerations that could inform the development of a framework for enhancing the efficacy of strategy implementation capability in the Zimbabwean public sector.

The choice of these participants was rooted in the established norm in qualitative research to purposefully select individuals not only with the required knowledge and assumed specialist insights regarding the topic under investigation but also from diverse socio-cultural and political contexts (Saunders et al., 2019). The inclusion of academics offered an independent voice that was not accountable to the government bureaucracy to which permanent secretaries were subjected. The idea was to ensure a balanced perspective in the interpretation of the state of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

### **5.5.2 Recruitment process**

Permission to involve government officials in this research was obtained from the Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet, who is the gatekeeper of the government institutions. The gatekeeper permission gave me legitimate access to respective ministries where I requested further individual permission to engage potential participants in the research. Participants from the President's Office and ZIMASSET cluster areas were recruited from Harare, the capital city where all government ministries are head-quartered, and where decision-makers responsible for the implementation of government strategy are found.

For academics, a distinct approach was followed. Given that their institutions were spread across the country, and their work do not represent their institutions, each was approached on their individual capacities based on their research interests. Those who

expressed interest in the topic of strategy implementation in the public sector were requested to participate in the study.

### **5.5.3 Data collection methods**

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), qualitative researchers aim to comprehend the context or environment of the participants by personally visiting this setting and gathering information. They often employ open-ended questions, allowing participants to freely express their perspectives (Creswell and Creswell 2017). In this study, both phases of data collection with the two distinct participant groups utilised in-depth, face-to-face interviews to gather data on the successes and barriers to the implementation process of ZIMASSET as well as to explore lessons learnt from the identified challenges. An Interview Guide was used, together with the researcher, as research instruments. The researcher as an instrument (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019; Wa-Mbaleka, 2020) entailed myself asking and probing, also using my experience and historical knowledge of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe to inform and direct the interviews.

The in-depth interviews with the ZIMASSET focal persons were preceded by semi-structured interviews adapted from the ZIMASSET result matrix. The ZIMASSET result matrix is a tool that was designed by government to assess ZIMASSET implementation progress.

All the interviews were conducted in Harare between 2021 and 2022. Schedules varied according to participants' preferences in terms of times, dates, and venues. All venues used were appropriate for COVID-19 protocols of social - physical distancing, with enough ventilation. Interviews typically ranged from 40 to 90 minutes. They were all recorded on a digital voice recorder and were conducted in the English language medium. Ample time was allowed to drill deeper into aspects discussed during the interviews, providing an opportunity to exhaust all aspects that needed to be threshed out.

### **5.5.4 Data analysis methods and procedures**

While qualitative research is inductive, Braun and Clarke (2021) contend that absolute inductivism is unachievable since we invariably bring our preconceptions and existing knowledge to the data when we analyse it. We seldom completely disregard the



semantic content of the data when we code for a specific theoretical construct. As such, the data analysis in this study employed a combined approach of inductive and deductive thematic analysis to decipher the findings.

Deductive thematic analysis, as characterised by Mayer (2015) and Braun and Clarke (2021), is objective and driven by theory. With this approach, a set of concepts, ideas, and topics derived from the research objectives and theoretical interests were used to interpret the data. From a critical realist perspective, the analysis recognised the inherent complexity of the public strategy implementation, aiming to uncover underlying causal mechanisms rather than merely describing surface patterns. This approach helped uncover deeper structures and relationships, shedding light on the reasons behind the habitual failure of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

In terms of the actual thematic analysis process, I first transcribed the interviews at the same time familiarising myself with the findings as well as linking them to relevant literature and theoretical frameworks presented in previous chapters. This involved identifying key concepts, themes, or theories that guided my analysis of the findings. I then developed a conceptual framework based on the pre-existing schools of thoughts presented in Chapter Two, which served as the initial template for making sense of the interview data. I carefully applied the theoretical insights to the transcripts, systematically categorising segments of the interviews according to the emerging themes. Throughout the analysis process, I remained mindful of the theoretical underpinnings guiding my analysis, continually comparing the findings to the established framework to ensure consistency and alignment with the research objectives.

As I progressed, I continuously refined the analysis iteratively, allowing for the emergence of new themes or sub-themes that were not initially anticipated in the theoretical framework. However, I maintained a critical stance, evaluating any new insights in relation to the realist framework. Finally, I synthesised the coded data, identified overarching themes, and interpreted the findings within the context of social realism. This involved synthesising the findings in a manner that provided meaningful insights while also acknowledging the theoretical perspectives that informed the analysis.

It is important to note that, as is typical in qualitative research, the analysis allowed for personal interpretation. This interpretation was inevitably influenced by my personal experiences and background as a government official, which, from a critical realist view, acknowledged the role of the researcher as an integral part of the research process (Saunders et al., 2019). This perspective simultaneously valued the importance of the subjective experience while maintaining a commitment to the existence of an objective reality. This analytical approach aligns with the comprehensive framework proposed by Kitto, Chesters, and Grbich (2008) for ensuring the quality of qualitative research.

#### **5.5.5 Ensuring quality**

Validity and reliability are an important aspect of any scientific inquiry. As with any qualitative research, validity and reliability are in this study referred to as quality. Kitto et al's (2008) proposed set of elements for ensuring quality in qualitative research have been used to ensure quality in this research. The criterion comprises seven categories namely clarification, justification, procedural rigour, representativeness, interpretation, reflexivity and evaluative rigour, and transferability.

Clarification refers to the *clear articulation of the aim and research questions* of the study. This was achieved in Chapter 1 of this dissertation and is repeated throughout the dissertation as a reminder to the reader.

The second element, *justification*, requires explaining why a qualitative approach and a specific research design are appropriate for answering the research question. Much of this chapter was devoted to providing justification for all the methodological decisions adopted. This also applies to *procedural rigour*, which entails the documentation of the data collection and analysis methods and their transparency as this chapter attempted to accomplish.

*Interpretation* involves giving meaning from the discussion of the results in relation to the outlined theoretical framework while *reflexivity* and *evaluative rigour* are axiological. They require the acknowledgement of the researcher's position and or views about methods, the ethical issues, and the relationship with the participants. My positionality as a government official has been explained, indicating the relationship that exist between myself and those under investigation. It is noteworthy to indicate however, that no ethical challenges arose besides the advantages that I had in gaining

access. This also applies to the integrity of the data gained from the purposely selected participants who happen to be senior government officials. Fears may be raised on the risk to compromise impartiality, authenticity, and validity, taking cognisance that most of the informants are/were conflicted as senior government officials who happen to be policymakers. I was aware about this risk during data collection. To minimise risk, I used my expertise as an interviewer to probe on aspects that I felt needed clarification. The risk was also mitigated by my insider knowledge of processes and history of strategy implementation in the country. It is important to emphasise however that the selected participants were the most relevant informants to provide information required for this study. No amount of bias could cloud the contribution of their insights to this study.

In terms of transferability, which for Kitto et al (2008) refers to the evaluation of the applicability of the findings to other contexts and their relevance to current knowledge, policy, practice, or research, the Zimbabwean context is not unique from other countries battling public strategy implementation. The findings, therefore, may be useful in such contexts. However, it is important to reiterate that the study does not seek representativeness.

Together, the above measures for quality allowed for *conceptual representativeness*, which concerns the suitability for generalising the findings conceptually.

## **5.6 Ethical considerations**

The study was conducted with strict adherence to key ethical principles guiding research involving human participants. It received ethics approval from the Durban University of Technology Institutional Research Ethics Committee. The ethical principles included informed consent, confidentiality, and beneficence. Prior to beginning the research, participants were presented with a Letter of Information to establish informed consent. This letter detailed the study's goals, the participant's role, and the potential implications of their involvement.

Participants demonstrated their consent to be involved in the study by signing a written Informed Consent Form. This practice ensured each participant had a clear understanding of the research and their role in it before proceeding.

Permission to engage the implementing agents of ZIMASSET was obtained from the gatekeeper, the Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet who is known to me as a government official, hence access to his office was not challenging. This was an essential step to legitimise the research within governmental structures.

An emphasis was placed on maintaining participant confidentiality throughout the data collection and dissemination process. Measures taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the identity of participants included the removal of participants' names from this final dissertation. This practice serves to protect the participants and uphold the integrity of the research process.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This methodology chapter outlined the research framework and design employed in the study, whose aim is to develop an empirical and theoretically informed framework for effective public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, with a specific focus on ZIMASSET. The research objectives were framed around understanding the practices and processes of public strategy implementation, identifying critical enablers, and addressing the persistent challenges in this context.

The research philosophy guiding this study is critical realism, which emphasises the existence of an objective reality independent of perception and the importance of uncovering underlying causal mechanisms that shape social phenomena. This philosophical perspective encourages researchers to delve into the complex social structures and historical factors that underlie strategy outcomes, rather than merely observing surface-level phenomena.

In alignment with this philosophy, the research strategy employed was an exploratory case study analysis that sought to gain an in-depth understanding through qualitative methods. The qualitative approach allowed for a naturalistic exploration of the context-specific realities of public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, involving key stakeholders with intimate knowledge of the ZIMASSET implementation.

This research strategy is well-suited to address the research questions and objectives outlined earlier in Chapter One, as it facilitates a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the slow implementation progress and provides valuable insights that can inform policy and strategy development.

Adhering to a well-considered and transparent methodology ensured reliability and trustworthiness of the study. The chapter thus serves not only as an illustration of how this study was conducted but it also provides a framework for future researchers interested in using qualitative approach in management sciences.

The findings collected through the qualitative methodological approach described in this chapter are presented and analysed in the chapters that follow.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **DYNAMICS OF ZIMASSET IMPLEMENTATION AND THE OUTTURN**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to investigate the public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe focusing on the recently concluded Zimbabwe Agenda for Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET). Employing a critical realist ontology that encompasses a multifaceted theoretical approach that draws on various theoretical lenses and empirical data, the study argues that the challenges in public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe are not merely superficial, but rather stem from deeper and complex causal issues that require attention. The goal of the study is to provide insights into these complexities and to propose a potential framework for achieving effective and successful public strategy implementation outcomes. A key motivation behind the study are the recurrent issues and obstacles that have hindered the implementation of previous public strategies in Zimbabwe, hence the study sets out to address three fundamental questions that constitute its focus:

- a. In what ways can the practices and process of public strategy implementation be improved in Zimbabwe?
- b. What do those responsible for public strategy implementation consider to be critical enablers of effective and successful public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe?
- c. What are the possible ways to ensure effective and successful public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe?

As presented in the previous chapters, the study is grounded on a quadripartite theoretical framework that encompasses the environmental, cultural, power, and learning schools of thought, which together are relevant for studying, designing, and implementing strategy. The framework is used to make sense of the study findings generated from a wide range of participants described in the previous chapter and presented in the following pages.

Participants from the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) were asked to give a general appraisal of ZIMASSET in relation to the feedback they were getting regarding

implementation and to reflect on any recommendations they could provide towards effective implementation. The ZIMASSET focal persons or implementors were asked about the extent to which they had gone with the implementation, notable successes and challenges or barriers to implementation. Views were also gathered from public intellectuals on the ZIMASSET strategy as well its implementation and their comments on what could be changed to achieve effective implementation in Zimbabwe.

This chapter thus offers insights and perspectives that emerged from these conversations, particularly on the practices, processes, critical enablers, and persistent challenges related to public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, beginning with notable dynamics regarding its implementation. But it may be important as a caveat to note few limitations that the reader may need to be informed about.

A notable limitation of this study lies in its singular reliance on qualitative methodology. This is not least because traditionally, research within the management sciences domain has favoured quantitative approaches. Nonetheless, this study intentionally diverged from convention to conduct an in-depth exploration of the underlying structures shaping public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. However, potential scepticism from peers within the management sciences regarding the chosen research methods and techniques, including participant selection and sample size is worth acknowledging. Despite these limitations, the integrity of the research remains uncompromised, with any drawbacks pertaining primarily to its reception within the discipline.

## **6.2 Dynamics of ZIMASSET implementation**

Introduced by the Zimbabwean government in 2013 to tackle economic challenges and instability, the implementation of ZIMASSET was significantly influenced by shifts in political leadership, internal and external economic pressures, and the broader geopolitical and socio-economic environment of the country. The implementation structure of ZIMASSET is outlined in Chapter Four of the strategy document (GoZ, 2013: 45 – 46). The Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) was responsible for the oversight, coordination and policy guidance in the implementation and evaluation of the strategy. The evaluation system was supposed to provide regular input for the Cabinet decision making process to achieve tangible results. The Government Ministries, in partnership

with other private agencies, were categorised into the four clusters that were aligned to the Cabinet Committee system.

The evaluation system outlined in two short paragraphs constituting Chapter 5 (p.47) of the ZIMASSET document. The process was led by the OPC that guided in the formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. This includes defining specific performance indicators across sectors such as agriculture, industry, infrastructure, and social services to measure progress towards socio-economic goals. Mechanisms for ongoing monitoring, data collection, analysis, and reporting to track progress, identify challenges, and inform decision-making were availed to each implementing partner. Periodic reviews and assessments were required from each Cluster through result matrices (see ZIMASSET, Chp. 7) to evaluate overall effectiveness and identify factors influencing implementation success or failure. Collaborative partnerships with stakeholders were required to gather input and feedback from various actors.

Notably, the program was abandoned in November 2017, months before its intended completion, owing to the changes in the country's administration following the transition from former President Mugabe to the incumbent Emmerson Mnangagwa's administration (Matamanda et al., 2021). But even before its premature conclusion, ZIMASSET's implementation had been characterised by a notably slow progress, with only modest outcomes recorded (ZANU PF, 2018). The failure to meet the targets raised pertinent questions about the factors hindering successful implementation. In interviews, participants, who were key stakeholders and experts, provided valuable insights into the challenges faced.

The implementation modalities were stated, with the cluster approach replicated from cabinet. A steering committee headed by the Chief Secretary and the cluster committee brought together all the stakeholders. These stakeholders who included Development partners, civil societies, and the academia met once a month. While the implementation modalities were outlined, weaknesses were identified, such as a lack of coordination by the cluster committee and a failure to establish priorities for the respective clusters. Lead ministries focused more on their responsibilities than on cluster work, resulting in unfinished tasks and undefined priorities.



There was noted weakness of lack of proper coordination by the cluster committee which was also supposed to have come up with priorities for the respective clusters but did not. The lead ministries responsible for the clusters concentrated on their ministry responsibilities more than the cluster work. This resulted in the cluster work to be left undone. There were no properly defined priorities in cluster areas such as food and nutrition, value addition and beneficiation (OPC, Interview, 2022).

The bureaucratic hurdles, including the subversion of systems and inadequate representation at high-profile meetings, hindered effective decision-making. The theoretical nature of generated reports and the lack of a culture of meeting targets influenced ZIMASSET to lose direction over time. Participants expressed concern that ZIMASSET's implementation lacked a proper framework.

The implementation was supposed to be informed by the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), whose three aims are [doing more, better and faster]. This RRM is premised on four (4) principles: protection, access, equity, and empowerment, and has five functions, which are to inspire political commitment, foster collaboration, reinforce academic equity, generate untapped resources, and improve understanding and accountability. If these aims, principles, and functions had been observed, implementation would not have been elusive because the outputs and outcomes had been predicted and known (OPC, Interview, 2022).

The lack of adherence to the RRM principles and functions conceivably resulted in elusive outcomes. This was compounded by coordination issues within the cluster committees and a lack of prioritisation in key areas, such as food and nutrition and value addition. The absence of dedicated individuals to supervise specific clusters and the disconnect between experts and politicians exacerbated the implementation challenges.

Participants revealed that despite lack of proper implementation, quarterly progress reports, intended for assessment, revealed interesting comments by consultants engaged as RRM experts who observed a lack of tangible outputs. Lack of dedicated individuals for cluster supervision, changing personnel due to promotions, and selective attendance at meetings further compromised project implementation.

The other challenge is that there were no individuals who were dedicated to supervise the specific clusters. Rather these individuals were responsible for the running of their ministries, hence they did not take the assigned duties as core business. This also affected the persistence and continuity since they kept changing faces and personalities each time there are promotions and emergence of other duties. Individuals attended only those meetings that appealed to them. It then compromised the implementation of the projects as important decisions could not be done, because there was a lot of resistance as there was no buy in at this leadership level (OPC, Interview, 2022).

The issue of representation at high profile meetings by what were perceived as junior members of staff by government bureaucrats resulted in some of the permanent secretaries snubbing the meetings since they could not be chaired by the so-called junior officers. Accordingly, the systems were subverted and so distorted that the desired results were not realised. Reports were being generated but they remained theoretical.

According to participants, a Mid-term review report of December 2015 was done as a requirement where all stakeholders participated, to include business, academia, civic societies, and the development partners, who all converged to just review and not evaluate the programme. The review suggests that the programme had lost direction.

A Mid-term review report in December 2015 indicated a loss of direction in the program, resulting in the formulation of the "Zimbabwe Accredited Economic Recovery Growth Strategy [2016-2018]" document. The subsequent introduction of the "Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP)" aimed to review the successes and failures of ZIM ASSET and take corrective measures.

Participants were concerned that even before any feedback could be given as to how the Zimbabwe Accredited Economic Recovery Growth Strategy had fared out, there was the introduction of the "Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP)" which was also supposed to review the successes and failure of ZIM ASSET with the view of taking corrective measures.

The study exposed a disconnect between experts and politicians, characterising ZIMASSET as a political statement rather than a strategic plan. The overwhelming influence of the political environment on the economic agenda, marked by leadership

preoccupation with public rallies and internal conflicts, contributed to neglect in supervising the implementation. As one participant noted,

The political leadership spent most of the time denigrating each other at public rallies, whilst nobody was supervising the implementation of the blueprint (Academic, Interview, 2022).

Despite the outlined culture of coordination, efficiency, and accountability in the ZIMASSET document, challenges persisted. The study revealed that the OPC, responsible for oversight and coordination, stressed the importance of stakeholder engagement, public-private partnerships, and a results-oriented approach. Government Ministries and departments played pivotal roles but faced challenges in aligning projects with the strategy's clusters and ensuring policy and budget alignment.

A recurring theme was the failure of leadership to fully embrace the strategic plan. Participants noted that technocrats and other implementing agents, including development partners, the private sector, and civil society organisations, with differing interests from ZANU PF and often disconnected from the formulation process, were left to implement a plan that originated from a political party manifesto. Power dynamics, typically detrimental in projects with multiple stakeholders (Gumede et al., 2023), were exacerbated due to ZIMASSET's dual nature as both a government program and a political initiative of the ruling ZANU PF.

All participants unanimously traced the strategy's origins to the ZANU PF political campaign manifesto for the 2013 harmonised election, highlighting a potential misalignment of interests. Some emphasised that 'the plan was not a plan' as it originated from a party manifesto that was then transformed into a national blueprint.

A Permanent Secretary in the OPC conceded that,

Though ZIM ASSET was supposed to be a blueprint or plan whose objective was to recover the economy, it has been noted that at its formulation, it was a plan that was not a plan because it was derived from a political manifesto. This then implies that the procedure of strategy formulation was not properly followed (PS, Interview, 2022).

The fear of challenging the ruling party among OPC officials, instrumental in policy direction and implementation, emerged as a barrier to addressing this fundamental distinction between political statements and strategic plans.

Another participant revealed that in July 1982, ZANU PF held its inaugural Central Committee meeting, themed 'A year of national transformation.' This meeting holds significant relevance as its resolutions could provide insights into why ZIMASSET faced challenges. One crucial resolution stated that all government policies must originate from the ZANU PF party, and the government's role is simply to execute party policies. This implies that, in terms of accountability, the government answers to the ruling party.

The primary objective of politics is to secure support, and once the party attains victory, it begins planning for the subsequent manifesto. A notable challenge arises from the fact that the government is not involved in the crafting of these manifestos; instead, it is tasked with implementing them without room for questioning or modifications. The party adopts an autocratic approach, and dissenting voices are often labelled as enemies of the state, sometimes facing unsubstantiated charges and dismissal from public service. The ethos of the ZANU PF party seems binary – either you are with them, or you are considered against them.

This historical context sheds light on the centralised nature of decision-making within the ZANU PF party. The fact that ZIMASSET, despite its intended economic recovery focus, was derived from a political manifesto raised concerns about the strategy's formulation process. The disconnect between the crafting of manifestos and their implementation by the government raises questions about the inclusivity and participatory aspects of policymaking. The binary approach of 'with us or against us' suggests a potential lack of openness to diverse perspectives, which might have implications for the effective implementation of policies like ZIMASSET.

The above provides a critical backdrop for understanding the political dynamics that influenced the fate of ZIMASSET and prompts consideration of the broader political landscape in Zimbabwe. While formulation was not a focus of the study, participants emphasised the issue of merging craft competencies and literacy, underscoring the disconnect between crafting policies and implementing them. The lack of commitment by some implementers and the absence of a unified purpose were highlighted,

suggesting a need for regular reviews of development plans and a dedicated oversight body.

There is a need for a National Inspectorate or Directorate or the Ministry responsible solely for policy implementation which should be staffed by five sectors: Economic, Political, Defence, Security, and Social sectors. These should have staff that will be responsible for following up on the implementation targets to see whether they are on course or if there are any challenges being faced by the implementors. This was not the case with ZIM ASSET. There were only workshops where theoretical reports were submitted without any physical inspection done to authenticate the claims (OPC, Interview, 2022).

The proposal for a national inspectorate or directorate dedicated to policy implementation, staffed across economic, political, defence, security, and social sectors, reflects a call for a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating progress. The emphasis on meeting targets, decentralisation for easier monitoring, curriculum adjustments to instil responsibility and accountability, and the importance of benchmarks underscore the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced. Overall, the participants advocate for a comprehensive and innovative approach to address the structural, cultural, and agential dynamics hindering effective public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

Learning within the context of ZIMASSET was also emphasised as a critical aspect, with participants highlighting the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances. The OPC provided insights into the role of Results-Based Management (RBM), stating,

Results-Based Management serves as a framework guiding learning processes within the government. It facilitates a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating progress towards goals, fostering adaptive practices and structures" (Interview, OPC, 2022).

This underscores the significance of RBM as a tool for fostering a culture of learning within government structures, emphasising the iterative nature of strategy implementation. Participants further discussed various strategies and techniques employed to monitor and evaluate progress, emphasising their contribution to the learning process. A government official reflected,

Regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are vital for learning and adaptation. They provide real-time insights, enabling us to identify challenges, successes, and areas for improvement throughout the implementation of ZIMASSET (PS, Interview, 2023).

This perspective aligns with the learning school of thought that emphasises the importance of feedback loops, data-driven decision-making, and continuous evaluation as mechanisms for organisational learning and adaptation.

The learning school of thought also emphasises the role of organisational structures in facilitating learning. A participant reflected on the need for adaptive structures, stating,

Organisational structures play a crucial role in fostering learning. Flexible structures that encourage collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and feedback mechanisms enhance our ability to adapt to the evolving demands of ZIMASSET implementation (PS, Interview, 2022).

This aligns with the learning school's emphasis on organisational design that supports continuous learning, encouraging the free flow of information and knowledge sharing.

ZANU PF failed a very important public policy document that was poised to develop the economy and improve people's sustainable livelihoods. The New Dispensation, through Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy 1, has resolved the historical bureaucracy by ensuring that there is clear separation of powers between the government and the party (GoZ, 2018, p.9; GoZ, 2020). It remains to be seen how impactful the less political interference by the New Dispensation would be on the success of the NDS1 on success of NDS1. The challenge, therefore, is the challenge of separation of powers between the government and the body polit.

Chapter three of the ZIMASSET document states that the interventions identified for implementation in the plan are mainly informed by the ZANU PF Central Committee Report to the 13th National Peoples Conference of 2012, which gave birth to the ZANU PF Manifesto (GoZ, 2013: 26). Accordingly, challenges arose due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders. The perception of ZIMASSET being politically motivated rather than a genuine national policy is highlighted by the accusation of self-serving propaganda. Notably, the inclusion of a presidential inputs support scheme in the

document was viewed as reflective of party campaign strategies rather than sound national policymaking.

A participant emphasised the detrimental impact of a political environment on strategic issues, noting that the neglect of these issues compromised effective implementation.

An environment which is determined by politics and gives higher weightage to same results in the negligence of strategic issues meanwhile compromising effective implementation of these strategies. I blame political leadership because it has the power to make things happen or not happen (PS, Interview 2022)

The above speaks to misgovernance issues which have persistently been blamed on the Zimbabwean government. All participants lamented that during ZIMASSET period, despite ZIMASSET committing to deal with corruption, improve efficient use of public resources and to improve accountability at all levels of public administration - corruption surged, with public funds being misused and diverted to serve personal interest whilst no one was taken to account.

Despite the Auditor General consistently revealing widespread financial mismanagement within various parastatals and local authorities in Zimbabwe, little to no effective action has been taken by the responsible authorities. This negligence is underscored by Zimbabwe's low ranking on the 2015 Corruption Perception Index. Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIS) reported in 2016 that the nation was haemorrhaging a minimum of \$1 billion annually due to corrupt practices, with law enforcement and local government officials identified as particularly egregious offenders (Academic, Interview, 2022).

The above points to systemic challenges, which suggests a need for comprehensive reforms, increased accountability mechanisms, and a commitment to address corruption at all levels of governance to restore public trust and fiscal integrity.

The enduring colonial architecture was identified as a key impediment to the implementation of blueprints like ZIM ASSET. Participants cited a Chinese government report advising Zimbabwe to restructure communal lands, originally designed to meet colonial aspirations. One respondent explained,

The existence of colonial and archaic policies was making it very difficult for the implementation of such blueprints as the ZIM ASSET and any other development strategy for that matter (OPC, Interview, 2022)

The participants further highlighted weak institutions as a pervasive challenge, turning policy implementation into a matter of personal connections rather than systematic approaches. Here, corruption played a role in placing individuals in inappropriate positions, contributing to inefficiencies in the public sector. As one interviewee noted,

One other aspect that is affecting public policies in Zimbabwe [in general] is that of weak institutions, where policy implementation is now a question of who you know rather than systems to deal with situations. Wrong people end up in wrong positions because of corruption (Academic, Interview, 2022).

Of particular concern was that there are sectors such as mining, where no proper and relevant laws that govern the extraction of minerals by the purported investors are in place. In sectors like mining, the absence of proper and relevant laws governing mineral extraction allowed investors to exploit resources without contributing significantly to the nation. The lack of stakeholder involvement during the formulation stage was cited as a root cause of this issue. One participant lamented that "these structures make it very difficult for effective strategy implementation" (Interview, PS, 2022).

Transparency, governance, and resource allocation issues further compounded the challenges. Weak institutions influenced by patronage and corruption were identified as major obstacles to effective public policy implementation. These institutional weaknesses undermined community participation and affected local communities, who were intended beneficiaries and stakeholders of ZIMASSET policies and projects.

The issue of patronage, a persistent problem in Zimbabwe, has historically undermined the effectiveness of public institutions (Chuma, 2020). This challenge extends to local communities, hindering their effective participation in policies and projects outlined in ZIMASSET. Kanyenze (2013) pointed out that ZIMASSET lacked alignment with the principles of a people-driven policy, a critical aspect in public strategy.



The inadequacy of budget allocation for ZIM ASSET, coupled with the reliance on natural resources for funding, further complicated matters. The absence of a clear roadmap detailing procedures and lacking monitoring and evaluation mechanisms allowed politicians to dictate projects without adherence to established principles. As participant pointed out, no proper budget was allocated to this programme. Funding of the programme was indicated as would be coming from the abundant natural resources, to include mining, yet,

No proper costings were done for funding of the programme. The programme was worthy twenty-seven billion dollars, yet it was not clear from where the funds were going to originate. Funding was indicated as would come from the abundant natural resource base without clearly highlighting how the resources would translate into cash or funds. The other issue was the realisation that there was no international traction on the programme, hence the need for domestic funding PS, Interview, 2022).

For the programme to be fully implemented it required US\$27 billion but the policy was dead silent on how that amount of money was going to be secured. Here, participants underscored the need for a comprehensive roadmap, emphasising that while the 'what' of projects was known, the 'how' remained largely unclear. The absence of a review mechanism hindered progress, enabling political projects to take precedence without accountability. Another academic highlighted,

There is need for a proper roadmap, that shows and explains how things should be done. The what needs to be done is known but the how is not clear and there is no room for review to check on what has and has not been achieved and why it was not (Academic, Interview, 2022).

While the stakeholders played crucial roles by contributing economic advice, funding, and technical assistance, their diverse interests presented challenges, particularly in the form of conditionalities that influenced the implementation process. Competing interests within and between ZANU PF and international multilateral institutions became evident, leading to constraints in supporting ZIMASSET as a government program that required about USD 30 billion for full implementation.

ZIM ASSET required companies to invest in Zimbabwe towards the goal of value addition and beneficiation, yet the country had a huge challenge of the easy of doing

business. The lack of support from multilateral companies and the country's bad debtor status with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank due to the country's political fallout with the West, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States, emerged as a significant impediment.

The Land Reform Program, initiated in 2000, strained relations with the West, leading to sanctions that impacted strategic entities and fundraising efforts for projects. Interference by developed countries through proxies, such as opposition political parties, and attacks from civil society also undermined the smooth functioning of institutions. Accordingly, the full participation of key stakeholders was limited, and the failure was also compounded by challenges characterising the complex Zimbabwean political and economic environment.

In addition to the above complexities, participants revealed critical aspects that deepened the issues faced by the policy, offering a more comprehensive view of the hurdles encountered. A notable significant turning point was the government's decision to revert to the use of the Zimbabwean dollar through the introduction of the Bond Note currency in 2016. Despite widespread advice from the public and prominent economists against this move, the government proceeded, resulting in severe consequences. According to a participant, this decision "destroyed all the sanity and confidence that had been established in the financial [sector], and investors withdrew their investments" (Academic, Interview, 2022).

For the participants, the introduction of the Bond Note not only expelled foreign currency from the market but also triggered a liquidity crisis, directly contradicting ZIMASSET's intended resolution of economic issues. They expressed concerns that monetary authorities failed to proactively address the situation, attributing the crisis to the nation's supposed excessive reliance on cash. This led to a mandated shift towards plastic money, causing transaction prices to surge, significantly impacting the cost of living, and contributing to elevated poverty rates.

Internal contradictions and external constraints, including legislation criminalising currency externalisation, presented additional challenges to ZIMASSET's implementation. Economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe hindered the strategy's focus on local resources and indigenisation as a sanction-busting strategy. Despite portraying these initiatives as strategies to

overcome sanctions, the current economic sanctions on Zimbabwe remained a significant constraint (Academic, Interview, 2022).

Participants thus emphasised the necessity of effective re-engagement with the international community and the restoration of the rule of law to remove sanctions. Without these measures, funding from multilateral companies and institutions remained elusive, highlighting the intricate challenges ZIMASSET faced on both domestic and international fronts.

Unless effective re-engagement with the international community is achieved, which is the focus of the new government, and the rule of law restored to enable removal of sanctions the current socio, economic and political environment do not permit for funding from the multilateral companies and institutions (OPC, Interview, 2022).

The internal contradictions and external constraints added layers of complexity to ZIMASSET's implementation. While legislation criminalising currency externalisation posed a significant challenge, further complicating efforts to align the strategy with its intended goals, economic sanctions, a longstanding issue for Zimbabwe, hindered the strategy's emphasis on local resources and indigenisation as a sanction-busting strategy. Despite initiatives framed as responses to these sanctions, participants highlighted the persistent constraint they posed on ZIMASSET.

The participants' emphasis on effective re-engagement with the international community and the restoration of the rule of law underscored the interconnectedness of domestic and international factors. Without these crucial measures, the elusive nature of funding from multilateral companies and institutions became apparent. This analysis illuminates the intricate challenges ZIMASSET confronted on both fronts, portraying a complex web of internal and external dynamics that significantly influenced its implementation outcomes. As Zimbabwe navigates its future path, understanding and addressing these multifaceted challenges will be imperative for the success of any strategic socio-economic initiatives.

### **6.3 A critical realist analysis of the public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe**

The dynamics involved in ZIMASSET implementation, spanning from political interference and leadership disengagement to outdated policies and weak institutions,

have collectively and unarguably consistently cast a shadow on the outcomes of public policy implementation in Zimbabwe. These obstacles, far from being superficial, mark the intricate complexities that underpin the modest results achieved. The issues faced are unarguably deeper and more profound than surface-level concerns and the nuances captured in these insights thus shed light on the multifaceted nature of translating strategic plans into tangible socio-economic outcomes.

The complexities involved in the implementation of ZIMASSET clearly extend beyond the immediate, observable issues as they encompass a web of interrelated factors that influence the trajectory of public policy initiatives. Understanding these dynamics is essential for crafting effective strategies that can navigate the intricate landscape of socio-economic development.

### ***6.3.1 The environmental perspective***

The environmental school of strategic management, as outlined by Miles and Snow (1978), offers a valuable perspective for analysing ZIMASSET's implementation. This perspective underscores the challenges faced in the economic, political, and social spheres, forming a confluence of factors that significantly impacted the strategy's execution. The participants unanimously recognised the influence of a volatile political environment, both domestically and internationally, as a pivotal determinant of ZIMASSET's success. The highlighted impact of internal political dynamics, governance issues, and controversial policies, contributing to constraints on ZIMASSET, aligns with Caiden's (1991) insight that political instability disrupts policy continuity and coherence.

On the international front, strained diplomatic relations resulting in economic sanctions and limited access to international support presented formidable barriers to ZIMASSET's success, a sentiment supported by Machingambi and Mhaka (2018). The economic landscape, marked by macroeconomic instability, hyperinflation, currency fluctuations, and high public debt, posed substantial hurdles. These economic challenges, particularly in agriculture, were exacerbated by various factors, including political, economic, and climate conditions, as noted by scholars such as Mhloyi (2012). The strategy's dependency on agriculture and associated issues were evident, further emphasising the interconnected challenges.

Socially, high unemployment rates and social welfare concerns impacted ZIMASSET's goals, aligning with Mhloyi's (2012) recognition of social factors posing challenges to its implementation. Therefore, the environmental school of strategic management serves as a valuable lens to comprehend the intricate challenges and opportunities arising from Zimbabwe's unique economic, political, and social environment in the context of ZIMASSET's implementation.

### **6.3.2 Cultural Dynamics in ZIMASSET Implementation**

Examining the implementation of ZIMASSET through a cultural theoretical lens (Schein, 2010 Njoh, 2016) reveals intricate insights garnered from interviews with academics, Permanent Secretaries, and representatives from the Office of President and Cabinet. reveal the profound influence of cultural values and beliefs on strategy execution, particularly at individual and organisational levels.

At the individual level, participants highlighted the salient role of cultural norms in shaping decision-making processes. An academic interviewee underscored the hierarchical nature intrinsic to Zimbabwean culture, positing its impact on the velocity and adaptability of ZIMASSET implementation. This resonates with cultural theoretical perspectives, particularly articulated by Schein (2010) and Njoh (2016) who emphasise the role of culture in shaping the practices and processes of public strategy implementation. The acknowledgment of such cultural influences underscores the need for nuanced approaches to accommodate and align with culturally embedded decision-making processes.

Institutionally, the discussions illuminated the pervasive impact of cultural practices within government institutions on strategy implementation. That cultural practices significantly shape the execution of strategies emphasises the cultural inclination towards collective decision-making and consensus-building within institutional contexts such as Zimbabwe. This echo established cultural dimensions, notably Individualism vs. Collectivism, where cultures leaning towards collectivism prioritise group decisions over individual autonomy. The organisational emphasis on collective decision-making introduces a cultural dynamic that necessitates adaptive strategies to align with cultural preferences and foster effective decision-making within the government. As highlighted in previous chapters, in post-colonial Zimbabwe, Samkange and Samkange (1980) shaped the discourse around hunhuism as a

development strategy towards the government's broader vision of building a socialist society based on African values. Hunhuism is a Shona variation of ubuntu, a traditional African philosophy and value system that emphasises the importance of humanity or humanness, and the interconnectedness of all human beings (Lubombo, 2015).

Cross-cultural dynamics emerged as a critical theme, as participants reflected on the challenges stemming from cultural diversity among implementing agents. The complexities arising from cultural differences, particularly in communication styles and approaches, which in turn influence the contributions of various organisations to the implementation were highlighted. This aligns with cross-cultural management literature, emphasising the significance of understanding diverse communication styles and the potential for misalignment in multicultural teams. In navigating these challenges, the government must foster a cultural intelligence approach, recognising and leveraging cultural diversity to enhance collaboration and synergies among implementing agents.

Despite criticisms regarding hunhuism's lack of concrete policy frameworks and implementation challenges (Mkodzongi and Dube, 2020), its enduring influence on development discourse in Zimbabwe signifies its resilience. The philosophy remains integral to Zimbabwean identity and serves as a wellspring of inspiration for those striving to establish a more just and equitable society. In the realm of public strategy implementation, the foundational principles of hunhuism, encompassing cultural analysis, leadership, and sensemaking, offer valuable insights. Cultural analysis aids organisations in comprehending the factors that shape their behavior and decision-making, while leadership is pivotal in shaping organisational culture and fostering a shared vision. Additionally, sensemaking equips organisations to navigate complex, ambiguous situations and adapt to changing circumstances.

The cultural theoretical analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the pervasive influence of cultural values on ZIMASSET implementation. From individual decision-making to organisational dynamics and cross-cultural collaborations, these insights underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity in the formulation and execution of public strategies. Recognising and adapting to the cultural context is imperative for fostering effective decision-making and collaborative efforts, ultimately contributing to

the successful implementation of complex socio-economic transformation initiatives like ZIMASSET.

### ***6.3.3 Power Dynamics in ZIMASSET Implementation***

Analysing ZIMASSET through the power school of thought reveals intricate dynamics in power distribution among diverse stakeholders, influencing strategic decision-making, as elucidated in extensive interviews. Government hierarchies notably impact ZIMASSET prioritisation and execution, aligning with power school perspectives (Mintzberg et al., 2008). Stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, wield substantial influence, shaping policy priorities in accordance with power school theories highlighting non-state actors' roles (Mintzberg et al., 2008).

Power dynamics within government structures, illuminated through interviews, underscore the interplay of hierarchies and political alliances, impacting ZIMASSET cohesion (Interview, OPC, 2021). This resonates with the power school's emphasis on power and politics influencing strategy development (Mintzberg et al., 2008). Stakeholder dynamics, acknowledging the influence of civil society and the private sector, align with power school theories on non-state actors' pivotal roles (Academic, Interview, 2021).

The power school of thought emphasises power and politics in strategy development (Mintzberg et al., 2008). Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) posits that organisations depend on external resources, shaping power dynamics within, while Institutional Theory (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) underscores norms and beliefs' role in exerting power. Political Economy Theory (Olson, 1965) stresses economic and political factors, influencing organisational behavior. Contingency Theory (Donaldson, 2001) and Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) highlight contextual factors and stakeholders' power, respectively.

Insights from these theories offer valuable perspectives for public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe's challenging context. Resource Dependence Theory aids in understanding external resource impact, Institutional Theory emphasises legitimacy and conformity, Political Economy Theory navigates economic and political factors, Contingency Theory tailors strategies to context, and Stakeholder Theory integrates diverse perspectives (Donaldson, 2001; Freeman, 1984). Applying these

insights enables effective decision-making amidst economic, political, and social challenges in Zimbabwe.

The power school, relevant in understanding African public strategy implementation, finds application in studies such as Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2017) on Nigeria's health policies and Tumuheirwe and Vian's (2017) exploration of public-private partnerships in Uganda. These studies emphasise power's role in policy implementation success or failure, showcasing the power school's utility in navigating complex stakeholder relationships in the African context.

#### ***6.3.4 Learning and continuous Improvement***

The learning school school underscores the significance of learning and adaptation in strategy implementation (Mintzberg et al., 2008). Argyris and Schön (1978) define learning organisations as those continually enhancing performance through reflection and feedback, requiring a culture fostering experimentation and learning from mistakes. Senge (1990) accentuates systems thinking and viewing organisations as complex, dynamic entities adapting to change.

The learning school provides a valuable perspective on the implementation of public strategies in Zimbabwe, particularly its emphasis on the importance of organisational learning and adaptation in a rapidly changing environment. By developing a learning capability, public organisations in Zimbabwe can become more effective and efficient, better able to achieve their strategic objectives. This aligns with the principles of learning organisations, fostering a culture of openness, experimentation, and continuous improvement (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Senge, 1990).

From the learning school perspective, public organisations need to develop the ability to learn from their experiences and adapt to changing circumstances. This would involve creating a culture of openness and transparency, in which mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning and improvement. It would also require the development of systems and processes that facilitate the sharing of knowledge and the dissemination of best practices.

The above analysis brings to light considerations focused on how government ministries and other implementing agents can enhance their capacity to learn and adapt in the face of evolving circumstances. Insights derived from interviews,



particularly reflections from the Office of President and Cabinet (OPC), illuminate the role of Results-Based Management (RBM) in shaping learning processes, practices, and structures within the government, as well as other strategies and techniques employed to monitor and evaluate progress towards goal attainment.

Learning within the context of ZIMASSET was emphasised as a critical aspect, with participants highlighting the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances. The significance of RBM as a tool for fostering a culture of learning within government structures was emphasised, particularly considering the iterative nature of strategy implementation.

Politics failed a very important public policy document that was poised to develop the economy and improve people's sustainable livelihoods. There is need to resolve the historical bureaucracy by ensuring that there a clear separation of powers between the government and the party. Under such circumstances, there would be less political interference into public policies. The challenge, therefore, is the challenge of separation of powers between the government and the body polit.

In conclusion, the learning school of thought offers valuable insights into how implementation can be enhanced through a focus on continuous learning and adaptation. RBM serves as a foundational framework guiding learning processes within government, while strategies and techniques for monitoring and evaluating progress contribute to the iterative nature of the learning journey. The emphasis on flexible organisational structures underscores the importance of creating an environment conducive to learning and adaptation, ultimately fostering the resilience and effectiveness of strategy implementation in dynamic circumstances.

Most of the respondents cited the aspect of political environment as having weighted heavily against the economic environment. The political leadership spent most of the time denigrating each other at public rallies, whilst nobody was supervising the implementation of the blueprint. The Permanent Secretaries who were part of the technocrats to implement, ended up hobnobbing with the politicians in a bid to protect their appointments.

It was also noted that most of the respondents recognised failure by the leadership to fully own the strategic plan and thus implementation was left to the technocrats, most of whom were nowhere near nor privy to how the plan was formulated. Some

highlighted that “the plan was not a plan” because it originated from a party manifesto which then was turned into a national blueprint.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

The findings highlight the need for an integrated and adaptive approach to public policy implementation, laying the groundwork for well-informed and resilient strategies in Zimbabwe's dynamic socio-economic landscape. From environmental constraints encompassing political, economic, social, and other aspects to the influence of cultural dynamics and power struggles, the analysis unveils a complex interplay of factors shaping policy outcomes. As the nation navigates these challenges, addressing the historical context and fostering a nuanced understanding of cultural intricacies and power dynamics emerges as pivotal for crafting effective strategies. The findings underscore the imperative for an integrated and adaptive approach to public policy implementation, paving the way for informed and resilient strategies in Zimbabwe's dynamic socio-economic landscape. In the next and final chapter, conclusions that inform a comprehensive framework to address the critical enablers of effective public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe, as identified by those responsible for its execution will be outlined. This framework is designed and rooted in the critical realist philosophy, which recognises the intricate interplay between visible actions and the deep-seated factors that shape and influence public strategy implementation in the Zimbabwean context. This holistic approach aims to pave the way for actionable recommendations and a roadmap towards more successful and impactful public policy implementation in the future.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This dissertation has examined the underlying causes and mechanisms that have influenced the trajectory of ZIMASSET, shedding light on the complex interplay between the manifest and the latent, the observed and the underlying, in the pursuit of finding effective ways for public strategy implementation. This final chapter draws conclusions that fall within the context of the foregoing discussion. The chapter recognises that the strategy's trajectory is shaped not only by visible actions but also by the deep-seated cultural values, environmental influences, learning processes, and power dynamics that underpin the Zimbabwean socio-economic landscape.

#### **7.2 Summary of findings**

The study explores the implementation of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) as a case study to understand public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. Utilising a critical realist ontology and a quadripartite theoretical framework encompassing environmental, cultural, power, and learning schools of thought, the research aimed to uncover deeper causal issues influencing public strategy outcomes.

Examining the dynamics of ZIMASSET implementation, the study reveals challenges stemming from shifts in political leadership, economic pressures, and geopolitical influences. The study identifies weaknesses in the implementation structure, including coordination issues, bureaucratic hurdles, and a lack of prioritisation.

The role of political dynamics becomes evident as ZIMASSET is characterised as a political statement rather than a strategic plan. The study highlights challenges arising from the disconnect between political manifestos and strategic plans, emphasising a need for a comprehensive approach to address structural, cultural, and agential dynamics.

Learning emerges as a crucial aspect, with an emphasis on continuous improvement and adaptation. Results-Based Management (RBM) is identified as a framework

guiding learning processes within the government. However, challenges such as corruption, weak institutions, and a lack of stakeholder involvement pose significant obstacles to effective implementation.

The study underlines the impact of historical and political contexts on ZIMASSET, emphasising a need for reforms, accountability mechanisms, and a commitment to address corruption. The enduring colonial architecture, weak institutions, and patronage contribute to inefficiencies. Budgetary inadequacies, competing interests, and reliance on natural resources further complicate matters.

Internal contradictions and external constraints, including economic sanctions and currency-related decisions, add complexity to ZIMASSET. Effective re-engagement with the international community and the restoration of the rule of law are deemed essential for overcoming these challenges.

The study illuminates the multifaceted challenges faced by ZIMASSET, emphasising the interconnectedness of internal and external factors. Understanding and addressing these challenges are deemed imperative for the success of future socio-economic initiatives in Zimbabwe.

In exploring the challenges faced during the implementation ZIMASSET, participants provided valuable insights that shed light on essential lessons for future strategy implementation. The discussions highlighted the critical importance of individuals aligning themselves with national policies and actively participating in the continuous monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes. Insights drawn from interviews with key stakeholders illuminated the following key learning points integral to effective strategy implementation:

### **7.3 Contribution of the study: A quadripartite framework for effective public strategy implementation**

In the pursuit of effective public strategy implementation, particularly drawing insights from the challenges encountered during the execution of ZIMASSET in Zimbabwe, a robust framework emerges. This proposed quadripartite framework is anchored on four pivotal pillars namely strong institutions, allocation of sufficient resources, management commitment, and regional/international partnerships. This comprehensive approach, while not novel in the scholarly discourse (see Shah, 2005),

proposes a synergistic integration of these pillars to tackle the longstanding issues contributing to habitual failures in public strategy implementation within the Zimbabwean context.

### *7.3.1 Strong Institutions*

The first pillar underscores the paramount importance of cultivating robust institutions to navigate the complexities of strategy implementation. Leadership and governance play a central role, demanding a clear organisational structure for enhanced coordination and accountability. Considering the lack of political will and inadequacies in governance, for example corruption bemoaned by participants, leadership development initiatives are essential to equip decision-makers with the requisite skills for strategic navigation.

Capacity building further becomes imperative, involving ongoing training programs to elevate the capabilities of those engaged in strategy implementation. Here, the power school of thought in strategy implementation may be instructive, which emphasises that strategy process is a process of influence. The role of leadership, power and politics in strategy can be used here to negotiate strategies that are favourable to interests. The role of leadership is paramount in strategy formulation and implementation (Mapetere, 2012). Crucially, the distribution of power within an organisation and the ability of individuals and groups to exercise influence are critical factors in shaping the strategy of the organisation. Furthermore, knowledge management systems are proposed to ensure the retention and dissemination of valuable insights garnered from past experiences. Additionally, stakeholder collaboration emerges as a critical aspect, advocating for inclusive decision-making processes and fostering partnerships with diverse entities, including private organisations, civil society, and local communities. Eresia-Eke and Soriakumar (2021) suggest developing strong leadership, providing sufficient resources, and promoting a culture of change in the organisation.

### *7.3.2 Allocation of Sufficient Resources*

If the gap between the financial resources required for full ZIMASSET implementation and what was provided is anything to go by, the other crucial pillar addresses the judicious allocation of resources—both financial and human—to fortify the implementation process. Financial resources must be garnered through realistic

budgeting, including local sources, and adopting a program-based budgeting approach. The optimisation of these financial allocations is crucial, aligning them with strategic priorities to achieve desired outcomes. Human resources management assumes significance, necessitating regular competency assessments and continuous training to bridge skill gaps. The maintenance of an efficient and lean workforce is proposed to minimise bureaucracy, reduce rent-seeking behaviours, and enhance overall productivity. As articulated in all the models on strategy implementation outlined in the previous chapters, resources are quite crucial. Thompson and Strickland (1986) emphasise the importance of allocating resources effectively while considering cost-effectiveness. The notion of 'reSources' is the 8th S added to the subsequent versions of the original McKinsey 7S Model (see Higgins, 2005).

According to Rani, resources can take the form of monetary or non-monetary assets necessary for the organisation to execute its strategic plans. Consequently, economic, and non-economic resources may be required for strategy implementation, and their availability should be a consideration (Fedato et al., 2017; Nilsen and Bernhardsson, 2019). Money, time, skilled personnel (as discussed above), culture, structure, technology, and systems are equally crucial institutional resources or factors contributing to strategy implementation success (Rani, 2019). Various resources, encompassing financial, human, technological, and organisational assets, have been identified as playing a pivotal role in enabling organisations to effectively execute their strategies, with the effective allocation of these resources emerging as a critical activity in strategy implementation (Eisenhardt, 2002; Gavurová, 2010; Hashim, 2008; Mohamed et al., 2013).

### *7.3.3 Management Commitment*

The third pillar revolves around the unwavering commitment of management to the implementation process. The literature underscores the crucial role of management throughout the implementation process, a consensus echoed across various models. Scholars emphasise that effective management practices play a pivotal role in aligning individuals within an organisation with the overarching strategy while fostering motivation to achieve strategic objectives. Zaribaf and Bayrami (2010) delineate three primary management roles: overseeing the strategic process, managing relationships,

and facilitating manager training. Additionally, research on Slovenian companies conducted by Cater and Pucko identifies "commonly addressed strategy implementation activities," which align with the conventional functions of management—planning, organising, leadership, and controlling (POLC), as depicted in Table 3.1. This collective body of work underscores the multifaceted responsibilities management assumes in driving successful strategy implementation, encompassing strategic oversight, relationship management, and continuous training initiatives. Leadership engagement, starting from the top, is identified as a key driver. Active involvement and commitment of top leadership are considered instrumental for successful strategy execution. Clear communication channels and transparency mechanisms are proposed to disseminate strategy objectives, progress, and challenges effectively. Feedback mechanisms are integral, ensuring insights from all levels of management are considered for necessary adjustments. Incentives and recognition programs are recommended to motivate sustained commitment and align individual and team performances with the successful execution of strategic initiatives.

#### *7.3.4 Regional and International Partnerships*

The final pillar advocates for collaboration beyond borders to enrich the implementation process. This involves regional partnerships with neighboring countries and collaboration with international entities. Such collaborative efforts aim to share best practices, address common challenges, and leverage external expertise and resources. Collaboration and partnerships have been established in previous chapters as a trend in strategy implementation, not least for Zimbabwe which is isolated from the international community of nations.

Globalisation has intensified competition and cooperation, exemplified by alliances like the BRICS coalition (Fedato et al., 2017). Public strategy implementation now embraces global collaboration, emphasising engagement with diverse stakeholders (Favoreu et al., 2016). The approach acknowledges resource constraints, growing societal complexity, and the need for civil society involvement, emphasising collaborative benefits (Robertson and Choi, 2012).

Networks play a pivotal role, involving stable interactions for public purposes (Provan and Milward, 2001; Clarke, 2011). Collaborative strategic management and network governance foster coordination, learning, and shared knowledge (Favoreu et al.,

2016). The Balanced Scorecard, as demonstrated by Inamdar et al. (2000), facilitates multi-sector collaboration, aligning objectives and driving performance improvement.

Collaboration finds application in healthcare, education, and environmental conservation in Europe, with examples from Finland, the United States, and the European Union (Korpela et al., 2012; Casady et al., 2016; European Commission, 2011). Globally, collaboration proves essential for comprehensive and successful public strategy implementation.

Despite its prevalence, research on implementation issues in collaborative governance is limited. Nabatchi and Emerson (2021) assert that understanding implementation is crucial for advancing research in collaborative governance, recognising unique challenges depending on the governance regime type (self-initiated, independently convened, or externally directed).

This framework, if considered, through amalgamating established principles and insights gleaned from the challenges of ZIMASSET, offers a comprehensive and context-specific strategy to overcome the persistent hurdles in public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

Indeed, one of the most enduring challenges that public management scholarship struggles to address relates to strategy implementation capability challenges in the public sector where institutions invariably fail to implement their strategic plans for many reasons (Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002; Olson, Slater and Hult, 2005; Olsen 2011; Brinkschroder 2014). This problem is a present threat for Zimbabwe where public institutions often encounter challenges during the implementation process of their otherwise excellent policies. The exploration of public strategy implementation, with a particular focus on the Zimbabwean context and insights from the challenges faced during the implementation of ZIMASSET, has unveiled a complex landscape marked by multifaceted issues. The interplay of structural, cultural, and contextual factors has posed formidable barriers to the realisation of strategic goals, creating a discernible gap between envisioned targets and tangible outcomes. The multifaceted analysis encompasses diverse perspectives, ranging from philosophical synthesis to practical considerations and lessons derived from historical implementation endeavours.



Critical realist perspectives shed light on the root causes and systemic barriers contributing to challenges in the Zimbabwean context. The conflation of party and government roles, coupled with issues of political coercion and manifestos turning into immune policy documents, underscores the imperative for revisiting institutional frameworks. Demerging party and government functions signify a step towards achieving more objective and accountable public policies.

The alignment with key foundations of successful strategy implementation, such as sound strategy, allocation of sufficient resources, and management commitment, provides a practical framework for addressing the identified challenges. The emphasis on the importance of competent management, devoid of undue political interference, and the allocation of necessary resources is reiterated across scholarly perspectives.

Furthermore, the insights derived from stakeholder views, as captured through interviews, contribute valuable suggestions for enhancing public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. The advocacy for robust anti-corruption measures, sectoral strategies with clear timeframes, consequence-driven approaches, and transparent policies collectively form a comprehensive set of recommendations.

The synthesis of insights from different schools of thought, incorporating environmental, learning, political, and power perspectives, enriches the understanding of the complexities inherent in strategy implementation. It highlights the need for adaptive and context-specific approaches that consider the dynamic interactions among various factors influencing the implementation process.

In crafting a forward-looking perspective, the recommendations for a continuous learning process, stakeholder involvement, capacity building, and regular monitoring and evaluation converge to form a holistic framework for effective public strategy implementation. Drawing on lessons from ZIMASSET challenges, institutionalising these recommendations becomes imperative to avoid recurring pitfalls and foster a culture of adaptability and improvement.

As Zimbabwe and similar contexts navigate the path of public strategy implementation, this study contends that a nuanced, adaptive, and stakeholder-inclusive approach, informed by the amalgamation of theoretical insights and practical considerations, is essential. The journey towards effective strategy implementation demands not only scholarly rigor but a collaborative commitment from policymakers, public

administrators, and stakeholders to transcend the persistent challenges and cultivate a landscape conducive to the realisation of strategic goals.

#### **7.4.1 Areas for further research**

Throughout this dissertation, we have learnt that organisations have through different ways consistently sought to create greater organisational flexibility to respond to environmental. Such adaptability is particularly important in contexts such as Zimbabwe, which are marked by a hostile international environment. We have also observed that scholars tend to concentrate on identifying potential obstacles or facilitators to the implementation of strategy, without offering a clear and comprehensive explanation of the implementation process itself. While this study has suggested the above framework as part of its contribution on which to base new efforts, it claims no authority to be able to address habitual failure in public strategy implementation in Zimbabwe. A significant amount of work remains to be done, and below are few suggestions arising from the foregoing discussion:

- a. Research may be required on the mechanisms for promoting policy learning and adaptation within the Zimbabwean context, including the identification of lessons learned from past implementation experiences and strategies for incorporating feedback into future policy formulation and implementation processes.
- b. In the context of persisting hostile international environment and unstable national economic outlook, an exploration may be required on the state's flexibility, particularly focusing on adapting its structures and processes to enhance flexibility in response to environmental turbulence.
- c. Crucially, there is also a need to address the research gap in strategy Implementation by exploring new approaches to researching this topic. More qualitative studies rooted in critical theory may be useful in developing innovative methodologies, frameworks, or theoretical perspectives that better capture the complexity and dynamics of strategy implementation in such settings as Zimbabwe finds itself.

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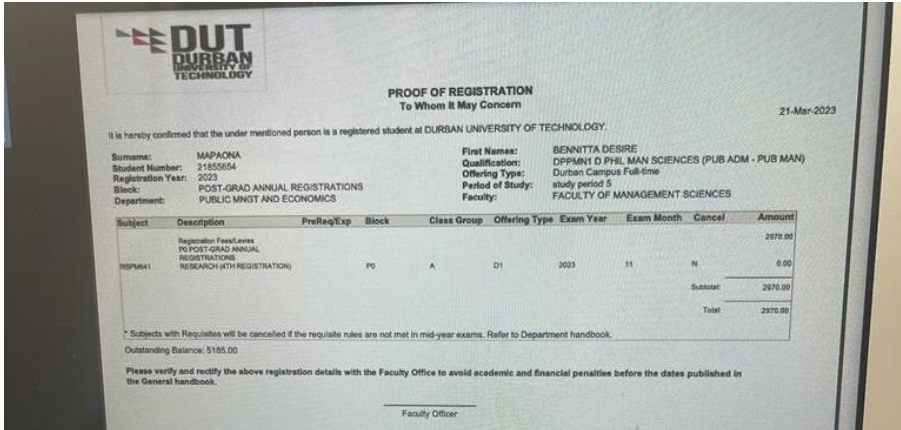
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- Zhou, G., and Masunungure, E., (2006). *An analysis of the objectives and effects of privatisation on the public sector and role of the state in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCDD) and the Southern Africa Peoples' Solidarity Network (SAPSN).*

## ANNEXURES



**M I Sultan/Steve Biko/City Campus** Tel: 031 373 2000 P O Box 1334, Durban, 4000  
**Pietermaritzburg Campus** Tel: 033 342 1088 P O Box 101112, Scottsville, 3209

### Post Graduate Checklist

No	Document	Student verification	Faculty Officer Verification
1	Attach Proof of 2023 registration <i>NB: Registration for the current academic year is compulsory</i>		
2	Indicate the academic years registered for NB: specify Full time or Part Time  Max Masters: 3 Max PhD: 4 <i>Note: A student cannot submit without meeting the minimum criteria of 1 year for a Masters study and 2 years for a DPHIL</i>	2019 FT 2020 FT 2022 FT 2023 FT	
3	Date of FRC Proposal Approval	27/03/2019	

		 Ms Mapaona.pdf		
4	Did you apply for Interruption/Extension of Studies? If yes, please specify for which years	Yes –21/7/ 2021  INTERUPTION OF STUDIES 2021.pdf		
5	Date of Submission of PG 5 - Intention to Submit	24/10/2022		
6	Date of PG 6 approval - Nomination of Examiners (Supervisor to ensure this is complete-student is not privy to this)	01 February 2023		
7	Ensure PG 7 – Submission of Dissertation for Examination is attached and duly signed by the student, supervisor and HOD	01 December 2023		
8	Ethics Clearance (Include as annexure) i.e. did you receive full approval to conduct your study? If <b>yes</b> please confirm which clearance has been received <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty Research Ethics Clearance (Level 1 ) <b>OR</b></li> <li>• Institutional Clearance (Level 2, Level 3)</li> </ul>	IREC	Full approval  B D Mapaoana FA (1).pdf	IREC
		FREC		FREC
9	Gate keepers' letters (Include as annexure on the dissertation/thesis)	 GATE KEEPER CLEARANCE LETTER.  GATEKEEPER_Letter for Research.pdf		



10	Turn it in report – under 20% (Please ensure the summary report is signed off by the supervisor and included as an annexure on the dissertation/ thesis)	 Mapaona PhD Thesis Turnitin.pdf	
11	Title – the student is to ensure the title of the dissertation/thesis has not changed from the initial title approved at FRC	<i>Towards effective strategy implementation in the public sector: An appraisal of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation</i>	
12	Please ensure an editors/statistician certificate is included as an annexure on the dissertation/thesis	 Editor's Letter.pdf	
13	Please ensure the dissertation/thesis is signed off for final approval by the Supervisor/co-supervisor and the declaration page is signed by the student	Signed	

**I, Bennitta Desire Mapaona 21855654 hereby confirm the above-mentioned documents have been submitted to the Faculty Research Officer accordingly along with the PDF Final signed Bound Thesis/ dissertation for Examination.**

I acknowledge that in the event of a Pass, I will **only** be eligible for graduation upon satisfying the Minimum Duration Rule G25 (2)(a) or Rule G24 (2)(a)

**Rule G25(2)(a) – Applicable to a Doctoral Study**

(2) Minimum and maximum duration

(a) The minimum duration for a Doctoral Degree shall be two consecutive academic years of registered study.

**Rule G24(2)(a) – Applicable to a Masters Study**

(2) Minimum and maximum duration

(a) The minimum duration for Master's Degree shall be one academic year of registered study.


**Student** : **Date: 04/12/2023**

**Supervisor** : **Date: 03/12/2023**

**FRO** : \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

FRO STAMP

# ANNEXURE A: PROOF OF REGISTRATION 2023



**PROOF OF REGISTRATION**  
 To Whom It May Concern

21-Mar-2023

It is hereby confirmed that the under mentioned person is a registered student at DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY.

Surname: <b>MADONKA</b> Student Number: <b>21655654</b> Registration Year: <b>2023</b> Block: <b>POST-GRAD ANNUAL REGISTRATIONS</b> Department: <b>PUBLIC MGMT AND ECONOMICS</b>	First Name: <b>BENJAMIN DESIRE</b> Qualification: <b>DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT SCIENCES (PUB ADM - PUB MAM)</b> Offering Type: <b>Durban Campus Full-time</b> Period of Study: <b>study period 5</b> Faculty: <b>FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES</b>
--	---

Subject	Description	PreReq/Exp	Block	Class Group	Offering Type	Exam Year	Exam Month	Cancel	Amount
REGISTRATION	Registration Fees/Levies FOR POST-GRAD ANNUAL REGISTRATIONS (RESEARCH WITH REGISTRATION)		PO	A	01	2023	11	N	0.00
<b>Subtotal</b>									<b>2075.00</b>
<b>Total</b>									<b>2075.00</b>

\* Subjects with Registrations will be cancelled if the registration rules are not met in mid-year exams. Refer to Department handbook.

Outstanding Balance: 5165.00

Please verify and rectify the above registration details with the Faculty Office to avoid academic and financial penalties before the dates published in the General handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Faculty Officer

## ANNEXURE B: INTERRUPTION OF STUDIES: 2021

----- Original message -----

From: Musaralubombo<LubomboM1@ukzn.ac.za>

Date: 18/08/2021 12:28 (GMT+02:00)

To: [bentidnapsbentidnaps@yahoo.com](mailto:bentidnapsbentidnaps@yahoo.com)

Subject: FW: FRC Feedback - 21 July 2021 - Interruption of Studies

Dear Maam

Hope this finds you well.

Please note the approval for our request below.

**From:** Mesha Naicker <mesha@dut.ac.za>  
**Date:** Wednesday, 18 August 2021 at 12:23  
**To:** Musaralubombo<LubomboM1@ukzn.ac.za>  
**Cc:** StrivrasanSoondrasan Pillay <spilays@dut.ac.za>  
**Subject:** FW: FRC Feedback - 21 July 2021 - Interruption of Studies

Dear Supervisor and HOD,

Arising from the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 FRC Sitting, Please note the outcome below for your Students Interruption of Study:

No	Name	Qualification	Interruption Dates	Reason as per Pg 4	FRC Decision
3	Ms BD Mapaona – 21855654 Supervisor: Dr M Lubombo (NWU) Co-Supervisor: n/a	DPHIL: Public Admin	1 Jan 2021 – 31 Dec 2021	“My registration attempt in March was not captured on the system. I only discovered this error now after registration deadline was closed”	Approved 21 <sup>st</sup> July 2021

## ANNEXURE C: FRC APPROVAL



27 March 2019

Reference: Proposal Approval: Miss Mapaona

Student number: 21855654

Dear Miss Mapaona

**Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration**

This serves to confirm the approval of your research proposal by the Faculty Research Committee, at its meeting on **26<sup>th</sup> March 2019**, as follows:

1. Research proposal and provisional dissertation title:

**Effective Strategy Implementation in the Public Sector: An appraisal of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMMASSET) 2013-2018.**

Supervisor: **Dr. M Lubombo**

Co-supervisor: N/A

Please note that any proposed changes in the thesis/dissertation title require the approval of your supervisor/s, the Faculty Research Committee, as well as ratification thereof by the Higher Degrees Committee.

2. Research budget to the amount of **R15 000.00**

Please note that this funding is not a scholarship or bursary and is therefore not paid directly to you, but is controlled by the Faculty. Any proposed changes to the use of this funding allocation requires the approval of your supervisor and the Dean. Please note that funding will be reimbursed to you after the provision of receipts.

The Institutional Research Committee has stipulated that:

- (a) This University retains the ownership of any Intellectual Property (patent, design, etc.) registered in respect of the results of your Masters/Doctors Degree in Technology studies as a result of the award and the provisions of the above Act;
- (b) Should you find any of the terms above not acceptable then you are given the option to decline the Research budget award to your project in writing.

May we remind you that in terms of Rule G25(2)(b), if you fail to obtain the Masters/Doctors degree within the maximum time period allowed after first registering for the qualification, Senate may refuse to renew your registration or may impose any conditions it deems fit. You may apply to the Faculty Research Committee for an extension.

Please note that you are required to convert your registration from the informal to the formal course and re-register each year.

Please note that the following must be adhered to:

**Registration:**

1. Ensure formal registration has taken place *(the onus is on the student and the supervisor to ensure registration takes place at the beginning of each year whilst the student is currently engaged with his/her Masters or PhD qualification)*
2. Ensure that application for Conferment of Status has been made in the event of your undergraduate qualification being different to this application. ***Your attention is drawn to the fact that Conferment of Status is required for registration.***
3. Ensure that your supervisor has submitted your proposal to the Faculty Research Officer (FRO) for IREC clearance (institutional research ethics committee). This is in the case of Ethics level 2 IREC and level 3 IREC (in the case of a study dealing with vulnerable populations). See guideline attached. ***It is the researcher's responsibility to check the Ethics requirements and submit to the relevant bodies irrespective of the reviewer's recommendation.***

**Dissertation submission for examination:**

1. Ensure that you submit the intention to submit form **(PG 5)**, signed by the HOD and Supervisor
2. Ensure that the signed checklist is submitted with the **PG 5**
3. Once your dissertation is submitted to the supervisor for examination purposes, communication from here on will only be with you supervisor and not with the faculty.
4. Your supervisor **MUST** nominate the examiners three months prior to submission of the dissertation/thesis for examination.
5. On submission for examination, please note that three ring bound signed copies must be submitted to your supervisor along with the completed and signed **PG 7** form, **FMS Checklist** and **Turn it in report**.
6. Feedback will be provided to your supervisor regarding the examination result after the result is ratified by the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC).
7. In the event of a resubmission the reports will be submitted to the supervisor who will communicate with you for revision. Once revision has taken place your supervisor will submit to the FRO for resubmission to the examiners.
8. In the case where there is a discrepancy in examiners results, an Arbiter will be nominated via the HOD and supervisor and tabled at FRC and ratified at HDC. On completion of this process, the Arbiters report will be tabled at FRC and ratified at HDC.
9. Results of the Arbitration process will be communicated to your supervisor

**Graduation requirements:**

1. Ensure that you submit a completed signed PG10 form
2. one hard bound dissertation/thesis with a pdf version on CD
3. response to post graduate examination form
4. completion of study form (IREC form)

Should you experience any problems relating to your research, your supervisor must be informed of the matter as soon as possible. If the difficulties persist, you should then approach your Head of Department and thereafter the Faculty Research Coordinator.

Please refer to the 2019 General Rule Book and the Postgraduate Students' Guide 2019 concerning the rules relating to postgraduate studies, which include *inter alia* acceptable minimum and maximum timeframes, submission of thesis/dissertations, etc. Please do not hesitate to contact this office for any assistance. We wish you success in your studies.

Kind regards,

---

Prof VP Rawjee

FRC Chairperson: Faculty of Management Sciences

Cc Supervisor: **Dr. M Lubombo**

## ANNEXURE D: IREC FULL APPROVAL



20 July 2022

Ms B D Mapaona  
24 Brigadier Atif Road  
Mt. Pleasant  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

Dear Ms Mapaona

**Towards effective strategy implementation in the Public Sector: An appraisal of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) 2013-2018**

I am pleased to inform you that Full Approval has been granted to your proposal.

The Proposal has been allocated the following Ethical Clearance number **IREC 163/22**. Please use this number in all communication with this office.

Approval has been granted for a period of **ONE YEAR**, before the expiry of which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the Safety Monitoring and Annual Recertification Report form which can be found in the Standard Operating Procedures [SOP's] of the IREC. This form must be submitted to the IREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Professor J K Adam  
Chairperson: DUT-IREC



## ANNEXURE E1: GATE KEEPER

F

(F)

CIA/65/29

18<sup>th</sup> December, 2018

Chairperson of the Ethics Committee  
Durban University of Technology  
KwaZulu Natal  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Sir/Madam,

**CLEARANCE LETTER FOR THE CONDUCT OF A RESEARCH STUDY  
BY MS BENNITTA DESIRE MAPAONA: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
DEGREE IN ADMINISTRATION: RESEARCH ON STRATEGY  
IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ZIMBABWE PUBLIC SERVICE**

Please be advised that Ms Bennitta Desire Mapaona, a Zimbabwean student, in the Faculty of Public Management is indeed authorised to carry out a research on "Strategy Implementation in the Zimbabwe Public Service" in pursuance of her Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Administration at the esteemed Durban University of Technology. In carrying out her field research, she will conduct interviews with resource persons in Government Ministries she may consider to be useful in her chosen area of study.

Kindly accept the assurances of our highest regards.

Dr M.J.M. Sibanda

**CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT AND CABINET**



## ANNEXURE E2: GATE KEEPER

Telephone: 707091/9  
Telegram: "SECPRES"



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
AND CABINET  
Private Bag 7700  
Causeway  
Harare

4 April 2022

Chairperson of the Ethics Committee  
Durban University of Technology  
KwaZulu Natal  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Sir/Madam

**CLEARANCE LETTER FOR THE CONDUCT OF A RESEARCH STUDY BY  
MS BENNITTA DESIRE MAPAONA: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
DEGREE IN ADMINISTRATION: RESEARCH ON STRATEGY  
IMPLEMENTATION IN THE ZIMBABWE PUBLIC SERVICE**

Reference is made to the attached Clearance Letter for research by Ms Bennitta Desire Mapaona, dated 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2018.

Please be advised that Ms Bennitta Desire Mapaona, a Zimbabwean student, in the Faculty of Public Management is still authorised to carry out research on "Strategy Implementation in the Zimbabwe Public Service" in pursuance of her Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Administration at the esteemed Durban University of Technology. In carrying out her field research, she will conduct interviews with resource persons in Government Ministries she may consider to be useful in her chosen area.

Kindly accept the assurances of our highest regards.

Dr M.J.M. Sibanda

**CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT AND CABINET**

CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE  
PRESIDENT AND CABINET

04 APR 2022

P. BAG 7700, CAUSEWAY  
ZIMBABWE

## ANNEXURE F: TURNITIN



### Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that **Turnitin** received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: MUSARA LUBOMBO  
Assignment title: Turnitin-External  
Submission title: Mapaona PhD Thesis  
File name: MAPAONA\_PhD\_Thesis\_2023.docx  
File size: 4.41M  
Page count: 170  
Word count: 49,179  
Character count: 303,560  
Submission date: 02-Dec-2023 05:43AM (UTC-0800)  
Submission ID: 2244393429

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PUBLIC  
SECTOR: AN APPRAISAL OF THE ZIMBABWE AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

BENHATTA DESIRE MAPAONA

1

## Turnitin Originality Report

Processed on: 02-Dec-2023 15:46 SAST

ID: 2244393429

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Mapaona PhD Thesis By MUSARA LUBOMBO

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< 1% match ()

[Waweru, Ruth Wambui. "Competitive strategy implementation in microfinance organisations in Kenya". Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences](#)

< 1% match ()

[Knott-Craig, Ian. "Am I my brother's keeper? learner leadership development in a secondary school in the Eastern Cape, South Africa". Faculty of Education, Education](#)

< 1% match ()

[Strydom, Karlena. "The impact of diversity and organisational culture on effective strategy implementation in a higher education institution". Faculty of Business and Economics Sciences, 2013](#)

< 1% match ()

[Tom, Lubabalo Alexander. "A case study of the strategic leadership displayed by Kevin Hedderwick at Famous Brands between 2004-2009". Faculty of Commerce, Rhodes Investec Business School](#)

< 1% match ()

["Addressing the strategy implementation gap with a liabilities approach", 'University of Pretoria - Department of Philosophy', 2017](#)

< 1% match ()

[Fresia-Eke, Chukuakadibia E., Soriakumar, A.D., "Strategy implementation barriers and remedies in public sector organisations". African Consortium of Public Administration, 2021](#)

< 1% match (Internet from 03-Sep-2022)

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344177518\\_Strategy\\_implementation\\_A\\_review\\_and\\_an\\_introduutory\\_framework](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344177518_Strategy_implementation_A_review_and_an_introduutory_framework)

< 1% match (Internet from 14-Feb-2023)

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ali-Sheikh-Ali/publication/260198159\\_Entrepreneurial\\_Orientation\\_and\\_Business\\_Performance\\_the\\_Moderating\\_Role\\_of\\_Environmental\\_Factors\\_A\\_Study\\_on\\_Women\\_Entrepreneurs\\_in\\_Somalia/links/013155052e0000000000000000000000/Entrepreneurial-Orientation-and-Business-Performance-the-Moderating-Role-of-Environmental-Factors-A-Study-on-Women-Entrepreneurs-in-Somalia.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ali-Sheikh-Ali/publication/260198159_Entrepreneurial_Orientation_and_Business_Performance_the_Moderating_Role_of_Environmental_Factors_A_Study_on_Women_Entrepreneurs_in_Somalia/links/013155052e0000000000000000000000/Entrepreneurial-Orientation-and-Business-Performance-the-Moderating-Role-of-Environmental-Factors-A-Study-on-Women-Entrepreneurs-in-Somalia.pdf)

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[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330760964\\_Research\\_Methods\\_for\\_Business\\_Students\\_Chapter\\_4\\_Understanding\\_research\\_philosophy\\_and\\_approaches\\_to\\_theory\\_development](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330760964_Research_Methods_for_Business_Students_Chapter_4_Understanding_research_philosophy_and_approaches_to_theory_development)

< 1% match (Internet from 18-Oct-2021)

## ANNEXURE G: EDITOR LETTER



**Mufasa Research Consultancy**

**SERVING WITH DISTINCTION**

20 November 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

**Re: Editor's Letter: BD MAPAONA**

**Towards effective strategy implementation in the public sector: An appraisal of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation**

Below is the scope considered during language editing of the above titled doctoral thesis:

- Grammar check
- Sentence construction
- Spelling check
- Punctuation
- In-text referencing
- Formatting/document layout

As a professional editor, I pledge that the above aspects of the doctoral thesis were, to the best of my knowledge, meticulously and correctly done at the time the work was sent to the candidate. However, I am not responsible for any corrections that were made after the editing process finalised.

Yours faithfully,

**Kemist Shumba (PhD)**

PhD in Health Promotion: University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)  
Master of Social Science in Health Promotion (*Gaw luvu*): UKZN  
Bachelor of Social Science Honours in Cultural & Media Studies: UKZN  
Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Great Zimbabwe University  
Bachelor of Arts (English): University of Zimbabwe

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**Cell:** +27 78 315 6186 **Email:** [info@mufasarc.co.za](mailto:info@mufasarc.co.za) **Web:** [www.mufasarc.co.za](http://www.mufasarc.co.za)  
**Address:** 7 Chartham House, 180 Brand Road, Glenwood 4001, Durban, South Africa

# ANNEXURE H: PG5:

PG 5



## Notice of Intention to Submit Dissertation / Thesis for Examination

<b>Faculty</b>	Management Sciences			
<b>Department</b>	Public Management and Economics			
<b>Qualification for which student is registered</b>	Doctor of Philosophy in Administration: Public Management			
<b>Offering type</b>	<b>Full time registration</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Part time registration</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Prior qualification</b>	Master of Commerce, Strategic Management & Corporate Governance			
<b>Student Surname</b>	MAPAONA		<b>Student No.</b>	21855654
<b>First Names</b>	BENNITTA DESIRE		<b>Title (Mr, Ms)</b>	Ms
<b>Postal Address</b>	24 Brigadier Atif Road, Mt. Pleasant, Harare. Zimbabwe			
<b>Tel (W)</b>	<b>Tel (H)</b>	<b>Cell</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>e-Mail</b>
+263242332748	+26324222301	+263772801567	N/A	benitadmaps@yahoo.com
<b>Title of Dissertation/ Thesis</b>	Towards effective strategy implementation in the Public Sector: An appraisal of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) 2013-2018			<b>Full</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Partial</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Dissertation/Thesis</b>
<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr Musara Lubombo			
<b>Position</b>	EXT Supervisor		<b>Present Qualifications</b>	PhD
<b>Tel (W)</b>	<b>Tel (H)</b>	<b>Cell</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>e-Mail</b>
0183892363		0834901604		40663256@nwu.ac.za
<b>Co-Supervisor</b>				
<b>Position</b>			<b>Present Qualifications</b>	
<b>Tel (W)</b>	<b>Tel (H)</b>	<b>Cell</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>e-Mail</b>
<b>I wish to submit my dissertation/thesis for examination on:</b>				January 2023

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Student

Date: 24/10/22

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor

Date: 2022/10/24

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Co-Supervisor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
HoD

Date: 25/10/2022

**ANNEXURE I: PG 6: NOMINATION OF EXAMINERS**

**APPROVED BY FRC 1 FEBRUARY 2023**

## ANNEXURE J: PG7 APPROVAL FOR EXAMINATION

PG 7



### Submission of Dissertation/Thesis for Examination

<b>Faculty</b>	MANAGEMENT SCIENCES		
<b>Department</b>	PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMICS		
<b>Qualification for which registered</b>	D PHIL MANAGEMENT SCIENCE (PUB ADM – PUB MAN)		
<b>Offering type</b>	<b>Full time registration</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Part time registration</b>
<b>Prior qualification</b>	MCON STRATEGIC MGT AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE		

<b>Student Surname</b>	Mapaona		<b>Student No.</b>	21855654	
<b>First Names</b>	Bennitta Desire		<b>Title (Mr, Ms)</b>	Ms	
<b>Postal Address</b>	24 BRIGADIER ATIF RD, MT PLEASANT HARARAE				
<b>Tel (W)</b>	<b>Tel (H)</b>	<b>Cell</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>e-Mail</b>	
+26342332748	+263242222301	+263772801567		benitadmaps@yahoo.com	
<b>Title of Thesis</b>	<i>Towards effective strategy implementation in the public sector: An appraisal of the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation</i>			<b>Full</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
				<b>Partial</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				<b>Thesis</b>	

<b>Supervisor</b>	Dr MUSARA LUBOMBO			
<b>Position</b>	SENR LECTURE	<b>Present Qualifications</b>	PhD	
<b>Tel (W)</b>	<b>Tel (H)</b>	<b>Cell</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>e-Mail</b>
+27183892363		+27834901604		Musara.Lubombo@nwu.ac.za
<b>Co-Supervisor</b>				
<b>Position</b>		<b>Present Qualifications</b>		
<b>Tel (W)</b>	<b>Tel (H)</b>	<b>Cell</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>e-Mail</b>
<b>I hereby grant the abovementioned student permission to submit his/her dissertation/thesis for examination.</b>				

Signed: _____	Date: 03/12/23	YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
(Supervisor)					
Signed: _____	Date: _____	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
(Co-Supervisor)					
Signed: _____	Date: 4/12/2023				
(HoD)					

<b>Routing</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>	<b>HoD</b>	<b>Faculty Officer</b>