

**Strategy Transition Processes and Practices in
Public Sector Organisations**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at De Montfort University**

by

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June 2018

Dedication

In the Memory of

My father, Fahad Sulaiman Abdullah Al-Mansour, who departed peacefully during the invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Thanks for all your love, care, efforts, and sacrifices for your children. Your deep love and custody have raised us within ethical manners that will safe us in life.

And

My Grandfather, Sulaiman Abdullah Abdulaziz Al-Mansour, who passed away on one fine morning.

Although we did not have the chance to meet for so long, I cannot forget your sympathy, motivation, and inspiration.

Acknowledgments

Alhamdulillah, Praise to Allah, the most compassionate and the most merciful, for aiding me with the required ambition, strengths, health, dedication, and skills, to complete the exciting journey of my Ph.D. research. This journey would not be completed without the support of others.

Firstly, I take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Demola Obembe for trusting my ability, for his valuable and priceless guidance, and encouragement throughout the research process. Because of his continuous support, this thesis has been completed. His expertise and knowledge gave me the tenacity to stay strong during the turbulent moments. Certainly, without his encouragement I would not have completed this research. He was always there when needed, he allocated more time to me than scheduled, and he was always making the supervision friendly and less stressful.

I am also indebted to Mr. Martyn Kendrick for his encouragement and support at the beginning of the research and Prof. Paul Hughes for aiding me especially in the quantitative part of this research at the end of the research journey. I am also thankful for De Montfort University for sponsoring me to present a paper at BAM conference in the United Kingdom, and for the Graduate School Office for supporting researchers when needed. My gratitude also goes to my annual internal assessors during the research period: Dr. Natalia Vershinina, Dr. Brahim Herbane, and Dr. Kassa Woldeesenbet.

I would like to appreciate those individuals who have helped me throughout the research period, especially Prof. Marwan Al-Akaidi who believed in me, believed in my ability, and encouraged me engaging in this research. My thanks also go to Prof. Moudi Al-Humoud and Prof. Naif Al-Mutairi for their continuous support at the Arab Open University. My thanks also go to my colleagues and friends and for Dr. Salim Abukharis. Finally, I would like to deeply thank all my family, especially my mother for supporting me with their prayers, positive words, and encouragement.

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Abstract

Strategy processes and internal actors' practices are crucial for organisations given their dynamic environment. Strategy processes including formulation, implementation, and evaluation have been treated as mutually exclusive, making how strategy is actually transitioned between them a matter of major concern (Whittington, 2007; Sorooshian and Dodangeh, 2013; Leonardi, 2015). Equally, particular groups of internal actors and their strategic practices have previously been researched in isolation from one another without expressing how they collectively interact to ultimately give strategy processes (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Engen and Magnusson, 2015; Friesl and Kwon, 2016). These processes and practices have barely been researched in the public sector, and this in turn contextualises this research to study strategy transition processes and practices enacted in public sector organisations.

Drawing on strategy-as-practice and Social Practice theory as meta-theoretical lenses, this research explores the dynamics of the strategy transition process stage by revealing the social practices of internal actors and other influential factors. A pragmatism approach was adopted for this research. The primary data collection was obtained through 27 semi-structured interviews with respondents from a single case study followed by survey of 381 respondents across five case organisations in Kuwait. The research identified four factors that interact and contribute to the complexity of the strategy transition process and practices of actors in the process. These are in order of significance; process design, actors' social interactions, strategic awareness, and role of leadership. In relation to the social interaction and leadership factors, the research found that strategy practices can be influenced by the societal culture inherited by actors. Equally, it was revealed that the control mechanism adopted for the strategy transition process contributed to the enhancement of the strategy transition process design and strategic awareness between actors.

Additionally, the dynamic interaction between these factors was found to affect strategy practice, which in turn either enables or impedes the smooth transition of organisational strategies from the formulation to implementation phases. The research also contributes

to the understanding of Social Practice theory by introducing the interactivity as a cognitive construct to its boundary. Hence, the study and its findings extend our understanding of the contextual social practices that could help to enhance the strategy transition process among internal actors.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The strategy process is a vital element in driving the success of organisations. There are different routes to studying strategy as a research topic, and researchers have many options through which to conduct their studies. These options include, for instance, strategy dimensions, schools of thought, and frameworks (Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999; Dess and Lumpkin, 2003; De Wit, 2017). One of these available options is studying the strategy process through considering how actors practice real-world strategy. Strategy process is divided into four stages, namely those of formulation, implementation, evaluation, and control, and the explanation as to how strategy is undertaken in proceeding from one stage to another provides an understanding of how strategy process is practiced. Furthermore, researchers tend to study internal actors in the sense of being isolated groups, namely top management, middle management, and front-line employees. This research focusses on strategy from the perspective of its practice, which is the most recent trend in terms of research focus in the field of strategy. Arguably, the consideration of actors' practices would contribute considerably to the understanding of the dynamics of strategy transitions. Furthermore, strategy practice in the private sector seems to be well established and systematic; however, in the public sector it has received only limited attention, which in turn contextualises this research; that is, to study the strategy process in the public sector in Kuwait.

This chapter introduces six major sections. The importance of the current research and the general framework that has been employed in this study are presented in section 1.2. Section 1.3 discusses the objectives of the current research, followed by the problem statement and the research questions in section 1.4. The significance of the study is introduced in section 1.5. Finally, an outline of the thesis is provided in section 1.6.

1.2 Research Background

There is a growing body of research that seeks to understand strategic management practices in public sector organisations (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski et al., 2016). Such understanding is therefore crucial to enhancing organisational

performance. In order to understand strategy, many studies have focussed on its various stages, namely formulation, implementation, and evaluation as being disparate components with no clear link as to how strategies transit from the formulation to implementation phase across internal actors, and this reflects the novelty of this research.

Traditional research have not thoroughly investigated the dynamics of strategy and how this is practiced within organisational systems and processes (Whittington, 2007). The line between the strategy formulation and the implementation phases is still unclear (Leonardi, 2015). Therefore, a considerable amount of research has been duplicated across countries, with agreement or rejection of each other's findings. However, respective strategic management research in the public sector context are still in its infancy. As argued by Elbanna (2007, 2008), there are only a limited number of studies that have been conducted related to strategy formulation in the context of the Middle East, but strategy implementation is still unclear. In contrast, Harrington et al. (2004) and Atkinson (2006) claimed that despite the importance of the strategy implementation stage, greater attention is paid to strategy formulation than strategy implementation.

In recent years, there has been a growing body of specialised literature that has drawn attention to the understanding the process of strategic management during its various steps, not as only an organisational phenomenon but also as a result of daily activities (Rasche and Chia, 2009). How people practice the strategy within their organisation remains puzzling due to the fact that the strategy stages are intertwined. The complicated relationship between strategy stages further requires a rich understanding of the role of social actors and their practices within the strategy process. As argued by Johnson et al. (2007), many theories in strategy including, for instance, a resource-based view, dynamic capabilities, and institutional theory have ignored the human actors and how they interact and practice strategy. This further emphasises the critical role of research into internal actors' strategy practices and processes (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Paroutis et al., 2013) and how strategy and strategising are shared across the enterprise (Pandza, 2011).

As the field advanced, researchers have emphasised the practical perspective of strategy within organisations, namely the strategy-as-practice (SAP) concept. SAP emerged at the beginning of the second millennium and entered its second decade with a growing body of promising research (Rouleau, 2013). The concept holds an alternative view to that expressed above, which instead focusses not on the strategy itself but rather on how people perform in relation to this strategy (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007, Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Jarzabkowski et al., 2016). It is further concerned with how strategy is undertaken, who is undertaking it, what tools they use, how they use them, what they do, and what impacts these queries have on organisational strategy (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). It is also noteworthy that practice-based analyses are growing within the field of management studies due to their capacity to help our understanding of how human actions are enabled or otherwise within organisations (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011).

Drawing from this background, this thesis seeks to advance knowledge as to the contribution of social actors, namely top managers, middle managers, and front-line employees in the strategy transition process within the context of public sector organisations in Kuwait. It thus locates the current conceptualisation of the strategy process within the practice perspective using Social Practice theory.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to provide an insight into the understanding of a social phenomenon with regards to organisational strategic behaviour. In particular, the study will investigate how decision-makers in public sector organisations effectively transit their strategies from the formulation phase to the implementation phase among groups of internal actors. The research will explain how social actors contribute to the strategy transition process, identify the factors that contribute to the dynamics of the strategy transition process, and will show to what extent these factors influence the involvement of various social actors in the strategy transition process. These are examined through three specific objectives, as follows:

- 1) To explore the role of top and the middle management towards the strategy transition process in public sector organisations. This task will explain how the top and the middle managers understand and practice organisational strategy, and will assess how their understanding contributes to drive strategy forward.
- 2) To identify the factors that contribute to the dynamics of the strategy transition process. This task will examine the various contextual factors that expedite or hinder the delivery of organisational strategy to different internal actors and departmental levels.
- 3) To explain the extent to which these factors (identified in 2) influence the involvement of particular groups of actors in the strategy transition process. This objective will be achieved by assessing how these different groups are affected by such factors and how they respond to them, as well as how their involvement supports or limits their involvement in transitioning organisational strategy between each other.

1.4 Problem Statement and Research Questions

Public organisations in Kuwait are managed by the government, which owns the majority of the workforce, available resources, and regulatory power. Although this positions the public sector to run the majority of economic and infrastructural activities within the country, there is a lack of strategy realisation within these organisations. In reality, however, these strategies are barely noticeable in general figures and related public expenditures. This in turn has resulted in a poor understanding of strategy transition practices among actors within this sector. To mitigate this situation, public organisations have adopted a number of policies and plans designed to make the strategy process workable. Starting from this point, this study adopts a pragmatic paradigm which provides for the interpretation of actors' social philosophies, perceptions, behaviour, and judgment in order to understand their actions regarding the strategy transition process. Therefore, a mixed method approach is adopted to fulfil the research objectives and answer the related research questions.

In order to investigate and resolve a research problem, a researcher needs to address certain research inquires. In this regard, researchers have emphasised the fact that research questions are bounded by the purpose of the study and therefore the methods and the design of the study investigation are formulated (Bryman, 2007). Research questions further reflect the problem the researcher wants to investigate and are considered to be an extension of the purpose of the study being conducted. Based on the research problem, the research questions are listed below:

- 1) How do internal organisational actors contribute to the strategy transition process in public sector organisations?
- 2) What are the organising factors that enable (or impede) the strategy transition process in public sector organisations?
- 3) To what extent do these factors affect the practices of organisational actors in the strategy transition process?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study results from its contribution to knowledge in the field of strategic management by addressing following gaps identified in the current body of research. In terms of the particular topic of this research, what is currently clear is that previous studies have treated the strategy stages, namely formulation, implementation, and evaluation, as being independent of each other without explicitly addressing how strategy transitioning is undertaken between them (Whittington, 2007; Sorooshian and Dodangeh, 2013; Leonardi, 2015). Furthermore, research into the strategy process tends to focus on single actor groups without further addressing how strategy is practiced among various groups of internal actors within the strategy transition process (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Engen and Magnusson, 2015; Friesl and Kwon, 2016). Moreover, unlike the private sector in which the strategy process and its practices are recognised, there is limited research in this regard into public sector organisations (Elbanna, 2007, 2008). Therefore, this study is significant in terms of advancing the field by shedding light on the strategy transition process and individuals' practices in the public sector.

This study is also important as it is believed to be the first to adopt a mixed method approach to exploring the dynamics of the strategy transition process and the associated factors typically encountered in Kuwait. It is, therefore, the first study to investigate this phenomenon in the public sector context.

The study provides an understanding of actors' practices within the strategy transition process, where the significance of this research lies in a number of valid points, as follows. By conducting this study, a greater awareness among public organisations as to the importance of adopting a practical mechanism towards strategy transition may be realised. This study will shed light on the importance of the careful selection of actors across different management levels whose understanding are in alignment with the organisational strategy.

Furthermore, conducting this kind of study will diagnose the weaknesses in strategy transition and will suggest clear guidelines to resolve and mitigate them. Moreover, the study may raise awareness about the factors that influence the strategy transition process and thus assist in designing suitable tools for effective transitions.

Additionally, embarking on this research may further enhance and help revise the way in which organisations execute their strategies and achieve their objectives. Furthermore, this study will help internal actors to realise the dynamics of the micro-environment to allow for better strategy practices and overall strategy when sharing strategy and collaborating between each other.

1.6 Outline of Thesis Chapters

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the available literature in the field of strategic management. It discusses strategy dimensions in general and the process dimension in particular to provide a coherent understanding of the contributions made by this research. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of the research is presented based on the theory applied and the research objectives.

Chapter 3 is the empirical research context chapter. It provides an overview of the national environmental context of Kuwait and the general strategy mechanism followed in the Kuwaiti public sector. Moreover, the chapter presents the rationale driving the empirical enquiry underpinning this research.

Chapter 4 reflects the presentation of the research methodology and methods. It provides the justification for the choice of research design and outlines the research population and sampling technique. The chapter also explains the data collection and analysis process for the two phases adopted in this research. It offers detailed information as to how the qualitative data (Phase-1) was managed, followed by similar details regarding the collection and analysis of the quantitative data (Phase-2). Moreover, the chapter shows how the research objectives and the respective questions will be answered.

Chapter 5 introduces the first phase of the findings to emerge from the qualitative data of the semi-structured interviews. It reports the findings narratively according to six major themes which are further supported by their respective codes and representative quotes from the interviewees.

Chapter 6 goes on to present the quantitative findings of the survey conducted in Phase-2 of the research. It starts with the descriptive statistics and frequency distribution of the study factors and further offers the results of the chosen statistical tests. The rationale behind choosing the particular tests used and supportive tables generated by the SPSS software 'IBM Corp. Released 2015. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 23.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp' are also presented.

Chapter 7 presents a discussion which integrates both the qualitative and the quantitative findings of the research as drawn from the empirical work. Moreover, it compares these findings with the discussion provided in the literature review and with the proposed theoretical framework for this research.

The final chapter of this thesis presents the reflection and conclusion of this work. It introduces the summary of findings and describes the contribution and implications of the

study. The chapter also outlines the research limitations and the scope for any future research. The recommendations based on the results obtained are also presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the basic principles and a comprehensive literature review into the field of strategic management in order to give a clear understanding and define the gaps in this area of research. The chapter starts by presenting the basics of strategic management in order to build the appropriate knowledge for a critical review of the literature in reference to the research phenomenon. Furthermore, it offers the bases for the applied theory, concepts, frameworks, contexts, schools of thought, and processes that underlie strategic management. The later sections of this chapter will give a critical literature review of the concept of strategy process and practice, which will guide the exploration of the research problem addressed in this thesis.

Drawing from the above, this chapter starts with a critical reflection of strategy and strategic management in section 2.2, which includes both the definitions and the evolution of the field. In section 2.3, the dimensions of strategy are briefly presented with a focus on the strategy process dimension due to its particular relevance to this research. Section 2.4 outlines the concept of strategy-as-practice, which is the most recent research focus in the field, and which is further critically reviewed. In section 2.5, the theoretical considerations for the strategy process are presented where the theory adopted in this research are critically reviewed. Finally, a summary of the chapter is provided.

2.2 Critical Reflection on Strategy and Strategic Management

In the field of strategy management it is generally assumed that strategic change is an emergent process (Mirabeau and Maguire, 2014). Over the last few decades, there has been considerable development in the understanding of management studies. In parallel with the advancement in knowledge of management studies, strategic management has progressed to include a narrow focus on management and organisational behaviour. The field has been recognised by the remarkable work of the scholars who led the development of the field of strategic management, for instance Andrews, Ansoff, Chandler, Porter, and Mintzberg. The concept of strategy continued to develop and to include the changes in economic, technological, and social environments such as

economics of innovation, organisational structure and design, technology management, marketing, and human resources (Durand et al., 2017). With its precursors, as arose at the beginning of the 20th century, strategic management, as an interest of management research, started in the 1960s, which saw business development as a dynamic concept that forces organisations to respond to changes in the external environment (Furrer et al., 2008).

Due to the expanding domain of the concept of strategic management in the field, various definitions of such have emerged which require critical review. In order to better understand the strategy, an exploration of the various definitions introduced by a number of authors are critically reviewed. The multiple dimensions reflect the difficulties encountered when attempting to summarise the concept in one unique definition. The critical views of the range of definitions will also aid in assessing how strategy is perceived by the various associated actors and how this perception aids the decision-making part of the strategy process. Accordingly, the following background reflects the conceptual definitions of strategy and strategic management, and the evolution in its field in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the field has advanced to date.

2.2.1 Conceptual Definitions

The aim of this section is to critically assess the various definitions of strategy and strategic management according to the literature in order to establish a clear understanding of what strategy and strategic management actually mean. The term ‘strategy’ originated in the military and throughout history the term has remained a military subject (Nartisa et al., 2012). However, the term strategy began to be used in the business literature in the early 1960s when strategic management first began to be used in corporations (Hambrick and Chen, 2008; Durand et al., 2017). The terms ‘strategy’, ‘strategic management’, and ‘strategy planning’ have been used interchangeably to describe how organisations reach their ultimate objectives (Andrews, 1980; Smircich and Stubbart, 1985; Mintzberg, 1987; Schendel and Cool, 1988; Bowman et al., 2002; Hesterly and Barney, 2010; Florea and Florea, 2014). Furthermore, various researchers have used the terms ‘strategies’, ‘plans’, ‘policies’, and ‘objectives’ as synonyms (Pun, 2004).

Authors have presented the terms strategy and the strategic management in different ways. For instance, Andrews (1980) viewed strategy as a pattern of decisions that determines the major goals of an organisation and forms the policies used to reach the desired objectives, while Van Cauwenbergh and Cool (1982) defined strategy as an integrated process between the formulation and implementation stages, or between policy and outcome. Their view implies that strategy is of concern to all actors, not just the top management team. For Smircich and Stubbart (1985), strategy is more than organisational goals as it is a reflection of the shared meanings among organisational members used to facilitate the required actions. Their view conveys the impression that strategy requires shared understanding, values, concepts, and perspectives among the actors involved. Contrary to these definitions, Mintzberg (1987) viewed strategy from a multi-dimensional perspective. According to his view, organisations perceive strategy differently according to the particular situations they each experience, and his argument confirmed that there is no one correct strategic pattern that should be followed, and therefore organisations need to be flexible in interpreting their particular strategies. This also suggests just how difficult and complicated the strategising process itself is, let alone assessing strategy from a single perspective.

For strategic management, authors have focussed on a wider perspective that combines the dynamics of an organisation in relation to its environment (Covin, 1991; Camillus, 1997; Mintzberg et al., 1998). Strategic management was viewed as a comprehensive term that included organisations' missions, objectives and choices of strategies, their environments, internal resources, assessments of their strengths and weakness, the formation and implementation of a choice of strategies, and the assessment of outcomes. Equally, Poister and Van Slyke (2002) viewed the term as a utilisation of organisational resources to advance a strategic agenda. These perspectives positioned strategic management as an economic concept that was intended to aid organisations in the creation of competitive advantage and target market benefits. This is similar to the view held by Petrova (2015) who emphasised the idea of strategic management as the main driver of value creation and the realisation of economic benefits.

Recent definitions in the field seem to offer a more comprehensive conceptualisation of strategy and strategic management. For instance, Hesterly and Barney (2010), Chaharbaghi (2007) and Johnson et al. (2008) have outlined key terms including the creation and maintenance of competitive advantages for a firm, long-term planning, responding to the environment, integrating business units, utilising resources and competences, and fulfilling actors' expectations. Strategy was also viewed in terms of being a response (or responses) to the various challenges an organisation might face. The complicated nature of the conceptualisation of strategy and strategic management has shed light on the strategy process, allowing for a better understanding of the concepts. Despite this, a number of researchers have looked to the terms as more process and practice oriented (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington and Caillaet, 2008; Rasch and Chia, 2009; Floyd et al., 2011; Sarpong and Maclean, 2014; Vaara and Lamberg, 2016). Strategic management is now seen as a process that integrates actors' practices so as to be able to reach high levels of performance (Aboramadan and Borgonovi, 2016). In keeping with these definitions, the next section will present the evolution of the field and how the concepts of strategy and strategic management have developed historically.

2.2.2 Evolution of Strategy and Strategic Management

This section offers a comprehensive review of the development of the strategic management field and how this has positioned the importance of the strategy process and practice in the field. The field of strategic management has seen a remarkable degree of development since it first emerged as a research interest in the 1960s (Furrer et al., 2008). The changes in the field over the following decades led to extensive adaptation to definitions of the strategy and strategic management.

The principal focus of strategy planning was on the financial and long-term planning of organisations. Strategic planning was designated to the top management team as they were seen to be responsible for maximising company profits. Organisations were oriented towards their production rate and how to plan for the long term (Ocasio and Joseph, 2008). Long-term planning is also reflected in Chandler's (1962) classical definition by correlating strategy to long-term plans and deciding corrective actions through the course of organisation to achieve the desired goals. Improving economic resources and achieving

good financial results were organisations' main priority. This focus was particularly prevalent during the 1950s and 1960s (Grant, 2016).

By the 1960s, the terms strategic planning and strategic management were well recognised, and indeed became even more popular in the 1970s. During this period, organisations turned their attention to the consideration of the challenges presented by the external environment by utilising internal resources to form adaptable scenarios. Furthermore, the early period of the 1970s may be noted for its recognition of a research-based approach, as distinguished by the development of different ontological and epistemological perspectives (Furrer et al., 2008). Organisations positioned themselves as entities within a wider environmental market. Managers' roles were more oriented towards long-term planning rather than the short term. Therefore, strategy was clearly linked to overall organisational performance. This notion can also be found in Schendel and Hofer's (1979) definition of strategy, which they described as a concept that reflects organisational performance and sustainability of operations.

The early part of the 1980s saw the acknowledgement of the significance of internal resources, capabilities, competencies, and structures towards organisational sustainability (Furrer et al., 2008). There was a major shift from planning orientation towards strategic management in which a focus on the value creation that leads to a competitive advantage for organisations was adopted. During this period, well-known scholars, such as Schendel Hofer (1979) and Porter (1980), led the development of the field from relying on strategic tools to a more systematic and theoretical analysis of strategy. Therefore, strategy was a central task through which managers could direct their organisations (Jemison, 1981; Schendel and Cool, 1988). This task was performed in line with the external challenges and the internal competences of the organisations (Bracker, 1980; Jemison, 1981). Moreover, strategy was also viewed through a multi-dimensional perspective including strategy as a plan, ploy, pattern, and position (Mintzberg, 1987). Strategy was also classified into categories and processes (for instance, Quinn, 1980; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

In the early 2000s, the field recognised another change in direction. Considerable attention was assigned to approaching new paradigms of strategy execution in the field (Bonn and Christodoulou, 1996; Wilson, 1998). The focus was also towards financial and resource-based performance (Furrer et al., 2008). Furthermore, many researchers (for instance, Chaharbaghi, 2007; Hitt et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2008; Hesterly and Barney, 2010) have developed the notion of the key strategic tools as a driver of successful strategy as well as the representing the threshold for acceptable management performance. Many of the researchers' views are in line with those who advocate planning school of strategy, who argue that the process is formal, can be decomposed into steps, is defined by checklists, and is supported by specific techniques (Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999).

Following the development of the field of strategic management in 2000, more recent studies have placed considerable emphasis on the strategy process and its practice (Vaara and Lamberg, 2016). This development has offered a social substitute to the conventional concepts in the field (Whittington, 2007; Floyd et al., 2011; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). The strategy-as-practice perspective has stimulated researchers to develop the field towards an understanding of how the strategy process is undertaken and how is it is practiced within organisations (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington and Caillaet, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Golsorkhi et al., 2015). Even with this interest, researchers still tended to focus on single actor groups (Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Engen and Magnusson, 2015; Friesl and Kwon, 2016). Therefore, the area still lacks a proper understanding of how the various internal actors practice strategy within the strategy process within organisations.

2.3 Dimensions of Strategy

The field of strategic management is very broad and rich with concepts and theories, and approaches. The available literature in this field shows several trends to the ongoing study in this area of research. Since its inception, the field has evolved into the many approaches followed and applied by organisations. The literature focussed on the strategy process dimension within public organisations. Prior to engaging in the process dimension in

further detail, it is worth understanding the other strategy dimensions and the relationships between them.

Researchers, including Chakravarthy and White (2001), Mintzberg et al. (2003), De Wit and Meyer (2010), and De Wit (2017), have presented three fundamental dimensions of strategy, namely strategy content, strategy context, and strategy process. Research has been interested in understanding the relationships between these dimensions and their impact on organisational performance in general for some considerable time. These dimensions are interrelated as each dimension is influenced by the other two. That is, strategy content is influenced by strategy process and the given context. Equally, the strategy content will influence how the strategy process will be conducted in the future. In assessing the definitions of these three strategy dimensions, De Wit (2017) argued that the strategy content dimension refers to the decision and choices that drive a company to its future and can be considered the product of the strategy process. Strategy content is concerned with ‘what’ questions of strategy, such as ‘what is the strategy?’, and ‘what should the organisational strategy be?’. Denis et al. (2007) argued that strategy practice is directly associated with the strategy content at any given managerial stage of the organisation.

On the other hand, the strategy context refers to the setting in which the other strategy dimensions, the process and the content, interact. The strategy context is concerned with the ‘where’ questions of strategy, such as ‘where should the organisation operate and in which environment?’; in other words, it looks at where the strategy content and strategy process take place. Organisations are usually subject to rapid environmental changes. O’Toole and Meier (2014) explained how some of these changes can include, for instance, environmental dynamism, uncertainties, unexpected and rapid changes, and unpredictability. These forces require key actors to be constantly active and be alert to the possibility of dynamic change.

The final dimension is the strategy process, which refers to the way in which the organisational strategy emanates. It is concerned with the ‘how’, ‘who’, and ‘when’ questions of strategy. Vaara and Lamberg (2016) argued that the historical embeddedness

of strategy process research did not gain proper attention due to the absence of any real conceptual, as well as methodological, tools on which to build its foundation. In order to act strategically, actors should realise how the entire strategic management process is undertaken. Therefore, the strategy process seeks to provide answers to questions such as ‘how strategy is formed?’, ‘who are the key actors in the strategy process?’, ‘when do certain events occur?’, ‘who should be engaged in strategy?’, ‘what kind of events need to be undertaken?’ and ‘how can strategy be realised in practice?’. The following sections provide a more in-depth understanding of the application of each strategy dimension.

2.3.1 Strategy Content

Strategy content is one of the fundamental dimensions of strategy as the content ultimately represents an organisation’s direction. Research into strategy content was one of the primary focusses of management research, and the significance of strategy content has been remarked upon since the 1970s (Luoma, 2015). Strategy content basically defines a strategy, an interpretation which can be traced back to the early work of Fahey and Christensen (1986) and most recently to that of Collis and Rukstad (2008). Strategy content is also considered to be the product of the strategy process within organisations (Fahey and Christensen, 1986). The content can also be conceptualised as per the typologies of Miles et al. (1978) and that of Porter (1980), on which considerable subsequent research has depended in order to explore associated research concepts. The influential forces of the strategy context on the strategy content, including organisational size, ownership, nature, and operation, have also been explored by a number of researchers (Knight, 2001; Hodgkinson and Hughes, 2014).

In reference to the association with the strategy process from a strategy-as-practice perspective, strategy content was also seen to be interdependent on the process dimension (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006). Furthermore, studies into the content dimension were criticised as not providing a sufficiently in-depth understanding of strategies in the strategy-as-practice literature (Jarzabkowski, 2005). A recent finding by Hansen and Jacobsen (2016) showed that internal actors might in fact change the content of a strategy based on external context, which results in altering the strategy process accordingly. A similar study by Hodgkinson and Hughes (2014) on public service

performance concluded that researchers in the area of strategic content and process must acknowledge the multi-dimensional nature of strategy and should subsequently explore beyond a single strategy typology. Therefore, the strategy process cannot be isolated from the content and the context dimensions as all strategy stages are interconnected and therefore strategy formulation and implementation are ongoing longitudinal processes (Tucker and Parker, 2013).

Strategy content within the formulation process is considered successful if it can be processed to implementation. This content within the strategy formulation process is considered to be dynamic, and relies on certain factors including the maturity of management leadership, the degree of employee involvement, the organisational culture, and the link between the implementation stage and the performance measures (McAdam and Bailie, 2002). The following sections will introduce the other two dimensions, the context and the process, in order to clarify the relationship between the three dimensions.

2.3.2 Strategy Context

An understanding the strategy context dimension helps researchers to determine how strategy practices are undertaken within a specific environment. As suggested by De Lima Fedato et al. (2017), strategic management is an inherently contextual activity. In the same vein, Jarzabkowski (2005) claimed that managers develop and adapt their strategies according the environments in which their organisation operates. Furthermore, there have been several recent studies which have examined the influence of contextual factors on the formulation and execution of organisational strategy (Huang et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2013). In the following sections, a reflection of strategy context will be given for both the private and the public sectors in order to draw conclusions as to the similarities and differences between these two sectors.

2.3.2.1 Strategy in the Private Sector

The academic debate on the differences between the private and public sectors is continuous, and can be considered from various perspectives. Researchers have, for the most part, examined the main differences between the private and public sectors through applying various organisational, economics, and political theories, generally concluding

that there are three main differences, namely ownership, financial aspects, and the control mechanism (Andrews et al., 2011; Hvidman and Andersen, 2013). In terms of ownership, private sector organisations are owned by shareholders who can easily adopt or modify their strategies to respond to environmental changes. Furthermore, in terms of funding, private sector organisations mainly generate their funds from the revenues associated with selling goods and services. Private sector control mechanisms are ruled by the market and the changes in their environment. Moreover, owners and managers endeavour to maximise their shareholders' capital value in accordance with the primary aim of the sector. Despite the fact that these differences represent clear distinctions between the private and public sectors, there are still ongoing investigations within both sectors as to how strategy can be undertaken (Meier and O'Toole, 2011).

These differences between private and public sector organisations play a significant role in investigating how strategy is practiced in each sector. In this regard, Nartisa et al. (2012) argued that since 1950, and for the more than 30 years subsequent, strategic planning was known to for its use as a guiding approach within the private sector. The various strategic tools have been intensively used by private sector decision-makers, where financial performance is their top priority; the private sector seems to focus more on profit than other social perspectives. Organisations within the private sector seem to be reasonably interactive in their efforts to cope with rapid environmental changes, mainly in terms of financial values. Consequently, actors in the private sector can be seen to engage in innovative activities that allow for the creation and maintenance of shareholder value (Schmidt, 2008).

The adoption of strategic management within the private sector has assisted organisations in building a strong base of strategy practices that enhance their performance (Van Veen-Dirks, 2010; Bjorklund et al., 2012). In the private sector, other attributes including culture and leadership style are also important to strategic stability (Jansen, 2011). There is also substantial evidence that other factors contributing to the strategy practices and excellence are shared between both the private and public sectors (Pella et al., 2013; Ramaseshan et al., 2013; Van der Merwe and Nienaber, 2015; Elbanna and Fadol, 2016;

Gębczyńska, 2016). These factors also seem to affect the goal orientation of organisations in both sectors.

In a comparative study between of the two sectors, Helden and Reichard (2016) found out that although both need goal-driven indicators, strategy practice was more driven in the private sector than the public sector due to pressure from competitors and the associated evaluation of strategic choices. This distinction has stimulated the interest of researchers in the field to explore the applicability of strategic management practices in the public sector. As argued by Hansen and Ferlie (2016), and equally by Hansen and Jacobsen (2016), a growing amount of research has, in recent years, sought to apply strategic management practice in public sector organisations. Thus, to give a more comprehensive understanding, the following section will give an overview of the strategic management in the public and voluntary sectors.

2.3.2.2 Strategic Management in Public and Voluntary Sectors

The available literature in public administration often differentiates between public and private sector organisations in terms of the strategic management process (Boyne, 2002; Vining, 2011). Strategic management, as enacted in the public sector, is still considered a premature measure in academic research, particularly given that strategic management research is still in its infancy (Johnsen, 2015). Strategic management is seen to provide significant benefits for profit, non-profit, governmental, and non-governmental organisations. It further provides a framework to control various activities, allocate resources, support objectives and decisions, and enhance organisational performance (Aboramadan and Borgonovi, 2016). The frameworks of strategic management that are relevant to public sector organisations have been evaluated by Boyne and Walker (2004). In their study, they criticised research which assumed that organisations depend only on a single strategy. Elbanna (2006) argued that recent studies into strategic management within public sector organisations normally focusses on either a singly approach to strategy formulation or at best a very limited range of strategy options. These studies also linked strategic management in the public sector with the associated organisational outcomes (Poister et al., 2010). Another study linked the effect of strategy practice with the performance of public sector organisations (Meier et al., 2006). It was also argued

that not all public sector organisations have a clear strategy formulation process (Andrews et al., 2009). Therefore, strategic management was also found to be crucial to the public sector (Meier and O'Toole, 2007; Ugboro et al., 2011; Johnsen, 2015). Following in the same footsteps as the private sector, the public sector can similarly create value for various actors (Talbot, 2011).

Generally, public sector organisations do not focus on competition in terms of profit (Hansen and Jacobsen, 2016) but rather on cooperation between other public organisations (McGuire, 2006). Equally, Bovaird (2003) and Bryson (2004) argued that public sector organisations are normally expected to collaborate, and not compete, with each other. Public sector organisations are therefore sought to introduce collective and public values (Stewart and Ranson, 1994; Moore, 2000). However, managing the performance of such a social mission is a challenging task for the associated actors (Drucker, 2010; McHatton et al., 2011). The influential factors on strategy process also differ between the public and private sector contexts. According to Euske (2003), one of the defining differences between public and private sector organisations is the focus on a political element or profit element, respectively. Equally, Bryson (2004) argued that both private and public sectors have criteria for, and indicators of success; however, these indicators are largely economic and market-based for the private sector, while they are more centred around creating social values for the public sector.

The difference between these sectors is also related to how each practices strategy and manages the strategy process. Rainey and Bozeman (2000) argued that private sector tends to have low levels of bureaucracy and makes considerable effort to balance the efficiency and effectiveness among their work processes as the time factor is normally considered to be a strong financial indicator. In contrast, public sector organisations tend to have high levels of bureaucracy with a slow work flow as the time factor is normally represented in a working unit to be accomplished. In terms of environmental response, as noted by Boyne (2002), public organisations often deal with complexity in terms of actors as each may have a conflicting need to the other. Meyer (2006) argued that conflict among managers may arise as a natural result of different interpretations of organisational

strategy. However, the private sector tends to face less complexity in this sense as the actors involved normally share the same financial interest.

Strategies are often formulated by government or the top-level management of public organisations. This view could be due to the perception of the public sector as being risk-averse, bureaucratic, and trustworthy (Bernier and Hafsi, 2007); external actors expect public sector strategies to be implemented in a proper manner. This notion seems to influence how actors practice strategy within the strategy process in terms of their response to dynamic changes in their environment. Unlike the private sector, actors in the public organisations tend to have less freedom in their responses to various environmental changes, even though the situation may clearly require immediate action or change. According to O'Toole and Meier (2014), environmental dynamism, uncertainties, rapid changes, and unpredictability are all considered to be part of a typical environment. Boyne and Walker (2004) argued that through formal strategic planning, organisations can adopt strategies to respond to the environment based on rational, logical, and objective analysis. Thompson (2000) further suggested that strategy formulation and strategy implementation as a sequential activity is a key element of a workable approach.

Based on the above differences, the process and the content of strategy also differs between the private and public sectors as the process of developing a strategy is interconnected in the former and not in the latter. Not only is the strategy formulation process considered difficult in the public sector, it is also widely acknowledged that the strategy implementation process is a particularly challenging aspect of strategic management (Andrews et al., 2017). One of the difficulties facing organisations in this regard is that managers often depend on one approach to implementation (Nutt, 1987). Considering the practice perspective, the strategy implementation approach often reflects the difficulty strategy process experience in real practice (Andrews et al., 2017). According to Joyce (2004), the strategy process is more difficult to manage, and it is considered to be more complex, in public sector organisations than in the private sector.

In their research, Hu et al. (2014) found that strategic management has a positive impact on the way non-governmental organisations serve their community's needs in terms of

delivering programs and services. Equally, Reid et al. (2014) found that regardless of the size of the organisation and the available budget, most successful organisations indicated their strategic management efforts to be the reason for their success. Another study by Aboramadan and Borgonovi (2016) showed that the adoption of strategy practices is positively correlated with both financial and non-financial performance within organisations. However, these positive outcomes cannot be realised without effective collaboration between actors within the strategy process.

2.3.3 Strategy Process

Researches in the area of strategy process have acknowledged the complexity of strategic development due to the number of parties involved (Mirabeau and Maguire, 2014). Although the term strategy process would appear to be a set of rules and stages to be followed, it is actually more of a philosophical approach towards how to successfully apply strategies in reality. Rasch and Chia (2009) argued that increasing efforts can be seen in the literature to understand the strategic management process and each major step this includes due to the importance of the process in the daily activities of organisations. Thus, the aim of the section is to provide an insight into how organisations combine courses of action and how the elements of the strategic management process interact with each other.

The concept of strategy process is one of the fundamental strategic management dimensions (Pettigrew, 1997; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Jarzabkowski, 2005). Recent studies into the strategy process, particularly in the areas of public management, have treated the strategy process as a relatively abstract concept (Hansen and Jacobsen, 2016) with a particular focus on the implementation of strategy (Hodgkinson and Hughes, 2014). Various studies into the strategy process have showed that the concept is important for organisations, but only offered limited information as to how the concept might practically unfold (Hansen and Jacobsen, 2016). It is further argued that the historical underpinnings and implications of the strategy process are only partially understood (Vaara and Lamberg, 2016).

According to Van de Ven (1992), there are numerous process models available in the strategic management literature; hence, strategy process is used in many different ways. To reduce the resultant confusion, three interpretations of strategy process were offered by Van de Ven (1992). The first interpretation of strategy process is that of the logic process that describes the relationship between interacting organisational variables. This logic process is considered to be an unrealistic assumption with regards to the linear sequence in which activities within organisations unfold (Van de Ven and Huber, 1990). The second interpretation of strategy process is that of the category of concepts or factors which refers to individuals' practices within organisations. This includes organisational inputs such as individuals' efforts, applied techniques, strategy formulation aspects, strategy implementation aspects, and strategy-making tools. The third interpretation of strategy process is that of a sequence of events that explains how circumstances change. This latter interpretation assumes a historical perspective that focusses on incidents over the duration of any given phenomenon experienced.

Integrating the concept of strategy process into the strategic management perspective results in a number of stages that capture a wider picture of the concept. This integration is seen in Mintzberg et al.'s (1998) argument of strategic management as being representative of the practices required to achieve organisational objectives. Boal and Bryson (1987) argued that the strategic planning process should contain at least four stages, which include the context of the strategy, the planning and implementation process itself, the final outcome of the change and, finally, the interactions between these three elements. However, Hesterly and Barney (2010) divided this integration into three steps: the strategy formulation step, the strategy implementation step, and the evaluation step for the overall strategy. This is consistent with Dess and Lumpkin (2003) and De Wit and Meyer (2010) who claimed that strategy analysis, strategy formulation, and strategy implementation are all considered to be the central ongoing process of the strategic management concept. Therefore, the stages of strategic management do not necessarily represent a linear sequence but rather indicate certain interdependences between stages which must naturally overlap due any given course of action. In general, Figure 2.1 represents the three stages of the strategic management process.

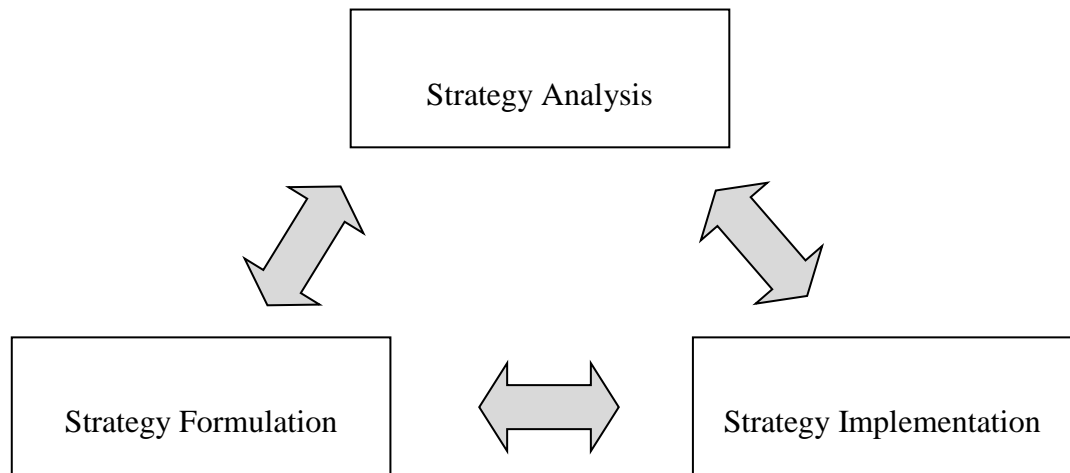


Figure 2.1: Stages of Strategic Management Process

(Source: Adapted from Dess and Lumpkin; 2003; De Wit and Meyer, 2010)

According to Dess and Lumpkin (2003), strategic analysis represents the preliminary stage in the strategic management process. This stage includes analysis of organisational goals, ensuring that these goals can be achieved, analysing the organisation suitability and feasibility, and dealing with various environmental concerns. Analysing internal strengths and weaknesses and assessing external opportunities and threats – that is, a classic SWOT analysis – is also implemented within this stage (Hunger and Wheelen, 1996). Moreover, Dess (1987) clarified that this stage should also include the mission of the organisation, its specific objectives, the development of the strategies, and the design of policies as appropriate. In the following sub-sections, the strategy formulation and the strategy implementation processes are further explained to better understand how these processes are undertaken at each stage.

2.3.3.1 Strategy Formulation Process

Generally, researchers use the terms, ‘strategy formulation’, ‘strategy formation’, and ‘strategy planning’ interchangeably based on each relevant context, while others see these terms as being complementary to each other. The strategy formulation process includes planning activities and initiating decisions to fulfil the organisational objectives. It integrates the basic fundamentals of strategy including, for instance, stating mission and mandates, recognising core values, approaching the vision and improving it onward,

evaluating strengths and weaknesses, initiating strategic goals and objectives, assessing the feasibility analysis for achieving these goals and objectives, conducting a situational analysis related to the micro- and macro-environment of the organisation, and recognising the tactical issues that face organisations. Burgelman (1991) defined the strategy formulation process as a stage in which individuals engage in activities to direct the organisational resources towards the implementation stage. Others view it as a process in which an organisation's strategy is created and developed (Rouleau and Balogun, 2011).

The strategy formulation stage is essential for influential actors as it assists them in setting the overall direction of their organisations' strategies and to develop scenarios to achieve their desired targets (Pasha and Poister, 2017). In terms of its process, researchers are conflicted in their interpretation of the strategy formulation process. For instance, Liedtka and Rosenblum (1996) viewed the process to be cognitive, as they believe that developing organisational strategies is a logical process in itself. Others have advocated the idea that strategies, along with the formulation process, should emerge from actors' behaviour as dependent on the concepts and the other processes that drive the organisation forward (Stonehouse and Pemberton, 2002; Bryson, 2004). For many researchers, the formulation of the strategy process is seen as a reflection of strategic planning and strategy-making process. The process is viewed as a proactive approach, which helps the organisations gain a better position in an uncertain world (Amram and Kulatilaka, 1999).

The formulation process was also extensively explained through the planning and learning schools of thought for strategy (Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999). In the planning school, analytical tools are utilised to evaluate the position of organisations, and such processes lead to the design of suitable strategies. This argument assumes that expected changes can be easily predicted and therefore the process should be flexible. The learning school, on the other hand, calls for a more rational approach towards the formulation process by minimising the prediction of environmental changes (Wiltbank et al., 2006). It also views the changes surrounding organisations as a learning experience that could be considered part of the formulation process. Even with the comprehensive view of the process offered by the learning school, this does not explain how organisations direct their activities within their strategy formulation process. Generally, strategy-

making processes are likely to differ from one organisation to another and even within the various levels of a given organisation (Daniels and Bailey, 1999).

In many research studies, the formulation of strategies and the strategy-making process have relied on the planning school of thought. One justification behind this could be due to the complexity of the strategy process itself, which takes into consideration the practice of the individuals involved as viewed by the learning school. Furthermore, the complexity extends to other soft factors including culture, power dispositions and actors' behaviour. Therefore, any kind of consensus among researchers in terms of describing a suitable model for the formulation process would appear to be unrealistic. This disagreement probably sheds light on why the subfield of strategy formulation saw its greatest levels of interest until 2010, and then declined afterwards (White et al., 2016). Therefore, the formulation process is well understood as an area of study, and recent research has instead focussed on the process beyond the formulation stage.

2.3.3.2 Strategy Implementation Process

Strategy execution is sometimes used as a synonym of strategy implementation. Unlike the strategy formulation process, the strategy implementation process is viewed as how managers direct the formulated strategies into action. It involves managing all the available internal resources to the organisation to ensure the implementation process is successful (Dess and Lumpkin, 2003). Some have argued that the implementation process is more complicated than formulating the strategy, and strategies which cannot be realised do not serve organisations (Allio, 2007). Equally, Hrebiniak (2006) asserted that even though the strategy formulation process is difficult, making the strategy work or implementing it is even more so.

Some researchers have found that the implementation stage should be completed when the surroundings change, while others understand it to continue until the intended benefits have been fully realised (Gottschalk, 1999). Despite the importance of strategy implementation and its process, the implementation concept remains poorly – and inadequately – understood (Gupta and Govindarajan, 1984; Walderssee and Sheather, 1996). The implementation process interacts across the organisational levels and, indeed,

within each given level of the organisation; therefore, it is a process that operates in both multilevel and multiunit directions. Consequently, the implementation process varies in length and in its level of complexity. Therefore, the role of actors in the implementation stage within the context of the entire strategy process is critical to realising organisational strategies.

The implementation process is also a complicated one within strategy practice (Heracleous, 2000; Miller et al., 2008). In the same vein, Beer et al. (1990) suggested that organisations' resistance to strategy implementation is usually a result of an unsuccessful implementation process rather than the strategy itself. This failure in the implementation process is also a reflection of a failure in most strategy processes within organisations. Due to the fact that the implementation process requires the collaboration of internal actors from various levels and units, the implementation process can be considered a multiplex process (Greer et al., 2017). Internal, as well as external, factors, including political concerns, culture, structure of organisation, implemented systems, and managers' practices, can make the implementation process even more complex (Heracleous, 2000).

Since the 1980s, a number of researchers have attempted to introduce strategy implementation frameworks that allow for the realisation of organisational strategies in a logical order (Waterman, 1982; Scholz, 1987). However, these frameworks are considered to be somewhat idealistic, and indeed do not reflect the dynamics of how strategies within the implementation process are actually realised. Okumus (2001, 2003) argued that such frameworks lack any explanation as to how the elements introduced interact with one another and what effects they may have on an organisation's overall performance. Equally, Zajac et al. (2000) asserted that understanding such frameworks is difficult as it requires a strong strategic fit between various organisational elements. Furthermore, a number of other studies have also investigated the challenges to the implementation process and the key qualities for successful implementation of strategies (Elbanna et al., 2016). The following section will introduce some of these challenges.

2.3.3.3 Barriers to the Strategy Implementation Process

From the above literature, it might be suggested that formulating strategies is simpler than implementing them. Researchers have built on this point to investigate the limitations and obstacles affecting a successful strategy implementation in considerable depth. There are many studies in this area of research and, based on the available literature review, this area appears to be almost saturated. The following paragraphs provides a critical review of some related studies in this area.

One of the more well-known studies in this area was conducted by Alexander (1985) who identified ten strategic implementation barriers in his investigation of medium- to large-size organisations in the United States. He found that most issues were related to more time spent than required in terms of implementing the organisational strategy, poor coordination of various activities, various crises, uncontrollable external forces, poor monitoring systems, insufficient employee capabilities, lack of identification of implementation activities, inadequate instructions and employee training, and inadequate leadership and direction. Kargar and Blumenthal (1994) conducted a study on banks in North Carolina and found that the ten problems identified by Alexander (1985) were further applicable to the selected banks, though to a lesser extent.

Another study by Eisenstat (1993) found that most strategy implementation barriers are due to difficulties in communication between actors and their competences in the workplace. His study concluded that obstacles include ineffective coordination and implementation of activities, insufficient employee capabilities, inadequate training and instruction provided to the lower level of employees, and inadequate direction from leadership to the lower level of employees. Some of these findings were essentially identical to that of Alexander (1985). Equally, Wessel (1993) grouped the barriers into six major obstacles including conflicting priorities, dysfunctional top team, style of management, conflicts between functions, inappropriate communication, and insufficient management development.

A study by Heide et al. (2002), which examined a Norwegian ferry-cruise company, introduced organisational culture and political forces as possible barriers to successful

strategy implementation. However, Taslak (2004) placed more emphasis on the strategic role of key strategy formulators as well as the time to implement tasks that address organisational strategy being a critical factor in leading to their successful implementation. Sorooshian et al. (2010) offered a classification of strategy implementation barriers into three major groups, namely the leadership style of the organisation, the organisational structure, and the workforce within the organisation.

These studies focussed on the barriers to the strategy implementation process only. Even more recent studies (for instance, Pella et al., 2013; Van der Merwe and Nienaber, 2015) reached some of the previous conclusions but in different contexts. However, although these studies showed similar findings, they also discussed the notion of a number of new insights that need to be considered while implementing strategies. One of the insights they felt deserved attention was the lack of consequences among strategy stages. Drawing from this point, it can be argued that the realisation of strategy is not necessarily dependent on factors which affect the strategy implementation phase; it could rather depend on how the internal actors' practice that strategy during the transition process between two different strategy stages (i.e., the formulation and the implementation stages).

2.3.3.4 Dynamics between Strategy Formulation and Implementation

Studies in the strategic management field seem to focus either on the strategy formulation or strategy implementation stages. One of the problems facing the successful implementation of strategies is that researchers often treat strategy formulation and strategy implementation as entirely independent from each other (Noble, 1999). Strategy implementation has received less attention from researchers than strategy formulation. Studies have emphasised each stage intensively; for instance, Bruton et al. (2004) and equally Elbanna (2007, 2008) argued that most studies of strategic management in developed countries focussed more on strategy formulation than implementation.

In the same vein, a number of studies provided evidence for strategy formulation within certain organisations; however, the means by which to convert these strategies into effect was not clear and was not sufficiently proven (Al-Shaikh and Hamami, 1994; Hamami

and Al-Shaikh, 1995; Aldehayyat and Anchor, 2008). Moreover, Atkinson (2006) stated that despite the importance of strategy implementation, greater attention is generally paid to strategy formulation than strategy implementation. He further claimed that one of the main reasons for this discrepancy is that researchers often underestimate the importance of such areas of research. Equally, Harrington et al. (2004) argued that even with the available number of studies on the strategic management process, the focus of these studies is more on how strategy formulation processes are undertaken.

Other researchers have focussed more on the strategy implementation stage than on the formulation (Alexander, 1985; Eisenstat, 1993; Wessel, 1993; Kargar and Blumenthal, 1994; Al-Ghamdi, 1998; Beer and Eisenstat, 2000; Heide et al., 2002; Taslak, 2004; Sorooshian et al., 2010; Hosseini et al., 2016; Katsuhiko, 2017). These studies have investigated a number of strategy implementation aspects including frameworks, challenges, barriers, and solutions that have led them to form a clear understanding about the concept. For instance, less than 50% of formulated strategies are ultimately implemented (Hambrick and Canella, 1989; Mintzberg, 1994; Miller, 2002). In a similar vein, Sorooshian et al. (2010) and Sorooshian and Dodangeh (2013) concluded that the recent focus on strategy implementation is due to a lack of understanding of the process required between the formulation and the implementation stages.

As opposed to the fixed strategy perspective, Mintzberg (1987, 1990) proposed the concept of strategy development that emerges over time in response to environmental changes. It was further extended to study how top management makes decisions in response to these various changes. Mintzberg and Water (1985) investigated the relationship between five types of strategies and that include the intended strategy, the deliberate strategy, the emergent strategy, the realised strategy, and the unrealised strategy. It was assumed that understanding the differences between these types of strategies will clarify the general understanding of the dynamic of the strategy development sequence. Rose and Cray (2013) argued since that time a controversial debate was ongoing as to the nature of the strategy itself, and how it can be managed in different forms. This debate has further created the same tensions among researchers in the field. Even more recent studies often base their arguments on their investigation of

the deliberate and emergent strategy formation themes (Glaister and Hughes, 2008; Rudd et al., 2008; Sminia, 2009; Rose and Cray, 2013). Therefore, the next section will critically assess the conceptual forms of strategies for a better understanding of the dynamic between the strategy formulation and the implementation stages.

2.3.3.5 Conceptual Forms of Strategy

This aim of this section is to address the differences between the types of strategies proposed by Mintzberg and Water (1985) in order to clarify the focus of current research in this regard. Strategies within the formulation and the implementation stages are intertwined in a broader strategy process. Mintzberg (1994) further argued that formulated strategies remain intentional and their implementation becomes deliberate before being realised. Therefore, intentional strategies which are not realised are ignored. Furthermore, a deliberate strategy has to be performed as intended, and to fulfil three minimum joint conditions which should serve to enable successful strategy implementation (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). These conditions include, firstly, that the intended strategy has to be announced and explained within the organisational context and that all organisational members should be informed. Secondly, actors should agree with the intended strategy for an organisational collective intention. Lastly, the available organisational resources, competencies, and capabilities should be directed towards achieving this objective. On the other hand, emergent strategy represents strategies without previous intention. The researchers concluded that strategy formulation can be described by the term ‘intended strategy’, while strategy implementation is represented by ‘realised strategy’. Maloney (1997) claimed that strategies may be unintentional or emergent in the way they develop from what organisations are actually doing.

Generally, not all intended strategies are actually realised due to the fact that organisations are surrounded by internal and external forces which in turn affect the strategy process. Quinn (1980) argued that a strategy process which allows actions or scenarios to emerge may force an organisation to remodel the chosen strategies according to the external environment changes. Equally, Harrington et al. (2004) claimed that internal actors may find that additional strategies emerge during the strategic implementation even though their original intention is actually realised. Some researchers also draw attention to the

strategy process within the firm's internal or external practice. It was argued that deliberate strategies may be transformed during the implementation process through the influence of an emergent process (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Grant, 2003; Harrington et al., 2004). The literature further acknowledges the distinction between the content of a strategy and the strategy process (Dangayach and Deshmukh, 2001; Barnes, 2001).

Understanding the conceptual forms of organisational strategy helps to inform the dynamic between formulating strategies and implementing them. It further helps the understanding of how actors actually practice the strategy when transiting from one stage to another, and who is involved. In this regard, Mintzberg (1978) argued that although the formulation of strategies is assumed to be assigned to the top management team, and implementing these strategies is assigned to lower level actors, these two assumptions are not often true. Mintzberg (1978), and equally Mintzberg and Waters (1985), based this assumption on three major arguments. They claimed that it is almost impossible that both formulators and implementers have exactly the same knowledge of the transited strategy. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult for actors to predict the changes in the environment in advance. They also suggested that the implementation phase may require further formulation of additional strategies. Such arguments reveal how complicated the strategy process is and why it is bounded by this complexity.

Mintzberg and Waters' assumptions draw the attention of the participative role of different actors in organisations in terms of for whom the strategy should be designated and at which stage. Some researchers, including Bourgeois (1980), Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984), and Hart (1992) see the strategy formulation stage as a key role of the executive management team only. Other researchers have a different view as they stressed the importance of involving all organisational members at different levels in the strategy process (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Hart, 1992; Parnell et al., 2002; Kash et al., 2014). Moreover, Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984) emphasised the vital role that internal actors can play in the strategy process. Their argument is based on the fact that that the strategy process is an organisational-level phenomenon, which creates a pattern of behaviour that exists within the organisational context.

Likewise, DeFeo and Janssen (2001) concluded that organisations should encourage strategy cooperation among departments and further encourage both managers and employees to carry out planned activities. This further reflects the importance of ensuring effective communication between organisational members during the strategy process (Espinosa et al., 2015). Hence, it is vital to explore the role of different internal actors in the strategy process in order to form a clear understanding of their contribution to the organisational strategy and how the strategy is actually practiced. In order to make it clearer, Mintzberg and Waters (1985) proposed a block diagram for the conceptual forms of strategy; this block diagram has been further developed in this research to reflect the necessity of actors' practices within a strategy mechanism process, as shown in Figure 2.2.

Mintzberg and Waters provided the conceptual forms of strategy in which one type may lead to, or result in, another form of strategy. Although they emphasised the importance of actors' participation in the strategy process, their model lacks any explanation as to how the link between intended and realised strategies is practiced, that is, the actors' practices within the transitioning process of strategies. Hence, an adaptation of their model has been developed to emphasise the critical role of the mechanisms of strategy and internal actors' practices within this process. Therefore, to better articulate the roles of the various actors in the strategy process, the following section will introduce the strategy-as-practice concept as the most recent research focus in the strategy field.

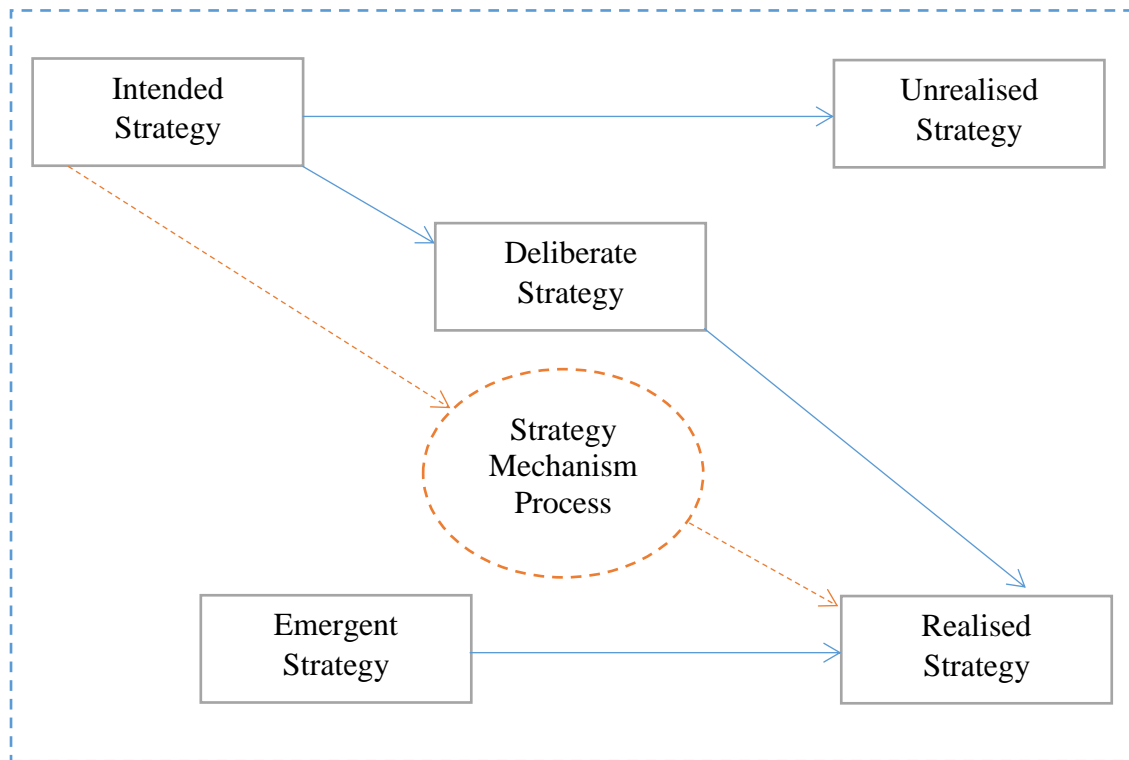


Figure 2.2: The Conceptual Forms of Strategy
 (Source: Adapted from Mintzberg and Waters, 1985)

2.4 Strategy-As-Practice

Following the development of strategic management in 2000, researchers were motivated to advance the field by understanding how strategy practice is undertaken by its various actors. Organisations consequently began involving context-specific understanding within strategic process research (Vaara and Lamberg, 2016). Therefore, more recent studies in the field have seen a considerable shift towards the strategy process and practice (Vaara and Lamberg, 2016). The strategy process and practice perspective has provided a social, as well as an organisational, alternative to conventional perspectives on strategic management (Whittington, 2007; Floyd et al., 2011; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). The strategy-as-practice concept has stimulated researchers' interest in understanding the detailed activities of how strategy process is undertaken and, consequently, how the practices of strategy have grown (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington and Caillaet, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Golsorkhi et al., 2015). However, the contributions made by the various actors in the strategy process and

practice still need further exploration. The following sections will introduce the strategy-as-practice perspective and its relationship with the strategy process.

2.4.1 Strategy-As-Practice Perspective

As explained in the above literature, there has been considerable progress towards development in the field of management studies. One of these developments is the emergence of new perspectives in which strategy-as-practice has emerged as one of the more recent perspectives in the field. The research at the early stages of strategic management focussed more on historical analysis (Chandler, 1962, 1977), while later studies revealed a greater emphasis on case studies (Burgelman, 1983; Pettigrew, 1985). These two trends have played a key role in the formation of strategic process research (Burgelman, 1983; Pettigrew, 1985), consequently involving context-specific understanding within strategic process research (Vaara and Lamberg, 2016). The key aspect of previous strategy-as-practice studies has been its focus on organisational practices which influence the strategy process and its outcome (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Therefore, more recent studies in the field have seen a considerable shift towards the strategy process and practice (Vaara and Lamberg, 2016).

The study of strategy-as-practice initially started with the empirical research of Mintzberg (1973), when he observed five different managers in order to gain an understanding of what managers do to accomplish their strategies; however, the picture in this regard was not particularly clear as the main focus of this research assumed a theoretical perspective towards strategy. As a research basis, strategy-as-practice is concerned with several queries as to how strategy works. For instance, how strategy is undertaken, who is undertaking it, what tools they use, how they use them, what they do and what impacts these queries have on forming the organisational strategy (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). The primary focus of the strategy-as-practice perspective is to show that strategising relies on organisational practices which affect the process and the outcome of a given strategy (Vaara and Whittington, 2012).

The fundamental basis of the strategy-as-practice perspective in fact relies on three focal points, namely practitioners, practices, and praxis (Whittington, 2006; Angwin et al.,

2009; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). According to Jarzabkowski (2005), Whittington (2006a), and Johnson et al. (2007), practitioners are viewed as those who perform the work of strategy, though this view also extends to the senior management. It might include, for instance, policy-makers, managers, and consultants who regulate praxis and practices. Practices, on the other hand, refer to the social activities and material tools through the strategy process. It also refers to the shared understanding that exists among individuals, including discourses, norms, traditions, values, policies, procedures, concepts, technologies, and tools, which allow the strategy effort to be realised (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007). Practices are also subject to continuous change and reformation. The third focal point is the praxis, which is viewed as the interaction of activities in which organisational strategy is accomplished. Figure 2.3 represents a conceptual framework by which to analyse the strategy-as-practice perspective.

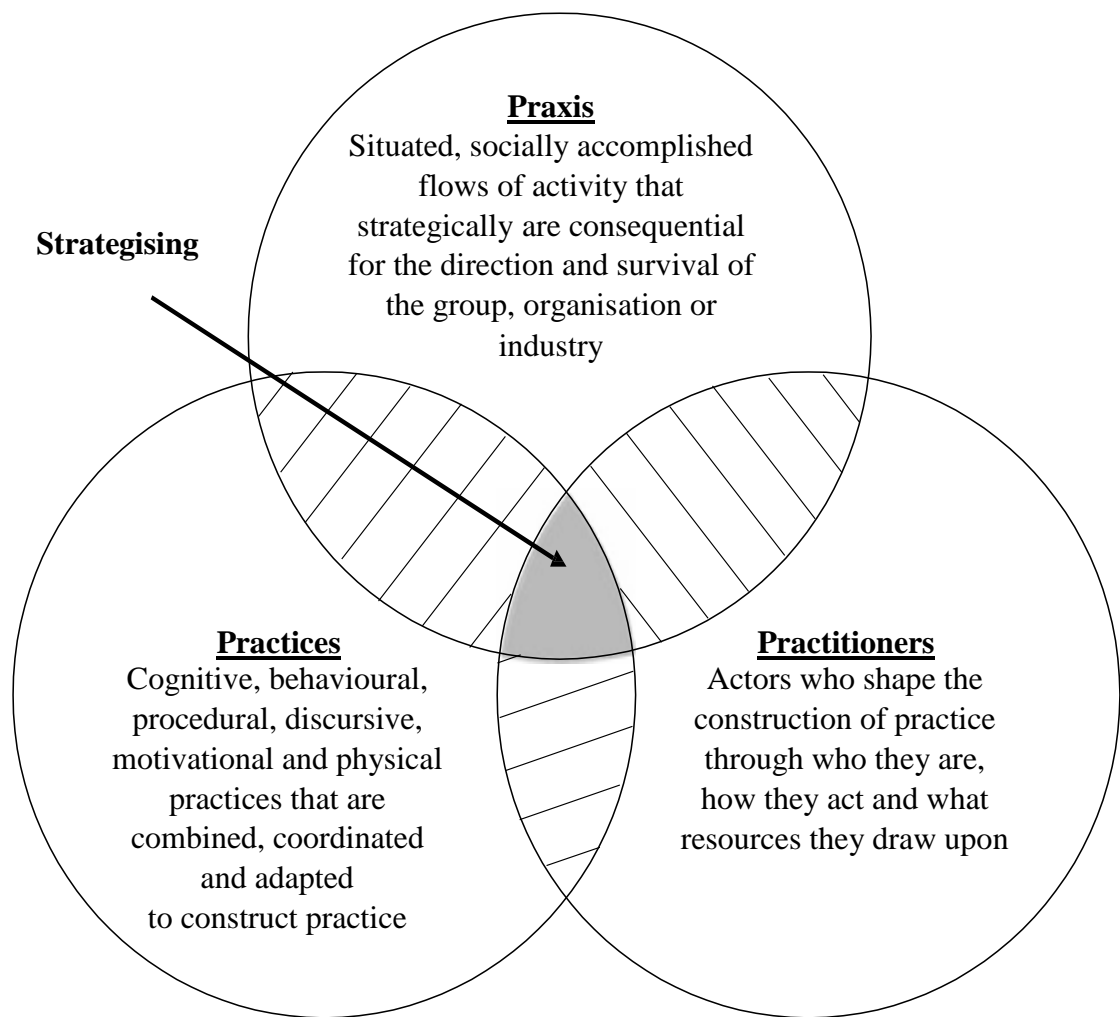


Figure 2.3: A conceptual Framework of the Strategy-as-Practice Perspective
 (Source: Adapted from Jarzabkowski et al., 2007)

Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) argued that the framework can be helpful in linking some of the key queries within strategy-as-practice research. As shown in the figure, the elements are separated but interconnected, hence the action of one element has an effect on the other two elements. Strategising occurs in the centre of the three elements, and therefore any research question will link the three elements in an inclusive manner. As the successful implementation of strategies is considered to be the desired objective for organisations, a critical evaluation of the strategy-as-practice elements reveals that strategy implementation is seen as a process that consists of different practices that each contribute to successful implementation (Johnson et al., 2007). However, there are limited strategy-as-practice studies that focus on implementation activities (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Laine and Vaara, 2007). Authors have attempted to understand the

interaction dynamic among the strategy-as-practice elements that leads to successful strategy implementation. For instance, Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007) have looked at how strategising occurs within organisations through their identification of strategy activities including execution, initiation, coordination, and reflection during the strategic process. Equally, Laine and Vaara (2007) assessed strategy activities when making sense of strategies, and also looked at how different practitioners pursue their organisational goals.

According to Johnson et al. (2007), strategy-as-practice examines what actually happens inside the organisation with respect to the various level processes. Every strategy demonstrates a new practice (Seidl, 2007). The concept further draws the attention of how strategy actors perform their daily strategic activities in an organisational practice (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This reveals that strategy-as-practice is an integral part of the strategic planning cycle. Jarzabkowski (2004) referred the term practice as the actions of managers in accomplishing their strategy and making it work. Johnson et al. (2003, 2007) argued that theories in strategy tend to ignore the role of social actors. Whittington et al. (2002) argued that strategy research has been affected by various organisational concerns which have created the necessity to include the other human factors in strategy studies. In this regard, Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007) investigated the interactions across different strategy teams between central and business unit levels and found that the interactions and behaviour of strategic teams change over time. This further suggests a thorough investigation into regular managerial practice to assess how both top and middle management practice the strategy-making process. The strategy-as-practice further reflects the collaborative mechanism of strategy-making in organisations (Vilà and Canales, 2008). In this regard, Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007) concluded that there were six activities practiced at multiple organisational levels that allowed them to reach a clear understanding of how the practice of strategy actually works. These activities comprise executing, initiating, coordinating, supporting, collaborating and shaping the strategy context.

To date, a number of research efforts considering strategy-as-practice have focussed mainly on the role of top managers in formal strategy-making practices (Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009) or how strategy is undertaken at the

board level (Hendry et al., 2010). This in turn has addressed the calls for further research to explore the role of different management levels and functional levels across the organisation (Miller et al., 2008; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009). In the same vein, Rouleau (2005) stressed the importance of middle managers within strategy practice. Equally, Mantere (2008) has emphasised the importance of the role of middle managers in implementing changes in organisations due to the experience they have regarding certain given situations, which places them in an excellent position to contribute to and act upon strategy practice. Balogun (2007) argued that middle managers practice the strategy as an act of editing. They are further supposed to balance the content and the process of strategic changes for better situational interpretations (Balogun and Johnson, 2004, 2005). Some researchers (Johnson et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) have seen the strategy-as-practice perspective as an encouraging topic through which to explore those outside the senior management team, and further called for greater attention to micro-level practices. Therefore, this thesis sets out to address the gap that goes beyond the participation of top and middle managers in one stage of the strategic planning process, as it further addresses their interaction and contribution to how they undertake strategy practice from the strategy formulation to the strategy implementation phase. For further clarification, the following section introduces the relationship between the strategy process and its practice.

2.4.2 The Relationship between Strategy Process and Practice

Many studies in the strategic management field have investigated macro-level firm behaviour and, indeed, the influence of such behaviour on firm performance (Bromiley and Rau, 2014). However, as introduced earlier in the above literature, the strategy-as-practice perspective is concerned with how the strategy process occurs at the micro-level of organisations (Johnson et al., 2007). Strategy-as-practice is seen to have commonalities with other approaches of strategy such as the strategy process (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985, Vaara and Whittington, 2012), and micro-foundations of strategy (Foss, 2011). One of the main strengths gained by the strategy-as-practice perspective is that it uncovers what is happening inside the process (Brown and Duguid, 2001). Therefore, it provides us with an understanding as to what is actually happening while strategising and how this might be interpreted. The micro-level studies of strategy are also prevalent in the growing

body of literature that focusses upon how people actually perform activities (Cook and Brown, 1999). Within the strategy-as-practice perspective, the strategy is viewed as situated and socially accomplished activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Strategy was also seen as an activity that allowed an organisation to adopt strategic outcomes, directions, survival, and competitive advantage (Johnson et al., 2003). On the other hand, the term 'strategising' is viewed as the actions, interactions and negotiations of various actors within an organisation (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Strategising is further viewed as an interaction of activities through the practices of multiple actors in organisations (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

The strategy-as-practice adds important qualitative insights to the firm process (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Carter et al., 2008) as, indeed, do the older traditions observed in the strategy process (Bromiley and Rau, 2014). Although there are some commonalities between the practice perspective and the strategy process, there are also some differences. As argued by Vaara and Whittington (2012), the primary focus of the process perspective was on the managerial agency represented by individual managers or teams, while the practice perspective is widely focussed on the social practice and structuring role of organisations. Furthermore, unlike the classic process perspective, strategy-as-practice is less concerned with economic results and more with other indicators such as the role of practitioners in influencing certain practices or specific sets of actors (Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Despite the differences between strategy-as-practice and the strategy process, both remain one part of the same family that help to concur a shared understanding of actual social practice within a real strategy process (Floyd et al., 2011).

The difficulty with strategising is linked to how the interaction of the three elements occurs and what role decision-makers might assume. This raises the question of who exactly participates in strategising and indeed at which stage. The available literature has considered the strategy process from the organisational level, with no clear indication of how the lower levels could contribute to the strategy process at different stages of strategy. For instance, Noble (1999), in his assessment of various researchers' view towards effective implementation of strategies, found that most of the views were related to the top level of organisations and called for more studies to explain the individual and

managerial levels' commitments towards strategy implementation. Equally, Okumus (2003) suggested that more qualitative and quantitative research on top, middle, and lower levels of employees was required. These remarks were further extended by noting that by applying this approach, a rich and intensive understanding would be gained with regards to the strategy process and how strategies are implemented. This was found to be in line with Aldehayyat and Anchor (2008), who recommended that new research needs to clarify the role of line, as well as administrative, managers to get a clear understanding of how strategy is performed inside an organisation.

Drawing from this point, it has been established that employees are considered the main source of knowledge creation in any organisation. It is therefore assumed that informing others of appropriate strategy is the responsibility of certain key actors, namely those who hold an influential position over key activities within the organisation. This typically involves the way in which managers conceptualise the organisational strategy and therefore its transitioning it to other groups of actors. In this regard, Dayan et al. (2017) argued that leaders and managers thus have an essential role in the formulation and implementation of their company's strategy. Summers et al. (2012) argued that managers are considered to be the strategic core of the unit due to the fact that they are more central to structuring their unit's work flow, responsible for their unit's activities, and that they are furthermore central to their unit's network and objectives. Fostering the correct communication culture offers the opportunity to engage employees at different hierarchal levels. This is further perceived as an important element if organisations are expecting to optimise strategy outcomes, as the commitment to effectively transitioning strategies between internal actors' groups will likely result in a more positive contribution towards organisational outcomes. Managerial involvement in the strategy process underlies their commitment to the strategy itself, and indeed the ownership of any finalised strategies (Piercy, 1998). However, a contribution to the strategy process on their part without the collaboration of other groups of actors will not be sufficient to realise any positive outcomes.

There is a general belief amongst top management that strategy formulation is their prerogative alone as it reflects a sign of their power and the difference between them and

their subordinates at organisations (Martin, 2011). Miller et al. (2008) argued that top managers often engage middle managers in the decision-making process; however, this engagement rarely follows through to implementation. Likewise, Rigby et al. (2002) claimed that senior managers at organisations often do not understand what they are implementing, which suggests a lack of proper communication and a distraction of the flow of information at some point, and therefore support can be seen as a priority for the managers responsible for achieving organisational objectives. Managers in today's businesses have the responsibility of supporting the management of performance or the management of learning. In a similar vein, Tamkin et al. (2003) claims that a shift in the role of middle managers is increasingly recognised as going beyond provision of direction and instructions to facilitate the actual implementation of change. In this regard, if such middle managers are to succeed in ensuring effective implementation of organisation strategies, there must be a more concerted interaction between both levels of management. As suggested by Heslin and VandeWalle (2011), employees may not interact with their line managers if they feel that they are not supportive and not acting in a reasonable manner. However, strategy practices are not only related to interaction between two groups of actors, but may also be related to the individuals' characteristics and efficacy, which in turn regulates their strategy practices. For instance, Fast et al. (2014) suggested that managers with low managerial self-efficacy feel personally threatened by their subordinates' voices and therefore react defensively.

Rapert et al. (2002), and equally Kellermanns et al. (2005, 2011), further identify the need for shared understanding between top managers on the one hand and middle managers and frontline employees on the other in order for effective strategy implementation to occur. Clampitt et al. (2002) also notes that middle managers are often more willing to engage in strategy communication but tend to see their role as reduced to the tactical/operational level, rather than being involved at the strategic planning and decision-making levels. The literature suggests that significant effort has been made in research to identify the importance of the middle manager but beyond this identification, their role in the strategy communication process remains unclear.

It was also suggested that middle managers may need to proactively engage other members of the organisation in effective communication (Barry and Fulmer, 2004). In earlier research, Quinn (1985) noted the isolation of top-management from daily operational activities, and therefore highlighted the crucial role of middle managers in fostering communication with regards to organisational strategy and its respective objectives. Other studies, for instance Wooldridge and Floyd (1990), Westley (1990), Dutton et al. (1997), and Huy (2001, 2002), have also provided useful insights into the involvement of the middle managers in the strategy process. As argued by Wooldridge et al. (2008), the network positions of middle managers in the organisation in which they serve can influence their effective participation in the organisational strategy process. Adamides (2015) concluded that the engagement of functional actors in strategy on a regular basis leads to better alignment within strategy. Equally, Powell et al. (2011) emphasised the importance of aligning both individual and group level cognition to ensure an organisation fit.

Middle managers comprise those who give and receive direction (Stoker, 2006). They are closer to senior management's day-to-day activities but relatively removed from frontline work (Huy, 2001; Ahearne et al., 2014). A critical role can be practiced by middle managers while communicating strategies. Solaja et al. (2016) argued that middle managers can integrate information and set the stage for strategic changes, facilitating change through altering organisational structure, implement required strategies, and consequently provide appropriate and useful feedback. The role of middle managers in the strategy process is also about providing continuous information, framing issues in a particular way, directing top management's attention to issues and resources, and linking ideas with action at both the technical and the institutional levels within organisations (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). They are more than simple intermediaries as they are facilitators of knowledge transfer and change and they play a strategic role in coaching their employees (Chuang et al., 2011; Conway and Monks, 2011). The notion of restructuring the various groups of actors involved in driving strategy forward was also noted by Friesl and Kwon (2016). This notion is further in line with the critical role various actors play as described in strategy practice and process research (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Paroutis et al., 2013; Messersmith et al., 2014),

and in how strategy and strategising is shared across the enterprise (Pandza, 2011). Although these functions reflect the critical role they play in the strategy cycle, the interaction between top management teams and middle managers and their contribution to driving strategy forward is still in its infancy. Therefore, managers need to be actively engaged in the micro-level practices within their organisations by encouraging flexible mechanisms which can enhance both communication and information sharing amongst employees and strategy practices between the various groups of actors (Sarpong and Maclean, 2014).

On the other hand, the participation of front-line employees in strategy practice is still unclear. In the service sector in particular, the participation of front-line employees is considered to be a significant factor in the success of an organisation (Cadwallader et al., 2010). Moreover, the knowledge held by front-line staff could add new perspectives to organisations, perspectives which could be unknown to both top and middle management teams (Engen and Magnusson, 2015). Therefore, the participation of front-line staff could be effective within the transition process and their role cannot be neglected.

2.5 Theoretical Consideration on Strategy Process

The following section presents the theoretical base that guides this research. It introduces Social Practice theory and its ability to contribute to the strategy transition process and the actors' practices. Furthermore, the section provides a critique of the adopted theory, which in addition to the earlier literature, led to the presentation of the theoretical framework for this research, as introduced in the last sub-section.

2.5.1 The Role of Actors in the Strategy Process

The social behaviour of internal actors can be strongly linked with their values, beliefs, perceptions, and past experience which influences the kind of decisions they make. The behaviour of managers determines what they can see from the environment, which in turn informs the decisions they make in their organisations. This behaviour is associated with top managers in particular as the most influential internal actors in formulating and directing organisational strategies. However, the top management team is not necessarily the sole actor formulating strategies. Although the traditional view of strategy nominally

limits its formulation to top management (Miller and Toulouse, 1986; Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1990), it has been argued that strategy is the responsibility of all employees (Fredrickson and Mitchell, 1984). It has also been suggested that a considerable amount of managerial success is derived from the ability to influence others (Yukl, 1999).

Managers, as the most powerful internal actors in organisations, are not necessarily aware of the entire strategy process. For instance, Aldehayyat and Anchor (2008) found that managers were aware of most strategy tools, but they do not always use them to influence their organisational strategy as appropriate. The strategy literature has always previously focussed on the role of decision-makers in leading the strategy process for organisations (Cyert and March, 1963; Child, 1972). A number of studies extended this argument by contending that the critical role of top management represented by 'top managers' or 'strategic leadership' is important enough to lead the process of the strategy content (Child, 1972; Miller and Toulouse, 1986). This notion was refuted by Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) and Ukil and Akkas (2017) as they argued that successful strategy should include all internal actors' efforts.

Within the organisational context, the focus on strategy itself to achieve results will not suffice. Therefore, decision-makers endeavour to create diverse opportunities that aid in implementing organisational strategy successfully and consequently achieving desired objectives. It has also been suggested that actors with different roles in organisations can make divergent choices for various reasons (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). These strategic choices in turn affect the dynamics of organisations and how their internal actors behave. It is worth mentioning that these choices, to a great extent, emanate from the observable personal characteristics of the most influential managers, as has been suggested by previous studies, for instance Wiersema and Bantel (1992) and Pansiri (2005). On the other hand, it has also been suggested that research should not only focus on managers' observable characteristics themselves, but should rather be placed on personality as a mediator between the cognitive processes and strategic decisions made by managers (Gallén, 1997).

Therefore, a clear segregation is predicted between top management as one managerial level and other management levels. Consequently, the possibility of a disconnect in communication between upper and lower managerial levels can be recognised in a way that drives attention to the role of managers in communicating organisational strategy between strategy formulation and implementation. Top management acts as the owner of the strategy and assumes it has been communicated to other organisational members in an effective manner. The importance of fostering actor interaction through empowering communication is underlined by Tarakci et al. (2014), Morrison (2014) and Falkheimer et al. (2017). Understanding how communication among various actors can be effectively undertaken is important as it acts as a significant means of processing information for employees, reduces ambiguity, and coordinates actions. The way managers practice their communication is strongly linked with employees' job objectives and perception of ambiguity (Keller, 1994). Through various previous studies, the communication element was repeatedly found to be a key barrier to archiving organisational strategies (Wessel, 1993; Heide et al., 2002; Taslak, 2004; Atkinson, 2006). It is through communication that organisational members are able to share experiences, demonstrate organisational values, understand their roles and responsibilities, and achieve any desired objectives (Keller, 2001).

While exploring communication, researchers in the field of organisational communication often consider four dimensions which include the frequency of communication, the channel used for conveying messages, the content used to influence strategy, and the direction of information, as concluded by Krone et al. (1987). Further research on communication has focussed on the sender of the information (Markus, 1994). With respect to driving strategy forward, actors within organisations need to maintain effective two-way communication to ensure a better understanding of organisational objectives. Kellermanns et al. (2008) argued that a higher degree of strategic understanding within a group may better facilitate the communication and coordination of desired decisions and outcomes. Further, failure to effectively communicate with employees may leave staff unaware of any associated tasks that might be required. The importance of communication is not limited to senior managers alone; rather, this includes the voice of other staff at lower hierarchical levels. In the same vein,

Weick et al. (2005) and equally Powell et al. (2011), have emphasised the importance of inter-unit communication to gain a better organisation fit. Effective communication further requires stability amongst line managers as this is known to be positively related to performance (Edelenbos et al., 2013). Furthermore, maintaining stable and good subordinate-manager relationships has been positively linked with job satisfaction and productivity in general (Zhang and Deng, 2016).

The organisational strategy deployed by a group of actors must induce change by overcoming any existing strategy (Gupta, 2012). Recently, research has concentrated on the importance of the mediating role of the communication and exchange process among organisational members (Jablin and Putnam, 2000; Garnett et al., 2008). This role further includes informing ideas and information, coordinating relationships, and creating and transferring knowledge (Kogut and Zander, 1996). Organisations are most likely fail to implement their strategies if internal actors cannot communicate these strategies in a meaningful manner. The following section will consider Social Practice theory as the guiding theory for this research in more detail.

2.5.2 Social Practice Theory

Social Practice theory offers an alternative approach that focusses on the dynamic activities of daily practices in relation to other practices in organisations (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). It further focusses on the practices of people in relation to other practices, both at the same time and space and across this time and space (Nicolini, 2012). Social Practice theory dates back to its two leading pioneers, Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens (Schatzki, 2012). The theory is founded on three main principles, which are (i) the consequences of everyday activity that produces and forms the structural norms of the social actors, (ii) the relations are integrated into each other and therefore are mutually constitutive, and (iii) dualism is rejected in theorising in favour of duality, which are inseparable in practice (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Feldman and Worline, 2016). Although each group of authors presented a different order and terminologies for these principles, they all agreed on the specific meanings of these principles in terms of understanding individuals' practice.

In terms of the first principle, the continuous practice of individuals forms the basis of, and norms within which relationships interact. The consequentiality principle was further found throughout the practice theory. Although scholars using Social Practice theory presented alternative views of the consequentiality perspective, they all generally agree on how consequentiality leads to the structural norms of social life. For instance, Giddens (1984) described the practice as social actions of individuals as repetitively producing and reproducing the structural norms that enable or hinder actions. Bourdieu (1990, p. 57), on the other hand, viewed the habitus as a generative principle that reactivates the sense objectified in institutions.

Social Practice theory is also based on a mutual constitution of human relations which are integrated with each other. This notion implies that relations and social practices cannot be realised without having an understanding of the role of agency in such practices and, equally, the agency should be understood in terms of the structural conditions and embedded social orders (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). Therefore, the agency cannot be conceived of as simply reflecting human interactions. Theorists have also contributed to the same notion by reflecting on the interdependence of agency and structural conditions in order to gain a better understanding of human practices. For instance, Giddens (1984), in his structuring theory, emphasised the recursive relationship between agency and structure, which in turn reveals that repetitive practices form structure and these consequently formed structures create the norms and procedure that are followed. Equally, Bourdieu also acknowledged the assumption of individual practices, habitus, and field which all interact, produce, and reproduce one another (Chia and Holt, 2006). This further draws attention to the fact that no phenomenon can be considered in isolation from other phenomena, and that phenomena are always inseparable (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011).

As for the third principle, the dualism in Social Practice theory can be rejected in favour of duality. The principle holds that the inherent relationships between any two elements have always been treated dichotomously (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). This further emphasises whether specific elements within the individuals' practices are dependent on, or independent of each other. Social Practice theory in this sense focusses on the dualities

of surroundings which in turn suggest a crucial point about the assumption of separateness (Feldman and Worline, 2016). In the Social Practice theory of Bourdieu, the deconstruction of subjectivity and objectivity was a central focus of his work in terms of viewing these constructs as being inseparable. Equally, for Giddens' theory of structuration, the primary focus was on the mutual duality between agency and structure. Giddens further extended his ideas to argue that agency and structure are not two sets of independent constructs, but rather represent a duality (Giddens, 1984. p. 25).

Just like many other applications of Social Practice theory, strategic management study has received considerable attention (Johnson et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2008; Golsorkhi et al., 2010). However, approaches to the application of Social Practice in the strategy field are quite disparate (Nicolini, 2012). For instance, Whittington (2006), and equally Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), have provided a descriptive approach that focusses on the analysis of the practitioners, their practices and interactions with each other, and the praxis of the context in which they act. On the other hand, other analytical approaches have been situated to provide an explanation for the behaviour and motivation of individuals on the personal, as well as the collective levels (Gomez, 2010).

2.5.3 Critique on the Use of Social Practice Theory

This section provides a critique of the adopted theory – Social Practice theory – in order to understand how it reveals the strategy practice of internal actors during the transition process. Previous theories of strategy have failed to address the vital role of human actors in the strategy process (Johnson et al., 2007). For instance, Resource-Based theory failed to explain the practices at the micro-level in organisations. The theory considered all available resources as one object without addressing how managers deal with resources that are beyond their control and how they might act accordingly (Priem and Butler, 2001). Dynamic Capability theory, on the other hand, considered the importance of assessing the micro-level activities performed by actors; however, the researchers rarely described actors' activities at this level, relying instead on the established mechanism at the macro-level of organisations (Gavetti, 2005). With Institutional theory, researchers acknowledged the focus on organisational behaviour as an object and the effects the formal system of organisations has on individuals. Researchers focussed on how actors

are regulated by the norms and rules followed, and how these attributes can lead to institutional change. However, such studies lack convincing evidence as to *how* these attributes can lead to change within institutions (Johnson et al., 2007). This research, however, adopts theory taken from sociology to provide an in-depth explanation of how actors practice strategy within a dynamic strategy process.

The critique draws on Stephen Turner's criticism of human practice and his aim to reject the common understanding of practice. In social science, there was a common understanding that certain social objectives exist to explain the individuals' general practice. The social sciences, for almost the entirety of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have relied on the principles of practice in their conceptual work (Bohman, 1997). In his work, however, Turner criticised some of the assumptions of Social Practice theory by advocating the idea that some terminologies are no longer suitable to explain these practices. These concepts include, for instance, the concepts of Social Practice that include habitus, paradigm, practices, and tacit knowledge about others. These concepts have further remained the main basic assumption in revealing individuals' practices, starting with the earlier work of Durkheim and Weber and ending with the more recent work of Foucault and Bourdieu. However, these concepts – which are used interchangeably – are not sufficient to explain practice from a research perspective due to the fact that practices are embedded within social objects that are hardly likely to be noticed unless special methods are adopted within associated empirical research. Such methods could, for instance, be the interpretation of meaning by humans.

Furthermore, individuals' social practices depend on their individual characteristics and on the social structure surrounding them (Siciliano, 2015). The socio-cultural backgrounds and characteristics perceived by two given parties play a critical role in brokering information between them (Shimoda, 2013). Individuals' practices are also shaped as based on the past experiences of those individuals, which may determine their predispositions to engage in knowledge-sharing practices (Obembe, 2010). Furthermore, individuals' social practices also depend on their social norms, which in turn regulate these practices within a given context. For instance, trust as a social norm is a significant

predictor as to the effects of knowledge sharing and practices among individuals (Holste and Fields, 2010; Buvik and Tvedt, 2017).

Prior the adoption of practices in social science, many terms were used as a way to provide a coherent explanation of the social objects that influence social practice. These terms, for instance, included social norms, social functions, powers, forces, social drivers, and meanings. The recent views of Social Practice theory assume two standpoints, which are ultimately inseparable. Firstly, agents are engaged in social and other complicated activities without explicitly knowing how they perform certain acts. Secondly, such activities allow agents to share knowledge and exchange practices between each other, even as based on the tacit, as well as the practical knowledge they possess and is reflected in their performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is impossible for agents to engage in social activities without Social Practice. The characteristics of social practice within a given social network influence information exchange, especially for those agents willing to benefit from such networks (Anderson, 2008). Furthermore, social practices are embedded within the notion of power and characteristics of agents. Agents with specific characteristics and high social power have an enhanced perceived leadership in the eyes of their subordinates, and vice versa (Chiu et al., 2017).

Without considering social practice as pertaining to the social activities of individuals, it is not possible to recognise the specific features of individuals that shape their dispositions within a specific, given context. Also explaining how social activities are effectively achieved without a dependence on practical knowledge will not allow for an interpretation of human interactions. The recent focus of practice-based research has concentrated on the field of management due to its potential to provide coherent answers as to how individuals' actions are enabled, or indeed disabled, by prevailing organisational and social practices (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). The adoption of Social Practice is also in line with the growing body of strategy-as-practice literature which has stimulated researchers' interests towards an understanding of how the strategy process is undertaken (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Golsorkhi et al., 2015).

Contrary to all the criticism of the theory, however, Social Practice provides an explanation of people's actions as a reflection of their dispositions to some considerable extent. It will further guide researchers in terms of revealing how individuals interact with one another given a particular context. Social practice can only explain a certain action if practices are shared between individuals and knowledge is transferred among them. However, in order to transit such knowledge, there must be a specific mechanism of transition in order to explain the individuals' tacit knowledge, by which such practices would consequently be more regulated (Bohman, 1997). In empowering social practices, agents will be exposed to a more diverse range of information, and are more willing to provide resources in return (Rogan and Mors, 2017). Although practices do not provide the foundation of all social interactions, or result in a certain social performance, they are nevertheless important to providing a coherent understanding of social structure and the characteristics of individuals.

2.5.4 Research Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature presented, the adoption of theory, and the gaps identified, a clear theoretical framework of the dynamic nature of the strategy transition process can be modelled. As previously explained in the literature, there are a numerous studies in the area of strategy formulation and equally strategy implementation, which have recently received even greater consideration. However, a clear mechanism as to how strategy is transited between these two stages has yet to be determined. Furthermore, previous studies have only shed light on individual groups of actors, namely the top management team, middle management team, and front-line employees in isolation, without explicitly investigating how these internal actors interact with each other within the strategy transition process itself. Even though these two identified gaps in the research area of strategy are important to the articulation of strategy transition, very few studies have investigated this area in any real detail. This motivates us to explore this area of research in order to determine a theoretical framework by which to enhance organisations' strategy transition processes and individuals' practices within such a process. The proposed theoretical framework is summarised as a block diagram, as shown in Figure 2.4.

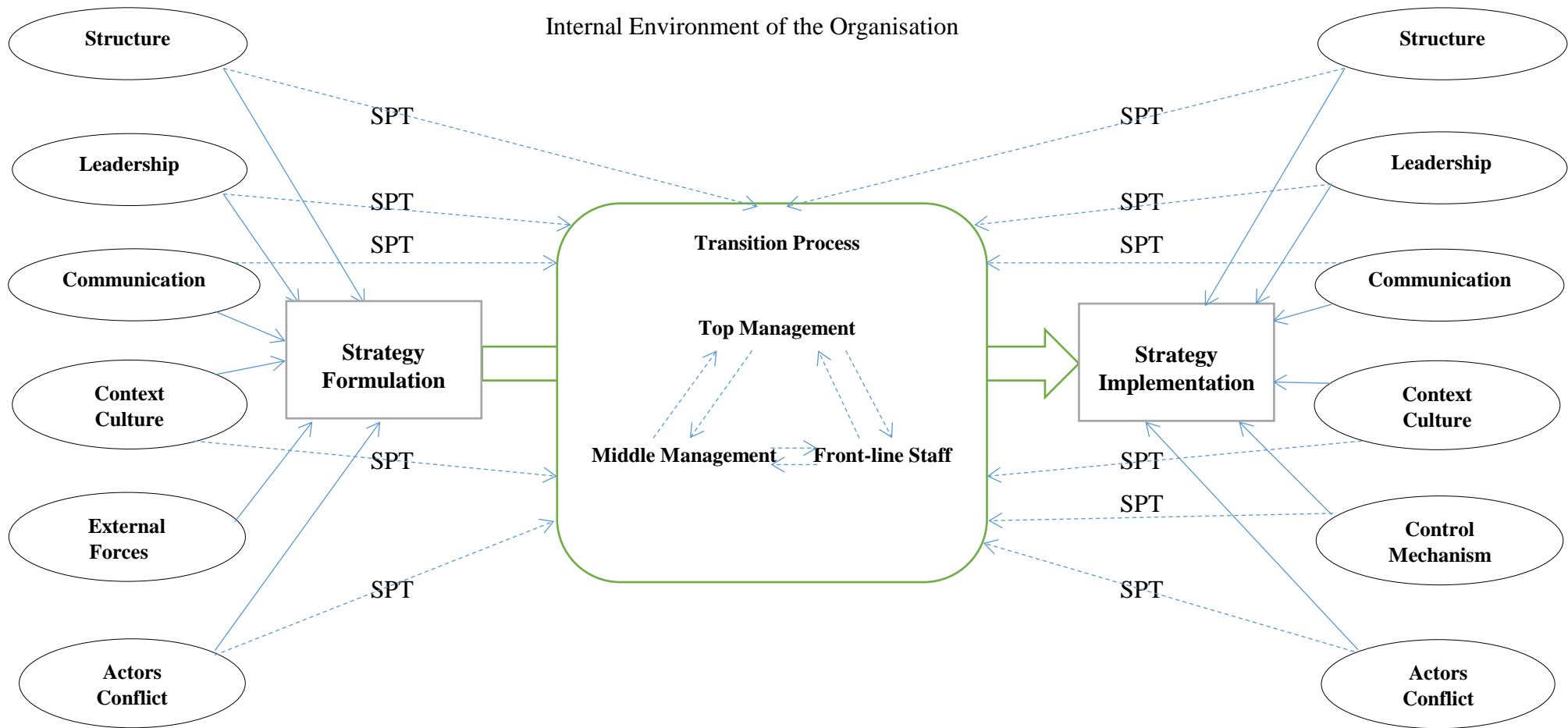


Figure 2.4: The Research Theoretical Framework

—————> Direct Relationship

- - - - -> Unclear Relationship

From the above figure, it is clear that the intention of this research is to assess the strategy transition process within the micro-context of organisations. With regards to the strategy formulation phase, a number of factors have been identified that might have a significant effect on the strategy formulation process. These factors include the structure of the organisation, the leadership style, the communication aspect, and the context culture, as well as the culture of actors, external forces, and any existent conflict among internal actors. Equally, research into the strategy implementation process has revealed that several factors affect the effective implementation of strategies. These include the structure of the organisation, leadership style, communication between actors at various levels, the context culture, the control mechanism applied within the organisation, and any conflict among actors. Due to the fact that the above factors affect both the strategy formulation and implementation stages to an equal extent, Figure 2.4 indicates that these factors could also possibly have an effect on the strategy transition process stage. However, their effect in this regard still needs further investigation, as represented by the dotted arrow in the block diagram.

Figure 2.4 also sheds light on the practices of internal actors, particularly with regards to the strategy transition process. As suggested by the literature, the role of the top management team is to formulate strategy; however, their contribution to the strategy transition process still needs further investigation, as represented by the dotted arrow in the block diagram. Middle managers on the other hand have a passive role in terms of their participation in both the formulation and the implementation stages. Previous studies have adopted two different perspective in this regard as some have argued that their role should be more focussed on the formulation than the implementation stage, while others have proposed the opposite, and each with apparently equally good reasoning. Middle managers are further seen as facilitating strategy deployment and their role in the strategy transition process needs further clarification, again represented by a dotted arrow.

Lastly, from their position in the organisational hierarchical structure, front-line employees are seen as strategy implementers, and it is clear that they do not have a role in the strategy formulation stage. However, their role in the strategy transition process also needs further investigation, as represented by a dotted arrow. It is also important to

note that the participation of front-line employees in other stages may, in fact, promote the efficient transitioning of strategies, which also needs further exploration (Engen and Magnusson, 2015; Friesl and Kwon, 2016). Furthermore, Figure 2.4 represents the interaction and practices of all internal actors, namely top management, middle management, and front-line employees in the transition process stage with dotted arrows, indicating the need for their further investigation in this research.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the conceptualisation of strategy and strategic management in the field by presenting definitions from the various perspectives presented in the relevant literature, and indeed the development in this field. The chapter then continues to describe the relationship between the strategy dimensions, namely content, context, and process. For a better understanding of how strategy is practiced within the strategy process, each dimension has been discussed in isolation in considerable detail. The strategy process was explored in relation to the content dimension, which was introduced to reflect the differences in the nature of strategic management between the private sector and the public and voluntary sectors. This distinction between the sectors has also provided an understanding of the applicability of strategy in the public sector, in which this research will be undertaken.

Having introduced these two dimensions, the relationship between the strategy process as a third dimension and strategy practice was highlighted. Within the third dimension, the chapter offered further details as to how the strategy process is undertaken at various strategy stages. As such, the conceptualisation and the process of strategy formulation and implementation phases have been explained; the barriers to both phases were also introduced. The literature also offered a clear understanding of the nature of dynamics between both strategy phases in order to aid our understanding of how the various forms of strategy are actually practiced. Therefore, the strategy-as-practice perspective has been further explained in order to highlight how individuals practice strategy within the overall strategy process.

To understand actors' practices, a theoretical consideration of the strategy process has been discussed by adopting the theory that underpins this research. This theory is Social Practice theory, which explains the actors' interactions when transiting the organisational strategy between them. The literature also explained how top and middle managers practice strategy within the strategy process. Based on a critical review of the literature, the gaps in this area of research have been clearly identified. Firstly, the strategy stages have to date been treated, and consequently researched, as being separate from each other, without explicitly addressing how strategy is transitioned between the various stages. Furthermore, studies into strategy process have focussed purely on the various groups of actors in isolation, and this has resulted in a lack of addressing as to how they interact with each other within the strategy transition process. Moreover, unlike the private sector, there has been only a limited amount of research into public sector organisations in terms of explaining the strategy process and its practices. This chronological order of sections has provided the rationale for adopting the theoretical framework to this research. In the following chapter, the empirical research context will be introduced.

Chapter 3: Empirical Research Context

3.1 Introduction

The context of any research plays a vital role in the sense that it underpins the research inquiry and provides for the understanding of the research findings. Furthermore, it helps to provide an explanation for the research phenomenon, or phenomena, under investigation. Moreover, besides the contribution of any research to knowledge in the chosen field of study, the choice of research context will add further value to the understanding of the nature and complexity of this context in particular. Since this research is conducted on a single case study, that is, the Kuwaiti public sector, it is therefore important to provide a brief background of where the study was conducted, which may deliver a better understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation to the reader.

Hence, this chapter introduces four major sections. An overview of the national environmental context of Kuwait will be introduced in section 3.2, followed by the general strategy mechanism in the Kuwaiti public sector in section 3.3. Section 3.4 presents the rationale driving the empirical enquiry for this research. Finally, a summary of this chapter will be presented in section 3.5.

3.2 Overview of the National Environmental Context of Kuwait

Kuwait is a hereditary Emirate that is based on a constitutional monarchy. The head of the state is the *Amir* (Kuwait Government Online, 2017). Kuwait follows a democratic *amiri* regime and the country's laws are enacted through the National Assembly (*Majlis Al-Ummah*) which consists of 50 members who are elected by people every four years through a free and fair election (Kuwait Government Online, 2017). The first parliamentary election in Kuwait was held in 1962 (Al-Diwan and Al-Amiri, 2017). The Kuwait government system includes both parliamentary and presidential systems. The *Amir* of Kuwait rules the Cabinet through the Prime Minister and his appointed ministers (Kuwait Government Online, 2017). Kuwait, with a total area of 17,818 square kilometres, is a small country situated in the north-west of the Arabian Gulf, and which shares its borders with Iraq to the north-west and Saudi Arabia to the south-west (Kuwait Government Online, 2017).

Kuwait is a permanent member in the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) which includes other five countries, namely Saudi Arabia, the United Arab of Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar (Kuwait Government Online, 2017). The country contains a total of six counties, namely Al-Asimah, Hawally, Al-Farwaniya, Al-Ahmadi, Al-Jahra, and Mubarak Al-Kabeer (Kuwait Government Online, 2017). As per the statistics of the beginning of 2016, Kuwait has an estimated total population of 4,132,415, of whom 1,238,679 are Kuwaiti citizens and 2,893,736 are expatriates (Central Statistical Bureau, 2017). The unemployed human capital as per the April 2017 statistics accounted for 14,822 individuals, of whom 22.78% are male and 77.22% are female (Central Statistical Bureau, 2017). In reference to the workforce, as per the statistics of June 2016, around 377,715 individuals are employed in the public sector of whom Kuwaitis represent 73.6% and non-Kuwaitis 26.4% (Central Statistical Bureau, 2017).

3.3 The General Strategy Mechanism in Kuwaiti Public Sector

The public sector in Kuwait is huge, consisting of a number of entities each of whom undertake a specific type of work that distinguishes one entity from the other. For instance, the public sector includes ministries, councils, bureaus, authorities, agencies, offices, charities, and others; however, in the context of this research, the term ‘organisations’ will be used interchangeably with ‘ministries’. The public sector further dominates the major activities of the country. Moreover, the development of the country’s infrastructure in various aspects has for a long time been dependent on public sector policies which are characterised by the heavy injection of governmental capital (Ramadhan and Al-Musallam, 2014). Unlike the common practice in a number of other countries, the role of the public sector in Kuwait is not only limited to regulating and supervising the overall activities of the country, but further extends to include the formulation and the implementation of the public strategies. Therefore, since most of the governmental projects and objectives include different entities, managing individual governmental strategies is the responsibility of the relevant ministry (though in corporation with other ministries).

The strategy mechanism is intertwined with several major parties in Kuwait. As a general view, the Council of Ministries (Cabinet of Ministries) supports the Prime Minister in the

formulation of the governmental strategic plan for a specific period of time (Kuwait Government Online, 2017). This task is conducted in corporation with the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, which is entitled to help guide the various aspects of development in the country. This is conducted in light of the general vision, strategy, and objectives of the general and sectoral plan they approve (General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, 2017). There is also the National Assembly (*Majlis Al-Ummah*), which is entitled to form legislation and monitor the governmental strategic plans and their proper execution (National Assembly, 2017). Moreover, there are also other parties that are assigned to monitor, approve, and follow-up on the execution of government strategy. For instance, the State Audit Bureau is required to maintain efficient control over public funds in order to safeguard them, prevent their misuse, and ensure they are spent effectively and in the best interests of the public (State Audit Bureau, 2017).

Another party involved in the strategy mechanism is the Central Agency for Public Tenders which is further entitled to monitor, study, and consequently approve (or otherwise) bids presented of various parties that directly deal with the ministries (Central Agency for Public Tenders, 2017). Moreover, there is the Government Performance Follow-up Agency which is responsible for monitoring and developing the performance of government agencies and fighting against system deficiencies in all their forms (Government Performance Follow-up Agency, 2017). Furthermore, the Legal Advice and Legislation (*Alfatwaa* and *Altashree*) is entitled to resolve disputes involving the various activities for the ministries, to translate commercial, investment and other laws, and to manage the legal cases brought by the ministries against the community (Legal Advice and Legislation, 2017). With this organisation of the strategy, one might argue that while strategy mechanism seems to be enacted in a systematic manner within the public sector, it still does not satisfy a wide range of stakeholders, and ultimately the realisation of public strategies is not recognised.

3.4 The Rational Driving the Empirical Enquiry

The rationale for embarking on this research and shedding light on the Kuwaiti public sector in particular is derived from the need to examine the country's development plan.

Kuwait adopts a five-year timescale for developing its various projects and activities, which themselves are related to different schemes within the country (Oxford Business Groups, 2017). Consequently, the various forms of the public sector (as mentioned in section 3.3) coordinate so as to be able to execute the projects or activities announced, either in full or in or part, as per their specialisation and role within the country. These continuous five-year plans feed into the government's broad vision, which is that of transforming Kuwait into a regional trade and financial centre by 2035 (Oxford Business Groups, 2017). The short-term plans, along with the broad vision for the country, provides an overview of general public-sector strategy.

One of the major problems with such strategy is that related projects and activities are normally delayed or are never implemented as per their envisaged schedule. For instance, the majority of projects and activities for the five-year national development plan for the period 2011 to 2014 were not successfully executed, with the majority of these projects and activities being shifted from the old to the new five-year plan, which represents the period 2015 to 2020 (Oxford Business Groups, 2017). Although government will generally acknowledge that their old plans have been unsuccessful, the reasons for such, and practical solutions by which to address them, are generally not recognised, with the minor exception of postponing projects for future implementation and increasing relative budgets accordingly. The development plane was aimed at building various projects including, for instance, building utilities and housing across the country, establishing core infrastructure, expanding the oil and gas industry, and diversifying economic resources in order to reduce the country's principal dependence on oil (Kuwait National Development Plan, 2018).

Drawing from the above brief, one critical concern might be raised which constitutes a new and significant challenge to public sector organisations. This is, due to the large size of the public sector in Kuwait and its dominance in terms of the various activities of the country, that the realisation of public strategies is assumed to be effective and well recognised. Although the public sector controls the majority of the workforce, available resources, and the regulatory power, it has a very limited role in realising strategies, mainly noticeable through general figures, large budgets, and public expenditure.

Therefore, this research is undertaken to explore how strategy is effectively transitioned from the formulation to implementation phase across various groups of actors. This study will simultaneously focus on the strategy transition process stage and actors' practices in the ministries as major players in governmental structure in order to diagnose the dynamics of the research phenomenon under investigation.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the empirical research context of this study due to its importance in underpinning the research phenomenon. Furthermore, the context of any research helps in the understanding of the formal – as well as the informal – settings of a particular situation. Moreover, this chapter is also vital to establishing a clear link with the research findings at a later stage. Therefore, it was important to provide an overview of the national environmental context of Kuwait and the general strategy mechanism in the Kuwaiti public sector for the purpose of capturing the cultural qualities of this sector's particular environment. The chapter also provided the rationale driving the empirical enquiry for this research to give a clear sense of the research problem and the significance of this study.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

Research methodology and methods is an important and integral part of any research effort. Through the methods adopted, researchers are able to underpin their research inquiries. Since the nature of research differs from one discipline to another in terms of content, objectives, and questions to be answered, it is therefore necessary for researchers to clarify how and why they designed their research in a given manner. Such clarification will reflect the credibility of the research as well as forming an understanding and the justification that links the proposed research questions and the chosen methods. Consequently, researchers need to present, and at the same time justify, how they intend to collect their data and define some suitable analysis by which to fulfil their research objectives.

Therefore, this chapter starts with the justification for the choice of the research design in section 4.2. Section 4.3 presents the justification for the use of case study, whilst section 4.4 outlines the research population and sampling technique. The chapter will also explain how the required access to organisations was obtained in section 4.5. As this research was conducted in two phases, and further due to the intensive activities included, it was considered imperative to discuss each phase in detail. Thus, section 4.6 discusses Phase-1, which includes semi-structured interviews, whilst Phase-2 constitutes the survey undertaken, as described in section 4.7. Section 4.8 introduces the ethical considerations of the research. Finally, the chapter summary will be presented in section 4.9.

4.2 Justifying the Choice of Research Design

The choice of research design is associated with the various research philosophies that describe the construction of beliefs and assumptions, which in turn guides the development of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2016). Research philosophies are normally distinguished through three main philosophical assumptions: ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Saunders et al., 2016). The terms are usually interpreted in terms of how human beings realise their world (Creswell, 2007). The philosophical assumptions fall into five major research philosophies that form the business and management researches.

These five philosophies are positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism.

It is important to acknowledge that there is no best philosophy to adopt as each has its own unique and valuable way of seeing the world (Saunders et al., 2016). Within these philosophies, it is vital for researchers to acquire a good understanding of the theory used at the beginning of their research journey, as this will inform the approaches they adopt towards theory development. This is often constrained with three reasoning approaches, namely deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, and abduction reasoning (Saunders et al., 2016, p.144). Based on a critical review of the various research philosophies and concepts, the design of this research was formulated.

This research falls into the pragmatism philosophy since the nature of the proposed research questions can only be answered through adopting a mixed method approach. This requires the researcher to combine both qualitative and quantitative techniques within a single study, which is referred to as the ‘mixed method approach’ (Hanson et al., 2005). Calls for the use of the mixed method approach in the management and organisational field have been further supported by a number of researchers (Edmondson and McManus, 2007). The approach has been also used in various studies across a number of different fields (Patton, 2015). It is important to note that using two different methods does not mean, or otherwise imply, that one method is superior to the other. Rather, the two methods should serve the same purpose, that of answering the research questions.

The research therefore adopts an abductive approach, which includes both inductive and deductive approaches. Inductive and deductive approaches constitute different categories of thoughts (Goel and Dolan, 2004). According to Garnham and Oakhill (1994), both approaches are treated differently in the psychological literature. A closer consideration of the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1 (Section 1.4) suggest that, with the exception of question three, the study seeks individuals’ own perspectives, beliefs, stories, backgrounds and experiences with regards to the specific phenomena under investigation. This level of engagement with participants requires active interaction and effective exchange of information between the researcher and the participants. These

types of questions require the adoption of an inductive approach. The use of the inductive approach has also been recognised in many qualitative studies (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Dey, 2003). As previously argued in Section 3.3, the inductive approach relies on how researchers or evaluators make use of the details of the phenomenon, deep readings, the understanding of raw data to derive concepts and themes through their interpretation of the gathered data (Thomas, 2006). To this end, questions one and two of this research will be answered through adopting semi-structured interviews and consequently objectives one and two of this research will be attained.

On the other hand, the deductive approach as introduced earlier deals with how researchers use various techniques to apply existing theories and test their validity against a certain context (Crowther and Lancaster, 2009). Furthermore, the deductive approach implies the test and assessment of whether the gathered data are consistent with previous assumptions, theories, and hypotheses determined by a researcher or otherwise (Thomas, 2006). In this research, the deductive approach will also be adopted due to the nature of the third question, which aims to measure the effect of the factors that emerged from the findings of the first two questions. The third research question will be answered through the close-ended questionnaire, which represents the quantitative part of this study and through which objective three of this research will be attained. Table 4.1 shows a comparison between the three approaches to theory development.

Drawing from the above discussion, the qualitative research will allow the researcher to play an active role in generating and interpreting the insights and more subjective views of the reality involved (Johnson, 2015). The findings that emerge from the qualitative method will be presented in terms of factors in which the questionnaire, as a second method, will then be used to prioritise these factors according to each internal group of actors. Prioritising the factors will help to reveal two major points, (i) it will show the most important factors for each actor group, and (ii) it will help measure the link between the involvement of groups of actors in the strategy transition process and, indeed, which factors that affect that process. Having presented the justification for the choice of research design, it can therefore be concluded that the adoption of a mixed method approach is the correct approach for this kind of research due to the richness and diversity

of the data that will be collected and subsequently analysed. Therefore, the next section presents the pragmatism philosophy and abductive reasoning in detail as a guideline or a thinking framework to underpin these research inquires.

Table 4.1: Comparison between the Three Approaches to Theory Development

	Deduction	Induction	Abduction
Logic	If the principles are true, then the conclusion is true	Principles are used to draw experimental conclusion	Principles are used to draw testable conclusion
Generalisability	More general to more specific	More specific to more general	Depends on interactions of both general and specific
Use of data	To evaluate hypothesis for a specific theory	To investigate a specific phenomenon, identify possible themes, and draw a framework	To investigate a specific phenomenon, identify possible themes, and test it in the framework
Theory	Falsify or verify	Generate and build	Generate or modify existing theory to build new theory or modify existing one

(Source: Adopted from Saunders et al, 2016, p. 145)

4.2.1 Pragmatism Philosophy and Abductive Reasoning

Pragmatism deals with the research problem in a natural manner and assesses the various strategies and methods in terms of how they will be combined, and how they will interact,

so as to solve the problem (Denscombe, 2014). Pragmatism philosophy emphasises the ideas that concepts can be relevant if they support practices or actions (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). Therefore, pragmatists begin with a research problem and seek to produce practical solutions to regulate future practices for this same problem (Saunders et al., 2016). This philosophy positions pragmatism researchers in such a way as to value practical outcomes more than other parts. Pragmatists recognise the fact that there are several ways to interpret a given reality and undertake research, and there is no single best view that can reflect the comprehensive picture of reality (Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, pragmatism research adopts a combination of research methods that are often referred to as ‘mixed methods’, which distinguishes the approach as being somewhere between purely qualitative and purely quantitative (Denscombe, 2014). However, this does not mean that pragmatists always use a large number of methods, but rather use a method or methods that allow for the opportunity to collect a credible and reliable body of data that advances the research (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008).

Moreover, this does not mean that one method is superior to the other. In adopting an approach to theory development, pragmatists may adopt a third approach called abductive reasoning. Ketokivi and Mantere (2010) argued that abductive reasoning often begins with some surprising fact that researchers have observed. With abductive reasoning, pragmatism research uses data to explore a specific phenomenon, identify themes and explain patterns, and to generate new, or modify existing, theories (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, abductive approach allows researchers to move back and forth between data and theory (Suddaby, 2006). Therefore, pragmatists find it reasonable to engage with a number of quantitative, as well as qualitative, methods to reach appropriate conclusions to the investigation of their research phenomenon. Researchers may find this approach reasonable if they have different types of queries that need to be addressed through a mixture use of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

4.3 Case Study Justification

Researcher should have a clear research strategy to explain how their research questions will be successfully answered. This requires researchers to specify how they will gather their data and from where it will be collected. In this research, the primary data will be

collected from a single case study as a guided tool to investigate the research phenomenon and to attain the research objectives through answering the respective questions. The case study is a useful tool to capture the dynamics of the phenomenon under investigation. Denscombe (2014) argued that case studies that focus on one or a few instances provide an in-depth view of the events, relationships, experiences, or processes relating to a particular phenomenon. Furthermore, a case study can represent an individual, a family, a social community, a work group, an organisation or an institution (Flick, 2014).

The use of the case study has several distinctive advantages in revealing the phenomenological inquiry relating to this research. For instance, Yin (2014) noted that using case studies in researches is appropriate to answer the how and why types of questions, which exactly matches questions one and three of this research. Case study also allows the researcher to use a greater variety of research methods (Denscombe, 2014). This is also clear in this research, which adopted a mixed method approach (See Section 4.2). Moreover, case studies are also suitable when the researcher has little or no control over the events within the context in which the research is conducted (Yin, 2014; Denscombe, 2014). This point is also applicable in this research as the researcher has no control over the participants' contributions to the research. Thus, the role of the researcher in this regard is considered to be that of a facilitator rather than an administrator. Therefore, although researchers may have their own perceptions of certain events in the research context, there is no pressure on them to change the events and facts revealed. Yin (2014) also argued that case studies are often connected with the process of evaluation. This will lead researchers to monitor and remark upon active events and be part of the environment being examined, such as the nature of this research.

Beside these advantages of using case study, researchers also need to be aware of some the associated drawbacks. For instance, the use of case study requires considerable cooperation from the organisations being researched in order to facilitate easy access to the required data (Flick, 2014). Furthermore, case studies can be lengthy and unreadable (Yin, 2014). Also, the tool requires particular skills in terms of analytical thinking and writing ability in order for researchers to effectively integrate the data collected from various sources (Marrelli, 2007). Overall, although the use of case study as a research

tool is to some extent debatable, the method can be adopted and is considered to be valid for the research strategy (Yin, 2014). It is further used to obtain a deeper understanding of various phenomena within the original contexts of different individual, social, and organisational aspects for the purpose of initiating or developing new concepts or theories. Moreover, a number of remarkable studies have adopted case studies in their research that have led to reliable findings, for instance, Chandler (1962), Mintzberg et al. (1976), Burgelman (1983), Nutt (1984), Mintzberg and McHugh (1985), Wechsler and Backoff (1986), Eisenhardt (1989), and Palmer and Quinn (2003).

4.4 Research Population and Sampling Technique

Researchers need to target their population and select a specific sample to fulfil their research questions, quite simply as it would be impracticable to do otherwise (Saunders et al., 2016). The term research population refers to the full set of cases or elements from which a research sample is taken (Saunders et al., 2016). The elements that make up the population for this study are the top and middle managers and the front-line staff of the ministries in Kuwait. These individuals are considered important to this study due to their interactions with each other in terms of strategy practice. Therefore, choosing a specific sample within the research population is considered to be crucial to the expected research results. Barnett (2002) argued that using sampling provides a possibility for a higher overall accuracy than a census. Census refers to the collection and analysis of data from every possible case or group member (Saunders et al., 2016).

Sampling saves time for researchers as the data will be more manageable due to the fact that fewer people are involved and, consequently, the results will be available more quickly (Saunders et al., 2016). Sampling is also crucial for later analysis as it involves decisions not only about which people to observe, but also about setting, events, and social processes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In the research world, there are two sampling techniques available to researchers that can answer their research questions, namely probability or representative sampling and non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2016). As the study adopts qualitative as well as quantitative methods for data collection, it is therefore vital to recognise the sampling technique chosen for each method in order to answer the research questions. As argued by Teddlie and Yu (2007), sampling

is treated more seriously within mixed method research due to the growing number of clear explanations in the area.

For qualitative research, research usually considers small samples of people nested in their context and studied in-depth (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Qualitative researchers follow non-probability sampling methods to answer their research questions (Perry, 1998; Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, qualitative sampling tends to be purposive rather than random (Kuzel, 1992), and purposeful rather than probabilistic (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling is suitable when targeting very small samples such as in case study research and when the researcher aims to select particular cases that are considered to be informative (Neuman, 2014). This kind of non-probability sampling allows qualitative researchers to engage with the selected sample so as to allow for in-depth data gathering (Saunders et al., 2016).

In non-probability sampling, in addition to purposive or judgmental sampling, qualitative researchers may also rely on a snowballing technique to gather the required data. Snowballing is a technique in which participants volunteer to take part of the research rather than being selected by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, for the qualitative part of this study, that is, the semi-structured interviews which will represent Phase-1 of the research, purposive and snowballing techniques will be adopted. These two techniques were considered to be suitable due to the fact that the interviews will be conducted with a selected number of several individuals who are believed to be able to supply the richness of information required to address the research questions. Therefore, the respondents will be categorised according to their managerial, as well as higher, positions with regards to the strategic management process by their organisations, which will include:

- (1) The undersecretaries of the ministries, as well as being the representatives of the technical activities are also considered to be the second-most important players at ministries

- (2) The assistant secretaries of the selected ministries as being the administrators as well as the coordinators for their own strategic plans and actions
- (3) The division heads and departmental managers as they represent an important managerial level as well as being key players in executing the planned strategies
- (4) The area managers for the selected ministries due to their sensitive role in monitoring the strategic plans and the assurance of strategic implementation process

As for the sample size, conducting a sufficient number of interviews has always been a challenge facing qualitative researchers. Thus, justifying the sample size for interviews to be conducted for a particular study has more than theoretical significance. Morse (2000) suggested conducting between 20 to 30 interviews with two to three interviews per person. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) recommended 30 to 50 interviews, while Creswell (2007) advised researchers to conduct at least 20 to 30 interviews. This in turn indicates that there is no exact agreed-upon figure constituting a satisfactory number of interviews. Therefore, the targeted sample size for the semi-structured interviews is 27 interviews.

For quantitative research, researchers use probability sampling or representative sampling, which is often associated with survey and experimental research strategies (Saunders et al., 2016). Researchers need to carefully select the most appropriate sampling technique for their research in order to ensure a representative sample (Saunders et al., 2016). Researchers have to select one of the main five probability samples, namely, simple random, systematic random, stratified random, cluster, and multi-stage sampling (Saunders et al., 2016). The authors further tabulated the impact of various factors on the choice of the probability sampling technique. It is therefore the responsibility of the researchers to decide upon a suitable probability sample for their research as well as to provide the justification for their choice. Therefore, for the quantitative part of this study, namely the survey that represents Phase-2 of the research, it was decided to adopt the cluster sample technique for two main reasons.

Firstly, the nature of cluster sample suits the third question of this research which aims to divide the internal actors into three discrete clusters and measure their involvement in the strategy transition process. This technique is in line with Barnett (2002), who argued that the cluster sample, also known as one-stage cluster sampling, requests the researcher divide his target population into groups prior to sampling. For this sampling technique, the sample frame would be the complete list of clusters rather than a complete list of individual cases within the population (Saunders et al., 2016). Equally, Bryman (2016) claimed that cluster sampling is always a multi-stage approach due to the fact that researchers always sample clusters first and then either their clusters or population units are sampled.

Secondly, cluster sample has a number of advantages as suggested by Saunders et al. (2016). For instance, the technique is associated with low cost, being easy to learn, quick, and can be used with an easily accessible population and not individual population members. It further allows researchers to be far more geographically concentrated than would be the case if a simple random or stratified sample were selected (Bryman, 2016). Cluster sampling is further ideal when it is impossible or impractical to compile a list of the elements composing the population (Babbie, 2007). These advantages are also applicable in this research due to its need to cover a wide geographical area. For instance, instead of visiting the representative offices for ministries in different areas, the researcher will target five ministries at their central locations in which the sample population will be covered and represented.

As for the sample size for the survey, generally, reported studies involved over 100 valid participants (Robinson et al., 2016). There are many other studies in the strategy field that use a sample size equal to or greater than 100, for instance (Al-Ghamdi, 1998; Jooste and Fourie, 2009; Bey et al., 2013). As for this research, different ministries are intended to be targeted for questionnaire distribution, with the aim of encouraging different employees from different employment levels, including top management, middle management, and front-line staff, to participate in the study. The reason the quantitative sample size needs to be justified is that to be in line with the ethical and the scientific considerations from one side, and to explain the choice of participants from the other side.

Therefore, the targeted sample size for the survey is intended to be 400 questionnaires. Also, the targeted respondents for each ministry will be the undersecretary, the assistant secretaries or agents, division heads and departmental managers, area managers, and front-line employees.

4.5 Negotiation and Gaining Research Access

Gaining research access is vital to researchers in order to gather the required data to address their research problem. Gaining the required access means a way more than normal permission to enter the organisational setting; rather, it represents access to the setting itself (Charmaz, 2014). The issue of gaining research access has been always an important element in the literature (Gummesson, 1991). Having access to an organisation and being able to interact with participants can be a difficult task, especially if the research topic is considered sensitive (Okumus et al., 2007). Organisations may further reject access as actors think that academics fail to solve problems of the study addressed, and they further doubt their ability to provide answers about what, how, and why they conduct a specific line of research and whether there is ultimately any reflective value for managers and the organisation itself (Coleman, 1996). In a similar vein, Leblanc and Schwartz (2007) argued that primary data is seen as being crucial if the secondary data for explanatory research is difficult to acquire or considered limited.

Against this background, certain steps were followed to ensure the negotiation over the research allows access to the selected organisations. An official letter was sent to the required ministries, clarifying the purpose of the research and the expected value to the organisations in particular, as well as the field itself in general. The letter provided more details about the procedure through which data will be collected and how this will be used, rather than focussing on academic content. The letter was further supported by an official request from the university in which the research was to be conducted and a copy of the personal resume of the researcher, along with his national identity. The letter clarified the ethical considerations raised by the research. The official letter is attached in the appendix list (Appendix I). While many researchers normally depend on organisations' websites to send emails and acquire respondents' information, it was preferable to personally visit each organisation and effectively secure the required access.

Moreover, to date, many of these organisations' websites do not provide information or the contact details of required respondents.

4.6 Phase-1: Semi-Structured Interviews Process

According to Creswell (2007), researchers using the qualitative method often depend on interviews, observations, documents and audio-visual material. Although there are a number of methods and techniques used to collect data in various types of research, some advocates have supported the use of interviews as a basic tool in the qualitative type. Authors such as Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Roulston (2010) and Patton (2015) have argued that the interview technique is considered to be one of the most essential tools in qualitative research as it provides rich and meaningful data about how human beings interact within their contexts. This notion is further supported by Parker (2003), as he stressed that qualitative researchers are meant to engage with participants from the organisation to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon being researched. Equally, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) pointed out that qualitative researchers are interested in how participants act and think in their own environment. The interview, as a technique, has several advantages, one of the main ones being that it can reveal information about individual emotional aspects such as opinions and beliefs. In this regard, Allen et al. (1997, cited in Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010) argued that respondents' answers during interview might be based on beliefs and opinions rather than actual behaviours or practices.

The research adopted semi-structured interviews as the main data collection method. The purpose of semi-structured interviews is to aid researchers in understanding the interviewees' perspectives, beliefs, stories, backgrounds and experiences with regards to the phenomenon under investigation. Saunders et al. (2016) viewed semi-structured interview, also known as non-standardised or qualitative interview, as an interview which lies somewhat between a structured and an in-depth interview. Boeije (2010) explained the process of the semi-structured interview by arguing that respondents or practitioners in their chosen field will share their own knowledge with the interviewer or researcher through a conversation held during the interview process.

There were several reasons behind the choice of the semi-structured interview for the current research study. Firstly, the subject being researched lies in a sensitive area related to individuals' strategy practices, which may make interviewees more reserved in their answers than might be desirable. Therefore, semi-structured interviews are used to allow for the freedom to vary the questions to accommodate the interview as well as to involve new concerns which might not have been originally planned. Secondly, it keeps the research design and questions open and flexible to facilitate newly emergent information. It further provides the interviewer with the ability to either provide or ask for some examples or a specific explanation for the question asked or on the answer received in order to gain a better understanding of the issues being researched. Thirdly, the semi-structured interview technique is beneficial for the interviewees as it provides them with the flexibility and the opportunity to share their beliefs, views, and experiences with respect to the questions delivered.

The semi-structured interviews that represent the qualitative part of this study were conducted for one of the public organisations in Kuwait. The qualitative data collection process included three different stages, namely the design of the interview protocol, the preliminary interviews, and the remaining interviews. Figure 4.1 illustrates the three stages which are aligned with their respective timings.

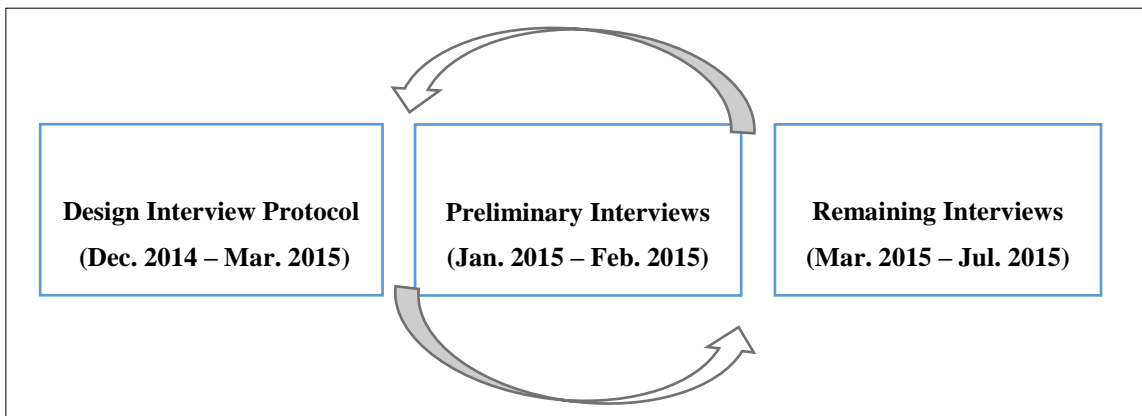


Figure 4.1: Qualitative Data Collection Process (Phase-1)

In order to gain a comprehensive picture of Phase-1 of the data collection process, the following sections provide detailed information on how the semi-structured interviews were collected and consequently how the gathered data were analysed.

4.6.1 Interview Protocol Design

Conducting qualitative research is an exciting task for both experienced and new researchers alike. However, Fontana and Frey (2000) asserted the difficulty of such a task and further claimed that asking questions and obtaining answers is harder than a researcher may initially expect. The difficulty with qualitative research probably lies in the nature of interaction between the researcher and interviewees due to the fact that respondents are expected to pen their experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. Further, researchers need to have key skills and be well prepared in order to be qualified to direct the interview in such a way as to ensure the information flow from interviewees. As stated by Saunders et al. (2016), as with any other research method, the key to a successful interview is careful preparation prior the actual interview process. Interview protocol is further considered to be one of these preparation steps. In the same vein, Jacob and Furgerson (2012) argued that an interview protocol is more than a set of questions; rather, it serves as a procedural guide for directing the researcher through the interview process. Moreover, it is considered as a reminder to the researcher as to the type of information which should be collected. Equally, Schwandt (1997) suggested that interview protocol is an important tool for assigning contact information and link it to answers, as interviewers may rely on such a database for future contact in case there is a need to clarify information, ask additional questions, and perform member checking. Therefore, it was vital to design a well-defined interview protocol prior to meeting the study participants.

The interview protocol was amended several times during its preparation to better fit the organisation in which the research was to be conducted, as well as to fit the interviewees' backgrounds and clarify any misunderstandings. As the literature suggested, in terms of interview questions the interview protocol was divided into two different levels, namely the essential and the probing questions that would each allow a flexible flow of information. Sternberg et al. (1999) suggested that answers to most direct questions from

interviewees should be followed by open-ended probes to allow free-narrative responses. The interview protocol begins with the general open-ended questions for the purpose of creating a friendly atmosphere as well as allowing interviewees to engage in the widest scope of research. This approach is preferable as it provides access to free-recall memory. The second level of the interview protocol was probing questions which targeted detailed answers from interviewees. The final design of the interview protocol is provided in the appendix list (Appendix II).

4.6.2 Interview Data Collection Process

The interview data collection process was carried out between January 2015 and late July 2015. In total, twenty-seven interviews were conducted based on two different levels, namely the preliminary level, with four interviews, and the remaining level, with twenty-three interviews. All interviewees were reached through adopting both purposive and snowballing sampling techniques as some interviewees were recommended by others. The recommended interviewees were seen to add value to the research as they are familiar with the research area or had a respective experience and consequently were capable of answering the interview questions and sharing their experiences. Each interview lasted between approximately between 45 and 90 minutes. Each interviewee was provided with a brief explanation of the research title and objectives, and the official letter was provided to those who requested it. The interviewees were chosen from both top and middle management and a variety of positions were selected. These included the assistant undersecretaries at the ministries, heads of department, and a number of other middle managers responsible for supervising a variety of units.

In line with the literature, conducting preliminary interviews prior to the actual interview process is found to aid the researcher in the review and in enhancing the interview procedure and managing different expectations. Zikmund (2003) argued that the pretesting phase is essential to qualitative researchers as the interviewers can discover whether respondents have clearly understood the interview structure and design or otherwise. Moreover, the division of the interviews into two main categories was to meet two main purposes. Firstly, it assisted the researcher in refining any given question, concept, term, or issue in order to create a better understanding of the area of research in

the remaining interviews. A valid case that should be mentioned was a question raised by one of the first four interviewees who asked for clarification as to the main difference between the term “Strategy formulation” (as in the case of designing the overall organisation strategy) and the term “Strategy planning” (as in the case of the whole strategy process). Another misunderstanding was raised by another interviewee who asked for further clarification as to the difference between “External fit” (as in the relation between the organisation and its macro-environment) and “Internal fit” (as in the relationships between key people within the organisation).

The second advantage gained from the preliminary stage was that it provided the researcher with the opportunity to reconsider the entire interview protocol to best fit the nature and respective cultures of the organisations, as well as addressing the respondents’ understanding. The technique was also supported by Saunders et al. (2016) in term of considering or omitting those questions which are not suitable for a particular organisation. Moreover, the stage was critical to building a strong relationship with the organisation in which the interviews took place, and to demonstrate high levels of commitment in pursuing the study. As this was the first phase of face-to-face interaction, the preliminary stage was further vital to establishing a friendly atmosphere and securing appointments with the other interviewees.

It was also felt important for the researcher to know the organisation’s setting, timing, structure, and protocol to allow the fieldwork plan to be adjusted accordingly. The stage was also a good opportunity for both the organisation’s representatives and for the researcher to manage each other’s expectations. For instance, the expected time for each interview, the form of questions and answers, the tools which would be used during the interview session, and any documents required that should be provided and signed, if any. In this regard, Saunders et al. (2016) argued that adequate preparation is also important to manage cultural differences between the interviewer and the interviewee. Therefore, researchers need to be aware of the social environment while conducting interviews to avoid causing any offence. Managing the time horizon was also one of the main benefits gained from the preliminary interview stage. The interviews held at the preliminary stage were further transcribed and analysed.

As technology has advanced, it has become acceptable practice to record interviews and observations made during qualitative research. According to Patton (2015), the creative and judicious use of technology could greatly enhance the quality of field observation and the utility of the observational record to others. This is further supported by Rapley (2007), who acknowledged that the actual process of making detailed transcripts enables researchers to become familiar with what they are observing as they need to listen/watch the recording several times. Equally, Rubin and Rubin (2011) suggested that recording interviews helps researchers store data to be examined immediately after conducting the interview in order to assess what questions to follow up on in later interviews.

Therefore, some of the interviews undertaken during this research were digitally recorded via a special audio recorder, and notes were taken during the interviews to complement the process. A full record of each interview was taken after its occurrence to avoid several considerations regarding interview quality such as reliability, validity, and bias. The researcher requested the respondent's permission to record the discussion and it was made clear to them that the sole purpose of the recording process was to help the researcher in the interpretation and analysis of the content of the interview. Consequently, most of the respondents were comfortable to accept the request and permission was therefore granted. Intensive notes, key words, mind maps, and detailed notes, were documented in papers for the remaining interviews in which recording the discussion was not allowed and objected to by the respondents.

Although each interview was ruled by an interview protocol in which the questions had been previously prepared and scheduled, a number of probing or follow-up questions were developed through the interviews. This encouraged the respondents to be more open and flexible in sharing their knowledge, experiences, feelings, and stories related to the proposed questions. Thus, it was necessary to keep an open mind during the interviews to encourage the flow of information. It was also important to remind the respondents of the confidentiality of their responses to keep them relaxed and encourage their participation. Thus, the data was kept in a secure place to which no-one had access apart from the researcher when needed. A point of note here is that the organisation in which the interviews were conducted requested a summary of findings be made available to

them, along with possible solutions and/or recommendations to address such findings; it was promised that this request would be fulfilled once the research was complete. A similar request was raised by some of the interviewees at the end of their interview sessions. Table 4.2 represents the profile of the interviews for the study.

Table 4.2: Profile of the Interviews

Serial Number	Interviewees ID	Managerial Level	Gender	Managerial Role	Minimum Years of Experience
1	I-1-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
2	I-2-MM	Middle Management	Female	Departmental Head	8 years
3	I-3-MM	Middle Management	Female	Departmental Head	8 years
4	I-4-TM-R	Top Management (Retired)	Male	Division Head	10 years
5	I-5-TM	Top Management	Male	Division Head	10 years
6	I-6-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
7	I-7-MM	Middle Management	Female	Departmental Head	8 years
8	I-8-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
9	I-9-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
10	I-10-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
11	I-11-TM	Top Management	Male	Division Head	10 years

12	I-12-MM	Middle Management	Female	Departmental Head	8 years
13	I-13-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
14	I-14-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
15	I-15-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
16	I-16-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
17	I-17-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
18	I-18-TM	Top Management	Male	Division Head	10 years
19	I-19-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
20	I-20-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
21	I-21-TM	Top Management	Male	Division Head	10 years
22	I-22-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
23	I-23-TM	Top Management	Male	Division Head	10 years
24	I-24-TM	Top Management	Male	Division Head	10 years
25	I-25-TM	Top Management	Male	Division Head	10 years
26	I-26-MM	Middle Management	Male	Departmental Head	8 years
27	I-27-TM-R	Top Management (Retired)	Male	Division Head	10 years

Key Guide:

I-TM: Interviewee from top management

I-MM: Interviewee from middle management

I-TM-R: Interviewee from top management (Retired)

Years of Experience: For this column, due to the anonymity of participants and at the request of certain individuals, the years of experience have been stated as per the legal requirement for holding a managerial position.

Departmental Head: 8 years of experience and above

Division Head: 10 years of experience and above

4.6.3 Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis

In qualitative research, there are several approaches available for researchers to guide them in analysing their qualitative data. As a general approach, for this research it was decided that the approach proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) would be followed, which includes three concurrent activities, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The authors viewed the data reduction stage as a process of selecting, focussing, simplifying, and transforming the data into written-up documents. The data display was viewed as a process of organising information, graphing, creating charts, and networks that would be easily to understand yet at the same time permit potentially far-reaching conclusions to be drawn. Finally, the conclusions were drawn after analysing data in terms of themes and sub-themes as per the thematic analysis approach to data analysis. The interviews were further manually analysed following thematic analysis. It should be noted that the process was not straightforward, as the researcher had to go back and forth several times between the raw interview data and the coding, etc. In addition to thematic analysis, there are also some of other approaches used to analyse qualitative data, however there is no one superior approach over the other as each has its own uses, pros, and cons.

No matter what researchers choose, the most important matter is that the choice itself must be justified, informed, principled, and disciplined (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). The use of each approach ultimately depends on what the researchers are trying to achieve and how familiar they are with the chosen approach in terms of an informative analysis of their qualitative data. In other words, selecting on an approach relies on whether researchers are adopting a deductive, an inductive, or an abductive approach (Saunders et al., 2016). Some of the approaches used to analyse qualitative data include grounded theory, narrative analysis, content analysis, and discourse analysis (Saunders et al., 2016). In using the grounded theory approach, researchers accept that concepts and themes emerge from their data without referring to the literature, and will emerge sequentially as researchers examine each paragraph (Rubin and Rubin, 2011, p. 204). Thus, the aim of grounded theory is to derive an explanatory theory on the basis of the data (Lyons and Coyle, 2016, p. 254). Although this approach is widely adopted, but it is not as flexible as thematic analysis (Saunders et al., 2016) and it further requires an enormous amount of coding (Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

Narrative approach is one of the family of approaches that is concerned with stories (Riessman, 2008). In using narrative analysis, the focus is more on detailed description than explanation (Lyons and Coyle, 2016, p. 254). Researchers using the narrative approach tend to preserve data within their narrated context to maintain the structural and sequential elements of each case (Saunders et al., 2016). Although the approach can help researchers to reveal the participants' narratives in their own social context, the approach is not without its own drawbacks. For instance, it is sometimes difficult to recognise the actual narratives for the analysis, and narrative analysts could be biased when attempting to make sense of the stories collected from a single interview (Lyons and Coyle, 2016, pp. 211-212).

As for content analysis, researchers use the approach to code and categorise their qualitative data in order to analyse it quantitatively (Saunders et al., 2016). Researchers may need to acquire extensive experience with the contextual use of the content being analysed (Krippendorff, 2012). Thus, codes and categories could be somehow predetermined by research prior to actual involvement in the fieldwork and data collection

process. Although content analysis has been used extensively in the social sciences (Krippendorff, 2012), the approach is still not perfect. For instance, Saunders et al. (2016) argued that ‘researchers may encounter difficulties with the documentary sources they wish to use for their data as they could be inaccessible, missing, incomplete, or unusable... also content analysis is not suitable to assess casual relationships’ (p. 612).

Discourse analysis, on the other, hand focusses on analysing the social effect of the use of language (Saunders et al., 2016; Lyons and Coyle, 2016). It explores how discourses construct or constitute social reality and social relations through creating meanings and perceptions (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 604). Thus, the discourse approach views the role of researchers as one of constructing or authoring an account of data (Lyons and Coyle, 2016, p. 246). Researchers adopting discourse analysis tend to rely on the distinctive advantages the approach provides. For instance, discourse analysis can reveal unspoken and unacknowledged parts of human behaviour and can further provide a positive social psychological critique for the phenomenon under investigation (Morgan, 2010). Even though its advantages are recognised, the approach has some limitations, just like other qualitative approaches. For instance, Antaki et al. (2003) have argued that many researchers who engage with discourse analysis may encounter shortcomings of under-analysis through summary, taking sides, and through either over-quotation or isolated quotation. Moreover, Morgan (2010) argued that as discourse analysis has different traditions, similarities and differences between concepts may cause confusion for both novice and experienced researchers alike. In addition, it may disrupt notions of gender, autonomy, identity and others, which can be disturbing (Morgan, 2010).

These are not the only approaches that exist that allow for the analysis of qualitative data; for instance, there are also some other approaches such as template analysis (Saunders et al., 2016), action research, conversation analysis, and Delphi study (Tesch, 1990). Having gained a brief understanding of each approach, and after careful consideration of the pros and cons of each, for a number of reasons it was decided to adopt a thematic analysis to guide the analysis of the qualitative data. Thus, the following section explains in detail the justification of using the thematic analysis approach in this study.

4.6.3.1 Thematic Analysis

According to Aronson (1995), thematic analysis is the means by which to identify themes and patterns of living and/or behaviour. It is a form in which data are recognised and emerging themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The process is further important to describing a phenomenon (or phenomena); Holloway and Todres (2003) argued that thematic analysis can be viewed as a foundational method for qualitative-based research due to the fact that qualitative research is diverse and complex by its very nature. Researchers should learn, in the first instance, how to conduct thematic analysis as it is considered a core skill and it is useful for other forms of qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In comparison to other approaches, Lyons and Coyle (2016) stated that ‘unlike other approaches, thematic analysis can be flexibly applied within any of the major ontological, epistemological and theoretical frameworks underpinning qualitative research’ (p. 87).

Thematic analysis is seen to provide valuable advantages for researchers when analysing gathered data. Although there is no specific agreement about how researchers can approach it, thematic analysis is highly adopted and widely used in different sciences (Boyatzis, 1998). As stated by Lyons and Coyle (2016) ‘thematic analysis can be used to answer most types of research question that are of interest to qualitative researchers’ (p. 88). The approach is further flexible, easy to learn in a relatively short time, similarities and differences can be easily highlighted, can generate unexpected insights, and its results are usually understandable by the general public (Braun and Clarke, 2006). They further argued that thematic analysis can be used within various theoretical frameworks. Moreover, thematic analysis gives researchers the freedom to move between deductive and inductive research approaches (Saunders et al., 2016; Lyons and Coyle, 2016).

Moving from this point, the researcher followed the six stages of thematic analysis offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) to make sense of the interviews. These involved (i) familiarising the researcher with the data gathered, (ii) generation of initial codes, (iii) searching of themes, (iv) reviewing of themes, (v) defining and naming themes, (vi) producing the report. It is important to note that the thematic analysis process requires the researcher to repeatedly go back and forth between raw interview data and associated

analysis and researchers should allocate a considerable amount of time to ensure better and more reliable analysis. In the same regard, Patton (2015) advised that qualitative analysis guidelines are not rigid rules, and researchers must be flexible in fulfilling their research questions and respective data.

4.6.4 Transcription of Interviews

Each interview was transcribed shortly after it was conducted. Although there are similar points, the content of each was unique, and each was assigned its own unique identity. The process of transcribing the interviews consumed a considerable amount of time and required good skills as well as proper attention. Transcription of interviews is a reliable technique on which the researcher can depend for the data analysis stage. Markle et al. (2011) suggested that recording and transcribing interviews is a staple norm in qualitative research. It is actually considered a pre-requisite for analysing qualitative data collected from respondents. The process is started while still collecting the data, and therefore the theoretical framework, along with interview questions, can be modified on a regular basis.

The process is considered to be critical to the research journey. In this instance, several steps were involved in completing each transcript. Firstly, the recording for each interview was revisited more than once to ensure that the details and richness of information were fully captured and well documented. Moreover, this exercise gave the researcher the opportunity to sensibly understand the discussion of each interview to avoid possible bias in interpreting its content. Secondly, the transcription was translated from Arabic into English as the majority of the interviewees preferred to be interviewed in Arabic, with the exception of one respondent who preferred that English was used. Thirdly, the translation was verified to ensure the accuracy in translating key terms and phrases and to avoid any bias. Fourthly, for the purpose of verification, the translation was given to two external translators who work at two different organisations to further ensure accurate translation.

The challenge in qualitative research relies on how the transcription of each interview is interpreted. Hence, once the engagement process with the interviews' transcription commenced, the researcher gained the opportunity to note important themes, key words,

terminologies, repetitive phrases, and discourses related to the research area. Therefore, it was subsequently realised that the process of data analysis had actually begun during the process of reviewing each transcript. A worthwhile point is that it was learnt from practice that research stages are not systematic in nature; rather, they constitute an interactive and iterative procedure that demands repeatedly going back and forth as described previously. This has also strengthened the required skills and thoughts to overcome these challenges.

4.6.5 Validation of Interview Transcripts

Qualitative research can produce massive amounts of data because such data is typically less structured than that produced by quantitative research. It is therefore a challenging task for the researcher to make sense of the gathered data and consequently interpret it. Thus, it can be argued that qualitative data is more subjective than quantitative. According to Pope et al. (2000), some quantitative researchers note that qualitative data cannot be held to give a straightforward representation of the social world, as different sets of research may differ in their interpretation of data. As a result, the accuracy of interpreting qualitative data may be questionable to some extent. Against this background, although it could be time consuming, it is debatable as to whether a given interpretation of qualitative data should be validated by a third party, or otherwise (Barbour, 2001). The proposed objective of validating transcripts is to reduce bias and ensure the accuracy of the data interpretation. In this regard, Carboni (1995) argued that ensuring credibility is an important task in order to establish confidence in the interpretation of the meaning of the gathered data. Equally, Thorne (1997) further stressed the necessity to ensuring that the interpretation of the researcher is reliable and reflects some truth external to the researchers' experiences.

The literature suggests two different ways to validate the analysis of the qualitative data: respondent validation, and peer review validation. The former suggests that transcripts should be returned to the original respondents to check them and make any required amendments. A number of drawbacks are associated with this technique if applied. For instance, one of the disadvantages is that the process is considered to be time consuming and needs to be done directly after the interviews have been conducted so that the

respondents can remember what was actually discussed. Another downside is that interviewees may change their perceptions and thoughts due to temporal effects and changes in their conditions. Furthermore, the issues originally discussed might change with time and consequently respondents may provide alternative responses to those initially provided. Moreover, Cutcliffe and McKenna (1999) supported the idea that some participants may not recognise some of the emerging theories in the field of study, as each may have contributed only a small portion of the total body of data. Another negative point was recognised by Bryman and Bell (2015) who suggested that the process may trigger a defensive reaction on the part of the research. Likewise, participants may also modify the content of the scripts if they feel that their opinions are not socially acceptable or if they assume that it will not add any value to the research or area of study.

On the other hand, peer review validation assumes that transcript analysis should be verified by a third party who has no direct interest with either the researcher or the respondent. The technique suggests that the analysis should be reviewed by at least one experienced, independent researcher. The main objective of this process is to ensure that the transcripts were correctly prepared in line with the study. According to Cutcliffe and McKenna (1999) and Barbour (2001), peer review validation may serve to counter any possible bias of the researcher; besides, it also helps to provide additional thoughts regarding the interpreted data. Although the process would appear to be effective, it can have several drawbacks. For instance, the process of peer validation could be biased to an extent as each researcher may interpret the gathered data differently. An additional disadvantage is the question as to how to proceed if one interpretation is stronger than another or more valid than the other, and the impact that such conflict could raise.

4.6.6 Initial Coding Technique and Data Reduction

As previously discussed, the time consumed by the whole transcription process actually lasted for a period of approximately four months. After transcribing each interview, each transcript was carefully analysed by the researcher in order to be familiar with the data gathered. Initially, a manual coding procedure was followed for each transcript. The approach followed to code the interview transcripts was the ‘file and block’ approach suggested by Grbich (2013). The main aim of this approach is basically to organise the

coding system for qualitative interviews. Following this suggestion, the interview coding was divided into two main phases. The first phase required coding each transcript line by line, while the second phase required grouping direct quotes of interviewees in a table under specific segments or headings for further analysis. The two phases of the block and file approach are attached in the appendix list (Appendices IV and V). Organising the gathered data in blocks helps researchers to contextualise the gathered comments, which in turn help to reduce the data in order to generate the final main themes of the study (Plitt Donaldson et al., 2016).

Therefore, specific notes defined by the researcher were assigned to key words, repetitive phrases, special stories or experiences, and so on. These notes were transferred to a specific table in which the initial themes and codes were generated and identified. As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), writing a memo can not only help summarise the themes but also tie them together and help the evaluator interpret the meanings of these themes. Categorising the qualitative data into codes and themes are extremely important for the researcher to guide the research objectives whilst still answering the proposed research questions. It also helps the researchers to simplify the discussion of the themes and consider the sense in which these can be interpreted. Furthermore, it assists the researchers in narrowing the scope of collected data and in managing it effectively and efficiently. In this regard, Griffiee (2005) stated that a particular challenge facing researchers is how to reduce the large amount of data obtained from interview transcripts whilst at the same time reflecting the meaning of these data. This process is not only a part of the data analysis process, but also a part of the data reduction process. The response to each question in each transcript was assigned to an initial open code and subsequently divided into further detailed codes to gain a sense of meaning. As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the critical question here is whether the meanings found by qualitative researchers are valid, repeatable and correct across the extent of the qualitative data. A sample of initial transcript coding is given in Appendix IV. Figure 4.2 gives a sample map for typical data coding.

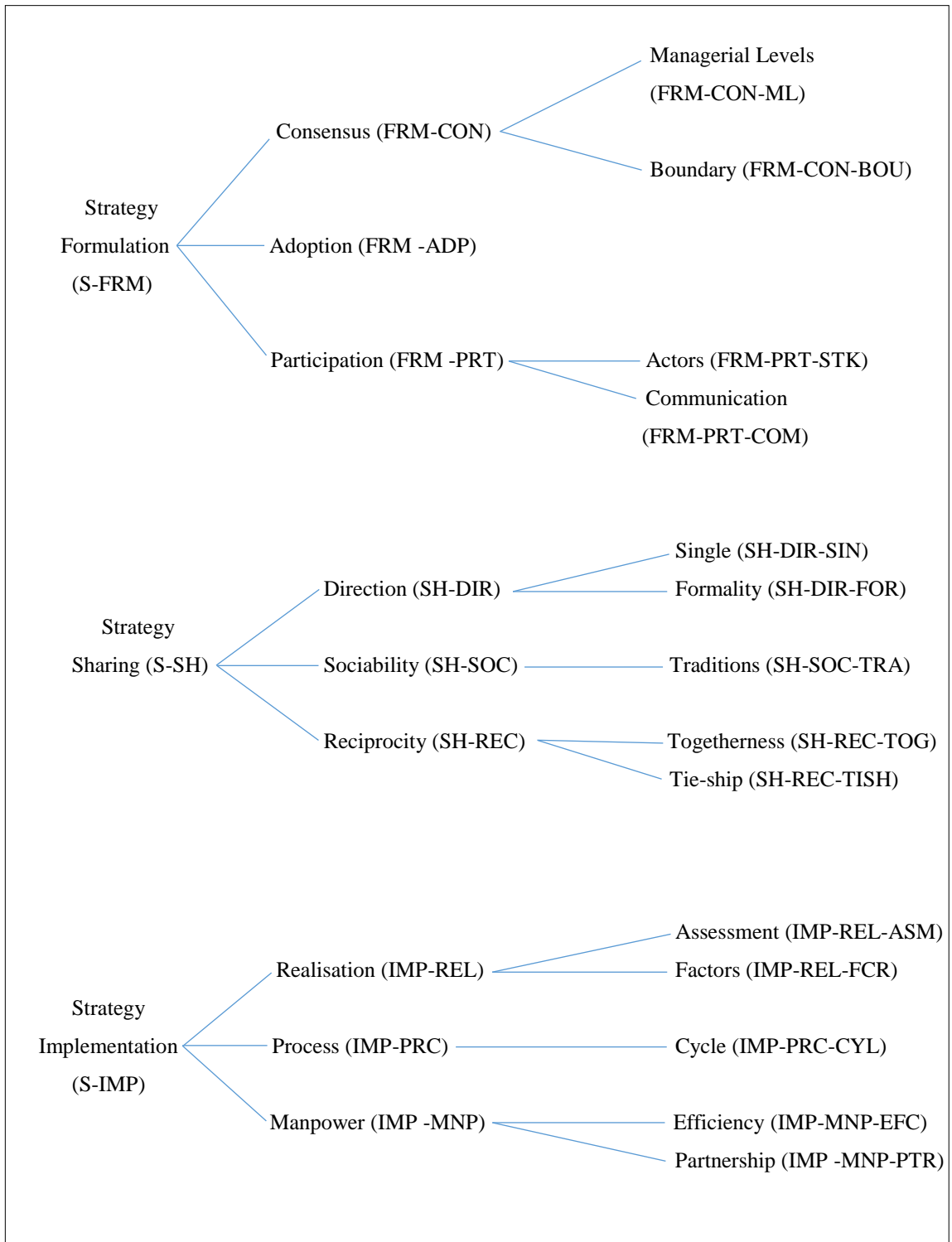


Figure 4.2: Sample Map for Data Coding

The coding process involved reviewing each transcript separately and identifying the codes and themes for the data that could potentially offer the answers the proposed research questions. According to Boyatzis (1998), the coding stage involves recognising

a vital moment and encoding it prior to a process of interpretation. The process also involves defining the codes which must be consistent across the interviews; the themes will be identified through careful reading and re-reading of the collected data. As suggested by Boyatzis (1998), a good code is defined as “the one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon”, while a theme is defined as “a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (p. 161). During the initial coding phase, an approximate number of one hundred and sixty-two pages of transcribed interviews were coded to generate several codes and respective themes, while it was modified on a regular basis to accurately fit the research objectives from one side, and to reduce the large amount of data gathered from the other. Furthermore, descriptive label categories were assigned for each theme and repetitive codes were further addressed. Table 4.3 gives a brief summary of code commonalities across the interviews.

Table 4.3: Sample of Code Commonalities across the Interviews

Serial	Code	Respondents	Similar Words	Interviews
1	Strategic consensus	20	No agreement, disconnected, different strategies, deny promises, lack of strategic joining, strategy changes	1-8, 10, 12-14, 16-20, 24-26
2	Instability in positions	18	Frequent changes, different faces, sudden movement, high rotation, supervising various departments	1-4, 6-10, 13-18, 20, 22, 24
3	Delegation power	17	Centralisation, one-man show, individual power, work depends on sole managers, lack of team work, lack of tasks distribution	2-7, 9-11, 14, 16, 18, 20-22, 24, 27

4	Single direction of information	19	One-way order, lack of mutual communication, receiving orders only, no involvement in decisions, rare chances for counter opinions, top-down communication, hierarchal orders	1-8, 10-11, 13, 15-16, 19, 22, 24-27
5	Reciprocity among employees	15	Trust between us, share what I know, support others with information, they always refer to me, seek help, continuous information exchange	1-3, 5-8, 11-14, 16, 18, 20, 26
6	Sociability among each other	15	Social interaction, gathering, outdoor activities, coffee break, informal discussion, gossiping, gathering breaks, friendship ties	2-6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17-20, 23-24
7	Clashes among key managers	17	Actors' conflict, counter opinions, no persuasion, imposing power, personal agenda	1-4, 9-13, 15-18, 20, 22, 25, 27
8	Decision-Makers' Mentality	16	Old generation, no fresh blood, outdated ideas, level of understanding, inapplicable approaches, no creativity, disconnection in opinions	1-2, 5-7, 9-16, 21, 25-26

9	Networks	15	Personal relations, individual networks, managers know many people, interests with others, reliance on others, influential people	3-8, 10-11, 13, 15-18, 20, 25
10	Decision-makers' perception	16	Level of thinking, they have different thoughts, they own strategy, different views, not willing to share strategy	1, 5-8, 10-14, 17-19, 20, 23-24
11	Individuals' self-efficacy	15	Managers' skills, encourage collaboration, way to manage, motivate others, individual experience, personal ability	1-4, 6, 8-9, 11-16, 18, 26
12	Technology-aided strategy transfer	15	Type of technology, current communication system, advance tools, mailing system, electronic archive, online strategy documentation	1-5, 9, 13, 15-18, 20, 22, 24, 27
13	Mentoring	16	Supervision, directing employees, need to coach, way to accomplish things, route map for staff	1-6, 8, 11, 13-14, 17-20, 24-25
14	Accountability and follow-up	16	Lack of feedback, ineffective control, no one is responsible, absence of observation, need of serious investigation, covering each other	1-2, 5-8, 12-15, 17, 20, 23-26

15	Non-engaged employees	15	Ineffective employees, no workstation for them, many people, massive number of staff, unrequired load, no real jobs, 'Batala Muqannaa'	3-5, 7, 9-10, 14, 18-21, 23-25, 27
16	Unclear roles and responsibilities	14	Overlap in tasks, multi-jobs, different roles, what exactly should be done, misunderstanding in rights and responsibilities, need to clarify daily work	3-7, 11-13, 15, 18, 20, 22-24
17	Reliability on expatriates (Reliance on foreign workers)	12	Foreign skills, lobby, form a unified group together, preservative, critical tasks assigned to experts, national workforce, efficiency of expatriates, unqualified national workforce	4, 6, 8-10, 15-19, 22, 26
18	Reward system	11	Lack of motivation, inequality at workplace, no recognition, dissatisfaction, effort vs. outcome, unattractive rewards	1-2, 4-6, 10, 14-16, 19, 25

Although using technical software such as NVivo, ATLAS.TI, and MAXQDA is considered an advantage to qualitative research, the decision was taken to perform data analysis manually. The software is rather seen as supportive tools by which to organise the data, however, they do not conduct the analysis itself; it is believed that there is no absolute substitution for manual analysis. Software may also turn the researchers' attention away from line-by-line coding as the focus will be on similar words and other general functions. Although line-by-line coding might seem to be a stressful exercise, it

can be an enormously useful tool for qualitative researchers. Therefore, all themes and sub-themes used herein were produced using a manual coding technique. After coding the entirety of the transcripts, more than 50 sub-themes were identified and the data reduced by linking the commonalities together and merging some units, as well as excluding those themes which were not frequently observed or otherwise considered irrelevant to the research objectives. However, the excluded themes and respective codes were not be wasted, as it was felt that they could potentially be used for future research in this area. Considering the data reduction process, only 18 sub-themes were identified. Figure 4.3 shows the final six main themes, as paired with their respective sub-themes.

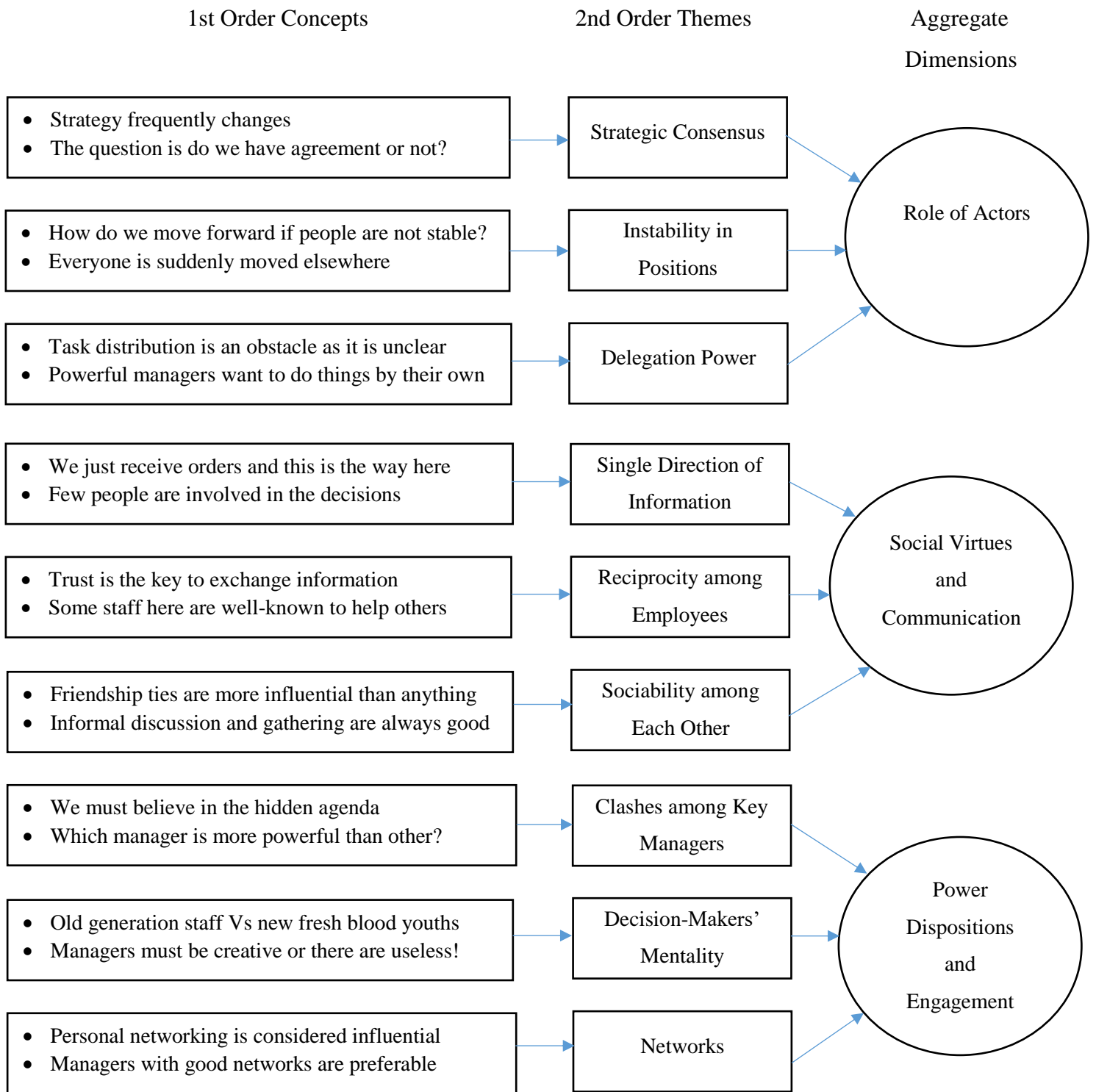




Figure 4.3: Final Thematic Map of Themes and Sub-themes (Data Structure)
 (Source: Adapted from Corley and Gioia, 2004)

Having the final thematic map disclosed, it is important to note that some of the emergent themes had already been noted to some extent in previous studies available in the literature. For instance, leadership, communication among individuals, and control mechanism were previously explained in various contexts to reflect their effect on either strategy formulation or strategy implementation within organisations. However, in this research, it was noted that new themes emerged that were found to affect the way in which strategy is shared among organisational members and transited from one managerial level to another. For instance, the belief of strategy ownership by certain individuals was found to be influential to the way in which strategy is transited from the formulation phase to implementation. Equally, the power dispositions and engagement was found to be critical to how people share organisational strategy amongst each other. Furthermore, job design and role allocation were found to play a critical role in sharing strategy among different employees. Further explanation of themes is presented in the qualitative results and findings in Chapter 5.

4.7 Phase-2: Survey Process

The survey technique was used for two main purposes. The first is in order to prioritise the outcomes raised due to conducting the interviews among different groups of actors groups. Secondly, it is important to understand how each group of actors perceives each factor and whether the priority order differs between them, or otherwise. It was perceived to be important to know which factor are considered more important than others for each group of actors as this might provide useful conclusions regarding the strategy transition engagement among various employees in a given organisation. Using the questionnaire tool for this purpose seems to have a number of distinctive advantages for the researcher. For instance, it allows the researcher to gather a large amount of data in a short time (Bryman, 2016). Furthermore, it allows for generalisability (Saunders et al., 2016). It is also considered to be cost effective (Bryman, 2016).

The questionnaires, which represent the quantitative part of this study, were collected from five public ministries in Kuwait. There were three actors targeted by the questionnaire, namely the top management, the middle management, and the front-line employees. The aim to distributing the questionnaires was to understand how the factors

identified from the qualitative study affect the involvement of top and middle managers as well as front-line staff in the strategy transition process and also to what extent; this in turn represents the third objective of this research. The quantitative data collection process involved three different stages, namely the survey design, the pilot study, and the survey distribution. Figure 4.4 illustrates the three stages, which are further aligned with their respective timings.

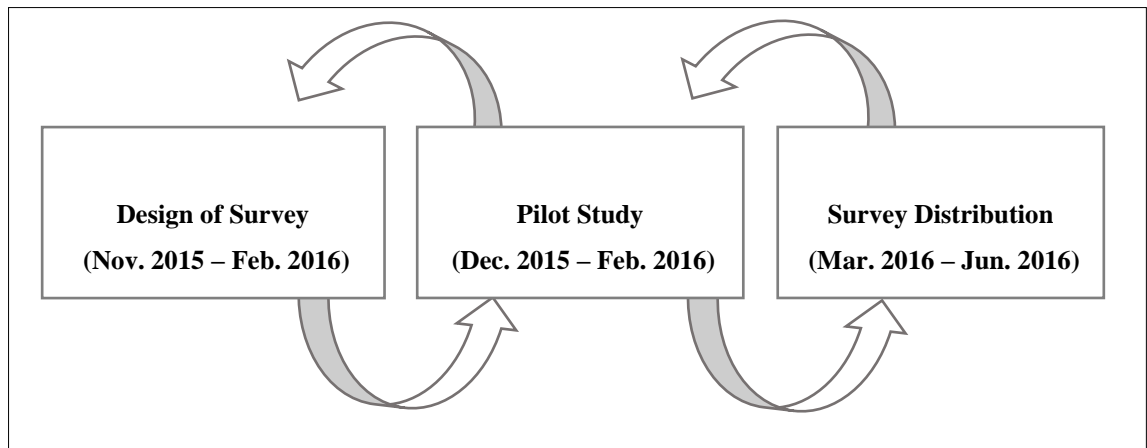


Figure 4.4: Quantitative Data Collection Process (Phase-2)

In order to gain a comprehensive overview of Phase-2 of the data collection process, the following sections provide detailed information as to how the survey data was collected and subsequently how the gathered data were analysed.

4.7.1 Survey Design

The use of survey has been widely adopted in research across various disciplines. It can be used to measure behaviours, demographic characteristics, levels of knowledge, attitudes and opinions. However, survey design is considered to be one of the most challenging tasks researchers can undertake. The difficulty can be assigned to the way in which researchers form questions to collect the required data or measure certain relationships. Peterson (2000) claimed that researchers will waste time and effort, and their results will be of little value, if an ineffective survey is constructed. As pointed out by Ambrose and Anstey (2010), the procedures depend on the researchers' abilities to consider the type and source of information that is most relevant to the research

objectives. The process of designing a survey is probably more of an art than a science (Ambrose and Anstey, 2010).

The survey was designed just after the analysis of Phase-1 had been finalised. The time to construct the survey extended over a period of approximately three months, from late November 2015 to late February 2016. The survey was subject to amendment several times during this period for the purpose of quality, as well as to make sure that the points being addressed were promising as a means by which to measure and answer the related research question. It is also worth noting that some questions were changed and in some cases omitted so as to fit the context of the organisations in which the survey was distributed. Furthermore, the changes were also subject to the results obtained from the pilot survey at the early stage of distribution. The final version is given in Appendix III.

4.7.2 Survey Data Collection Process

The survey data collection process was carried out between December 2015 and June 2016. The survey was distributed to employees at different managerial levels, namely top management, middle management, and front-line staff. The survey was provided in both Arabic as well as English based on the preference of each participant. However, the majority of participants preferred the Arabic copy as it was their native language.

For validity purposes, copies of the questionnaire in both languages were given to two independent experts to verify whether the copies were identical or otherwise; this practice was also followed prior to running the pilot study. According to Hazzi and Maldaon (2015), researchers should consider back-translation, especially when using the original survey in a different language as this is considered the first step in either the pilot or the main study. This was further found to be in line with the recommendations given by Brislin (1970), who suggested that two bilingual experts are preferable when verifying the survey translation, especially if the languages are not 'identical' in the sense of reflecting exactly the same meaning to the participant. All participants were reached through their offices and were provided with a copy of the questionnaire in their preferred language. Each copy provided a brief of the study, describing what the survey was about, and were also provided with an estimation of the expected time for completion.

It is important to note that some of the participants requested an online version of the survey as they preferred this to the paper-based questionnaire. The online version was provided through an online host, SmartSurvey, which could be accessed through the website www.smartsurvey.co.uk. According to Norman et al. (2001), computerised, self-administrated surveys have become an acceptable alternative to human interviewers and paper-based questionnaires. Ilieva et al. (2002) argued that the trend towards the use of online data collection has significantly increased since the late 1990s. Craig and Douglas (2001) further stressed the importance of incorporating new tools which are based on the latest technologies to facilitate the process of data collection. Although the use of online surveys might be debatable among researchers, the technique is seen to offer a number of advantages. For instance, it is considered reasonably inexpensive in terms of financial resources, it is associated with a short response time, and the data gathered can be directly loaded to the main database, thereby saving time and effort on the part of the researcher (Ilieva et al., 2002).

The survey data collection process was conducted via two main phases, namely the pilot study phase and the remaining survey distribution phase. Running a pilot test is considered vital to any research journey. This importance can be seen to be connected with the quality of the research (Hazzi and Maldaon, 2015). Pilot study has a number of distinctive advantages for research. For instance, it can be used to check words, unintended mistakes, refine statements, amend scale items, and is considered a preliminary to other necessary modifications. It can be further used to verify the research instrument (Hazzi and Maldaon, 2015) and consequently to examine the feasibility of the approach intended for use on a larger scale, that is, the main study. Therefore, it was important to pilot the survey before embarking on the main stage of survey distribution. In terms of the sample size for the pilot study, Baker (1994) viewed a sample size constituting 10-20% of the total population to be reasonable as a response rate.

The survey has six factors to measure, namely awareness, flexibility, leadership, interaction, process, and perception factors. The pilot survey was distributed to two public organisations. Prior to distributing the survey, an official letter was sent to the responsible department in each organisation to ensure access and gain appropriate approval. A total

of 55 copies were distributed and collected back after one month. With five invalid and incomplete copies, only 50 completed surveys were available for analysis. After piloting the survey, in terms of the leadership factor, questions 2 and 8 were removed leaving a total of nine questions to be asked instead of 11. In terms of the interaction factor, question 9 was removed leaving a total of eight questions to be asked instead of nine. All other questions were kept the same with no change. Thus, a total of 58 questions were asked instead of 61 questions, in addition to one subjective open question that allowed participants to add any further comments they might have. Consequently, after considering the required amendments to the pilot study for the remaining survey distribution phase, a total of 400 surveys were distributed, from which only 381 samples were appropriate for final analysis. The response rate for valid surveys is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Pilot Study Response Condition

Condition	Number
Survey Sent	55
Responses	54
Invalid survey	5
Valid Survey	50
Percentage of Valid Surveys	90%

4.7.3 Survey Data Analysis Process

The quantitative data analysis was performed through using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) ‘IBM Corp. Released 2015. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 23.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp’. Here, Cronbach’s α was set to be 0.5 for all the survey factors; according to Nunnally (1978), an α of 0.7 has been found empirically to represent the threshold of an acceptable reliability coefficient. In addition, a higher sum of means shows a strong proficiency and, similarly, a higher sum of standard deviations shows a stronger dispersion of the data. The survey distributed was tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The quantitative data analysis is offered in both this chapter and Chapter 6. In the following sections, the reliability and validity of the data will be presented along with descriptive statistics for each factor in order to measure the

distribution and account for outliers. The analyses also include the Pearson correlation between the survey factors to allow the strengths and direction of linear relationships between any two given factors to be measured. Moreover, summary statistics for numeric factors will also be presented. However, in Chapter 6, the analysis is mostly concerned with the results of the survey responses and the research question. Therefore, various analyses were applied to measure whether there was a difference in the responses given by the various managerial levels, or otherwise, in terms of their priority with regards to certain factors affecting the strategy transition process.

4.7.3.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

To measure the reliability of factors, Cronbach's α was applied. Reliability can be defined as the accuracy or precision of a given instrument. Cronbach's α tests were performed for each of the factors individually. Therefore, the test was performed for each factor as well as the overall results. Table 4.5 reports the guidelines by which to interpret Cronbach's α .

Table 4.5: Cronbach's α Measure

Cronbach's α Values	Internal Consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

After running the reliability test, all the factors indicated good reliability with Cronbach's α coefficient ranges between 0.86 to 0.89, as shown in Table 4.6, with the exception of the perception factor which showed excellent reliability with a coefficient of 0.90. From these figures, the reliability analysis showed that the distributed questionnaire was reliable as five out of six factors showed good reliability with one factor indicating excellent reliability. Therefore, all the suggested factors were significant to the investigation.

Table 4.6: Reliability Table for Each Factor

Factors	No. of Questions	α
Awareness	10	0.89
Flexibility	7	0.89
Leadership	9	0.88
Interaction	8	0.86
Process	12	0.87
Perception	12	0.90

4.7.3.2 Pearson Correlation Analysis between Study Factors

Pearson correlation was used due to the fact that the measured data are ordinal and dependent on a specified scale. A Pearson correlation, or simply a correlation coefficient analysis, was found for each of the six factors, namely awareness, flexibility, leadership, interaction, process, and perception. This analysis was vital to this research as it measured the liner relationship between any two given factors. The values of the Pearson correlation test range from 1 to -1 in which values equal to zero reflect no association between two given factors; values greeter than zero indicate a positive association, and values below zero indicate a negative association. Furthermore, Pearson correlation analysis requires the relationship between each pair of factors to be monotonic, or simply that they do not change their direction. This last condition will be violated if the points on the scatterplot of any given pair of factors appears to shift from positive to negative, or vice versa (Sedgwick, 2012). It is worth noting that there are no definite rules through which to measure the strength of the association of any two given factors; however, Cohen’s standard provides some general guidelines by which measure the effect size or the strength of the relationship in this regard. Therefore, in order to measure the association or the effect size between the study factors, a Cohen’s *d* value was determined. Table 4.7 shows the effect size for Cohen's *d*.

Table 4.7: Cohen's *d* Standard

Cohen's <i>d</i> Values	Effect Size
$0.10 \geq r > 0.30$	Small Association
$0.30 \geq r > 0.50$	Moderate Association
$r \geq 0.50$	Large Association

(Source: Adapted from Cohen, 1988)

From the Pearson Correlation analysis, it was found that there was a significant positive correlation between the awareness and the flexibility with ($r = 0.81, p < 0.001$). The r between the awareness and the flexibility indicated a large association. The results also indicated positive and large associations between the awareness and other factors including leadership, interaction, process, and perception. Furthermore, there were positive and large associations between the flexibility and other factors including leadership, interaction, and perception. Moreover, there were positive and large associations between the leadership and other factors including interaction and perception. The results also revealed a positive and large association between the interaction and perception factors. Finally, a positive and large association was also noted between the process and the perception factors.

It may also be noted from the table that a positive and moderate association can be identified between the flexibility and process factors, leadership and process, and between the interaction and process factors. It is further justifiable to have a large association between awareness and other factors, as awareness is vital for actors in the way it forms their flexibility in practicing strategy content, leadership in influencing strategy practices within the organisation, their interaction with each other, the process of transitioning strategy between two stages, and the actors' perceptions of their organisational strategy. Table 4.8 represents the results of the correlations. Furthermore, Figure 4.5 shows a scatterplot matrix of the correlations.

Table 4.8: Pearson Correlation Matrix between the Awareness, Flexibility, Leadership, Interaction, Process, and Perception Factors

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Awareness	-					
2. Flexibility	0.81	-				
3. Leadership	0.68	0.73	-			
4. Interaction	0.73	0.78	0.74	-		
5. Process	0.52	0.46	0.38	0.43	-	
6. Perception	0.52	0.58	0.54	0.54	0.74	-

Note. The critical values are 0.10, 0.13, and 0.17 for significance levels .05, .01, and .001, respectively.

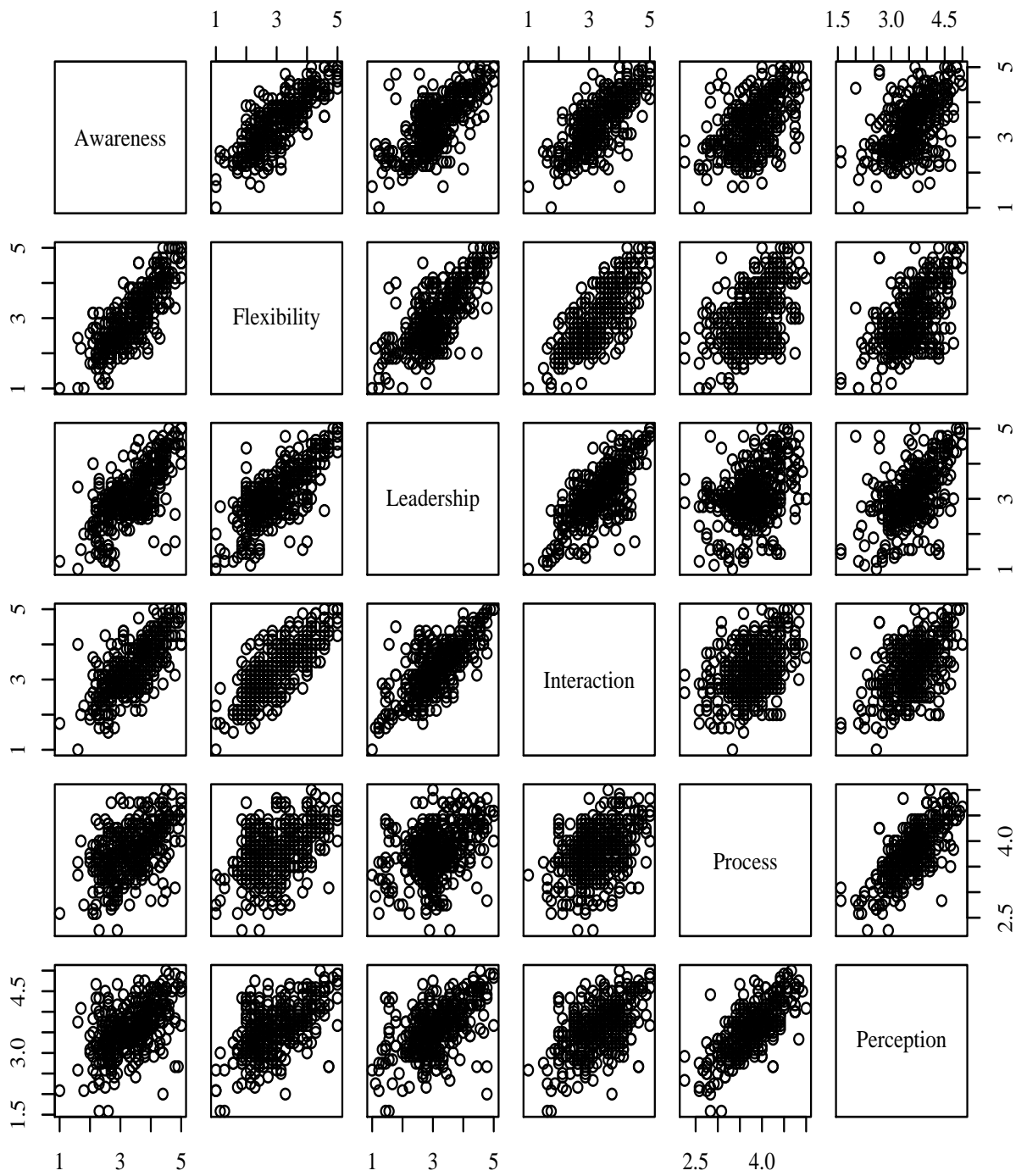


Figure 4.5: Scatterplot Matrix between the Awareness, Flexibility, Leadership, Interaction, Process, and Perception Factors

4.7.3.3 Summary Statistics for Numeric Factors

This section reports the statistics related to numeric factors in order to clarify the language of the survey as seen by its participants. These statistics were carried out for the six independent factors in this study as noted in section 4.7.3.1 To accommodate this point, we use (μ) for the Mean, which reflects the average value of a scale for each factor that varies from 1 to 5. Higher sums of means indicate a stronger understanding of the language. Moreover, higher sums of standard deviations (σ) indicate a stronger dispersion of the data values. The scale of value for the questionnaire ranges from 1 to 5, as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Questionnaire Scale of Values

Scale of Value	Description
1	Strongly Disagree 'SD'
2	Disagree 'D'
3	Neutral 'N'
4	Agree 'A'
5	Strongly Agree 'SA'

In Table 4.10, it may be noted that the typical mean of the data (μ) for all the study factors ranged from 3.00 to 3.79, which indicates good clarity of the survey as the threshold point is 3 and above. Furthermore, the table shows that the data of the survey were normally distributed as the Skewness ranges from -0.21 and 0.31, and the Kurtosis ranges from -0.65 and 0.19. According to Westfall and Henning (2013), if the Skewness is ≥ 2 or ≤ -2 , then the factor is considered to be asymmetrical about its mean; furthermore, if the Kurtosis value is ≥ 3 , then the distribution of a particular factor does not produce outliers. Thus, no additional tests need be applied for normality based on these statistics.

Table 4.10: Statistical Summary for Interval and Ratio Factors

Factor	M	SD	n	Min.	Max.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Awareness	3.36	0.76	381	1.00	5.00	0.04	-0.65
Flexibility	3.00	0.85	381	1.00	5.00	0.31	-0.51
Leadership	3.09	0.79	381	1.00	5.00	0.05	-0.02
Interaction	3.28	0.75	381	1.00	5.00	0.06	-0.38
Process	3.79	0.51	381	2.25	5.00	-0.18	-0.12
Perception	3.58	0.59	381	1.58	5.00	-0.21	0.19

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics and ethical considerations are important while engaging with organisations and participants. Ethics may lie within the nature of the researchers' questions, which may lead to some meaning being uncovered within the interviewee. Saunders et al. (2016) argued that researchers should not subject participants to the risk of embarrassment, pain, harm, or any other material disadvantage. Therefore, it is important to maintain a certain ethical standard while dealing with participants to achieve the above, as well as to create trust among research parties. The ethical consideration in qualitative research should not end at some particular stage, but rather should remain at the forefront of researchers' thinking throughout the course of their study and even beyond it (Saunders et al., 2016).

Based on this background, certain steps were followed to ensure adherence to the ethics of the study. At the beginning, an official letter was sent to the administration departments at the organisations to gain permission for the required access. A few points were clarified with each participant, including a brief introduction to the research and how their responses would be used, an estimation of time to complete the interview session or the questionnaire, how questions will be asked, and permission to use the audio-tape recorder and to take notes during the interview session. Moreover, participants were assured of their anonymity and that their responses would remain confidential on a permanent basis. Furthermore, participants were reminded that participation in the research was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time and at any stage during the research without explanation and with no negative consequences. It was also made explicit to them that upon successful completion of the research, the content would be available to public;

however, the private information shared in the interview would not be disclosed by any means.

The names and job titles were replaced by initial codes, as previously clarified in Table 4.2. It was also felt that on a few occasions, some of the interviewees showed signs of discomfort at sharing certain kinds of information due to being aware that their contribution was being recorded. In such cases, the tape-recorder was stopped immediately to give these interviewees the opportunity to recall their memory as well as to maintain the high levels of trust expected. Moreover, the original notes and transcripts in which names, dates, titles, and special events were referred to were kept confidential and will be destroyed after the research is complete.

The same circumstances also applied for the quantitative phase in which questionnaires were distributed to participants. The questionnaire paper did not include any questions through which the researcher might be able to establish the identity of a participant, and therefore anonymity was assured. Participants were further briefed about the extent to which the information would be used and were given the option to participate, or otherwise decline to continue; also, the option of withdrawing from the study at any time was further assured. Due to the fact that some of the subjects addressed in the questionnaire measured the degree of communication among participants and their line managers, some participants requested further clarification as to whether the fact of their participation would be shared by their line managers (or otherwise). It was confidently communicated that their input would only be used for academic purposes and would under no circumstances be made available to a second party, with the exception of the researcher himself.

4.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained the rationale behind the choice of research design, and the justification behind the use of case study. The purpose behind this explanation was to communicate the rationale to the choices made by the researcher and how these choices were linked to the research questions and overall objectives. The chapter also clarified the manner in which the required access to organisations was obtained. The chapter also

considered best practice and any ongoing debate over the research population, sampling technique, and sample size, as was further explained. As the research adopted a mixed method approach to answering the proposed questions, the rationale behind using both semi-structured interviews and questionnaires was discussed. Moreover, explaining both methods in detail was vital so as to reflect how these methods were interdependent in this research.

The chapter also provided detailed information about the fieldwork by explaining how the data were collected and analysed for both the qualitative method, as represented by Phase-1, and the quantitative method, as represented by Phase-2. In Phase-1, qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews based on a single case study. The data were analysed manually following a thematic analysis scheme and, after considering the data reduction, six major themes were found to have emerged. These included the roles of actors, social virtues and communication, power dispositions and engagement, personalising the strategy ownership, control mechanism of strategy transition, job design, and role allocation.

After finalising the qualitative data emergent from Phase-1, it was then possible to design the survey tool which formed the basis of Phase-2. In this phase, quantitative data were collected from five organisations and subsequently analysed. The analysis conducted in this chapter for the quantitative phase was mainly to test the reliability of the survey as well to consider the correlation between the factors studied, enabling the researcher to interpret the quantitative results (See Chapter 6). The results showed that the survey was reliable and there was considerable association between the factors studied, namely awareness, flexibility, leadership, interaction, process, and perception.

Furthermore, ethical considerations were considered and discussed in this chapter in order to reflect the researcher's awareness of such concerns, and to further to assure the compliance of this research with the required ethical practice and standards. Having explained the research methodology and methods, the following chapter will introduce the qualitative results and findings emergent from Phase-1 of this research.

Chapter 5: Qualitative Results and Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the qualitative study that was carried out for just one of the organisations in Kuwait over a period of six months. This study was designed to identify the way in which strategy is being interacted among the various managerial levels in the organisation. Also, the main findings to emerge from this study will be introduced and reported as a narrative, where the themes that were identified in Chapter 4 (Section 4.6.6) will be evaluated by representative quotes from the interviewees. Furthermore, the empirical findings will be presented in line with the theoretical framework of the research, as discussed in the literature review in section 2.5.4. Finally, the discussion will be structured to reflect the flow of the strategy from formulation to implementation and the interaction between them.

Section 5.2 outlines the roles of actors in terms of their influence on the strategy transition among employment levels through a discussion of the consensus over the strategy and the frequent change of officials as well as their power of delegation. Section 5.3 introduces social virtues and communication as influential themes in the strategy transition by explaining the direction of information along with the reciprocity and sociability between organisational members. Section 5.4 addresses the confliction among key managers according to their work power, their individual behaviour and their mentality in the workplace and at networking based on their power dispositions and engagement. Section 5.5 discusses the ownership of the organisational strategy by clarifying the decision-makers' perception and self-efficacy and how technology may influence the strategy transition within the organisation. Section 5.6 describes the control mechanism from the mentoring perspective, the accountability and follow-up, and the non-engaged employees in the organisation in relation to the strategy transition. Section 5.7 presents the job design and roles through a discussion of the lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities, the reliance on expatriates against the host national workforce, and the reward system applied. Finally, a summary of the qualitative findings and results of this chapter will be given in section 5.8.

5.2 The Roles of Actors

The roles of actors were one of the main findings of the research in the sense of the way managers' act. This role does influence the way strategy is transitioned across different groups of actors within the organisation. This section represents the largest dataset of the six themes pursued during the research with representative quotes from 22 interviewees out the total of 27. This section has a particular value as the data collected reflects the ideas that leaders' actions have a considerable influence on how strategy is formulated, delivered to other employees, and executed in terms of its held objectives. Based on the aggregation of relative codes, the data will be discussed in relation to the three factors (consensus over the strategy, frequent change of officials, and delegation power) which have been shared across the interviewees' answers. Below are some of the direct quotes that show the direct influence of leadership practice on the flow of strategy across various employment levels.

"I think that convincing the staff to understand any strategy must start from the top positions... I mean the minister himself and his undersecretary and the assistant agents of the ministry... issues always happen in understanding or not... and unifying or not... the outlines of the strategic plan for the country and our contrition but as a ministry in this plan. Out of 10 projects that are required to be implemented as an example, certain officials might see the first three projects as priority, however, other officials might see the other projects are important and terminates what others do and here the incompatibility and distraction of employees arise in understanding and applying what is actually required over time". (I-10-MM)

The above excerpt, raised from (I-10-MM), demonstrates that the three managerial positions (which represent the top management) have a particular responsibility to standardise the strategy requirements subsequently implemented by staff members. Their role is specifically to formulate strategies and ensure their consistency in terms of the targeted objectives over time. Agreement over a strategy is viewed as an integral part of the strategy transition process. According to this interviewee, the commitment to strategy seems to be subjective in nature rather than a systematic process in the sense that each

group of decision makers may prioritise the objectives according to their own perceptions. It should be noted that strategy transition is not only about unifying objectives, but also understanding its content and delivering this practice to other employees. Changing the priorities of projects that have already started may result in rendering the targeted objectives unachievable on a continuous basis. Further, a lack of agreement over pre-planned strategic objectives will almost certainly result in continuous confusion amongst employees with the consequent effects on implementing the tasks in accordance with senior management's decisions. According to 20 of the interviewees, the lack of agreement over unified strategic objectives between top and middle management from one side, and within the same level managers from other, seems to be a result of improper planning by decision makers. This view was stated by one of the heads of the department, as she claimed:

“Ok... challenges are many between the start and the end of the strategy. One of the most important challenges is the lack of proper and valid planning. I mean taking a sudden decision of establishing a power station or a residential city requires extensive efforts and great preparation for the fieldwork... decision makers can't just change their opinions like that, we are humans and we have other things to work on... it's a bit chaotic... the customer may not notice it.... as he/she is getting our service and that's what may be important for them, but for us it is different as we always feel that our strategy as senseless and disconnected at some point”. (I-3-MM)

The interviewee (I-3-MM) described lack of planning as one of the crucial challenges facing the stage between strategy formulation and strategy implementation. A clear transition and a stable strategy will have positive consequences on the understanding of the roles and the responsibilities of the staff and, indeed, the requirements of the top management. I-3-MM argued that that top management representatives may decide to make changes to the formulated strategy at any time, resulting in unnecessary distractions for other employees. Executing assigned tasks might be difficult within a disorganised environment. The interviewee used certain terminologies such as 'senseless', 'chaotic', and 'disconnected', which clearly imply that there is a certain inconsistency in the

organisational strategy. The changes may not occur within the formulated strategy, but rather beyond the boundaries of what has already been decided by the top managers, resulting in a major change in the current direction. The ongoing functions of staff might well seem to be incompatible with the planned strategies.

When (I-24-TM) was asked about the reasons for the inconsistency in the transitioned strategy, a top manager shared his experience in saying:

“We can’t stick to one required strategy for a logical certain period of time and we simply ask our staff to adhere to it as we are not alone... strategising needs experts in the field and they do nothing than formulating strategies and ensure its smooth operation... this is not we only do as we found ourselves solving operational issues which take time and effort, also if strategy is to be consistent, then outside collaboration needs to be consistent...[Unrecorded]”. (I-24-TM)

From the top management point of view, the above interviewee raised some serious issues in relation to strategy consensus. He clearly argued that the process of unifying what is required represents a particularly challenging task to the decision-makers. He further noted that specialists in the field may not be available to the organisation. He also emphasised that it is important to maintain a strategic consensus on the content as well as among the individuals with whom the strategy will be shared. This gives the impression that the nature of top managers’ jobs is not limited to formulating strategies, but is further extended to solving day-to-day operational activities. Top manager (I-24-TM) supported the view of ensuring the strategic consensus does not rely purely on top management and organisation internal conditions, but also on changes to the external environment. Even though the strategic consensus is ensured among the top managers, this might not be the case at the operational level.

In addition to the lack of strategy consensus among individuals, answers gathered from 18 interviewees revealed that frequent changes in decision-makers’ positions have a negative effect on how the strategy is delivered to lower managerial levels. This instability amongst the appointing managers leaves staff members unaware of their

required roles and responsibilities, which in return render the organisational strategic objectives difficult to achieve. This was further illustrated by one of the middle managers (I-15-MM):

“No one has the right to criticise us or any employee if we don’t receive clear guidelines and from a specific person, as simple as that... we do come here for five days a week, we know where our offices are, we know our working time, but we are not sure of what we should exactly do as we are not sure who will be our new manager as each one is different. I do not mean here my direct manager in particular, but I mean the one who give us guidelines... they just keep moving and moving around and we are lost in this loop”. (I-15-MM)

The above excerpt confirms the assertion that a high amount of change in managers’ positions can be linked to staff uncertainty when it comes to understanding the strategy and performing any associated tasks. The quote seems to be associated with the process of strategy formulation, strategy transition and the way in which strategy objectives can be assessed. Instability in decision-makers positions results in a continuous divergence in the management process. Further, there is a link between managers’ changes and a loss of knowledge amongst staff. Every manager may have a different view, rule and agenda. In such a case, the staff play a much less critical role when they exposed to impulsive change on the part of their supervisors. It was also noted that a change in positions is not limited to the operational level with direct managers, but could happen at the top management level as well. In the same vein, one of the departmental heads (I-9-MM) shared his experiences by saying:

“I understand that working hard and putting efforts are expected from everyone and especially from us as managers, but why should we go extra mile as all of our efforts will be wasted in a second and by one decision, we could be asked to supervise another department or being delegated to another role... I would rather give the minimal effort to avoid disappointment”. (I-9-MM)

This situation may make managers disloyal to their organisations due to their perception of being under threat of being moved at any time. It was made implicit that efforts will not be considered by any new manager as they will introduce different guidelines. A focus on the individuals can be noted here rather than a focus on the stability of the system. Although the interviewee acknowledged some of the key qualities needed to be appointed to a managerial position, only minimal requirements are sufficient to manage the department. Having said this, an insecure position may discourage the idea of innovation, as was clear when the interviewee questioned the point of going the extra mile for the organisation.

When interviewee (I-6-MM) was asked about the reasons behind the decision makers' instability at the ministry, he advocated that these reasons could represent an over-criticism of the ministry by the media and the influence of National Assembly; the interviewee clearly argued that organisations are not separate entities from the community. The external environment can have a significant effect on the changes which occur within the organisation's context. Moreover, it can be understood that managers may pay a great deal of attention to public opinion. In such scenarios, managers may work in favour of the external powers rather than focussing on the interest of their organisation itself, as represented by its objectives and staff responsibilities and welfare. Instability in managers' positions may lead to a negative effect on the performance of the organisation in the long run in terms of required objectives and the staff's perception of directed strategies. This is exemplified in the comments of one of the managers:

“This is the nature of life. Right? We, as a ministry, do not work separately from the external environment. Managers are careful to what the national TV channel announces, also to our member of parliament's perception... movements in high sensitive level positions are obvious here... what is going outside raises alert to changes inside the ministry which I think is not healthy for the stability of objectives and the management of manpower over years”. (I-6-MM)

Beside the frequent change of decision makers, it was interesting that 17 managers acknowledged that the term delegation is limited and undermined in the sense that the

strategy was not being moved smoothly to the related organisational members if any decision maker was absent. Delegating tasks was also found to be a key element in transiting and implementing the strategy. Some reasons such as a centralisation approach and methods of management have been significantly linked to the interviewees' answers. From the top management perspective, one such manager (I-18-TM) emphasised the importance of delegation in order to achieve a flexible strategy transition; this is reflected in the following excerpt, as raised by one of the managers from the top management:

“I think many staff may not be aware of what they do in case of their line manager is absent for any reason. You know how it is in the public sector, the official may take the centralised pattern in decision-making or in managing his own department or unit, he may not delegate anyone in his absence as they feel they just don't want to, staff will be unaware of what is going around, and projects will be halted for so long... we try to change this behaviour, but as I said a manager in a public sector is a decision maker”. (I-18-TM)

From the above quote, it was made explicit that delegation is not obvious, and it leaves the staff unaware of the tasks that need to be carried out. The interviewee took the position of encouraging the use of delegation to ensure continuity of work. Officials need to be flexible in the sense of delegating some of their authority to support the best interests of the organisation itself. The cessation of projects was linked to the absence of a person with sufficient authority to authorise appropriate action. The absence of such a responsible manager can be understood in the sense that the authority to act is restricted to one person and thus a centralised managerial approach is being enacted. It can be understood from the interviewee's view point that a senior manager in the public sector is a very powerful person within their organisation. Although managers seem to resist the idea of delegation, efforts have been directed towards enforcing delegation among decision makers. Delegating responsibility to others seems to be one of the required skills that slips between the boundaries of content and practice. The interviewee's answer also clearly shows an absence of clear instructions from managers or the misuse of such guidelines. In the same vein, another middle manager (I-5-TM) shared his experiences:

“Let me give you a live example on our daily work, we work currently in a pure technical department, we feel that our direct manager tends to tight our responsibilities and we find ourselves useless sometimes, as we cannot do anything without referring back to him and sometimes he does not show up when needed... can you imagine that all the department stops just because an x or y person doesn't exist? Do they have the right to do so in this governmental institution?”. (I-5-TM)

From the excerpt, the interviewee was critical to an understanding of the term delegation as he clearly equated it to direct supervision at the hierarchal level. He further noted how complicated delegation could be in terms of facilitating staff tasks and driving projects forward or, indeed, hindering them. Delegation seems to be also a way of encouraging staff and giving a sensible feel for responsibility. This quote is similar to the first excerpt as both agreed that when a manager is absent, there is no alternative means of transiting strategy across the employment levels. From his perspective, the importance of delegation to assist the staff in accomplishing their tasks is clear. The interviewee saw line managers as those who should be defining tasks and explain why and how they should be done, while associates were responsible for completing the actual work. Further, delegation is seen in this context as a principal source of information by which to make strategy workable. This may also reflect the fact that subordinates may not be involved in any given decision-making process. It seems that, in this context, delegation is not valued by senior managers. By raising some of the logical concerns, the interviewee questioned the circumstances in which a manager could, or should, not delegate their authority. In exploring the apparent lack of delegation of authority, one of the interviewees (I-20-MM), a member of the middle management level, claimed that:

“Some officials don't care of such process and they delay transactions without caring of work interest. Even during their absence, their department is inactive because there is no one to work on behalf of them. I mean that the position may lead them to be arrogant in front of other individuals as they know what to do and others don't. It also may make them feel that they are very important and validate that by seeing no document is signed except by them, and this should not be the

case as their role is to properly manage the work and share what they know". (I-20-MM)

From the quote, it is clear that the lack of delegation gives the impression of control and provides managers with a sense of personal satisfaction. It further informs us as to how important officials are in the process of transiting strategies. The interviewee viewed a good and effective manager as one who understood proper delegation. The interviewee's emphasis was not only about the term delegation itself, but also about the implications of good management practice. Delegation skills are seen as a way of allowing employees to take part in achieving an organisation's strategy. Organisations need capable managers who are able to understand the working conditions and the consequences of good or a bad judgement with regards to any delegation they might propose. Effective delegation is also seen as a core skill of a resource management portfolio, as the interviewee suggested that managers should lead the work forward for the benefit of the organisation. Delegation, in this context, seems to form a part of the organisational, as well as individual, levels. From the above, it could also be perceived that working closely with the top management and being aware of some of their concerns may result in managers at any level hindering the process of delegation and strategy transition. To clarify, managers may use this knowledge as a source of power and control to force other staff to refer to them when seeking information. This in turn will help secure managers' positions as they will be seen as the only knowledgeable individuals within a particular department. Furthermore, such proximity to top management could merely be an excuse for being unwilling to delegate authority to others and sharing the information with them. Individuals in organisations that adopt such a rigid approach to information flow and managerial practice may lead to them finding alternative routes of communication in order to exchange information. This notion is further discussed in the following section.

5.3 Social Virtues and Communication

This section examines how employees communicate with each other within the organisation. In this organisation, the employees usually communicate with each other in an informal manner rather than adopting the more formal approach. In other words, employees attempt to gain information through their own social interactions.

Communication between employees was one of the more interesting findings obtained from the interviews. The empirical evidence drawn from a total of 20 interviewees reflected how internal communication plays a crucial role in understanding the transition to the required strategy by staff members for final implementation. Based on the interviewees' responses, three relative codes were realised and emerged together. These codes include the single direction of information flow, the reciprocity among employees and their sociability with each other. According to the thematic analysis, some of the direct quotes of the interviewees are provided. These codes reflect how the communication practices identified could influence the strategy transition within the organisation. With respect to the exchange of information, 19 interviewees argued that the flow of information tends to be one-way, that is, from top to bottom.

“I would best describe the situation by saying that the information process in the ministry is transferred in the form of paper orders and that starts from top-to-down of the employment hierarchy. The cycle begins by undersecretary to an assistant agent to a supervisor to a head of department and finally reaches the ordinary employee at the front-line. However, this does not mean that the employee in these levels understands fully what he does... as he is following orders only. Am telling you we are not there yet... I even doubt if the employee understands the foreseen objectives of such orders as he has not been involved in the meetings at the different management levels. Now can we blame the employees or someone else?”. (I-1-MM)

From the above quote by (I-1-MM), it was observed that, with regards to the strategy transition, information flows vertically (top-to-bottom) across the various employment levels within the organisation. According to the interviewee's response, information is transferred in a single direction, namely from the top to the bottom of the organisation's hierarchy, with only a limited flow in the opposite direction. This was found to be highly problematic as a large number of employees were not aware of the overall significance of their tasks as they merely received orders and attempted to execute them on the basis of limited information, and therefore understanding. The majority of staff members did not take part in the meetings where the importance of such orders was discussed. This

kind of management is only to the advantage of the few staff with access to the information, with a large number of employees left unaware of what was actually going on. There was clear dissatisfaction among the employees, as expressed by the interviewee when he mentioned that they were very passive rather than being fully engaged in the decision-making process. The managers' job was seen as one of merely transiting information rather than facilitating and negotiating strategy with their employees. It is clear that there must be a link between understanding the information provided and strategy implementation, but in this organisation this link seemed to be broken.

Apart from the staff members who had the advantage of being directly involved in the meetings, there was a clear disconnection between delivering information to other, different employment levels and the way they implemented strategy within their daily work. Looking at how the strategy transition process was being practiced, one of the top managers (I-11-TM) claimed that:

“In the ministry we hold regular meetings on the top management level to discuss the strategy in terms of objectives, issues and implementations. We are the only party involved in discussing such matters and we pass them accordingly to the relevant departments which should then pass them to their staff for implementation. This makes it easy for us as it is difficult to involve all the employees in the discussion especially that the majority of them...this discussion is irrelevant and not important to them, we feel satisfied in this way, you don't need every single person in front of your door from the early morning (waiting for the meeting) as we are very busy with other things, who would ever prefer extra tension? Normally no one”. (I-11-TM)

It is obvious that the interviewee felt the process of strategy formulation was limited to senior officials only, in a process by which decisions were being made and then transited to the lower managerial levels for implementation. As one of the top managers in the ministry, the interviewee clearly differentiated between the upper management as one managerial level and middle management, along with the front-line staff, as another.

According to the interviewee's points of view, it could be suggested that the role of the middle managers was purely one of delivering strategy information to lower-level staff to be executed without the need for their involvement in the decision-making process. It can be further postulated that the interviewee thought that due to the large number of employees, it was too difficult to engage them all with the strategy transition process. The process of including everyone's thoughts when discussing the required strategic objectives was seen to be impractical in terms of implementation. The interviewee gave the impression that the majority of staff would not be interested in, or even care about the strategy itself as their role was purely limited to that of execution. Such an absence of various managerial levels at the strategy formulation stage might result in various technical opinions not being considered during the initial stages. Being busy with his daily duties and dealing with unforeseen issues were seen as reasons for not engaging in two-way communication with employees. Mutual communication was considered to as an additional burden, rather than a means of making the management process more convenient.

In addition to the direction of communication being discussed, 15 interviewees claimed that, in general, the level of trust between the managerial levels, the departments, and among the employees seems to be responsible for the delays to the implementation of the strategy transition process. Officials tended not to disclose key information to their employees as they were considered untrustworthy for some reasons. In this regard, one of the middle managers (I-2-MM) argued that:

“As long as the communication depends on people rather than on the system, then you may expect people to hide what they know from others... as what is currently happening, it's almost a chaotic, sometimes I do not feel that people are honest in telling us the truth of what is going on, properly they do not trust us or some of us... or even not trust our performance capabilities. I want to do my best to finish my work, but how can I meet the expectation if I am not all the time aware of full and probably false information is delivered to me, I always had a feeling that there is a hidden part of the speech which makes me frustrated whether to do the work or not”. (I-2-MM)

Interviewee (I-2-MM) clearly believed that strategy transition was not systematic to organising the flow of the information, but rather was dependent on individuals' social practices. He further considered that successful communication between individuals may result in more organised work and less conflict between various managerial levels and departments. People are the main source of sharing information; however, providing incorrect or incomplete information may result in staff being unable to perform their duties correctly. Managers might not share their knowledge as they did not appear to fully trust the staff under their supervision. One of the reasons for not sharing the strategy that was raised by the interviewee was that the staff's capability to perform what might be required was being underestimated. The stereotype that officials held about their staff was seen to be crucial in determining the level of the trust they should be accorded. In such instances, the trust officials had in their staff could facilitate two-way communication and the sharing of relevant information. Incomplete information and a general lack of communication might also play a role in delaying the progress as this may result in the staff not having the confidence to perform their assigned tasks or to take responsibility for the associated risks. From a top management level perspective, one of the top managers (I-18-TM) seemed to support this argument, as was made explicit in the following excerpt:

“Although it is always good for healthy organisation, I personally think it’s difficult for us that we pass information to everyone, you just can’t imagine how many people we have, also to be honest, I don’t think that all the employees are trustworthy to complete required tasks, a large number of them here are claiming having a job and they are satisfied with it ... from my experience, I rather prefer to inform a small and certain number of them who can achieve what is needed”.
(I-18-TM)

The above quote confirms that trust among individuals is crucial to the stability of the organisation in the long run. The above perspective was quite similar to that of the previous middle manager in the sense that the perceptions of one individual can confirm the feelings of another. In this case, the official's beliefs can be predicted as a reflection of their staff's practices in terms of communication. Moreover, it was interesting to note

that most of the interviewees referred to the fact of overstaffing, i.e., “*Al-Batala Al-Muqanna’a*”, as the main reason behind the failure to be able to trust the entire staff in terms of information sharing. It was also believed that many staff members were not interested in communicating or sharing work information with higher management; they would rather avoid being engaged in work that would require additional effort on their part. Unnecessary staff were considered to be a waste of resources as they could not be effectively utilised to execute strategies.

To some extent, a lack of trust also existed between the lower and higher managerial levels. Besides some employees believing that their opinions would not be delivered to higher management, they were also afraid that their ideas might be stolen if they were shared with higher managerial levels, and they would not get appropriate recognition for their contributions. The employees had a tendency to be reserved about sharing what they felt might help enhance the strategy. This was reported by a departmental manager (I-14-MM), who claimed:

“I rarely share ideas; ideas don't reach the top of the pyramid except by a "mediator", or someone to connect me with the decision maker such as his relatives and of course after insisting several times to be in touch with him. For example, if you come up with an idea of building a multi-floor car park in the ministry to help employees, this will never reach up unless a mediator is there. This is how it goes... we are too many people, and everyone needs to be acknowledged by top officials, we do not share ideas as it might be stolen by someone who we thought trustworthy and our efforts then basically will be wasted... we do not even know if our suggestions will be taken into consideration or not”. (I-14-MM)

From the excerpt, it was interesting to note that employees felt that some form of mediation might be necessary to facilitate communication with higher management. They used the word “mediator” (or, more exactly, the Arabic word “*Wasta*”), to represent how communication was being practiced across the managerial hierarchy in order to reach the correct people in top management. It can be inferred from the interviewee’s response that

employees' past experiences with their line managers influenced the level of trust between them. It is clear that any ideas tended to be kept secret if employees had had a prior bad experience or had actually experienced immoral practice by their line managers. It can only be concluded that feedback was weak or there was a complete absence of a two-way communication loop as the staff were clearly not confident that their ideas would reach the correct person. Such fear and distrust among operational staff and decision-makers could well decrease creativity and initiatives in the workplace.

Employees' social interaction, as was mentioned by 15 managers, seemed to be the alternative means of information exchange and to remain updated about issues within the ministry. Social events and positive collegueship became apparent as the main sources of communication and sharing of ideas. To a large extent, regular strategy information was communicated through the social interaction networks between the employees rather than through official channels. Employees tended to learn about the ministry's activities informally through their colleagues rather than formally through their direct managers. In this regard, one of the division heads (I-15-MM) shared the following experience:

“Communication... what can I tell you about communication... in fact the common way here is to convey data by social or customary system not by the official system. It's preferred by a big group of beneficiaries. For example, sometimes, we need to pass an issue to be solved. Officials don't prefer to transfer this data like an official decision, and generalise it to all. That's to avoid troubles, and hassles from people who think they deserve such announcement. Also, it is for the sake of benefiting closer people to the decision makers or other certain persons. Therefore, the officials first try spread out the important information informally between their staff to make them ready for the official decisions”. (I-15-MM)

The above middle manager (I-15-MM) brought up the notion of sociability when he highlighted the social observations or traditions followed by employees. Following such an approach was seen to be preferable by both decision makers and other beneficiaries at the ministry. It was further confirmed that social networks overlapped with the other,

broader networks within the ministry practice. Transiting strategy using official channels may have generated a degree of resistance from the staff. Staff members tend to receive their information implicitly rather than obtaining it through official channels. Social relations among individuals facilitated and enhanced information transfer across organisational members. It was also suggested that officials might take advantage of this practice in order to create a space of freedom through which to fulfil their personal interests. The interviewee further focussed on the term 'relationship' rather than individuals themselves in the matter of information transfer. It was further argued that this practice minimised resistance against any strategy circulated among employees. The question of whether this transition practice could be effective in delivery of the required strategy was raised by another middle manager (I-2-MM) when he argued:

“The views and contributions of top management when a strategy is to be known to everyone are encouraged by social gathering to a large extent on the bases of units, departments, or the whole ministry itself. Everyone feels that... The employees do not bother to know what is going on, they know later what news are there by incident chat with any colleague in a break or internal visit to each other offices or even outside the work hours. Also, people have no supportive facilities such as official emails to keep an eye of right things around. I believe that's why we hear rumours every day and why we move slowly towards our objectives”. (I-2-MM)

The interviewee had a similar opinion to the previous manager; he felt that ordinary employees did not really care about being informed about strategy, and rather believe that information will be made available to them at some appropriate time through discussion or social gatherings inside, or indeed outside, the ministry itself. In fact, the absence of a unified or standard communication channel creates distractions and allows rumours to spread unchecked among the employees. He further took the view that social practice is a natural outcome in such cases. Various organisational objectives could be efficiently delivered if the management makes use of the correct communication tools. It was also inferred that such practice represents an unnecessary barrier to transiting the required formulated strategy that can then be implemented at a later stage.

Another reason for social interaction was given by one of the interviewees from the middle management who argued that social interaction is an expected consequence of what he referred to as a “closed door policy”. He views extended to the idea that such inflexible practices amongst line managers towards their respective staff would indirectly encourage social interaction amongst employees. Unless there were a formal order to the contrary, the socialisation practice would seem to be the only way for the employees to properly achieve their tasks. There would be a serious issue if the staff members were not accurately informed about the required strategy through proper communication channels. This was clearly reflected by the following sentiment, as raised by (I-8-MM):

“I think the issue of miss communication depends massively on the direct line manager for each employee in each unit or department. People will value listening to each other if managers adopt a close door policy and they are a lot here. What else can the staff do either to be acknowledged or to complete their required organisational or departmental objectives?”. (I-8-MM)

Social virtues were seen as the preferred route for interaction within the organisation. Many employees have adjusted to the fact that official information channels, if they even exist, would not meet the needs of the general culture of the organisation and would not be preferred by their senior officials to use their positions in a fair and reasonable manner, and their personal power alike. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of this power, the following section introduces the power dispositions and engagement of staff within the organisation.

5.4 Power Dispositions and Engagement

Another key finding is that the power dispositions and engagement affect the way in which the formulated strategy is transited and shared among organisation members to effect implementation. To clarify this theme, managers may intentionally or spontaneously misinterpret their authority and act according to their personal judgment rather than the norms and rules of the organisation, which could result in a significant disruption to the strategy transition process. Managers in such a scenario use their own judgment and practices and, as a result, negate the accepted regulations. This section

provides fieldwork evidence reported from a total of 17 interviewees out of 27, which reflects the influence of individual power on the strategy transition process. It was noted from the interviewees' views that this theme was based on three codes, namely clashes among key managers, decision-makers' mentality and their personal networking. According to our thematic analysis, strategy sharing is clearly affected by peoples' power, a point which is further supported by the direct quotes of the interviewees. Clashes among key managers was mentioned by 17 interviewees.

“I think personal matters are everywhere, but it is different from one to another and obviously affects people understanding of the required work. Here, it gets worse because people may have different opinions and ways of work, it could also happen due to a personal agenda or the bad feelings towards each other. I always feel that we cannot control these issues, but we can survive in finding other ways such as being nice to each other, and obviously what encouraged this... is the absence of the accountability”. (I-15-MM)

The previous quote from (I-15-MM) raised a number of major issues related to individuals' power and the way they treat each other. It was suggested that individuals' control over their personal behaviour plays a major role in how effectively the formulated strategy can be transited to the designated staff in the ministry. This seems to be a serious matter as personal behaviour is sometimes difficult to control and, if not well managed, could result in personal clashes and misbehaviour which may affect strategy practice among employees. The interviewee further argued that personal conflicts can affect the work process and the understanding of the work required by the staff. Hence, formulated strategies might be seen as being of no significance if people are unable to understand its importance. It was also interesting to learn that personal clashes might not be due to differences in managers' views regarding the work process, but could be the result of managers' personal agendas. The interviewee linked the propagation of such personal practice to the absence of any accountability when individuals abuse their power. This may indicate what is actually considered acceptable practice amongst managers within the workplace. Maintaining good relationships among managers seems to be an alternative survival tool that can help move the work forward. In the same vein, another

middle manager (I-13-MM) shared a similar opinion regarding personal conflicts among decision makers. This was clear from the following excerpt:

“Being a director of this department for some years now, I can tell you that good relations are the key to get work done. I learned how important is to identify the managers that I deal with, the nature of my work with them, and what things I am required to do. I confidently say this because I am not sure about their personal feelings towards me. It is the nature anyway, isn't it?. I remember that once I dealt with another departmental manager [Name of Department and the manager] who used to hate me and not to treat me well... I guess because he doesn't get on well with me, he used to delay my papers and requests using many excuses such as they were lost, or not received or looked at, or so on. Yes, I may think it's important to put personal hatred aside from work, but it's not the way he thought; he deliberately wants to reject or delay my requests”. (I-13-MM)

From the previous comments, it can be seen that building, as well as maintaining, good relationships between managers has positive consequences in terms of removing obstacles while transiting strategies. It was further reiterated that good relationships with others may facilitate daily tasks within the organisation. The interviewee noted that a successful manager should have some of these key skills to ensure positive engagement and acceptance from others. Managers not only manage their departments but should also form good relationships with their colleagues to maintain healthy working condition and facilitate a smooth strategy transition process. The interviewee believed that personal conflict is a part of the human nature. He further noted that managers may deliberately delay informing others of the strategy, delay the work process, or in some cases even reject work for various reasons. It is clear these practices could merely be due to not getting on well with someone. The separation between the personal confictions and the interest of the organisation makes it a challenge for managers to smoothly transit the required strategy content. Thus, personal feelings are considered to be crucial in the work environment as in most cases it is highly unpredictable.

In addition to negative feelings, an individual's personal agenda might delay the effective transition of organisational strategies as these personal interests can seriously interfere with the interests of the organisation. This was simply viewed by a middle manager (I-3-MM) and a recently retired top manager (I-4-TM-R) whose comments are presented below, respectively:

"I think it's difficult to answer... personally I will do my job the way it is meant to be, otherwise I will be seen as am against them. The priority and concerned objective of the key influential people that we deal with might be political in the first place, it might be a work revenge or an economical negotiation or other personal thought, we don't know, but we can feel it... The general interest will then follow. For example, during my work at the ministry, many times I had to refer to (Name) as I know that he is professional and respect the work and I avoid (Name) as I know that the work interest is the last thing he thought of". (I-3-MM)

"The information what I have... I only use it for the benefit of the work, this way I am.... this is what I am here for, to achieve the ministry objectives. I see this as a key for a professional work. Probably this is why I was not well liked official by many influential people at this ministry. Their ultimate goals and objectives were far away from my way and from the work interest and sometimes this include the minister himself. I can tell you... as I did not give them any kind of support, I have been deprived of promotions as well as blacklisted... and this is why we have so many cases in the court including myself". (I-4-TM-R)

It can be seen from the above that both interviewees construe individual confliction to be purely social and political in nature. People may have different legitimate, or indeed non-legitimate, goals that probably lead to a situation where unnecessary dispute occurs. It can also be seen that individuals' reputations reflect the way in which other people try to seek information from them and accomplish their required tasks. The interviewees referred to professionalism and the personal attitude as key criteria for well-intentioned individuals working towards the general interest. Thoughts of what good or acceptable criteria might actually be differed from one employee to another. However, in this

context, a clear link between key positive values of individuals and the public interest can be seen. Such conflict may not only occur at the middle management level; it can also emerge at the top organisational level, as represented by the head of the ministry. This may suggest that the strategy may be completely disrupted during the transition process as individuals at all organisational levels may take considerable time to interact or resolve overhead conflicts. Key influential employees may take this too far and lobby against each other if they feel there is some sort of resistance to their personal agendas. Negative practice of this kind can also harm people on their personal level. Staff may be prevented from following proper routes in completing their work if they feel their personal positions might be affected in any way.

16 managers referred to the mentality of decision-makers being a key influential factor in diverting the strategy from its proper course, and therefore employees misunderstanding required tasks could only be expected. There is a possibility that conflict might arise where different perceptions of the strategy are sufficiently different, and this might result in ambiguous or disparate information being given to employees. This was illustrated by one of the departmental heads (I-9-MM):

“Let me give you an example to illustrate the issue in a more comprehensible picture. I am a technical person, I like to work with someone who understands the way of my work, someone who I can share similar ideas and perceptions with. Our department is one of the best departments, we always accomplish tasks and thanks for our previous line manager (Name), all our requests were welcomed by him, and every idea is considered and never thrown away. The case now is totally different since we have another line manager on board Mr. (Name), may be this is his way, or he has not enough expertise, I just can't work in this way”. (I-9-MM)

Aside from his personal feelings, the previous quote highlights the conflict in mentality in the workplace. The sharing similar perceptions between managers and their subordinates are seen to facilitate an understanding, and the implementation of the strategy, which results in effective teamwork. The interviewee noted there are positive

collaborations on the one hand but was also sure that negative confliction existed. This is also reflected in the fact that the actions of an inexperienced manager may lead to continuous misunderstanding of the required tasks amongst his subordinates. This suggests the importance of sharing similar perspectives amongst individuals at different levels of seniority across the workplace to ensure continuous and productive cooperation with regards to strategy transition. Effective strategy transition seems to be dependent on the sharing of similar views between the two managerial levels and indeed the extent to which these are understood. Interestingly, it was also observed that the conflict due to individual mindsets could be a result of age differences between the two different levels of seniority. This view was reflected in the following excerpt from one of the middle managers (I-10-MM):

“Ammmm, ok, Do you know.... where is the problem? It is the elderly officials those who have been on their chairs for ages, excuse me for this expression “those are dinosaurs” (it is cultural phrase), I don’t know why they are still there, why higher decision-makers don’t replace them with new and fresh blood from the active youth employees, it’s their turn now. I can’t imagine how they are still thinking of old tools and never try new things.... [Unrecorded] ... Speaking about me, I just keep my new ideas inside my head and heart as I am certainly sure that my manager will not understand any. He is an old fashion school person and I am not. I tried to discuss something with him in the past and I will never do it again”.
(I-10-MM)

The interviewee (I-10-MM) clearly indicated the conflict to be a result of the differences between the older generation (decision-makers) and the younger generation. He further claimed that this misunderstanding, where the older generation maintain the use of out of date tools during the strategy transiting while the younger generations might push for alternative options. Senior managers may not accept the adoption of new and modern. In this case, decision-makers are seen as the only ones with the power to transit the strategy the way they think appropriate, while others are seen purely as strategy receivers and implementers.

The interviewee used this expression “dinosaurs” to describe the long period that a senior manager might spend in his position without any actual improvement. This was reflected through emphasising the importance of giving younger, more active individuals the opportunity to participate in the strategy transition process. It might be a long time before younger individuals get the chance to lead. Staff at different levels of seniority might prefer not to share new ideas if they have to deal with a line manager with a different, or opposing, mentality. Past experience with a given individual seems to have a significant influence on any future interactions with the same person. This may slow the smooth transition of the strategy. Another department head (I-6-MM) seemed to have a similar opinion:

“You just remind me of ten of unfortunate stories around. If we want to use a new modern technique to implement a certain strategic project, we find it a very challenging to convince the old officials, who are not updated in the technology, in using this modern technique is more challenging than implementing the project itself. Can you imagine that?, old officials are not open-minded who want things to be done in only one way and not to accept alternatives and take a challenge. Here we are not supposed to accept this.... We are here to make change, but unfortunately sometimes things never get changed”. (I-6-MM)

From the excerpt above it may be noted that the differences between the two generations (old and new) in terms of their ways of thinking could have a negative effect on the strategy transition process. It was also suggested that, at least to some extent, individuals might show some resistance to such differences when at work. It was further noticed that the change may simply not occur as senior managers are seen to be dominant in enforcing their power in most cases. Managers may avoid changing methods they have followed for long time as they would likely be unwilling to take on any associated potential challenge. This may also suggest a delay in response to daily work as the two managerial levels may spend long time resolving such conflict until agreement is reached as to how the strategy will be transited. It is also important to note that both previous quotes positioned the conflict as between two different managerial levels rather than within a given level of management.

It was also interesting to note that 15 interviewees suggested that broad personal relations inside and outside the ministry could have an influence on how the key strategy formulators convey the required strategy to other individuals. Employees may show a degree of ignorance in their understanding of what the strategy is about and how it is being delivered to them. Therefore, they would only be interested in following the instructions of their managers as they only prioritise their managers' connections. The assumption here might be that managers' personal relations could ultimately benefit their subordinates. Therefore, individuals might be concerned that their personal interests can be highly affected by their managers' personal relations, and this might cause them to attempt to satisfy their managers – regardless of the actual work interest – in many cases. This kind of ignorance may lead to a misunderstanding of the strategy and how it should be implemented according to the various organisational objectives. Hence, personal relations could be seen as a side to individual power that can result in control being imposed over various aspects of any strategy implementation. One of the middle managers (I-20-MM) elaborated on this concern by saying:

“I personally think that employees have nothing to do with the strategy... I doubt if they care too. I know my manager has strong and deep relations here, he can help me if I am good to him or he could harm me if I am not nice to him. I didn't realise how powerful he is until I personally saw who he knows in other departments and beyond this building. What I care about is only avoiding making troubles and nothing else. I try to have a good relationship with him as this creates a mutual benefit which I don't want to lose, and I believe it's true for everybody in the organisation”. (I-20-MM)

People tend to seek support from those they know and can easily reach. The assurance of personal support from key powerful people inside and outside the organisation seems to have a direct effect on individuals' behaviour in the organisation. As a result, it was claimed that employees first priority is to work with a manager who has good networks and maintains good relations with their employees, regardless of whether they can add value to this manager's department or otherwise. Furthermore, it will not necessarily be in employees' interest to work with a capable supervisor who can professionally run their

department. This further suggests that employees' main consideration is that of with whom they will work, rather than to the nature of work itself and their managers' skills. Such relations are argued to produce mutual personal interest for both parties. Therefore, transiting organisational strategy may not attract people's attention unless they are so obliged. It also can be observed that front-line staff members do not need to know strategy details as it is not considered to be part of their job. This view was shared in the following excerpt taken from an assistant undersecretary (I-25-TM) to the top management level:

“Front-line staff shouldn't know about the strategy itself, their role is to perform their daily work which fulfil what the top management requires... even though if you give them the option to learn the strategy, I doubt if they take the opportunity unless we force them to do so, they only want to be looked after by a good supervisor (from their point of view) who gives them less work and high benefits... believe me or not, sometimes we receive telephone calls to appoint them to be supervised by a specific supervisor, and in most cases those mediators they don't know these supervisors, they just heard about them.... that's the way how it goes... we don't really like it!”. (I-25-TM)

The abuse of work-related power and individuals' behaviour has a considerable influence on the way in which the people interact with each other. Individuals tend to act according to their personal relations and own judgments, which results in a neglect of common practice. Such negative practice has encouraged staff to adopt certain attitudes which can have serious consequences for a smooth strategy transition among the various employment levels. To summarise, managers' networks could be a valid reason for individuals acting in such a manner. These personal networks may ultimately result in individuals hindering the strategy transition. The following section discusses the ownership of strategy as an emergent theme among the key managers.

5.5 Personalising the Strategy Ownership

Personalising the strategy ownership is defined in this context as holding the strategy content with the manager who is otherwise supposed to otherwise facilitate its dissemination to other organisational members. Transferring knowledge is a crucial

resource for the organisation to ensure flexible strategy sharing among employees. This section presents the managers' belief of knowledge ownership as one of the main interesting findings of the research. Fieldwork evidence reported from 16 interviewees (59% of coded data) has revealed the perception of decision-makers with regards to what extent the strategy can be shared. This was found to have significant influence on how the strategy is transited from the formulation phase through to implementation. It was remarked that interviewees have linked the belief of strategy ownership to organisational strategy through three dimensions, including decision-makers' perceptions, individuals' self-efficacy, and technology-aided strategy transfer. The influence of knowledge ownership is discussed below and is further supported by some direct quotes from interviewees. It is important to note that decision-makers' perceptions were mentioned by 16 managers.

“I always disagree to share the strategy itself to other employees in other positions at the ministry, it is not their role though to know what it is, they are meant only to execute what we tell them straight away... I believe we are the right people to discuss the strategy and it's all related concerns, otherwise we will not differentiate between who formulates plans and who implements these plans... employees have to take it forward and focus on their work not our work”. (I-23-TM)

The above excerpt was raised by one interviewee from the top management level (I-23-TM). As with his comments, he clearly argued that strategy itself should remain the responsibility of senior managers alone, and not to be shared with anyone else; senior officials are seen to be in charge of strategy related issues. However, this senior management team should at least inform employees in other levels as to how to focus on achieving the objectives according to the organisational strategy. The interviewee took the view that a collaborative approach does not always exist in the two different employment levels and he called the executive management team 'thinkers' and the lower management levels 'doers'. The excerpt informs us that only top management representatives are involved in the formulation process of strategy. Meanwhile, other employment levels are seen as implementers of the planned strategy, which makes it

difficult for middle managers to be fully aware of some of the crucial details required to assist their staff in achieving the required objectives. This may leave the junior managers in the middle management level in a state of some confusion as they then have to rely on a trustworthy source of information to facilitate the strategy transition to their staff. Therefore, excluding the junior managers from engaging in strategy formulation could have serious consequences at the implementation stage. This was evident from the comments raised by a departmental head (I-17-MM), as he claimed:

“What is going here is that we just receive an order to do A or to do B and not to do C, we don’t know why these things need to be done, we try to understand what those people want, but mostly we just leave it as it is, we do not need to feel unwelcomed or looking for a favour... I was involved in many situations when myself and my staff act according to what we think will please the top management team!”. (I-17-MM)

The fact that this view supports the perception of ownership does not mean that strategy sharing is completely disregarded across the various employment levels. The excerpt reveals that top management tends to own the strategy and is reluctant to share its content. Since the major part of strategy is concealed, middle managers may misdirect their subordinates to work in a such way that management expectations are not ultimately fulfilled. In order to resolve the information concealment issue, decision-makers should take this matter seriously to properly live up to their responsibility to achieve success. The above interviewee also introduced the element of ‘management impression’. He was further aware of the boundaries with respect to work relations and the level to which he would be able to access strategy content. Middle managers may decide not to be involved in understanding the details of strategy content if they feel their role is underestimated. Consequently, defensive behaviour might result when it comes to future collaboration with top management team. This may make middle managers adopt the negative perception that sharing strategy with others has no value and will likely result in unfavourable personal criticism from others. The strategy sharing approach is seen to be a crucial element for senior managers as their decisions ultimately form the public perception of the organisation.

In the same vein, a manager from the middle management level (I-10-MM) shared his view by arguing that employees may not have a clear idea about their organisation's strategy. It was found that some parts of the strategy are concealed from employees as full knowledge of such is considered the responsibility of top management level only. Leaving middle managers uninformed about the requirements of the top management has been found to be a significant obstacle to facilitating the formulated strategy during the implementation stage. Different aims may affect whom strategy is shared with. Employees may need to know the organisational strategy in order to accomplish their required tasks. This is clearly reflected in the following comments:

“This is a difficult question to answer... I guess... honestly I don't know, I may say our aim is to supply power service to the public, but I do not know if this is a strategy or not. We are not involved in high-level meetings to get a chance to discuss what they think of... our strategy should be available for everyone, why not?”. (I-10-MM)

In addition to the aims of the various top and middle managers at the organisation, responses from 15 interviewees have also shown that managers' self-efficacy could also play a major role in either facilitating or hindering strategy. The personal efficacy of managers may influence the extent to which strategy is shared, not only at the individual level but also at the organisational level, namely among departments and units. In this regard, certain concerns were raised by a middle manager (I-16-MM), who said:

“I think it would be easier to transfer strategies and take it forward only if the responsible managers follow certain principles and have good skills that made it understandable for everyone and certainly implemented... people will be active and perform better and faster if their managers help them and vice versa.... In this case... in my opinion... I wouldn't work professionally as you could imagine if managers were not up to that standard”. (I-16-MM)

The interviewee took the view that the success of any work was based on the skill profiles of the managers and how to they apply these skills within the workplace. It was made

explicit that people are the main source of power that drives a business forward, through effective strategy sharing and mutual understanding between managers and their subordinates. Successful strategy implementation does not happen incidentally, it is the result of effective collaborative work among individuals prior to the implementation process and is one of the core skills needed by managers to achieve their objectives. The manager above was of the view that people who occupy managerial positions should have key skills that assist them in the support of their staff and allow them to fulfil other actors' expectations. In this sense, one of a line manager's responsibilities is to make sure employees understand the strategy and develop their skills. Therefore, they are responsible for managing the learning process of their subordinates. To maintain effective strategy understanding and transfer, managers were seen to take a role of strategy mentors or facilitators instead of strategy controllers. Moreover, middle managers they should provide a wider view of how to manage relationships and professionally play the role of facilitators between the top management and the front line staff.

From a top management perspective, one of the top managers (I-18-TM) raised the following issue:

"I really see the matter from other view point... as it is more about the individuals, we are enforced to have senior people with certain basic skills and characteristics who can't explain the organisational strategy to us... then how can we manage our staff... then what can we do? Some of them don't want to participate due to the weakness of their personality, limited knowledge, and abilities. While others have the feeling of inferiority complex or failure or may be lack of importance, if the others can gain what they know. I think we need to work on that with more attention". (I-18-TM)

Although they agreed to some extent, the view of the top manager differed from that of the previous middle manager (I-16-MM) in terms of the reasons why managers do not share organisational strategy effectively with their staff. It was interesting to note that sharing strategy with others is not only about the communication itself, but goes beyond

that to include the individual characteristics of the one who is in charge of transiting the strategy. Beside the low skills profile of managers, it was further suggested that middle managers may not share what they gain from top management as they consider this knowledge to be advantageous and gives them an upper hand when managing others, and which they do not want to lose over time. Managers feel insecure and may lose their power if they share the entire strategy with their staff. To clarify, managers prefer to ensure certain information remains undisclosed and consequently force others to refer to them when needed. This act, in turn, will secure their positions from replacement by other managers. This could also be a disincentive for strategy sharing as managers would prefer not to lose their distinctiveness in comparison to others. Therefore, they might rather prefer to intentionally hide key information through which results in their employees never gaining the skills that may lead to them one day replacing their manager. Managers thought that sharing strategy with subordinates would increase their concerns over losing power, value, and indeed their very positions, even though it is at the same time a potential chance to exchange expertise, develop work patterns, and effectively achieve the organisation's required objectives.

Conversely, it was argued that certain key skills could hinder the smooth transition of strategy between the formulation and implementation stages. Attributes such as lack of knowledge and ability were perceived as discouraging strategy sharing among individuals. A similar opinion to this was addressed by the following interviewee, who claimed that individuals' self-efficacy has an effect on the strategy transfer process prior the implementation phase. This middle manager (I-12-MM) also elaborated on how individuals' self-efficacy is perceived:

“Every manager is different from the other, the matter is left to a person expertise and the level of people he interacts with or at least discusses the strategy with. Informing strategy contains different complicated interactions... probably what makes it easier is the question of.... did that manager practice this nature of work such as for example [Name], or he is new to it such as [Name of Department]?”
(I-12-MM)

The excerpt also confirms the assertions of strategy transition being linked to the expertise of the person responsible for sharing the strategy and achieving the required organisational objectives. Managers may perform better in terms of articulating strategy and sharing it with others if they are familiar with the nature of the department under their supervision. The process of transiting the strategy from formulation to implementation is not always easy and is not seen to be a straightforward process. The interviewee also reflected the perception of middle managers to be a source of reference and expertise when needed. Middle manager (I-12-MM) further accepted the fact that managers may differentiate between the managerial levels or positions with whom they discuss strategy. For instance, they could be more likely to share the level of strategy details with senior people at higher managerial positions such as their line managers compared to people at lower managerial levels such as their co-workers and subordinates. Beside the self-efficacy of strategy facilitator, it was interesting to note that 15 managers felt the type of adopted technology in the organisation influences the way in which strategy is transferred from the formulation phase to implementation. This was found to be important as interviewees emphasised the lack of archiving strategy practice due to the fact that the organisation's adopted system hindered information exchange pertaining to its strategy and other related projects.

From a middle management perspective, one such individual emphasised the importance of adopting an electronic system to make strategy accessible to every member of the organisation. This view is illustrated in following quote:

“It is common that you find a documentation of all strategies for different years for any private company, but not in our case... since all orders and requirements are handed-in by hand or by internal mail through all employment levels and not by an electronic mail... under such circumstances... I personally believe it is difficult to follow what is the strategy itself, my employees either”. (I-1-MM)

From the above extract, it can be perceived that there is an absence of any electronic archive and strategy information exchange at all employment levels (top management, middle management, and front-line level). Middle manager (I-1-MM) also acknowledged

the differences in strategy archiving between the private sector and the public organisations and how the process of strategy communication works in each. Understanding the strategy itself means managers and their staff face a difficult task if the strategy is not electronically documented and can be easily tracked. Employees may find themselves performing only orders and operational duties which may or may not be part of the organisational strategy. The interviewee below was of the view that online access to strategy content could constitute valid evidence of strategy sharing among members and consequently achieve the desired results. In the same vein, when asked about the same issue, middle manager (I-13-MM) shared his opinion by stating the following:

“I think one of the problems is the postal system we have, I can understand it’s important to save department practices, as the computer does... so why it is not happening? Mistakes are more likely to happen when loads of papers are moved across the floors... I may know what is in the mail, my colleague may know, but not the others. I can share a story here, once... I have received a paper notice and its state was urgent within 3 days, however, it’s dated back 10 days before I received it!... the transfer to computer database work should have been adopted since 2000, but honestly, its adaptation will reveal the incapable seniors as everything will be recorded”. (I-13-MM)

Things can go wrong when transferring strategy manually between employment levels and the above quote, this raises the urgency with which the electronic archiving of strategy, respective objectives, and the assigned role of each employee must be achieved. The interviewee expected that mistakes would occur without the use of technology-aided tools, and he clearly emphasised the fact that moving to an electronic mailing system would help to ensure everyone remained informed. Employees must be part of the strategy success of their organisation and their contribution must be acknowledged. It was also argued that implementing advanced technology could be opposed by some senior officials whom it is believed are incapable of either following the work process or dealing with such high-tech information as well as tools. This may suggest that the top management is the only level involved in the formulation and the ownership of

organisational strategy as well as the decision-making process. The role of middle managers and their respective staff is seen as that of the implementers of any orders received that may form a specific part of the strategy. Although face-to-face strategy transfer should not be neglected, moving to online strategy practice has been found to increase employment satisfaction, engage employees with the organisation's objectives, and encourage corporative work. Therefore, many interviewees stated that there is a need to adopt an effective control mechanism for strategy transition in the organisation to effectively monitor and encourage strategy sharing among individuals. Such a control mechanism is discussed in the following section as another important finding of the research.

5.6 Control Mechanism for Strategy Transition

This section clarifies the way in which the control mechanism is operated and how this mechanism could affect the strategy transition process between departments and the exchange of information among individuals. The way in which the organisation controls its strategy transition practice was found to be a crucial when it came to strategy transition such that the organisation's objectives could still be achieved. This theme was mentioned by 16 interviewees from both the top and the middle management levels. The main issues in relation to how the control mechanism should be operated have been compiled and discussed under three major codes, as previously explained in chapter 4. The three main codes discussed in this section are mentoring (as mentioned by the 16 interviewees), accountability and follow-up, and non-engaged employees. The following are some of the quotes from interviewees which indicate the influence of a control mechanism on strategy transition within the organisation.

“We can't simply be updated of things around... unfortunately I would say that there is no clear and common policy to be followed among departments inside the ministry as each department is directed differently and operates differently. Some managers meet their employees and share the strategy and some do not. Sometimes you find each department implements its own policy and own roles. Now if you want to know the reason for such practice, you can easily say there is no systematic control shared among us... we can't deny the reality”. (I-1-MM)

The above middle manager (I-1-MM) clearly argued that the absence of a unified control system that could be shared among departments might delay the strategy transition between organisational members. The interviewee suggested that this lack of unified control mechanism not only left the employees unaware of the organisational strategy, but also resulted in the units inventing their own policies within the organisation. It can also be observed from the excerpt that the term ‘supervision control’ was clearly mentioned by the interviewee. In other words, managers had found a suitable environment in which to invent their own work manual, and which would best satisfy their own interests though would not necessarily those of the general organisational objectives. In such cases, managers could have the freedom to interpret the manner in which tasks should be executed, which again may not be in line with the organisation’s objectives. This lack of predetermined and agreed guidelines was found to form the basis of personal actions enacted in the above manner within the organisation. The interviewee further viewed the situation as a reflection of a painful reality that might be difficult to change.

From a top management perspective, this was found to be a significant hindrance to effective sharing of strategy among members, as claimed by top management member (I-11-TM):

“If you want my personal opinion, I honestly tell you that we don’t have real implemented standards, it is personal efforts performed by each unit and department, people may be unfamiliar with such professional matters... however, there is a strong tendency from the agents council of the ministry to make these standards and enforce them, but only after training will be provided to the staff, it’s good for work, it’s good for our staff... we still discuss this... [Unrecorded]”.
(I-11-TM)

The need to improve the internal control mechanism seems to be a matter of particular urgency amongst the top management team. The focus here was found to be more on the development of the staff members’ work skills within the organisation. However, it was brought to our attention that middle managers are not equipped with the necessary skills to deal this development and they require special training to ensure the consistency of the

control mechanism within the organisational boundaries. Interviewee (I-11-TM) saw work standards as guidelines, or a framework within which to allocate the various roles and responsibilities of the employees, from where they would be able to deal with daily operational activities. It may be noted that the use of an effective control mechanism will enable employees to share strategy, and deliver required objectives far more efficiently. This was made explicit by the interviewee, in the sense that developing such a control mechanism is the responsibility of the top management team, in order to ensure healthy practice and organisational continuity. Designing an effective training program may to address the above might therefore increase the potential for effective strategy transition among organisational members. The absence of an effective control mechanism could be due to the lack of clarity in the policies and procedures within the ministry, as was clearly reflected by the following statements from middle manager (I-14-MM) and top manager (I-25-TM), respectively:

“People don’t share objectives as they don’t know where to start and how to start, they need to be organised and referred to a reference point when there is a confusion... in the private sector the work manual that clarifies relations, issues, rights, obligations, codes are there in everyone’s hand, but here it might be there but it is not compiled... I am not sure if there is a specific source here to get these documents from!”. (I-14-MM)

“I think there are policies and procedures, but I don’t think they are gathered in one place. There are obvious things like a request of budget, however, other matters to ensure people collaboration I guess it needs attention as things now are left for personal judgment... and people just follow what their senior colleagues did... may be!.... organising things is crucial for the work, otherwise the organisation will pay heavy price for consequences!”. (I-25-TM)

From the above, one gains the impression that although they used different terminologies as a ‘work manual’ and a ‘policy and procedure’, both interviewees emphasised the importance of having a clear route through which to organise strategy transfer and information exchange in order to achieve organisational objectives. Interviewees are of

the view that well-documented work rules will increase efficiency by facilitating strategy sharing among members and enhancing the mentoring process for the various employment levels. The interviewees further argued that work policies and respective procedures might be used to some extent, but were not sure as to whether the documents should be compiled and made available to staff or otherwise. This might suggest that strategy transition practice might be left to individuals to decide their own best practice. To clarify, individuals may act in the way they personally see appropriate in order to serve their assigned objectives, and therefore strategy will be practiced personally, rather than officially, by policies and procedures. They perceived the internal control mechanism to be an important strategic resource within the organisation. It can be inferred that the tasks and duties were linked to the organisation objective to a great extent. For the case described by the above excerpts, it was noticeable that employees may not have recognised whether they perceived the correct strategy information or otherwise, and similarly whether the required organisational objective had been accomplished. This brought the notion that if efficient mentoring is not considered by the organisation, this issue may become costly in terms of effort and time so consumed.

It was also suggested that employees may exchange information and operate according to the customs and traditions instead of the agreed regulations. Therefore, they may rely on senior collegueship relationships if mentoring is not well defined. Mentoring is seen as a set of managerial practices that ensure fulfilment of organisational objectives thorough managing relations and mandating an effective code of practice among employees. Interestingly, top management managers seem to be aware of how mentoring operates in the private sector and they warned about the consequences of not applying such an approach in the organisation.

As mentioned by 16 managers, it was also interesting to note that lack of accountability and constructive feedback could influence the way in which strategy is transited and implemented among the different employment levels. Responsible middle management managers may decide not to share the strategy formulated by top management with their employees as they will not be held accountable for such practice. Employees in such a scenario are left with no clear guidelines as to how to proceed and accomplish what is

required. This was clearly reflected in the following comment made by a manager (I-15-MM) from the middle management level:

“It is so easy that you will find a specific project is suspended and employees don’t know what to do and that’s just because a certain manager act wrongly or has other interests... managers here are almost protected from effective accountability and no one blames them for what they do... imagine they can do whatever they want... for example... they can simply enforce a particular decision without validation and cannot be blamed, no matter if that decision is good or bad for the organisation, if the results are good or bad”. (I-15-MM)

The above excerpt suggests that knowledge and strategic information exchange is limited in the organisation. The role of middle managers is seen as that of facilitators of strategy; however, this role is not well-defined in this context. It was noticed from the excerpt that establishing an effective mechanism of accountability to limit the role of managers is a challenging mission that faces the reformers from the top management team in the organisation. Managers were found to be powerful and shielded against any form of intervention and threat to their positions. The interviewee clearly linked the poor performance of the organisation to this lack of accountability. Therefore, a correlation was noticed between achieving objectives and the lack of accountability. Furthermore, inefficient tools by which to question managers for any misconduct could end up with information being withheld and organisational objectives being suspended. It was further argued that managers may manage their departments and their staff without following acceptable work practice. This practice encourages the personal actions and withholding of information that leads to continual confusion amongst staff.

In a similar vein, when a departmental head from middle management level (I-20-MM) was asked about the reasons for not holding managers accountable for their actions, he claimed that:

“Well... I don’t see managers hold for a serious investigation or seriously questioned by their higher level managers, I don’t remember... I have faced one

throughout my work experience here, I guess they may be in trouble only if financial issues are involved such as the misuse of budget or other issues beyond the work which rarely happen... and if it happens, it will be slow, and people will find a way around it... managers have relations and powerful positions that make supervising and holding them accountable is almost absent". (I-20-MM)

The departmental head raised a very serious issue with regards to the strategy practice undertaken by managers. He clearly argued that the ensuring accountability amongst public sector employees is considered to be a very slow process and managers they can use their power and relations to force such issues to be dropped. Managers' practices might be questioned in few cases, such as when dealing with the department budget, however in most cases managers discourage the opening of formal investigations. People strongly rely on their connections when things go against them. Interestingly, it is not only managers who rely on their relations, it is also the managers' choice to revise their decisions when they are exposed to social pressure. Organisational members may have different expectations of what the organisation has actually proposed. The quote suggested that the employees work in an environment which is characterised by changing agendas and principles. Therefore, sharing the right information about the organisational strategy and the commitment to achieve strategic goals could be subject to frequent change. The interviewee also viewed the supervision procedure as being as important as accountability. Officials' responsibility was seen to provide continuous guidelines for middle management and direct them towards implementing strategies. This may suggest that top management may only provide the general strategy guidelines while operations themselves are left to the middle managers and their staff.

Similarly, a departmental head (I-2-MM) commented in confidence that the lack of accountability and clear direction is what makes the difference in achieving real outcomes. Information asymmetry is one of the poor practices that managers adopt towards their employees. Information exchange seems to be absent among a group of employees in one department. It was argued that although encouraging corresponding behaviour between a manager and subordinate may facilitate work progress and lead to positive work outcomes, the absence of the supervisory role and the accountability of

people remains a challenge in properly fulfilling this collaboration. This was clearly reflected in the following statement:

“I ask other departments if we have common work to be discussed... some jobs are done quickly, while a delay may happen in others because no one can ask the responsible person of why such delay is encountered and this cause a delay in the project timeframe... sometimes we try to ask other people in the department, but they simply answer we have no idea of what you are talking about!”. (I-2-MM)

In addition to the lack of accountability and the continuous mentoring from direct managers, 15 interviewees' responses have shown that ineffective strategy transition among employees could be the result of the excessive number of employees who work for the ministry (i.e., it is overstaffed), which has a common phrase in Arabic culture, “*Al-Batala Al-Muqannaa*”. Non-engaged employees hinder management's ability to follow up and achieve the desired organisational objectives. This issue was pointed out by a middle manager (I-14-MM) who made a comment that the unnecessarily high number of staff has a serious impact on the way strategy information is shared among members:

“What is strange is that the people are too many, but they don't work, not only because they don't have nothing to do, but also due to the lack of supervision and guidance. Sometimes, it's due to ‘Al-Batala Al-Muqannaa’. You may find 4 chairs and one table at one department, but the number of employees is far more than that... while a shortage is seen in another places. Indeed, there is not enough space, so they don't come to work to be informed of issues here and there, but they only care about getting their salary while staying at home. Actually, every day I have to do extra more work to deal with those employees”. (I-14-MM)

From the above excerpt, it can be clearly seen that the interviewee was emphasising the importance of employing only the required number of staff in each department to facilitate strategy sharing as well as allowing for effective management. He further perceived the lack of a control mechanism for the strategy transition to be a result of persistent chaos in the organisation for so long. In his argument, he claimed that departments were not

prepared to accommodate the number of staff they had, while other departments may suffer from staff shortages. This was found to complicate the process of information exchange due to ineffective employees who did not make any contribution to the work and who would obviously not be interested in sharing news related to the nature of their work and its objectives.

It was also clear from the lines in the quote that middle managers actually spend a lot of time dealing with non-engaged employees or unwanted staff and their particular daily issues, which in turn has a significant effect on the time allocated to manage the strategy transition process. It was also suggested that the organisation is not utilising its own workforce effectively and efficiently, as the extra employees were not engaged in the work process and hence results in a high cost due to this mismanagement. This may reflect negatively on the overall organisational performance. In the same vein, an assistant undersecretary from the top management level (I-18-TM) shared a similar opinion and discussed the reasons for such phenomenon by stating:

“Let’s make it simple, massive numbers of employees is not a new problem, we suffer from it here in the ministry and in the governmental body in general due to the Civil Service Law as you may know, now what makes it worse is that most employees have irrelevant specialisation to what we actually need... [Unrecorded]... we end up spending day and night to find solutions for unproductive and non-specialised employees rather than developing strategies and improving quality of strategy transition, and they end up with a loss of interest to learn or accept any information that is not related to their specialisation!”. (I-18-TM)

This quote supports the view of interviewee (I-14-MM) in the sense that both respondents agreed on there being a large number of ineffective employees in the various departments at the organisation. The interviewee further offered the reason of this phenomenon was the Civil Services law, which secures jobs for all citizens under any circumstances, even if they are not required. The organisation is thus overwhelmed with unrequired employees who are not willing to learn due to the mismatch between their job and the required

specialisation, qualifications, and relevant experience. This argument was based on the logic that this was not a matter of choice; rather, it is imposed in form of law that public organisations must deal with and cope with it themselves. The interviewee clearly linked the role of top management team to the provision of the organisation's general direction rather than dealing with the associated details; in other words, to perform such high-skilled duties as improving organisational strategies, enhancing the quality of information exchange among organisational members, and effectively maintaining and controlling the overall organisation performance.

Conversely, top managers are spending extensive amounts of time dealing with and managing day-to-day activities. The interviewee further acknowledged the importance of focussing on the organisational macro-objectives which they are employed for. The uncontrolled number of employees at the organisation leads to unsuitable jobs being assigned to them which do not match their qualifications and experience they may have, and therefore a lack of effective strategy transition and implementation results. This concern was raised by several interviewees and is further explained in detail in the following section.

5.7 Job Description and Roles Allocation

The allocation of roles and responsibilities to the organisational members and the way in which jobs were structured and designed was found to be another key interesting finding. Therefore, this section explains how job description and roles allocated to employees could affect the strategy transition among different employment levels, as supported by the views of 15 interviewees out of 27 interviews, which constitutes 55% of the coded data. By aggregating relative codes, it has been revealed that the theme can be drawn from three different elements including the lack of defined roles and responsibilities, the reliability on expatriates versus national workforce, and the applied reward system. The following thematic analysis represents some of the direct quotes of interviewees from both the top and the middle management levels.

“Well... we shouldn't forget the role of structure, which plays a critical role in making the strategy alive and be able to see the light and success... I mean you

may find capable people, but they are not allowed to improve structure, or the opposite you may find incapable people with full authority to modify structure. Both cases certainly won't help the situation and won't drive the strategy forward... it is the organisation job to make the structure clear to every employee... not an individual work... things must be clear from the beginning and decision-makers must interfere... Department [Name of department] is a real example of how things are missed around... misunderstanding happens in one way or another because of that issue". (I-20-MM)

The above quote was from the interview with a departmental head (I-20-MM) from the middle management level, and reflects how important the organisational structure for strategy continuity and success is. Organisational structure is perceived as a roadmap through which to achieve organisational objectives. The interviewee clearly made the link between the structure and the role of employees, and further viewed them as one integrated system. Capable employees are considered to be a waste of human resources if the overall structure is not well designed. It was also argued that institutional structure should be well managed by the top management. Maintaining a good organisational structure is also seen as a strategic priority for decision-makers to ensure an effective strategy transition process. A good structure and a well-defined role have an influence on the strategy transition behaviour among departments and individuals. Sharing strategy among the organisation's members is dependent on the way in which the organisation is structured, and roles are allocated. It may also be noted that people perform and exchange strategy better when a clear and effective structure exists. As noted from 14 interviewees, the lack of defined roles and responsibilities seems to be a hindrance, which explains why strategy is not effectively shared among the organisation's members and objectives are not efficiently accomplished. This view was stated in the following quote given by a top manager (I-11-TM):

"The most important obstacle is the overlapping of roles among different parties inside and outside the ministry especially when it comes to describe what is really required by each employee and suddenly complaints start... motivation for employees is not always enough, sometimes we don't really know what this person

is doing in this department and why he is here, what value can he add, and what is important to us is what kind of interaction we may have with this employee... [Unrecorded]”. (I-11-TM)

As observed from the assistant undersecretary’s illustration above, new roles are usually precarious and stressful for any employee. It was argued that a lot of staff members in various managerial levels might face several unforeseen situations in which individuals’ experiences alone are not enough in themselves, and certainly not without a clear structure. Employees’ knowledge of their roles and responsibilities is a key factor in supporting the organisation’s intangible assets. In order for employees to accomplish the expected organisational objectives, it is vital for them to clearly understand what the objectives are. In other words, employees are left unaware of the full significance to the tasks assigned to them and the nature of such work.

Top manager (I-11-TM) was of the view that unclear job descriptions could hinder the strategy transition and consequently the execution of these strategies. It was also noticed from the interviewee’s response that the overlap in roles was due to unclear job descriptions, which ultimately define the role of each staff member. Overlapping roles and responsibilities is not limited to the internal boundary of the organisation, but it also extends to include the external parties that may interact with the firm during the transiting and execution of the strategy. Raising complaints and blaming each other can happen if unexpected actions occur, and are normal consequences of the absence of any clear identification of duties and roles. It was acknowledged that upon clarifying these duties, senior decision-makers could set the boundary at which the strategy transition takes place to the individuals and with whom the engagement should be. Another manager (I-18-TM) from the top management team seemed to support the above-mentioned views:

“Ok to explain the situation, I believe in proper distribution for the tasks and roles... and in the organised work... the roles and tasks should contain every single detail... not only what to do every day, there are many and many different positions in some departments while in reality we don't need such positions... while other departments might really need such positions; however, the

organisational structure doesn't allow that... we tried to modify this but with no success as the governmental structure is controlled by the Civil Service Commission... Our opinion must be considered prior to structuring jobs in order to serve the public needs better... Currently, having overlapped positions with no clarity of the responsibilities causes a severe ambiguity in sharing strategy and where the organisation is heading to". (I-18-TM)

There are two main issues to highlight here. The first concern relates to the expectation of individuals in terms of duties at the organisation, while the second concerns multiplicity of jobs and the extent to which the structure is modified. The interviewee clearly acknowledged the work allocation for both employment and individuals' levels. It was argued that the job description assigned to each member should not be limited purely to their daily work; it should further include all the attributes such as the legal, administrative, financial and other related tasks which employees might face during their course of work. Thus, it can be understood that setting clear roles will determine the scope in which employees will engage and how this engagement is applied to facilitate or hinder strategy transition and execution.

Moreover, having multiple jobs may serve against the smooth transition of strategy from the formulation to implementation phases. It was claimed that overlapping positions may in fact confuse the reception of strategy as to whom the strategy should be assigned and what objectives to be carried out. It was also suggested that job positions are unsystematically distributed among divisions as some departments have a shortage of positions, which might also slow the motion of strategy among members. Senior managers seem to be unengaged in terms of designing the jobs and the allocation of tasks as the existing structure is controlled and owned by the Civil Service Commission. It can be inferred from the interviewee's response that top managers' opinions are seen to be a crucial input to structuring the work tasks that ensure the smooth transition and exchange of strategy, as well as providing a better service for the public; however, in this case, their views are neglected. This further suggests a kind of disconnection between strategy formulators and executors exists. Inaccurate job descriptions may lead to ambiguity,

which results in some employees not knowing exactly what their role towards the shared strategy actually is, and when, exactly, they should participate in the transition process.

Middle manager (I-12-MM) expressed a similar attitude as per the following excerpt:

“I find no reason for not transferring the strategy if everyone knows how to deal with it... I think structuring and defining roles should also include structuring department’s work as well... since it differs from one to another, people may relate a particular task to them, others will do the same... the point here is that who is right and who is wrong, sometimes we find easy tasks been by mistake circulated through senior managers and different staff... and this consumes great amount of time”. (I-12-MM)

From the above excerpt, it was implied that there would be a greater tendency to transfer strategy and share its contents with different managerial levels if roles and responsibilities are well-defined. The lack of clarity regarding various roles was seen to hinder decision-makers in terms of performing their actual duties as inaccurate job descriptions could allow for roles to be interpreted differently across a group of employees. Middle manager (I-12-MM) argued that some duties are sometimes allocated to different people or departments, suggesting that some of the work assigned to the lower managerial level staff has actually been conducted through the top management team, or vice versa. In fact, this may encourage the notion of being a follower rather than being a leader, as concerned employees would nominally assume that the top level management team would always be involved in solving such issues. Consequently, minimal effort would be shown by staff in the lower managerial level. Similarly, to clarify roles for organisational members, the interviewee argued that the role of each department should be clearly described to prevent the overlap of roles. Strategy transition could be misunderstood as the staff may have similar job descriptions but work in different departments, who might consequently perform different activities according to the nature of their units.

Beside the lack of defined roles and responsibilities, it was interesting to note that a reliance on expatriates rather than national citizens could play a crucial role in hindering

or facilitating the strategy transition among organisational members. This was found to be important as 12 interviewees emphasised this phenomenon (relying on expatriates) as being an obstacle to choosing with whom to share organisational strategy and related objectives. This led to a great number of employees being unaware of the information exchanged.

A departmental head (I-22-MM) emphasised the importance of sharing strategy equally among organisational members, regardless of the nationality of employees. This was reflected in his following quote:

“Many senior managers prefer to share the strategy with foreigner staff instead of the national staff... and this is unfair!... I think they rely on them as they think those are the ones who understand the nature of work and considered to be experts, some of them work here for a long time and they are many... which is not good as they form an informal lobby... the problem we face is that foreigner staff do not share what they know and rarely disclose it to others... they tend to be selfish in informing what the strategy is and why they have been preferred than others... their background, values, perceptions, and perspectives are different... this doesn't work if we need to be going ahead”. (I-22-MM)

As observed from the middle manager's view above, senior managers tend to rely on expatriates rather than citizens to exchange information. The presumption here is that foreign workers are more reliable in conducting the work required and that they deserve to be engaged with the organisational strategy more than others. Middle manager (I-22-MM) also linked the strategy sharing with the length of stay of the expatriate in the organisation. It was further made explicit that the excessively large expatriate workforce results in a kind of ignorance amongst the national workforce in terms of awareness of the strategy and achieving the desired organisational objectives. The excerpt also reveals that two-way communication affects the trust level between expatriates and national employees and therefore strategy is not delivered to the intended employees. Senior managers tend to describe expatriates as supporting players in driving the strategy forward, and their roles are seen to be crucial to the success of the organisation.

However, it was argued that the tendency for expatriate to share the strategy, especially with national employees, is very limited. The interviewee also described the way in which expatriates act within the organisation, and further states that they form a lobby. This practice between foreign workers and national employees makes it difficult to understand the way they communicate and construct their relationships. It was also claimed that expatriates have different socio-cultural backgrounds from the national staff members, which in turn is seen to play a major role in complicating strategy-related information for both sides. Also, from the above excerpt, it can be further inferred that senior managers have confidence in expatriates' abilities to perform tasks without the need to share the strategy with the national staff.

In the same vein, middle manager (I-26-MM) argued that although foreign employees may be effective in the performance of routine tasks, they might harm the organisation on the long run as they effectively block information exchange. The interviewee went on to say that:

“Honestly, some people can't be replaced easily, for example our brothers from different countries, they do good work in low level jobs, which our citizens might not accept to do... such as a typing or a data entry job... but let me tell you, in the case of high level jobs... regrettably they don't inform citizens of what they know about the organisational strategy, or how tasks should be done, even if they are formally asked to do so, they will find a way or another to hide things and to control the work by themselves and not to tell the complete tasks... they want to be close to decision-makers as much as they can and to feel needed all the time... we feel it... unfortunately... real solutions are needed!” (I-26-MM)

Foreign employees may intentionally hide information from national employees within the organisation. Furthermore, foreigners might want to be in positions of control, a valuable source of knowledge, and as a reference, which were argued to be the main reasons why strategy was not being shared by expatriates with national employees. It was further suggested that both sides (expatriates and national citizens) had failed to achieve proper mutual trust due to the fact that important information is not generally shared or

incorrect information is passed between them. A negative attitude towards information exchange can be noticed in the above statement with phrases such as 'hide things', 'not to tell complete tasks', 'regrettably', and 'unfortunately'. Such words clearly reflect the negative tone of this situation and the effect that such a lack of collaboration in sharing strategy would have on the work progress and the implementation of projects.

Although some of these practices might not be formally seen, the unspoken concerns held by managers reflect the disappointment in how strategy is actually transited among the various employment levels. In this situation, in which foreign workers feel insecure in their jobs due to the national staff, the flow of strategy and information tends to be constrained. This in turn might result in ineffective strategy transfer, affecting other work aspects, for instance, in terms of the quality of the output produced, staff effort, and time consumed in achieving particular tasks. The interviewee further noted that if expatriates in low level jobs were to be replaced, which means the national staff would have to accept these sorts of jobs to replace expatriates, the situation might be changed. It is not only the expatriate's attitude that can foster trust in transiting strategy when it is formulated, but there may also be other hidden interests that hinder strategy exchange among employees. Middle manager (I-26-MM) claimed that formal channel instructions to people might be ineffective in fostering strategy transition among staff, and further called for additional solutions to maintain ties and sustain trust among expatriates and the national workforce.

Another interesting point noted is that employees may lose interest in sharing strategy with others due to the discouraging reward system applied within the organisation. Actors' groups at various managerial levels may decide not to share the required strategy as they feel that their efforts are not being appreciated. Reward distribution was found to have a conflicting effect on moving strategy forward or hindering this movement. 11 interviewees shared their experiences in this regard, who argued that additional efforts to enhance the process of transiting strategies are not being recognised, where all employees receive the same treatment. They further argued that employees make only minimal efforts to justify their salaries. One of the middle managers (I-19-MM) shared his experience in this regard when he said:

“I am a person who encourages managing the organisation just like how the private companies do... those people ensure their strategies are successfully understood and completely implemented, their staff always motivated to do their best, they are financially supported, and most importantly they receive awards from time to time... and of course they have a disciplinary system for undesired performance, that’s how it should be... [Unrecorded]”. (I-19-MM)

Middle manager (I-19-MM) raised some points as how management practice should be enacted. To accommodate this point, strategy formulators must understand how to motivate organisational members, in which they can facilitate the strategy transition and the implementation of the required strategies. The interviewee made the comparison between the ways in which staff are encouraged to support strategy transition in both the private and the public sectors.

Apart from the reward distribution itself, people’s tendency to share strategy and their efforts to successfully support this transition are affected not only by the rewards and incentives to do so, but also by the people’s mentality towards deciding either to share or to hoard strategy transfer information. The interviewee perceived the psychological states of employees to be as important as financial reward through his emphasis on the continuous appreciation and recognition of staff’s efforts in this regard. Although both are considered to be tools by which to support strategy transition among individuals, the interviewee clearly differentiated between controllable variables (e.g., financial reward and thankyou letters) and uncontrollable variables (e.g., emotional motivation), and indeed recognised the importance of each. Similarly, an assistant undersecretary from the top management level (I-4-TM-R) tended to share a similar opinion, placing a focus on the need for a fair reward system among individuals in order to support strategy transition. He stated:

“Employees are not the same, some of them they like their work, while there are many others don’t care about sharing strategies or even implement them... active managers always complain about being equally treated with inactive managers and have no convincing words to respond to their complaints... I certainly believe

that as long as the principle of punishment and rewarding is not seriously applied, then don't expect real productivity or even measuring it... people behave according to what they see... if they don't care about passing information around, things will be complicated". (I-4-TM-R)

From the above excerpt, it was clear that fairness within the workplace plays a huge role in moving strategy forward and ensuring continuous communication. People have different attitudes and needs in the workplace. Therefore, decision-makers are held to be responsible for encouraging collaborative teamwork among individuals, as well as promoting the values apparent in various staff members within the organisation. The interviewee further claimed that fairness in the reward scheme may influence employees' behaviour and their attitudes with respect to strategy transition. The assistant undersecretary also suggested that the absence of a fair reward scheme and proper accountability may lead to poor productivity as individuals lose their faith in the people running the organisation. He further noted that it is even difficult to measure performance, as each individual might make different contributions to the process of strategy transition and this can be affected by the value of the reward they receive. Introducing a fair reward system is further viewed as an important influential factor through which the organisation can control attitudes and behaviour in terms of the way in which strategy can be successfully formulated, transited, and implemented.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the qualitative findings of Phase-1 of this research, as conducted through semi-structured interviews. The results presented six major themes, as reported in a narrative fashion, and which was further supported by representative quotes from the interviewees. The findings of Phase-1 suggested that the roles of actors play a crucial part in facilitating or hindering strategy transition among individuals. Moreover, social virtues and communication were found to be vital in exchanging organisational information related to the formulated strategies. Interviewees' responses also revealed that individuals' power in relation to job positions and their personal attitudes, in addition to the way in which they engage with each other, could be influential on how strategy is transited cross different employment levels. Furthermore, senior managers were generally

found to believe in strategy ownership, and therefore sharing organisational strategy with others was seen to be limited at best. The findings of Phase-1 also suggested that the implementation of a strategy transition control mechanism is a complicated process that, if well managed, would allow strategy transition among individuals to be smoother and more efficient. Finally, the way in which jobs are designed and tasks are allocated within the organisation were also found to be influential in terms of the way in which strategy transition information is either shared or hoarded by staff members, and consequently the effects of such on the implementation of organisational objectives. In next chapter, the quantitative findings of Phase-2, namely those obtained from the distribution of questionnaires to the three groups of actors (top management, middle management, and front-line employees) will be reported and discussed. Furthermore, the priorities of themes according to each group of actors will be analysed, and a further assessment as to the similarities and differences between their answers will be presented.

Chapter 6: Quantitative Results and Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative study that was carried out at five public organisations in Kuwait over a period of eight months. The primary aim of the quantitative study was to measure how the factors which emerged from Phase-1 affected the involvement of internal actors in the strategy transition process and to what extent this effect was influential. The survey data were analysed using SPSS 'IBM Corp. Released 2015. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 23.0. Armonk, NY: IBM Corp'. Based on the statistical results processed in Chapter 4, which provided the validation of the survey data, the One-Way ANOVA and Multinomial Logistic Regression tests were found to be applicable. The outline of the statistical analysis undertaken in this chapter is depicted in Figure 6.1 below.

Therefore, three steps were strictly followed to ensure statistical rigor as well as a reliable analysis for the survey data. After presenting the summary of the survey information in Section 6.3, the chapter outlines the steps followed in order to analyse the survey in Section 6.4, which includes the test of reliability, and the statistical tests using One-Way ANOVA and Multinomial Logistic Regression, and the analysis of the results. Finally, a chapter summary is presented in section 6.5.

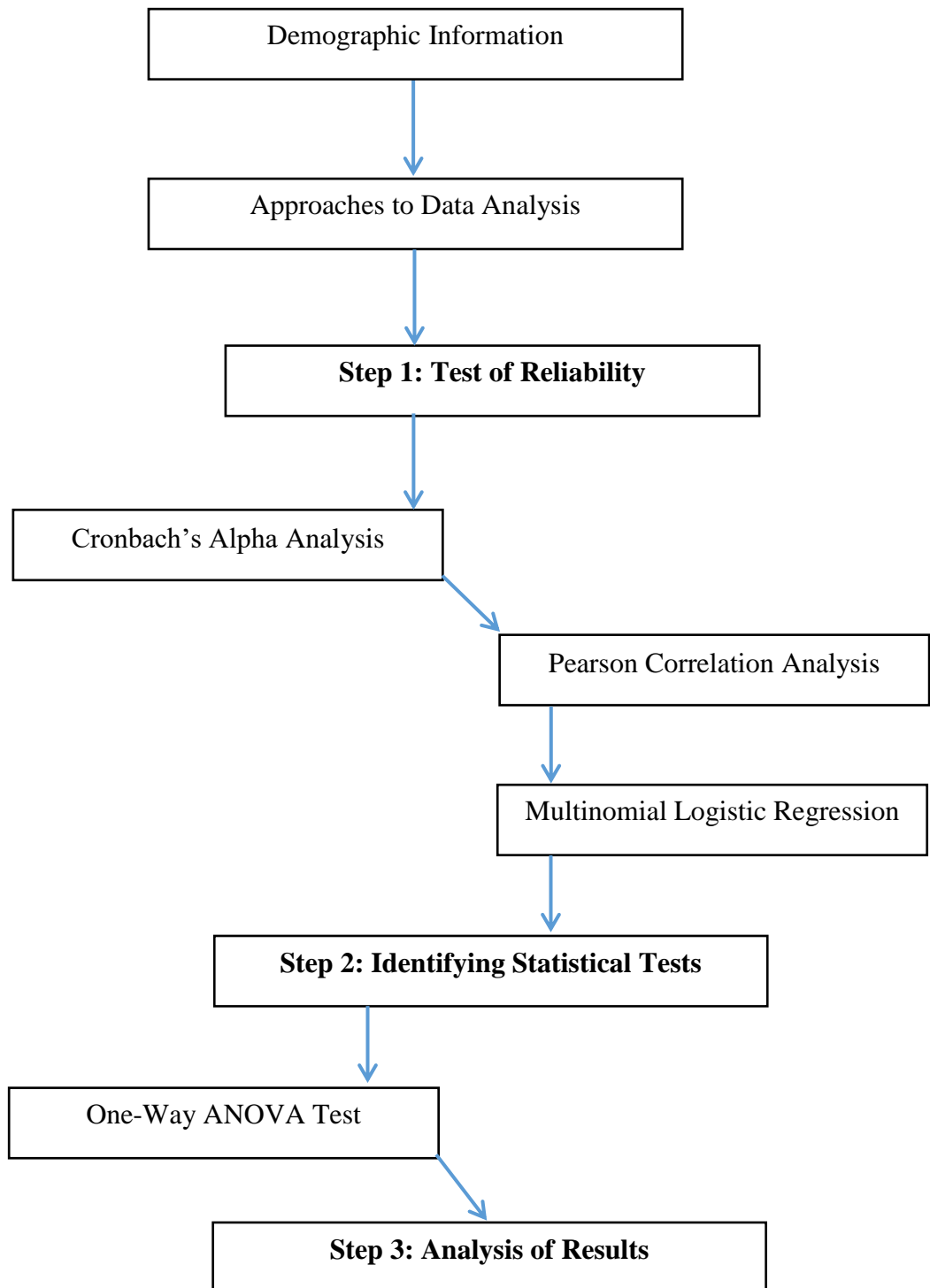


Figure 6.1: Outline of Statistical Analysis

6.2 Participants' Demographic Information

This section reports the demographic information obtained from the participants. This includes the participants' gender, employment category, work experience, and years spent with the same supervisor. The information is also presented in Table 6.1 as frequencies for nominal factors. It is worth mentioning that the results reported herein were obtained from a total of 381 valid questionnaires out of the 400 questionnaires distributed to different groups of actors including top management, middle management, and front line staff.

6.2.1 Participants' Gender

The participants of the study were 61% female ($n = 232$) and 39% male ($n = 149$). More females participated in the study than males, which could have been due to the large number of female employees that generally work at the ministries. Figure 6.2 illustrates the participants' gender.

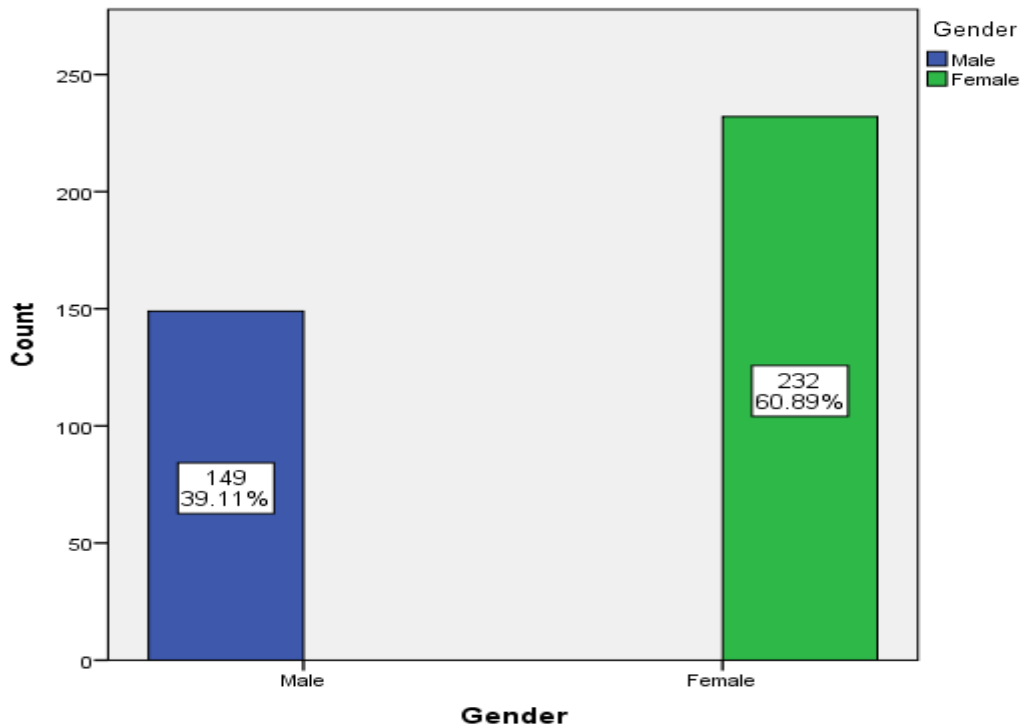


Figure 6.2: Bar Chart for Participants' Gender

6.2.2 Participants' Employment Categories

As per the nature of any organisation, front-line employees are normally greater in number than middle- and top-level management employees. The largest employment category for the study was amongst front-line employees, who accounted for approximately 55% ($n = 210$) of the total sample. The middle management was the second-largest category of participants who accounted for about 36% ($n = 137$) of the sample. The smallest category of employees was top management, as expected, who account for about 9% ($n = 34$) of the sample. Although the opinions of the top and middle managers are considered vital to the study it was expected that there would be fewer participants than front-line staff, as previously explained in the research methodology and methods chapter (see Chapter 4). Figure 6.3 illustrates the participants' employment categories.

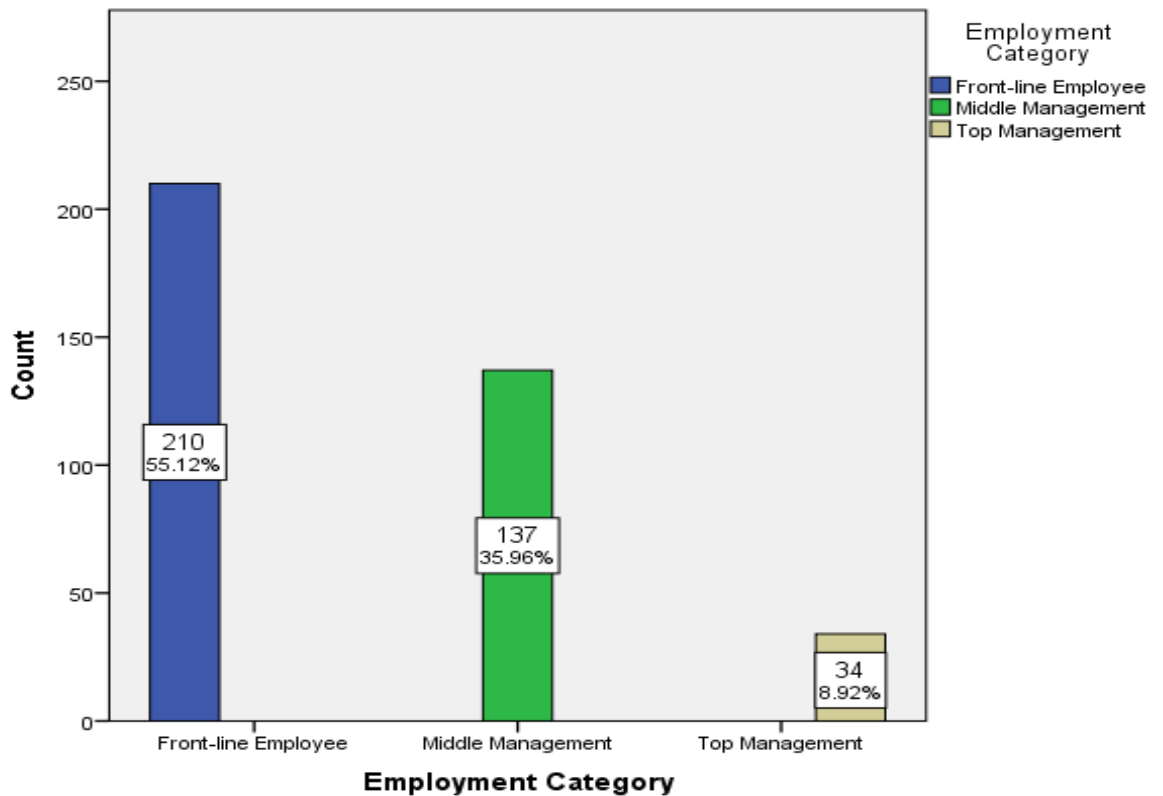


Figure 6.3: Bar Chart for Participants' Employment Categories

6.2.3 Participants' Work Experience

The majority of participants have work experience of between 11 to 15 years, with this group accounting for about 48% ($n = 184$). The second group of employees have work experience of between 6 to 10 years and account for approximately 20% ($n = 77$) of the sample. The third group participants had less than 5 years of work experience and accounted for about 16% ($n = 62$) of the sample. The fourth group of participants had work experience of between 16 to 20 years and accounted for approximately 12% ($n = 48$) of the sample. Only about 3% of participants had more than 21 years of work experience ($n = 10$). It can be clearly seen that almost more than half of employees have more than 11 years of work experience, indicating a high rate of stability in working positions. Only about 36% of employees prefer to change their working environment to find employment elsewhere. Figure 6.4 illustrates the participants' years of work experience.

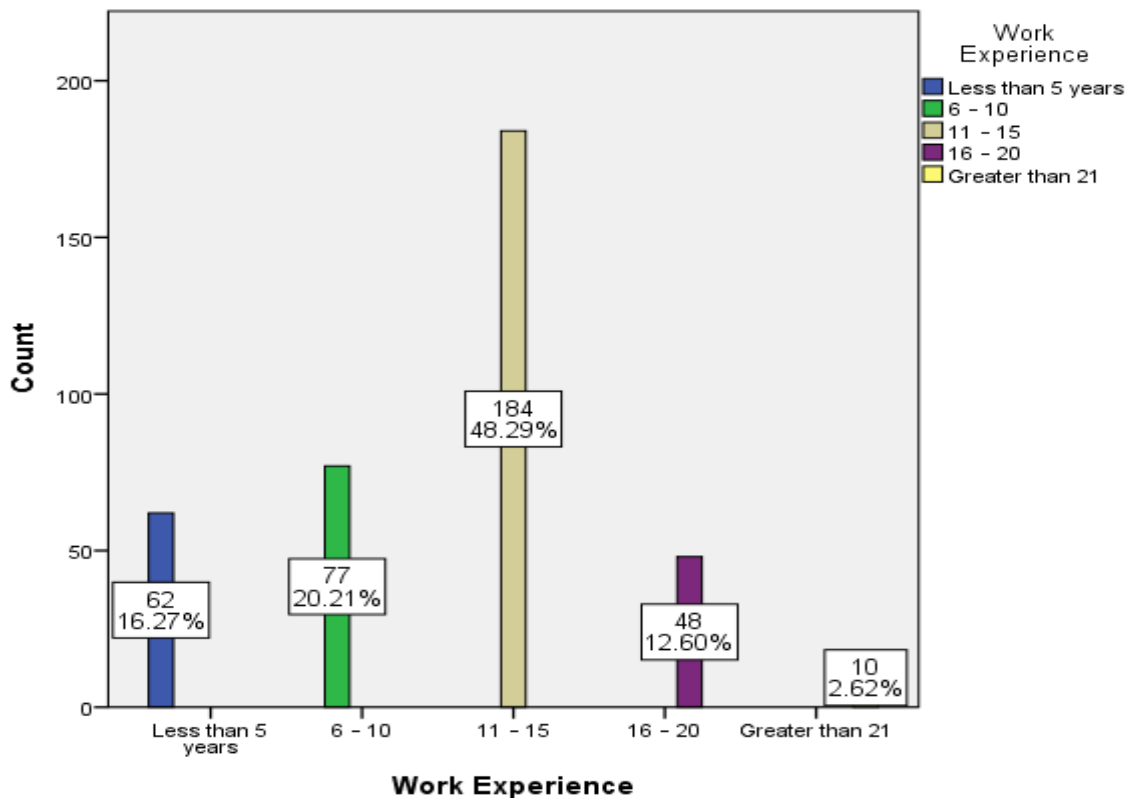


Figure 6.4: Bar Chart for Participants' Years of Work Experience for the Same Ministry

6.2.4 Participants' Time Working Under the Same Supervisor

Nearly 50% of participants had worked with the same supervisor for 6 to 10 years ($n = 188$). Approximately 20% of participants had worked with the same supervisor ($n = 76$) for less than 5 years. The third group of participants had worked between 11 to 15 years under the same supervisor and account for about 18% ($n = 70$) of the sample. The fourth group of employees had worked for between 16 to 20 years with the same supervisor and accounted for about 7% ($n = 28$) of the sample. Only about 5% of participants had worked with the same supervisor for more than 21 years ($n = 19$). The supervisors tended to stay at their specific organisations less than 5 years, and a positive relationship can be seen among managers and subordinates in terms of working with each other. This is further in line with the qualitative findings, as it was suggested that the loyalty of workers with whom they work was one of the top priorities of employees. Figure 6.5 illustrates the participants' time working under the same supervisor.

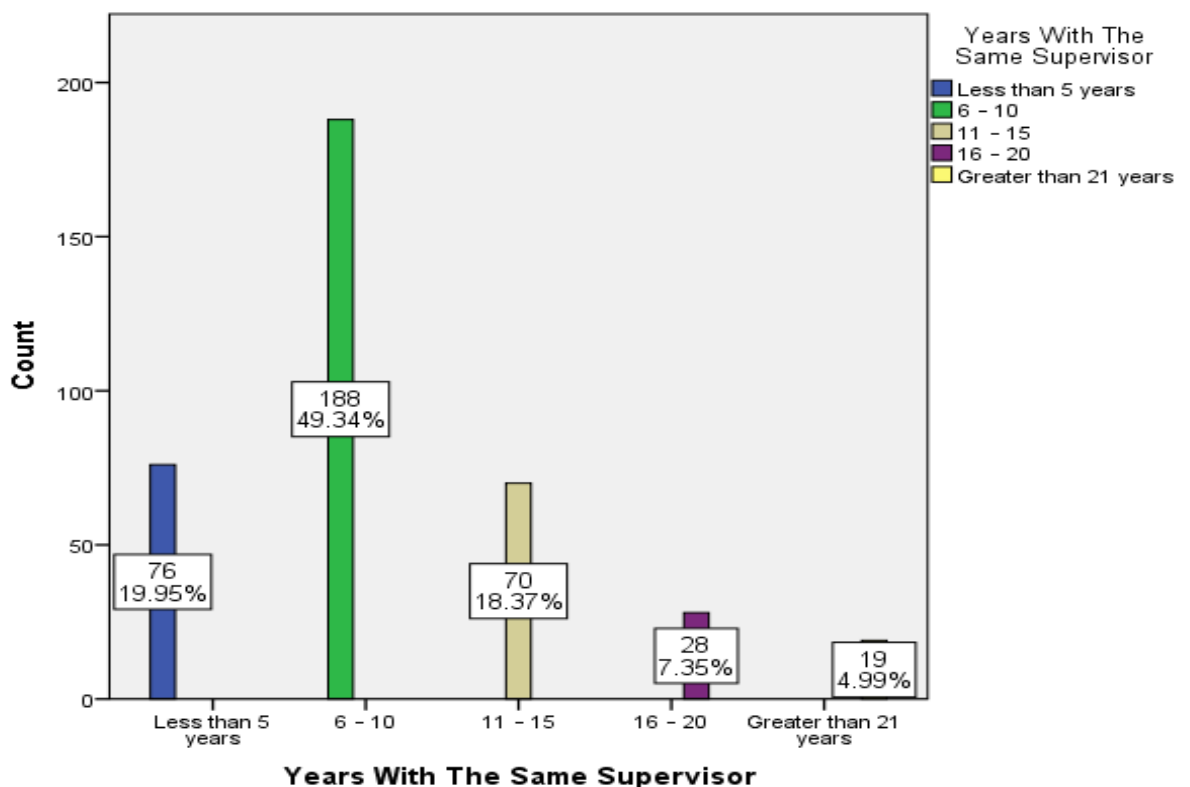


Figure 6.5: Bar Chart for Participants' Work under the Same Supervision

6.3 Summary of Participants' Demographic Information

A summary of the demographic information gained from survey participants is presented in Table 6.1 as frequencies for nominal variables.

Table 6.1: Frequency Table for Nominal Variables

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	232	61
	Female	149	39
	Missing	0	0
<hr/>			
Employment Category	Front-line Employee	210	55
	Middle Management	137	36
	Top Management	34	9
	Missing	0	0
<hr/>			
Work Experience	11 - 15	184	48
	16 - 20	48	13
	6 - 10	77	20
	Greater than 21	10	3
	Less than 5 years	62	16
	Missing	0	0
<hr/>			
Years with the Same Supervisor	11 - 15	70	18
	16 - 20	28	7
	6 - 10	188	49
	Greater than 21 years	19	5
	Less than 5 years	76	20
	Missing	0	0

Note. Due to rounding errors, percentages may not equal 100%.

6.4 Approaches to Data Analysis

This section introduces the steps followed to analyse the survey data. Each step is explained in further detail to clarify how the quantitative analyses were conducted. The

first step describes the reliability analyses, while the second and third steps present the statistical tests performed to extract meaningful results from the survey data.

6.4.1 Step 1: Test of Reliability

Testing the reliability of the questionnaires and data was the first step undertaken to ensure a rigorous analysis of the quantitative data that emerged from Phase-2 of the research. In this step, two tests were applied, namely Cronbach's α and Pearson Correlation analysis, as explained in Sections 4.7.3.1 and 4.7.3.2, respectively. By conducting this step, the researcher gained the confidence to move to step 2 in which the most appropriate statistical tests were carried out.

6.4.2 Step 2 and 3: Statistical Tests and Analysis of Results

After applying the reliability test, it was clear that the One-Way ANOVA and Multinomial Logistic Regression tests could be utilised to analyse the quantitative data. These tests will show the differences among internal groups of actors in terms of their responses to the strategy transition process. Consequently, the objective of question 3 of this research will be approached.

6.4.2.1 One-Way ANOVA Test

The One-Way ANOVA test was used to determine if there were any significant differences between two or more groups of actors in terms of the mean scores of the dependent factor. In the case of a statistical significance being found and the independent factors having two or more levels, then pairwise comparison, namely a post-hoc test was used to determine the paired differences. This was found applicable to the related research question as the researcher was interested in measuring any differences with respect to prioritising the factors affecting the strategy transition process among three different employment groups, namely top management, middle management, and front-line employees. However, it is important to bear in mind that the One-Way ANOVA, whilst a comprehensive test, does not necessarily inform which specific groups were statistically significantly different from each other; but rather shows that at least two groups were different. Table 6.2 shows the distributive results of the means and standard deviations

found for each factor for each employment category. Consequently, Figure 6.6 illustrates the trend in each study factor for each Group of Actors.

Table 6.2: Distributive Results of the Means and Standard Deviations for each Factor for each Group of Actors

Descriptive Statistics

Actor Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Front-line Employee	Awareness	210	3.0743	.70562
	Flexibility	210	2.6429	.73047
	Leadership	210	2.8074	.71857
	Interaction	210	2.9542	.63554
	Process	210	3.7635	.42548
	Perception	210	3.4873	.52246
	Valid N (listwise)	210		
Middle Management	Awareness	137	3.8321	.63326
	Flexibility	137	3.5255	.77764
	Leadership	137	3.4639	.78555
	Interaction	137	3.7272	.69650
	Process	137	3.9155	.52061
	Perception	137	3.7658	.62920
	Valid N (listwise)	137		
Top Management	Awareness	34	3.2294	.65112
	Flexibility	34	3.0840	.63996
	Leadership	34	3.3824	.53054
	Interaction	34	3.4596	.59410
	Process	34	3.3995	.66817
	Perception	34	3.4559	.68357
	Valid N (listwise)	34		

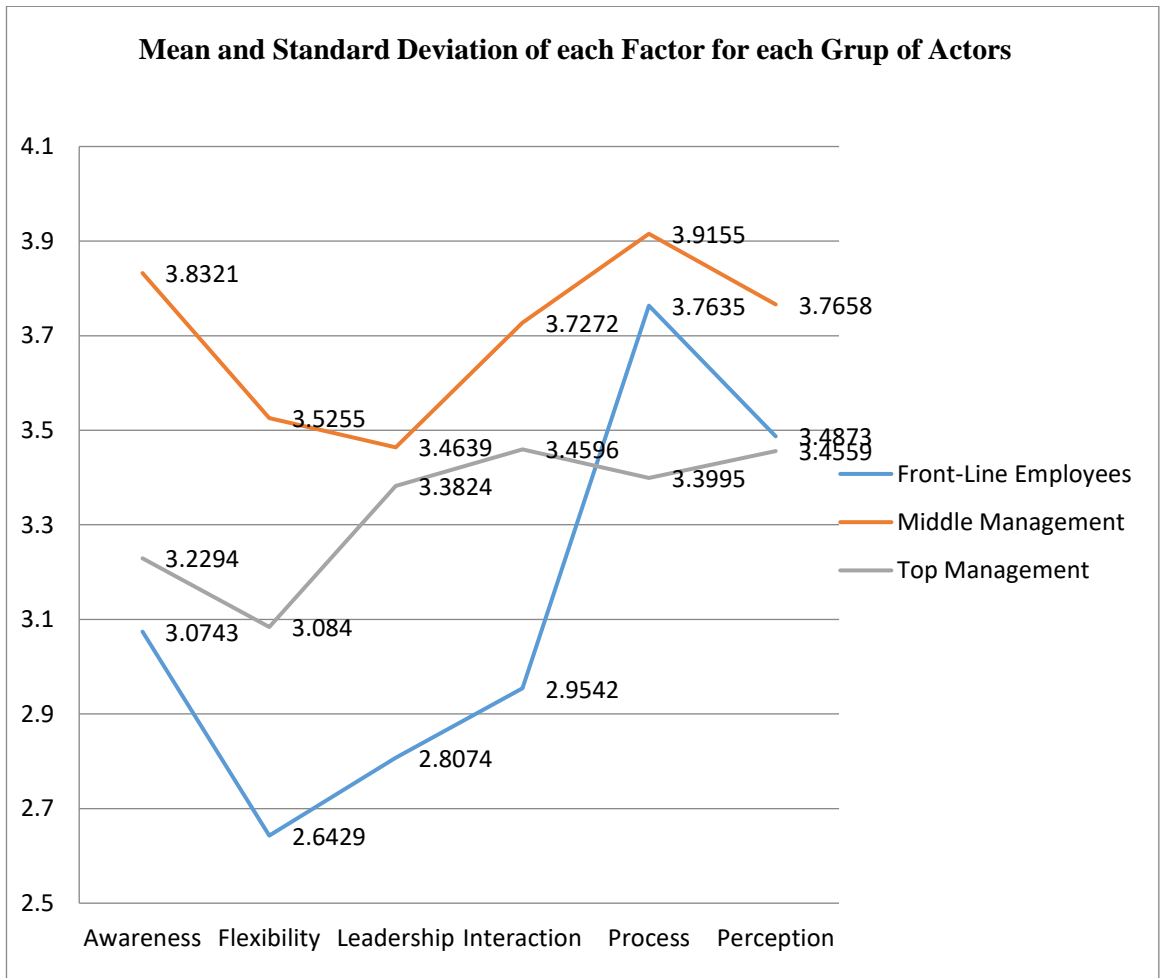


Figure 6.6: Mean and Standard Deviation of each Factor for each Group of Actors

6.4.2.1.1 Interpreting ANOVA Table

After performing the One-Way ANOVA test, it was found that there are statically significant differences between the groups of means for the six study factors. The results shown in Table 6.3 below indicate that the significance value of the study factors is $p = 0.000$, which is below the threshold value of 0.05 and, therefore, it can be argued that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean factors between the different employment categories. Accordingly, different groups of internal actors have different priorities with regards to the study factors. This information can be useful to an extent; however, the results shown in Table 6.3 do not inform us which of the specific groups differed. Therefore, a Tukey post-hoc test was performed to indicate which groups of actors differed from each other, the results of which are presented in the Multiple Comparisons Table 6.4.

Table 6.3: Results of ANOVA Test

		ANOVA				
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Awareness	Between Groups	48.259	2	24.130	52.847	.000
	Within Groups	172.590	378	.457		
	Total	220.849	380			
Flexibility	Between Groups	64.865	2	32.433	59.145	.000
	Within Groups	207.278	378	.548		
	Total	272.143	380			
Leadership	Between Groups	38.821	2	19.411	36.481	.000
	Within Groups	201.126	378	.532		
	Total	239.948	380			
Interaction	Between Groups	50.786	2	25.393	59.235	.000
	Within Groups	162.041	378	.429		
	Total	212.827	380			
Process	Between Groups	7.481	2	3.740	15.810	.000
	Within Groups	89.431	378	.237		
	Total	96.912	380			
Perception	Between Groups	7.050	2	3.525	10.550	.000
	Within Groups	126.310	378	.334		
	Total	133.360	380			

6.4.2.1.2 Interpreting the Multiple Comparisons Table

From the results reported in the previous section, statistically significant differences have been shown among the three employment categories, namely top management, middle management, and front-line employees. The following Multiple Comparisons Table 6.4,

which includes the results of the Tukey post-hoc tests, shows which groups of internal actors groups differed from each other.

Table 6.4: Multiple Comparisons of Study Factors for Employment Positions

Multiple Comparisons

Tukey HSD

Dependent Factor	(I) Employment Category	(J) Employment Category	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Awareness	Front-line Employee	Middle Management	-.75783*	.07421	.000	-.9324	-.5832
		Top Management	-.15513	.12491	.429	-.4490	.1388
	Middle Management	Front-line Employee	.75783*	.07421	.000	.5832	.9324
		Top Management	.60271*	.12947	.000	.2981	.9073
	Top Management	Front-line Employee	.15513	.12491	.429	-.1388	.4490
		Middle Management	-.60271*	.12947	.000	-.9073	-.2981
Flexibility	Front-line Employee	Middle Management	-.88269*	.08133	.000	-1.0740	-.6913
		Top Management	-.44118*	.13689	.004	-.7633	-.1191
	Middle Management	Front-line Employee	.88269*	.08133	.000	.6913	1.0740
		Top Management	.44151*	.14188	.006	.1077	.7754
	Top Management	Front-line Employee	.44118*	.13689	.004	.1191	.7633
		Middle Management	-.44151*	.14188	.006	-.7754	-.1077
Leadership	Front-line Employee	Middle Management	-.65650*	.08011	.000	-.8450	-.4680
		Top Management	-.57495*	.13484	.000	-.8922	-.2577
	Middle Management	Front-line Employee	.65650*	.08011	.000	.4680	.8450
		Top Management	.08156	.13976	.829	-.2473	.4104
	Top Management	Front-line Employee	.57495*	.13484	.000	.2577	.8922
		Middle Management	-.08156	.13976	.829	-.4104	.2473

Interaction	Front-line Employee	Middle Management	-.77302*	.07191	.000	-.9422	-.6038
		Top Management	-.50539*	.12104	.000	-.7902	-.2206
	Middle Management	Front-line Employee	.77302*	.07191	.000	.6038	.9422
		Top Management	.26763	.12545	.085	-.0275	.5628
	Top Management	Front-line Employee	.50539*	.12104	.000	.2206	.7902
		Middle Management	-.26763	.12545	.085	-.5628	.0275
Process	Front-line Employee	Middle Management	-.15196*	.05342	.013	-.2777	-.0263
		Top Management	.36398*	.08992	.000	.1524	.5756
	Middle Management	Front-line Employee	.15196*	.05342	.013	.0263	.2777
		Top Management	.51594*	.09320	.000	.2967	.7352
	Top Management	Front-line Employee	-.36398*	.08992	.000	-.5756	-.1524
		Middle Management	-.51594*	.09320	.000	-.7352	-.2967
Perception	Front-line Employee	Middle Management	-.27851*	.06348	.000	-.4279	-.1291
		Top Management	.03142	.10686	.953	-.2200	.2829
	Middle Management	Front-line Employee	.27851*	.06348	.000	.1291	.4279
		Top Management	.30993*	.11076	.015	.0493	.5705
	Top Management	Front-line Employee	-.03142	.10686	.953	-.2829	.2200
		Middle Management	-.30993*	.11076	.015	-.5705	-.0493

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

From the above table, it can be seen that there is a statistically significant difference in terms of strategy awareness between front-line employees and middle management as $p = 0.000$. There is also a statistically significant difference between middle management and top management as $p = 0.000$. However, there were no differences between the front-line employees and the top management as $p = 0.429$.

As for the flexibility factor, there is a statistically significant difference between the front-line employees and the middle management as $p = 0.000$, as well as between the front-

line employees and top management as $p = 0.004$. There is also a statistically significant difference between middle management and top management as $p = 0.006$.

As for the leadership factor, it can be seen that there is a statistically significant difference between the front-line employees and the middle management, as well as between the front-line employees and the top management as $p = 0.000$ for both relations. However, there were no differences between middle management and top management as $p = 0.829$.

As for the interaction among employees, there is a statistically significant difference between the front-line employees and middle management, as well as between the front-line employees and top management as $p = 0.000$ for both relations, while there were no differences between middle management and top management as $p = 0.085$.

As for the process factor, there is a statistically significant difference between the front-line employees and the middle management as $p = 0.013$, as well as between front-line employees and the top management as $p = 0.000$. There is also a statistically significant difference between middle management and the top management as $p = 0.000$.

In terms of the perception factor, there is a statistically significant difference between front-line employees and middle management as $p = 0.000$, as well as between middle and top management as $p = 0.015$. However, there were no differences between front-line employees and top management as $p = 0.953$.

Due to the fact that significance differences have been demonstrated among different employment levels with respect to the study factors, a further test was required to prioritise these factors according to each employment level. This was found to be important as it answered the proposed research question in relation to the quantitative part of the study, as well as helping to understand which factors are perceived as having the most attention among different employment levels. Therefore, the Multinomial Logistic Regression test was performed for this purpose, and is further explained in the following section.

6.4.2.2 Multinomial Logistic Regression Test

The multinomial logistic regression test is used to examine the relationship between one or more independent (predictor) factors and a single nominal dependent (outcome) factor. The use of multinomial logistic regression formulation for multiclass classification is not new. As the aim behind adopting the quantitative part is to prioritise the factors affecting the strategy transition process, the multinomial logistic regression test was chosen to assess whether the six independent study factors have a significant effect on the dependent factor through assessing responses of each group of actors. The test provides a reasonable interpretation as each nominal category was assumed to be related to an underlying latent 'response tendency' (Kwak and Clayton-Matthews, 2002). Therefore, the test creates a linear combination of all independent factors to predict the log-odds (probability) of the dependent factor. The test was further performed on three groups of actors, as reported in three different tables where in each table a comparison of two groups of actors is reported, taking into consideration one actor group to act as a reference category. Furthermore, the results in terms of factors ranking for each actor group is attached in the appendix list (Appendix VI).

Prior to presenting the comparison among the three actors' groups, it is important to note that the results of the multinomial logistic regression model were significant as $\chi^2(12) = 175.06, p < 0.000$, suggesting that the six study factors, namely awareness, flexibility, leadership, interaction, process, and perception, had a significant effect on the probability of observing at least one response category relating to employment position relative to all groups of actors. That is, each of the study factors has a different influence than the others. McFadden's R-squared value is a suitable means by which to measure the fit of the model, and the excellent threshold value is greater than 0.2 (Louviere et al., 2000). As for this research, McFadden's R-squared was calculated and the outcome was 0.25, which indicates an excellent fit. In line with the McFadden R-squared value, the statistical analysis also provided other values to examine the model fit, and these values are presented via Cox and Snell and Nagelkerke analyses, which were both found to be acceptable. Since the overall model was significant, each predictor was examined further. The following Tables 6.5 and 6.6 show the model fitting information and the McFadden R-Square values, respectively.

Table 6.5: Model Fitting Information

Model Fitting Information				
Model	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	694.761			
Final	519.694	175.067	12	.000

Table 6.6: McFadden R-Square Value

Pseudo R-Square	
Cox and Snell	.368
Nagelkerke	.439
McFadden	.252

6.4.2.2.1 Front-line Employees and Middle Management

The comparison between front-line employees and middle management is shown in Table 6.7. From the results, it may be noted that the regression coefficient for the awareness factor in the response category ‘front-line employee of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = 0.42$, $\chi^2 = 0.78$, $p = 0.375$, indicating that the awareness factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the front-line employee category of employment position relative to top management. The regression coefficient for the awareness factor in the response category ‘middle management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 1.18$, $\chi^2 = 5.90$, $p = 0.015$, suggesting that a one unit increase in awareness would increase the probability of observing the middle management category of employment position relative to top management by 227.64%.

The regression coefficient for the flexibility factor in the response category ‘front-line employee of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = -0.36$, $\chi^2 = 0.53$, $p = 0.466$, indicating that flexibility factor did not have a significant effect on the probability

of observing the front-line employee category of employment position relative to top management. The regression coefficient for the flexibility factor in the response category 'middle management of employment position' was not significant, $B = 0.29, \chi^2 = 0.34, p = 0.559$, indicating that the flexibility factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the middle management category of employment position relative to top management.

The regression coefficient for the leadership factor in the response category 'front-line employee of employment position' was significant, as $B = -1.09, \chi^2 = 4.77, p = 0.029$, suggesting that a one unit increase in leadership would decrease the probability of observing the front-line employee category of employment position relative to top management by 66.56%. The regression coefficient for the leadership factor in the response category 'middle management of employment position' was significant, $B = -1.11, \chi^2 = 5.09, p = 0.024$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the leadership factor would decrease the odds of observing the middle management category of employment position relative to top management by 67.29%.

The regression coefficient for the interaction factor in the response category 'front-line employee of employment position' was significant, $B = -1.22, \chi^2 = 5.68, p = 0.017$, suggesting that a one unit increase in interaction factor would decrease the probability of observing the front-line employee of employment position relative to top management by 70.69%. The regression coefficient for the interaction factor in the response category 'middle management category of employment position' was not significant, $B = -0.15, \chi^2 = 0.87, p = 0.768$, indicating that the interaction factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the middle management category of employment position relative to top management.

The regression coefficient for the process factor in the response category 'front-line employee of employment position' was significant, as $B = 3.11, \chi^2 = 22.35, p < 0.000$, suggesting that a one unit increase in process factor would increase the probability of observing the front-line employee of employment position relative to top management by 2145.90%. The regression coefficient for the process factor in the response category

‘middle management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 2.15, \chi^2 = 11.16, p < 0.001$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the process factor would increase the probability of observing the middle management of employment position relative to top management by 759.87%.

The regression coefficient for the perception factor in the response category ‘font-line employee of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = -0.50, \chi^2 = 0.78, p = 0.376$, indicating that the perception factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the font-line employee of employment position relative to top management. The regression coefficient for the perception factor in the response category ‘middle management of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = -0.68, \chi^2 = 1.56, p = 0.211$, indicating that the perception factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the middle management of employment position relative to top management.

Table 6.7: Multinomial Logistic Regression Table with Employment Position Predicted by Study Factors among Front-line Employees and Middle Management

Parameter Estimates

Actor Group ^a		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Front-line Employee	Intercept	-.539	1.565	.119	1	.730			
	Awareness	.422	.476	.788	1	.375	1.526	.600	3.877
	Flexibility	-.365	.500	.532	1	.466	.695	.261	1.849
	Leadership	-1.095	.501	4.777	1	.029	.334	.125	.893
	Interaction	-1.227	.515	5.682	1	.017	.293	.107	.804
	Process	3.112	.658	22.353	1	.000	22.459	6.183	81.586
	Perception	-.503	.568	.785	1	.376	.605	.199	1.840
Middle Management	Intercept	-4.824	1.605	9.035	1	.003			
	Awareness	1.187	.488	5.907	1	.015	3.276	1.258	8.532
	Flexibility	.295	.505	.341	1	.559	1.343	.499	3.611
	Leadership	-1.118	.495	5.097	1	.024	.327	.124	.863
	Interaction	-.152	.516	.087	1	.768	.859	.312	2.362
	Process	2.152	.644	11.160	1	.001	8.599	2.433	30.385
	Perception	-.681	.545	1.563	1	.211	.506	.174	1.472

- a. The reference category is: Top Management.
- b. Note. $\chi^2(12) = 175.06$, $p < .000$, McFadden $R^2 = 0.25$.

Placing the top management as a reference category, it can be seen that three factors, namely process, interaction, and leadership, have a positive effect on front-line employees as the significance values are less than 0.05. The process factor received the highest

priority as $B = 3.112$, the interaction factor received the second highest priority as $B = -1.227$, and the leadership factor received the third highest priority as $B = -1.095$. The results also revealed that the other three factors, namely perception, awareness, and flexibility, actually have a negative effect on front-line employees as their significance values were greater than 0.05. The perception factor received the fourth highest priority as $B = -0.503$, the awareness factor received the fifth highest priority as $B = 0.422$, and the flexibility factor scored the lowest priority as $B = -0.365$.

As for the middle management, it can be clearly seen that three factors, namely, process, awareness, and leadership, had a positive effect on this category as the significance values are less than 0.05. The process factor received the highest priority as $B = 2.152$, the awareness factor received the second highest priority as $B = 1.187$, and the leadership factor received the third highest priority as $B = -1.118$. The results also revealed that the other three factors, namely perception, flexibility, and interaction, have a negative effect on the middle management category as the significance values are greater than 0.05. The perception factor received the fourth highest priority as $B = -0.681$, the flexibility factor received the fifth highest priority as $B = 0.295$, and the interaction factor scored the lowest priority as $B = -0.152$.

6.4.2.2.2 Middle Management and Top Management

The comparison between middle management and top management is shown in Table 6.8 below. From the results, it can be seen that the regression coefficient for the awareness factor in the response category ‘middle management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 0.76, \chi^2 = 5.21, p = 0.022$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the awareness factor would increase the probability of observing the middle management of employment position relative to front-line employee by 114.77%. The regression coefficient for the awareness factor in the response category ‘top management of employment position’ was not significant, $B = -0.42, \chi^2 = 0.78, p = 0.375$, indicating that awareness factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the top management category of employment position relative to front-line employees.

The regression coefficient for the flexibility factor in the response category ‘middle management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 0.65, \chi^2 = 4.39, p = 0.036$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the flexibility factor would increase the probability of observing the middle management of employment position relative to front-line employees by 93.34%. The regression coefficient for the flexibility factor in the response category ‘top management of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = 0.36, \chi^2 = 0.53, p = 0.466$, indicating that the flexibility factor did not have a significant effect on the odds of observing the top management category of employment position relative to front-line employees.

The regression coefficient for the leadership factor in the response category ‘middle management of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = -0.02, \chi^2 = 0.06, p = 0.938$, indicating that the leadership factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the middle management of employment position relative to front-line employees. The regression coefficient for the leadership factor in the response category ‘top management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 1.09, \chi^2 = 4.77, p = .029$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the leadership factor would increase the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to front-line employees by 199.04%.

The regression coefficient for the interaction factor in the response category ‘middle management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 1.07, \chi^2 = 11.84, p < 0.001$, suggesting that a one unit increase in interaction factor would increase the probability of observing the middle management of employment position relative to front-line employees by 193.02%. The regression coefficient for the interaction factor in the response category ‘top management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 1.22, \chi^2 = 5.68, p = .017$, suggesting that a one unit increase in interaction factor would increase the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to front-line employees by 241.23%.

The regression coefficient for the process factor in the response category ‘middle management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = -0.96, \chi^2 = 5.22, p =$

0.022, suggesting that a one unit increase in the process factor would decrease the probability of observing the middle management of employment position relative to front-line employees by 61.71%. The regression coefficient for the process factor in the response category 'top management of employment position' was significant, as $B = -3.11, \chi^2 = 22.35, p .000$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the process factor would decrease the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to front-line employee by 95.55%.

The regression coefficient for the perception factor in the response category 'middle management of employment position' was not significant, as $B = -0.17, \chi^2 = 0.19, p = 0.660$, indicating that perception factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the middle management of employment position relative to front-line employees. The regression coefficient for the perception factor in the response category 'top management of employment position' was not significant, as $B = 0.50, \chi^2 = 0.78, p = 0.376$, indicating that perception factor did not have a significant effect on the odds of observing the top management category of employment position relative to front-line employees.

Table 6.8: Multinomial Logistic Regression Table with Employment Position Predicted by Study Factors among Middle Management and Top Management

Parameter Estimates

Actor Group ^a		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Middle Management	Intercept	-4.285	1.102	15.111	1	.000			
	Awareness	.764	.335	5.211	1	.022	2.148	1.114	4.140
	Flexibility	.659	.314	4.396	1	.036	1.933	1.044	3.581
	Leadership	-.022	.283	.006	1	.938	.978	.562	1.703
	Interaction	1.075	.312	11.843	1	.001	2.930	1.588	5.405
	Process	-.960	.420	5.221	1	.022	.383	.168	.872
	Perception	-.178	.404	.194	1	.660	.837	.379	1.849
Top Management	Intercept	.539	1.565	.119	1	.730			
	Awareness	-.422	.476	.788	1	.375	.655	.258	1.666
	Flexibility	.365	.500	.532	1	.466	1.440	.541	3.833
	Leadership	1.095	.501	4.777	1	.029	2.990	1.120	7.987
	Interaction	1.227	.515	5.682	1	.017	3.412	1.244	9.361
	Process	-3.112	.658	22.353	1	.000	.045	.012	.162
	Perception	.503	.568	.785	1	.376	1.653	.543	5.030

a. The reference category is: Front-line Employee.

b. Note. $\chi^2(12) = 175.06$, $p < .000$, McFadden $R^2 = 0.25$.

Placing the front-line employees as a reference category, it can be seen that four factors, namely interaction, process, awareness, and flexibility, have a positive effect on middle management as the associated significance values are less than 0.05. The interaction

factor received the highest priority as $B = 1.075$, the process factor received the second highest priority as $B = -0.96$, the awareness factor received the third highest priority as $B = 0.764$, and the flexibility factor received the fourth highest priority as $B = 0.659$. The results also revealed that the remaining two factors, namely perception and leadership, had a negative effect on middle management as the associated significance values are greater than 0.05. The perception factor received the fifth highest priority as $B = -0.178$, and the leadership factor scored the lowest priority as $B = -0.022$.

As for the top management, it can be clearly seen that three factors, namely process, interaction, and leadership, had a positive effect on this category as the associated significance values are less than 0.05. The process factor received the highest priority as $B = -3.112$, the interaction factor received the second highest priority as $B = 1.227$, and the leadership factor received the third highest priority as $B = 1.095$. The results also revealed that the other three factors, namely perception, awareness, and flexibility, had a negative effect on top management as the associated significance values are greater than 0.05. The perception factor received the fourth highest priority as $B = 0.503$, the awareness factor received the fifth highest priority as $B = -0.422$, and the flexibility factor scored the last priority as $B = 0.365$.

6.4.2.2.3 Front-line Employees and Top Management

The comparison between front-line employees and top management is shown in Table 6.9. From the results, it may be noticed that the regression coefficient for the awareness factor in the response category ‘front-line employee of employment position’ was significant, as $B = -0.76, \chi^2 = 5.21, p = 0.022$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the awareness factor would decrease the probability of observing the front-line employee of employment position relative to middle management by 53.44%. The regression coefficient for the awareness factor in the response category ‘top management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = -1.18, \chi^2 = 5.90, p = 0.015$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the awareness factor would decrease the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to middle management by 69.48%.

The regression coefficient for the flexibility factor in the response category ‘front-line employee of employment position’ was significant, as $B = -0.65, \chi^2 = 4.39, p = 0.036$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the flexibility factor would decrease the probability of observing the front-line employee of employment position relative to middle management by 48.28%. The regression coefficient for the flexibility factor in the response category ‘top management of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = -0.29, \chi^2 = 0.34, p = .559$, indicating that the flexibility factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to middle management.

The regression coefficient for the leadership factor in the response category ‘front-line employee of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = 0.02, \chi^2 = 0.06, p = 0.938$, indicating that the leadership factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the front-line employee of employment position relative to middle management. The regression coefficient for leadership in the response category ‘top management of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 1.11, \chi^2 = 5.09, p = 0.024$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the leadership factor would increase the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to middle management by 205.75%.

The regression coefficient for the interaction factor in the response category ‘front-line employee of employment position’ was significant, as $B = -1.07, \chi^2 = 11.84, p < 0.001$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the interaction factor would decrease the probability of observing the front-line employee of employment position relative to middle management by 65.87%. The regression coefficient for the interaction factor in the response category ‘top management of employment position’ was not significant, as $B = 0.15, \chi^2 = 0.08, p = 0.768$, indicating that the interaction factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to middle management.

The regression coefficient for the process factor in the response category ‘front-line employee of employment position’ was significant, as $B = 0.96, \chi^2 = 5.22, p =$

0.022, suggesting that a one unit increase in the process factor would increase the probability of observing the front-line employee of employment position relative to middle management by 161.19%. The regression coefficient for the process factor in the response category 'top management of employment position' was significant, as $B = -2.15, \chi^2 = 11.16, p < 0.001$, suggesting that a one unit increase in the process factor would decrease the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to middle management by 88.37%.

The regression coefficient for the perception factor in the response category 'front-line employee of employment position' was not significant, as $B = 0.17, \chi^2 = 0.19, p = 0.660$, indicating that the perception factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the front-line employee of employment position relative to middle management. The regression coefficient for the perception factor in the response category 'top management of employment position' was not significant, as $B = 0.68, \chi^2 = 1.56, p = 0.211$, indicating that the perception factor did not have a significant effect on the probability of observing the top management of employment position relative to middle management.

Table 6.9: Multinomial Logistic Regression Table with Employment Position Predicted by Study Factors among Front-line Employees and Top Management

Parameter Estimates

Actor Group ^a		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Front-line Employee	Intercept	4.285	1.102	15.111	1	.000			
	Awareness	-.764	.335	5.211	1	.022	.466	.242	.898
	Flexibility	-.659	.314	4.396	1	.036	.517	.279	.958
	Leadership	.022	.283	.006	1	.938	1.022	.587	1.781
	Interaction	-1.075	.312	11.843	1	.001	.341	.185	.630
	Process	.960	.420	5.221	1	.022	2.612	1.146	5.951
	Perception	.178	.404	.194	1	.660	1.195	.541	2.639
Top Management	Intercept	4.824	1.605	9.035	1	.003			
	Awareness	-1.187	.488	5.907	1	.015	.305	.117	.795
	Flexibility	-.295	.505	.341	1	.559	.745	.277	2.003
	Leadership	1.118	.495	5.097	1	.024	3.058	1.159	8.068
	Interaction	.152	.516	.087	1	.768	1.165	.423	3.204
	Process	-2.152	.644	11.160	1	.001	.116	.033	.411
	Perception	.681	.545	1.563	1	.211	1.975	.679	5.744

a. The reference category is: Middle Management.

b. Note. $\chi^2(12) = 175.06$, $p < .000$, McFadden $R^2 = 0.25$.

Placing the middle management as a reference category, it can be seen that four factors, namely interaction, process, awareness, and flexibility, had a positive effect on the front-line employees as the associated significance values are less than 0.05. The interaction factor received the highest priority as $B = -1.075$, the process factor received the

second highest priority as $B = 0.96$, the awareness factor received the third highest priority as $B = -0.764$, and the flexibility factor received the fourth highest priority as $B = -0.659$. The results also revealed that the remaining two factors, namely perception and leadership, had a negative effect on the front-line employees as the associated significance values are greater than 0.05. The perception factor received the fifth highest priority as $B = 0.178$, and the leadership factor scored the lowest priority as $B = 0.022$.

As for the top management, it can be clearly seen that three factors, namely process, awareness, and leadership, had a positive effect on this category as the significance values are less than 0.05. The process factor received the highest priority as $B = -2.152$, the awareness factor received the second highest priority as $B = -1.187$, and the leadership factor received the third highest priority as $B = 1.118$. The results also revealed that the remaining three factors, namely perception, flexibility, and interaction, had a negative effect on the top management category as the associated significance values are greater than 0.05. The perception factor received the fourth highest priority as $B = 0.681$, the flexibility factor received the fifth highest priority as $B = -0.295$, and the interaction factor scored the lowest priority as $B = 0.152$.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the quantitative findings of Phase-2 of this research, which was conducted through the answers to the questionnaire. The survey was guided by six major factors, namely awareness, flexibility, leadership, interaction, process, and perception, which emerged from the qualitative findings in Phase-1 of this research. The findings of Phase-2 suggested that there were significant differences between various groups of internal actors in relation to the factors tested. This was revealed through the One-Way ANOVA as this test indicated that the significance value of the study factors was $p = 0.000$, which is below the threshold value 0.05, demonstrating that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean for the studied factors between the different groups of actors.

Due to this significant difference, the Multinomial Logistic Regression test was processed to test the significant effect of each factor studied on each group of internal actors. The findings also suggest that the process design, the interaction among groups of actors, awareness of strategy, and leadership were among the most significant factors in terms of their effect on the strategy transition process, which in turn influences the strategy practice amongst actors. The next chapter will present a comprehensive discussion that links the qualitative and the quantitative findings in line with the available literature, adopted theory, and proposed framework.

Chapter 7: Discussion of Findings

7.1 Introduction

This research was conducted to provide a deep and a rich understanding of how public sector organisations effectively transit their strategies from the formulation to the implementation phase. This was carried out through examining the practices of internal actors in the strategy process. This chapter discusses the main findings of the current research that were reached in both the qualitative and quantitative studies reported in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively. An overview of the research findings is presented in section 7.2. The effect of strategic consensus among actors in influencing the strategy transition will be discussed in section 7.3 and the role of societal culture inherent through individuals will be presented in section 7.4. Section 7.5 highlights the impact of a control mechanism for the strategy transition on shaping the transition process. Having discussed the main findings of this research, it is imperative to present the model of the strategy transition process, which is indeed presented in section 7.6. Finally, the summary of this chapter is presented in section 7.7.

7.2 Overview of Research Findings

This section reports the main findings of interest to emerge from both the qualitative and the quantitative chapters (Chapters 5 and 6, respectively). In relation to the second research objective, the findings revealed that four factors, namely process design, actors' social interaction, strategic awareness, and leadership in the strategy process regulate the strategy transition process stage and its associated practices. The dynamic interaction between these factors was found to be critical in terms of its effect on the strategy practices, which in turn either enable or impede the smooth transition of organisational strategies from the formulation to the implementation phases. A summary of the factors ranking matrix is attached in the appendix list (Appendix VI).

In relation to the social interaction and leadership factors, the research revealed that social relationships between various actors could be considered to be both dynamic and complex (See sections 5.2 and 5.3). This is due to the fact that the role of actors and their behaviour is the most visible aspect of strategy practices. The complexity of actors was found to

emerge from their conflicting understanding and perceptions of the prioritisation of the strategy content. Furthermore, senior actors experienced high levels of instability in their functional positions, which in turn affected their strategy practices and related decisions. Actors' complexity was also due to their excessive reliance on social networks which impeded their functional roles in aligning the strategy content with practices during the transition process stage. Moreover, the belief of some groups of actors in strategy ownership was another reason as to why actors' social practices are apparently so complicated.

As for the first objective of this research, the findings presented have also revealed that the societal culture inherited by actors play a significant role in directing their practices within the strategy transition process stage (See Section 5.4 and 5.5). The inherent societal norms and values were found to direct the strategy practices as per customs and traditions, rather than workable rules and procedures. The raise of societal culture was found to consequently raise the informal communication networks and indirectly encourage a reliance on a limited number of individuals in transition organisational strategy. Furthermore, the contextual culture also affected the reciprocity between the various groups of actors, which in turn contributes to ineffective dynamics of the strategy transition process.

As for the third objective of this research, and in relation to the process design and strategic awareness factors, the research revealed that strategy practices are largely associated with the nature of the adopted control mechanism for the strategy transition process (See section 5.6 and 5.7). The control mechanism is considered to be a complementary part of fostering the cognitive understanding of the strategy transition process and relative actors' practices. The control mechanism was found to be ineffective due to the efficacy and mentoring of senior actors towards their subordinates, which in turn regulated the strategy choices and practices of those actors within the web of relations. Furthermore, the excessive number of non-engaged employees makes it difficult for senior actors to focus on effective strategy practices. Within the control mechanism, the research revealed that shifting to an online community enhances strategy practices, which in turn leads to a better strategy transition process. However, this step

requires simultaneously ensuring the accountability which was found to be otherwise lacking due to the strong societal culture of internal actors, as opposed to following work rules and procedures.

Drawing from the above overview of the research findings, this thesis offers an innovative analytical approach to strategy process and practice assessment. It combines a simultaneous investigation of multiple factors that affect the strategy transition process stage and the social practices of the internal actors within this particular stage. This investigation has led to a cognitive understating of the transition dynamics for the intended organisational strategies, as this raises new challenges for both the strategy process and strategy practice. One should note that this thesis makes a substantial theoretical contribution to Social Practice theory by introducing interactivity as a critical construct within the context of the theory. With this new construct, this thesis extends the discussion on the increasing importance of understating the actors' social practice within the strategy processes. The following sections will discuss each of the major findings of this research in further detail in order to explain how they relate to, extend to, or differ from the previous studies in the literature review.

7.3 Strategic Consensus among Actors

The thematic analysis presented earlier in Chapter 5 represents an attempt to capture the critical importance of the role played by the various actors in transitioning strategy to others. Based on the investigations, the roles of the relevant actors was the most critical theme among the six themes considered in the study (see Section 5.2); this may have been due to individuals' behaviour being the most visible aspect of strategy practices. The findings suggested that the roles of the various actors in the strategy transition process appear to be extremely complicated within the context of strategy practices. The focal point is not the complexity itself but the nature of this complexity in affecting the transitioning process of the strategy. The complexity was due to the lack of consensus between the actors. According to Kellermanns et al. (2005, 2011) strategic consensus can be defined as the shared understanding of the strategy content among managers at the top, middle, and/or operating levels of the organisation. Therefore, the way in which top and middle managers act has a considerable influence on how the organisational strategy is

transitioned to other staff members and subsequently implemented. This resonates with the findings of Jarzabkowski et al. (2007), who suggested that actors with different roles at organisations make divergent choices due to the various processes involved. This further suggests that a shared consensus is one of the fundamental bases in strategy practices. The study revealed that the lack of consensus among actors arose due to several reasons which are discussed below.

(1) Priority of Strategy Objectives

The influence the various actors had on the transition process was found to be due to the lack of strategic consensus among the top and middle management teams. In this research, the agreement over shared strategy between and within the two managerial levels was effectively non-existent. This was clear as top and middle managers seemed to have conflicting views over the priorities of the strategy objectives. This supports the assumption of Powell et al. (2011) who emphasised the importance of aligning both individual- and group-level cognition to allow comparisons among different groups and to further distinguish the overall fit in an organisation. The agreement over shared strategy is considered to be an integral part of any strategy transition process. The strategy consensus among the two groups of managers seemed to be subjective in nature rather than a unified process, and this in turn led to conflicting priorities. This is because top management representatives were found to have different priorities from middle managers with respect to the strategy objectives. This disagreement resulted in a major issue in terms of achieving the organisational objectives. Consequently, the lower level employees may be misled in their contributions due to the conflicting directions they received, and this may have led to the misunderstanding their assigned tasks; this was linked to the lack of effective communication between the actors. Kellermanns et al. (2008) suggested that a higher degree of strategic consensus within a group may better facilitate the communication and coordination of desired decisions and outcomes. Equally, Tarakci et al. (2014) argued that the ability to identify issues within a group can enable organisations to generate policies that encourage strategic consensus in a productive manner.

Strategies can only be transitioned if an agreement is reached between top and middle management teams, as ultimately strategy is a collaborative process that requires a consensus over the required objectives to be achieved. As explained in the literature review, strategy content is intertwined with the strategy process and practice (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006). The conflicting priorities of objectives within the organisational strategy shed light on the importance of the leadership construct that can integrate the actors' practices within the strategy process. However, the leadership spirit was not evident in this research, and therefore the conflict over the strategy content continued. From the quantitative findings in Phase-2 of this research, it was clear that leadership was a significant factor in regulating the actors' practices within the strategy transition process. This was clearly evident from Section 6.4.2.2, as the leadership factor was the one of the highest four factors affecting the various groups of actors with $B = -1.095$ for the front-line staff, $B = -1.118$ for the middle management team, and with $B = 1.095$ for the top management team.

(2) Stability in Positions

Stability in positions allows individuals to build a shared understanding of strategy content among each other within the organisation. Therefore, the stability of the various actors in their positions for a reasonable amount of time was found to be extremely important in maintaining consensus among them. The findings of this research indicated that the lack of strategic consensus among top and middle management was strongly associated with stability in positions. In other words, the high rotation rate of top and middle managers was found to be a major cause of the absence of strategic agreement between these two groups, which resulted in a negative impact on how strategy was being delivered and shared with others. Therefore, employees were left confused in terms of achieving organisational strategic objectives due to highly changeable decisions. The findings of Hancock et al. (2013) and Park and Shaw (2013) support this finding as they found that, in general, collective turnover rate can be negatively associated with unit-level outcomes. According to Hausknecht and Holwerda (2013), turnover can therefore be defined as the voluntary or involuntary separation of individuals from the unit in which they serve. Although the terms turnover and rotation rate could have counter meanings, the common concern with respect to the research findings is the low stability of top and

middle managers in their positions making it difficult for them to convey the organisational strategy in an appropriate manner. Notably, apart from the minister, the frequent change in the functional roles of the actors, specifically middle managers, is limited to within the organisational boundaries.

The role played by the top and the middle managers was critical in facilitating the strategy process and attaining the desired objectives. In general, this finding was in line with the findings of Summers et al. (2012) who argued that managers are considered to be the strategic core of the unit due to the fact that they are more central to structuring their unit's work flows, responsible for their unit's activities, and are central to their unit's network and objectives. The importance of stability is in fact related to the core function played by knowledgeable managers with respect to the unit, department, or division they manage. The relationship between low stability in positions and organisational performance tends to follow a negative trend rather than a positive one. This is further in line with the recent work of Heavey et al. (2013) and Hale et al. (2016) who viewed the consequences of functional turnover to be typically negative at the collective organisational level. Moreover, Meier and Hicklin (2008) and equally Edelenbos et al. (2013) also concluded that stability in managerial positions is positively related to performance.

The stability level in relation to strategy transition among organisational members has broad implications for public sector policy and practice. Most managers find it difficult to direct their units, and consequently achieve organisational objectives, if they are to be rotated shortly after they gain their positions. Consequently, the other unit members may need additional time to accommodate any recent turnover events. This remark is further in line with the findings highlighted by Messersmith et al. (2014) who argued that it takes time for new managers to learn the specific job functions, routines, and unit-specific skills and knowledge of their new positions; also, it takes time for mutual socialisation to take place. The rotation event may further lead managers at various levels into being disloyal in terms of effectively contributing to the organisational strategy due to their repetitive impression of being under rotation threat when pursuing their course of action.

It was also noted that instability in positions can occur due to a number of pressures outside the organisation. Therefore, the findings of this research stress that instability in this context was found to be mostly due to unplanned turnover, as in some cases a change of managers could be necessary in order to hire more qualified people that can genuinely make a positive change within the organisation. This argument is supported by the findings of O'Toole et al. (2007) who found that there was no direct negative relationship between the frequent changes in managerial positions and performance. According to his findings, new individuals could be more effective and capable than others. It is worth mentioning that strategy practices are the production of the shared norms, values, policies, and procedures which guide groups of actors towards the realisation of the organisational strategy (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Therefore, without instability of managerial positions, it would be difficult for strategy to be effectively transitioned from the formulation to implementation stages.

(3) Different Understanding of Strategy

The research has found that the absence of strategic consensus among managers within the organisation could also have been due to different understandings held regarding the strategy itself. This was found to be evident from the thematic analysis (Section 5.4) as it was revealed that conflict among actors arose from different perceptions, which led to different understandings of strategy. This idea is supported by Balogun and Johnson (2004) and Meyer (2006) who concluded that conflict among managers may arise as a natural result of different interpretations of organisational strategy. Personal conflicts were also found to be linked to the mentality of managers in directing and practicing the organisational strategy. An agreement in terms of mindsets between managers in the workplace is seen to play a critical role in transitioning strategy across different departments and units and consequently realising organisational objectives.

In Social Practice theory, Bourdieu (1990) argued that 'in the interaction between two agents or groups of agents endowed with the same habitus (say A and B), everything takes place as if the actions of each of them (say *a*₁ for A) were organised by reference to the reactions which they call forth from any agent possessing the same habitus (say *b*₁ for

B)' (p. 61). This explanation draws attention to the importance of the alignment in two actors' mindsets in order to realise effective practice within the transition process.

The findings revealed that maintaining inflexible mindset reflects the personalities and independence of managers, which may lead to employee engagement in the strategy transition process and the innovative environment being hindered. It was also noted that the lack of specialty and the age differences among managers themselves and their subordinates were also causes for the differences in individuals' mindsets in the organisation. This is also one of the explanations offered by Social Practice theory in this research as it advocates that personal behaviour plays a significant role in regulating practices.

The empirical findings also consolidate the quantitative findings explained in Chapter 7, which suggested that around 50% of employees have served in the organisation for between 11 to more than 21 years. Equally, around 80% of employees have worked under the same supervisors for different periods. From these statistics, it is obvious that managers who serve 20 years or more may find it difficult to give the 'new blood' that had been injected into the organisations the chance to express their opinions and innovative ideas. Furthermore, the different understandings of strategy between various groups of actors reflect their overall lack of strategy awareness while practicing the strategy within the strategy transition process. This is also confirmed by the quantitative findings in Phase-2 as the awareness factor had one of the highest priorities for the various actors, which in turn affects their understanding of the organisational strategy. Based on the results of the Multinomial Logistic Regression test in Section 6.4.2.2, it can be clearly seen that the awareness factor was the third highest influential factor, with $B = -0.764$ for the front-line staff, the third highest influential factor for the middle management with $B = 0.764$, and the second highest factor for the top management team with $B = -1.187$.

Within the conceptual framework of strategy-as-practice, the term 'practitioners' was intended to recognise the critical role of top and middle managers within the strategy process due to their positional power in the organisation and their initiatives towards

change (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006a; and Johnson et al., 2007). However, it was found in this research that top and middle managers generally avoid trying new initiatives as they are not willing to encounter potential risks and rather prefer to follow certain known practices. This in turn has discouraged younger managers or ‘fresh blood’ employees from sharing ideas should they happen to have a different mindset from their line managers. These findings are similar to those of Keating and Heslin (2015), who suggested that managers with fixed mindsets are unlikely to grow their mindsets with their staff when exposed to various challenges. Moreover, employees are not willing to ‘go the extra mile’ if they feel that their managers are not supportive and not acting in a reasonable manner (Heslin and van de Walle, 2011). Therefore, it can be concluded that the lack of consistency between actors’ mindsets may lead to the absence of any strategy consensus.

(4) Social Networks

The level (in terms of their nature and extent of the associated social ties) of social networks also influences the personal behaviour, practices or attitudes that affect the transition and execution of this strategy, as this research has found. The broad networks characteristic to top and middle managers play a critical role in driving strategies forward. Within the practice perspective, the strategy is viewed as a situated and socially accomplished activity (Jarzabkowski, 2005). As suggested by Ahearne et al. (2014), middle managers in particular need to leverage a diverse set of social networks including top management, colleagues at the same managerial level, front-line employees inside the organisation, and business partners outside the organisation. The abuse of social networks over functional networks affects the alignment of strategic consensus and consequently hinders the effective transition and execution of the strategy. Due to these networks and level of connections, organisational members at lower employment levels show a complete disinterest in engaging with the strategy process; rather, they venerate their line managers’ connections above all else in order to secure a healthy relationship within the working environment. Consequently, the loyalty to a particular line manager is superior to the organisational strategy. This was found to maintain high levels of personal satisfaction which may negatively affect the consensus and transition process. However, Zhang and Deng (2016) affirmed that maintaining a good subordinate-manager

relationship was found to increase job satisfaction amongst employees and which further leads to increasing the productivity of the organisation. Their findings were based on there being a healthy relationship between managers and their employees, while in this research the relationship was based on personal interest. The loyalty towards managers rather than organisational strategy confirms the assumption that the employees thought that their career benefits were better served through such practice. According to Cho et al. (2017), such behaviour may provide the impression of excellent employees to their managers in order to obtain their desired career benefits, such as promotion.

Building networks and connections is a complicated task and difficult concept within the context of the public sector as relations are found to secure individual positions to a greater extent than the applicable system. What became clearer during this research was that building networks and social interactions are embedded in the strategy practice which occurs not only on the managerial levels but also the lower employment levels that believe in such networks rather than the system. Managers with strong relation ties and social networks are even seen to be good leaders by their subordinates. This is similar to the conclusion of Chiu et al. (2017), which suggests that managers' high social power, as triggered by their networks, enhances perceived leadership qualities in the eyes of their subordinates. By contrast, managers who are avoided by subordinates lack informal social power and further are not perceived as leaders. Equally, Anderson (2008) found that the characteristics of social networks affect information exchange among actors, and this effect is stronger for those managers who are willing to benefit from such networks. Furthermore, public sector managerial positions are seen to serve the mutual interest with other managers inside and outside the organisation. This idea was further considered by Rogan and Mors (2017), who argued that managers who mostly invest individual resources in their relationships are exposed to a greater diversity of information, have a greater autonomy within the organisations in which they serve, and their contacts are more willing to provide resources in return. Therefore, social relations force top and middle managers to drift from organisational strategy, which in turn results in a lack of strategic consensus. Consequently, front-line employees tend to pay greater attention to those with which they will work, rather than the nature of the work itself.

(5) Belief in Strategy Ownership

The lack of strategic consensus among actors was also related to the actors' ownership of strategy. This ownership in turn leaves other groups of actors either unaware, or at best aware to only a limited extent, of the strategy. Consequently, a lack of consensus creates asymmetry in the information held among groups of actors. The findings of this research revealed that top managers have a strong passion for the organisational strategy and its ownership. The belief in strategy ownership negatively affects the effective transition of strategy. Social Practice theory provides an explanation for such behaviour and practice in that the strategic outcomes of organisations are a normal reflection of the values and perceptions of the various actors within organisations (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990). This research found that it is not only top managers that have such values and perceptions, but further that middle managers may have even more influential values and perceptions than top managers. Although strategy practices were seen purely as a senior management task, whom are believed to be the strategy practitioners as proposed by some researchers (i.e., Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007), those same researchers have encouraged the exploration of strategy practices beyond the senior management with particular emphasis on micro-level practices (Johnson et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

This research revealed that specific guidelines as to strategy are owned and shared among top management team only, while general guidelines were transitioned to middle managers who were required to explain it to their employees. Top management saw themselves as strategy formulators, whereas middle managers and front-line staff were responsible for strategy implementation. Middle managers and their employees were left unaware of the majority of technical details related to the work they needed to perform. It seems to be that performing all organisational activities within one managerial level is somewhat unrealistic. As suggested by Rigby et al. (2002), senior managers often do not understand what they are implementing, which is due to their assumption that they know the entire strategy process. The findings further highlighted the need for top managers to share strategy details with other groups of actors.

Strategy ownership, as revealed in this research, does not mean the complete ignorance of strategy sharing within the transition process; however, the details of strategy transition

were found to be reserved to the top management team. This means the various groups of actors have access to different levels of information, which prevents them from building proper consensus and promoting effective change. The need for the engagement of different actors in order to effect strategic change was also highlighted in the findings of Kash et al. (2014). The top management team needs to be more responsible and effective in terms of strategy transition to individuals, and middle managers in particular.

Since the majority of organisational strategy remains concealed, middle managers were found to be reluctant to direct their subordinates accordingly and consequently fulfil organisational expectations. Middle managers need to be effectively engaged in the strategy transition process, both vertically and horizontally. The findings are similar to that of Solaja et al. (2016) who found that middle managers do indeed play a critical role at all stages of managing the strategic process for the organisation. Equally, Ukil and Akkas (2017) found a positive impact due to middle management involvement in strategic change, and by this involvement top management team would be in a better position to bridge the information gap experienced by front-line staff.

Strategy ownership in this research was not related to the level of actors' engagement, but rather with top management practice where they promote themselves as key players in transitioning the strategy within the organisation. Giddens (1984) explained such practice by advocating the idea of 'what actors practice, are events which would not have happened if those actors had behaved differently, but which are not within the scope of the agent's power to have brought about' (p. 11). Drawing from this, the findings confirm that maintaining a strategic consensus among actors between and within the same managerial level is crucial in determining the conceptualisation of the strategy transition process. Consequently, shared understanding should be considered to be a social practice which cannot be isolated from the actors' interactions.

7.4 Societal Culture of Actors

The findings of this research have revealed that the societal culture inherited by actors plays a significant role in directing their practices within the strategy transition process. It was evident from Section 5.3 that societal culture is embedded in individuals' social

practice. What appears interesting in this finding is how the inherent societal norms and values shape the interaction of groups of actors amongst each other. As suggested in the literature review, the strategy process and practice perspective has provided a social as well as organisational alternative to conventional perspectives on strategic management (Whittington, 2007; Floyd et al., 2011; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Social Practice theory helps us to draw an explanation for such connections between societal values and individuals' practices. Giddens (1984), for instance, stressed the difficulty with promoting change due to the interconnectivity between individuals' practices and their wider social systems, which are inseparable. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1990) asserted that 'the practical world of individuals that is constituted in the relationship with the habitus, is a world of already realised end – procedures to follow, paths to take' (p. 53).

The importance of societal culture was found not only to guide the actors' practices, but also the way in which they exchange information and knowledge. In the quantitative part of the thesis (see Chapter 6), societal culture in relation to strategy engagement is also reflected in two factors, namely the process and the interaction. These factors were indeed among the top four factors found to have a significant effect on strategy transition among groups of actors. The societal culture forms the way in which actors communicate strategy amongst each other. As argued by Keller (2001), communication is important for actors to understand their tasks, share goals and values, and also to achieve organisational objectives. Communication between actors was also critical in the implementation phase (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000; Heide et al., 2002; Taslak, 2004; Sorooshian et al., 2010; Gębczyńska, 2016; Katsuhiko, 2017). The study revealed that the influence of societal culture on actors' practices in the strategy transition process caused by a number of reasons, which are discussed below.

(1) Informal Communication Networks

The societal culture effect was obvious in relation to the strategy transition among actors and their communication. Interviewees' responses revealed a clear segregation among actors (top and middle management groups) in terms of strategy transition. This segregation has led to the formation of alternative, informal transition routes for information exchange between organisation members (e.g., rumours, gossip, etc.).

Strategy transition seems to occur through social networks rather than formal channels as shown in section 5.3. Social networks might divert the transitioned strategy from its ultimate aim. This finding is also echoes the findings reported by Siciliano (2015) that suggest that informal networks within public sector organisations, in particular, deserve attention from managers as this may affect organisational strategy.

The existence of social networks is a natural result of social practices among individuals. However, in this research the dependency on such networks was found to be due to vertical communication being the only available route for strategy transition. This unidirectional route of strategy transition left a large number of employees unaware of the organisational strategy as they only followed the instructions they were given in performing their tasks. Top managers were found to assume that groups of actors were effectively communicating. However, middle managers were found to misinterpret, or otherwise not fully understand, the strategy as communicated by top managers. Consequently, this lack of understanding can be seen to significantly affect front-line employees' roles. This finding is in line with that of Katsuhiko (2017), who argued that it is possible for top managers to believe that organisational values, goals, and strategic objectives are being properly communicated, while other organisational members may not see this communication in the same way.

Top managers did not seem to accept the idea of bottom-up communication, i.e., feedback, from their employees. One fundamental reason for communication following a vertical direction was top managers' belief that they were the only people capable of initiating the strategies formulated in order for them to be implemented by low level employees. This is also in line with the argument made by Falkheimer et al. (2017) who affirmed that previous studies paid exclusive attention to how managers communicate, as this practice could lead to a bias in the understanding of strategy. The communication between actors which reflects the process factor was one of the most significant in terms of its effect on strategy practices within the strategy transition process. For instance, the quantitative findings discussed in Chapter 6 suggested that the process factor was the second-most influential factor for front-line employees with $B = 0.96$ and the middle

management team with $B = -0.96$, whilst it was the most influential factor for the top management team with $B = -3.112$.

The majority of actors who participated in the semi-structured interviews expressed both the importance of being involved in the communication process and having the ability to express their opinions. With the exception of the top management team, organisational members do not take any significant part in discussing the organisational strategic objectives. The role of those members was seen in the strategy transition process as one of strategy transferors, rather than facilitators or partners. Therefore, a large number of employees were in fact unaware of the communicated objectives. Communicating strategy in this case was considered to be solely the responsibility of top managers, whilst the rest of employees remained effectively ignorant in this regard. In fact, employees outside top management were considered purely to be strategy receivers. This was found to be contrary to the views of Falkheimer and Heide (2014a) who considered the practice of strategic communication to involve diverse organisational actors including managers, leaders, and co-workers, who should all act and communicate strategically. The exclusion of middle management and front-line staff from the decision-making and transition processes reveals that technical opinions had not been effectively considered. Both middle managers and front line staff could perform tasks without necessarily being aware of the ultimate strategic objectives. This research found that mutual communication was seen to increase internal tension among the various groups of actors. However, encouraging two-way communication was mentioned by Morrison (2014), who argued that top management needs to be open to other voices to make employees feel confident in the sense of being able to speak to their line managers (for example, to comment on certain issues, provide their opinions, etc.) without fear of recrimination.

(2) Reciprocity among Internal Actors

Actors' societal culture seems to affect the extent to which organisational members trust each other. The low reciprocity among top and middle management, as well as among members of the same managerial levels, was found to hinder the effective flow of strategy information. Therefore, transiting organisational strategy and implementing objectives

becomes very difficult. The findings suggested that low reciprocity does not please individuals, and this in turn has a negative effect on their performance in the strategy transition process. Consequently, this discourages them from achieving their organisational strategy objectives. One major outcome to arise from this research is that managers might not share strategy due to underestimating their subordinates' capabilities. This in turn has led these subordinates to seek information from horizontal networks, rather than vertical channels, due to the fact that communicating strategy depends mostly on individuals rather than on clear instructions. Moreover, these findings are supported by the work of Siciliano (2015), who suggested that in any possible network, advice between two particular actors depends mainly on the characteristics of each actor and on the social structure surrounding them, and further that employees tend to rely on peers within the same job level for advice, rather than referring to their superiors. The notion of individuals' behaviour influencing strategy practices was also explained by Social Practice theory (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1990). The lack of reciprocity was clearly present at the work-level, as two senior management levels were found not to be sharing work-related information. This was contrary to the view of Vilà and Canales (2008), who argued that strategy practices should reflect the collaborative and interactive nature of the various actors.

The lack of formal reciprocity among top and middle managers and their subordinates was found to create adverse behaviour towards the strategy transition process. This is because actors depend on their past experience while interacting with others. In understanding the logic of such practice, Bourdieu (1990) stressed that the 'habitus of individuals ensures active presence of past experiences which are deposited in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formula rules and explicit norms' (p. 54). However, the findings of this research contradict those of Detert and Trevino (2010), who argued that a formal system is not effective and can unintentionally force employees to become even more defensive. According to their view, employees prefer flexibility when interacting with each other, while this research found that flexibility does not necessarily promote mutual reciprocity between actors. Therefore, both top and middle managers need to adopt a policy of mutual reciprocity, between each

other and with front-line employees. The lack of reciprocity through formal networks will merely result in additional time being required to effectively transit strategies. This is in line with the findings of Katsuhiko (2017), who suggested that more time has to be spent by top management informally communicating with organisational members so as to encourage information exchange.

(3) Background and Characteristics of Actors

The cultural background and characteristics of actors were also reflected through their practices within the strategy transition process. For instance, some of the top and middle managers who participated in this research adopted an open-minded policy and embraced all employees in their sector, regardless of their employment status or cultural background. On the other hand, other managers followed a highly restrictive policy when transitioning strategy-related information. Therefore, some of the actors across the various groups were less involved in the strategy transition process than others. These managers were found to rely on expatriates for work-related issues due to their efficiency, and consequently strategy was transited to, and shared with, foreign workers to a greater extent than it was to nationals, as they considered expatriates to be key players in the strategy transition process due to them playing a more crucial role in driving strategies forward than national employees. This further confirms the findings of Shimoda (2013), who concluded that although expatriates and host national employees are key to successful activities within organisations, the latter are often seen merely as backseat players. Hence, the tendency for expatriates to communicate strategy with national employees was found to be limited due to their belief in knowledge ownership and the general distrust among the two parties.

The distrust among the two groups of actors, that hinders effective transition of the organisational strategy through effective 'hoarding' of information was found to be due to past experience that one group has had with another. Bourdieu (1990) explained this form of practice by arguing that 'the structures characterising a determinant class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the habitus, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences' (p. 54). This

explanation draws attention to the necessity for teamwork among the various groups of actors as based on a public service ethos rather than personal, and selfish, interests.

The unbalanced practice enacted by the managers with regards to the expatriates and the national manpower makes it difficult for researchers to entirely understand the way in which they communicate and construct their relationships. This view is echoed by Shimoda (2013), who argued that the different socio-cultural backgrounds perceived by expatriates and host national employees play a critical role in brokering information between the two sides. Given the differences in these backgrounds and perceptions, foreign workers feel threatened by host national staff, the flow of strategy and information is thus further complicated. This is echoed by Obembe (2010), who argued that the past perceptions of individual actors may determine their predisposition to engaging in knowledge-sharing practices. Maintaining a unified understanding of acceptable social practice through the building of mutual trust between both parties is crucial to effective information exchange within the strategy transition process. These findings are similar to those of Holste and Fields (2010) and Buvik and Tvedt (2017), who each found that trust is a significant predictor of the extent to which knowledge sharing among individuals will be effective. The expatriates' attitude is a good indicator as to why strategy exchange is adversely affected. This is further in line with the conclusions drawn by Weick et al. (2005), who found that communication is not only about the skills that organisation members have, but also about group and intergroup dynamics.

Therefore, the findings confirm that the socio-cultural background inherited by the actors is vital to enabling an effective strategy transition process across the various groups of actors. Consequently, the social cultures of the various individuals and their daily practices should be carefully considered when transitioning organisational strategies.

7.5 Readdressing the Mechanism of Strategy Transition

Another major finding in this research was that there was a clear link between the control mechanism adopted for the strategy transition and actors' practices during the strategy transition process. Based on the qualitative responses in Section 5.6, it was revealed that the way in which the organisations control their strategy process shapes the actors'

practices within the transition of strategy. The control mechanism is one of the strategy-making process stages, as discussed in the literature review, and is also considered to be a complementary means of facilitating and understanding how the organisational strategy is shared among groups of actors.

According to Shen et al. (2017), the control mechanism refers to the managers' utilisation of long-term objectives and the criteria by which they assess their practice and as the organisation's performance. However, in this research, it was revealed that such objectives and criteria are barely used to realise the organisational strategy. The absence of a clear control mechanism was found to affect the flow of strategy-related information among the groups of actors. This situation has led to the majority of employees being unaware of the organisational strategy. As a result, departments and units have created their own such mechanisms. Therefore, the sharing of strategy understanding among the groups of actors is almost non-existent in terms of organisational strategy. This confirms the argument of Rapert et al. (2002), which suggests that organisations need to create the suitable atmosphere to encourage the exchange of strategy information and knowledge in order to achieve consistency among organisational members. The effects of a control mechanism on the transition of strategy are explained below.

(1) Managers' Self-Efficacy

The self-efficacy of top and middle managers has an interesting effect on the strategy transition control mechanism. Controlling the transitioning process is not necessarily related to the frameworks that organise work relations and strategy practices; it is rather about the choices and practices of actors within the web of relations. These behaviours within this structure result in the hoarding of information pertaining to the effective strategy transition. Individuals' behaviour towards strategy practice can be attributed to their own personal characteristics within this structure. The empirical findings revealed that the development of employees' understanding of organisational strategy is their line managers' responsibility. Strategy transition is closely linked to the perceptions, skills, and characteristics of top and middle managers in terms of brokering the strategy and the information exchange process.

Empirical findings showed that top and middle managers may think what they know to be a source of advantage and superiority, which makes them fear losing this over the time if this information were to be freely shared with others. Equally, the strategy content and process were also seen as a main source of reference and expertise, when needed. Having such perception leads managers to deliberately act in a manner contrary to the guidelines of the organisation. This practice would not exist if an effective control mechanism was in place to ensure the effective transition of strategy among groups of actors. This practice reveals the self-efficacy of the managers responsible for facilitating the transition process. The finding is also backed up by the work of Fast et al. (2014), who found that managers with low managerial self-efficacy feel personally threatened by their subordinates' opinions and therefore react defensively.

Actors' perceptions, which form their practices within the strategy transition, seems to be imbedded within the applicable structure of their organisations. Giddens, and equally Bourdieu, provide a possible explanation for such practice. For instance, Giddens (1984) suggested that 'structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling... analysing the structuration of social systems means studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors' (p. 25). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1990) argued that 'the generated practices are mutually intelligible and immediately adjusted to the structures, and also objectively concerted and endowed with an objective meaning that is at once unitary and systematic, transcending subjective intentions and conscious projects, whether individual or collective' (p. 58).

Managers' self-efficacy was also reflected in the way they articulate their strategy practices with each other and with their subordinates. It was therefore clear from the statistical results in Chapter 6 that the process, interaction, awareness, and leadership factors were among the most significant factors affecting actors' strategy practices within the strategy transition process. These factors reflect both the personal characteristics of top and middle managers in terms of social practice and the strategy practice itself within the organisation. Drawing from this finding, the relationship between the actors' perceptions and the structure of the organisation can be clearly seen. This relationship is

directed by the adopted control mechanism in terms of managing the strategy transition, which in turn requires considerable attention from top and middle managers to be effective.

(2) Utilisation of Human Resources

Non-engaged employees, who are referred to in Arabic as '*Al-Batala Al-Muqanna'a*', was found as one of the main reasons for the lack of an effective strategy transition control mechanism. The excessive number of employees was found to hinder the ability of top and middle managers to focus on strategy transition itself. In general, the managers' role is to provide macro-directions for daily work by focussing on organisational strategies and enhancing the quality of information exchange among groups of actors. However, this research found that top and middle managers spend a great deal of time dealing with the various issues related to non-engaged employees, resulting in less time being allocated to the strategy transition process. The majority of non-engaged employees were found to be unwilling to learn or share organisational strategy due to having qualifications, experience, and specialisation that was irrelevant to their actual job.

The empirical findings also revealed that top and middle managers found it difficult to control non-engaged employees who do not have the self-motivation to learn new initiatives or to take part in the strategy transition process. The findings are similar to those of Chaudhary et al. (2013), who found that adaptability of self-efficacy is crucial in distinguishing engaged employees from the non-engaged, although the excessive number of non-engaged employees is an imposed policy and thus beyond the organisations control. Top and middle managers need to have the ability to be able to object to this kind of policy, as imposed by government. This is echoed by the recent work of Sarpong and Maclean (2014), who concluded that managers need to be actively engaged in micro-level practices within organisations by encouraging a flexible mechanism between organisational members that can enhance, or achieve, better strategy practices and processes. Equally, strategy would be more aligned if more corporate or functional actors were engaged in the strategy process. The notion of engaging various actors in driving strategy forward has also been noted by Friesl and Kwon (2016).

(3) Technological Interaction

The research also revealed that the absence of an electronic archive and online information exchange among various groups of actors also contributed to the lack of mechanism to the strategy transition. This lack of documented practice has delayed the actors, middle managers in particular, in acting strategically and being able to easily exchange information with their subordinates. Furthermore, it hinders them from aligning the strategy transition backward with their top managers. Middle managers, along with their employees, may continue performing operational duties which may inadvertently diverge from the intended organisational strategy. Interestingly, empirical findings have revealed that top managers showed considerable resistance to technology-aided strategy transfer as a reflection of their perceived ownership of the organisational strategy. Some middle managers were also found to prefer face-to-face, as opposed to online, communication.

Shifting to online community was found to form a basis for the strategy practiced by top and middle managers which in turn can enhance the strategy transition process. This is in line with the findings of Espinosa et al. (2015), who emphasised the importance of interactive communication to bridge the gap between managers and their employees. Interaction through technology is also considered part of the strategy practices of various actors (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

Having an ineffective communication system that is not regularly documented and shared across actors' groups can create a barrier to actors being involved in the strategy formulation, transition, or implementation processes. This practice could in turn exclude certain actors from the decision process whose opinions might well be of importance to an effective strategy transition. The findings of this research shed light on the importance of making online communication available to internal actors. This is similar to the findings of Kirkman et al. (2012), who argued that the growth in information and communication has increasingly led to the shift towards the use electronic communication, rather than the face-to-face approach, as a means of interacting at work. Hill et al. (2014) also found a positive relationship between adopting electronic

communication and actors' satisfaction, commitment to their organisations, and general job performance.

Although the findings of this research support the use of online communication to ensure a better strategy transition, Butts et al. (2015) found that staying electronically connected can have negative consequences in the sense of an increased work-nonwork conflict in terms of duties among actors. They argued that employees might become distracted with other non-work-related issues (i.e., personal work), which affects the quality of the work itself. Looking at the flip side of the picture, their argument draws attention to the importance of adopting an effective control mechanism to direct actors' practices. Therefore, even with the negative consequences associated with online communication, there is a necessity to engage every organisational member in the strategy transition process and ensuring an effective control mechanism is in place.

The quantitative analysis in Phase-2 also revealed that the interaction factor was perceived to be within the four most influential factors on actors' practices within the strategy transition process. The analysis in Section 6.4.2.2 revealed that the interaction factor was perceived as the most influential factor for front-line staff and middle management with $B = -1.075$ and $B = 1.075$, respectively; for the top management team, the interaction factor was the second-most influential factor with $B = 1.227$.

(4) Accountability of Actors

The fourth issue that contributes to the lack of control mechanism was the lack of accountability with regards to actors' practices. Although it has been established that accountability should be practiced according to work rules and procedures, it was found that accountability in this research was practiced according to the societal culture of internal actors. To clarify, actors are normally not held accountable due to cultural pressure, norms, and obligations of society, which allows these actors greater freedom in terms of practicing strategy according to their personal judgement rather than rules and procedures. Therefore, accountability was based on soft human elements that constitute feelings rather than the clear hard elements that constitute rules and procedures. As Bourdieu (1990) stated 'each individual system of dispositions is a structural variant of

the others, expressing the singularity of its position within the class and its trajectory' (p. 60). This research found that top and middle managers might delay the strategy transition process if accountability is not seriously applied.

The empirical findings also revealed that the lack any serious accountability was due to unclear policy and procedural guidelines within organisations. This lack of clarity allows top and middle managers to find 'fertile ground' in which to create their own guidelines, namely ones that best fit their personal, as well as their departments', interests, though ultimately these may not fit organisational strategy. Predetermined and agreed guidelines are intended to form the basis of social order among organisational members. In the circumstances described above, however, the realisation of organisational objectives was difficult to recognise. The absence of effective accountability has resulted in mismanagement of actors' practices within the transition process. One possible explanation is that the strategy process tends to be unstructured, and therefore managers in both top and middle management levels must be cooperative when addressing the heterogeneous interactions of employees.

Furthermore, the research revealed that both top and middle managers in public sector organisations are lenient in terms of enforcing accountability. There was no clear evidence of an effective basis by which ensure accountability among internal actors. Due to the societal culture and mutual favour among managers both inside and outside the organisation, managers were found to be relatively soft in enforcing each other's accountability. Managers were found to face cultural embarrassment and shame if certain practices were followed. Paying serious attention to the culture and the web of social relations was found to undermine the application of rules and procedures as instructed. Managers should take the initiative in ensuring accountability, regardless of the cultural consequences, for effective transition to occur. This initiative is also reflected in the idea of managers being good leaders. The quantitative results also showed that effective leadership was among the most important of the dimensions that can have a significant effect on the strategy transition process among groups of actors (see Chapter 6).

7.6 Model of the Strategy Transition Process

Based on the literature review chapter and the discussion in this chapter, a new model can be presented to explain the dynamics of the strategy transition process (Figure 7.1). The model presented introduced in a block diagram to provide a clear understanding of the strategy practices undertaken by various groups of internal actors, namely the top management team, middle management team, and front-line employees within the strategy transition process, and the factors they might encounter. Furthermore, it presents the relationship internal actors have with the various stages of strategy and, consequently, the factors that affect the actors' practices within the strategy transition process.

In relation to the context of this research, the model is required to improve the strategy practice undertaken by actors within the strategy transition process. The new model has been developed based on the qualitative and the quantitative findings of this research. It also reflects the views of actors as to what affects the effective transitioning of strategies from the formulation to the implementation phase. With regards to the positional power of the top management team, it is expected that such individuals take the initiative in raising strategy awareness in both middle managers and front-line employees to ensure a better transition. This awareness can be raised through involving both groups of subordinate actors in the formulation stage, consequently ensuring that their future collaboration in the transition process. It was also asserted that the role of the top management team is limited to strategy formulation where the relationship towards the strategy transition process and the strategy implementation stage is unclear. However, the top management team should communicate the organisational strategies in the form of instructions, revealing their passive role in the strategy transition process. This clarification should help to address the first objective and question presented in Sections 1.3 and 1.4, respectively.

Middle managers, on the other hand, were clearly participating in the strategy transition process, though in a passive role rather than an active one. Moreover, the research found that their role was critical to the proper implementation of the strategies. Although they participate in these two stages, middle managers need to be effectively engaged in the formulation process to a greater extent than other stages. This was seen to be vital as their

role is one of being strategy mediators, which in turn requires high levels of interaction both vertically with the top management team and their subordinates, and horizontally with their colleagues at the same managerial level. It is expected that middle managers perform their role as expected without necessarily relying more on one stage than another, as their interactive role will enhance strategy practices within the transition process. It is due their passive role in the formulation process that middle management are inefficient in directing their front-line employees towards what they consider to be acceptable practice. This explanation also provides an answer to the first objective and question of this research.

As for front-line employees, they perform their daily duties as per instructions from their line managers. Their performance in this regard is perceived as the implementation of organisational strategy. It was also evident that their role is mainly active in the implementation stage of strategy. The findings in this research also revealed that their role is unclear in both the formulation stage of the strategy and in the strategy transition process. Furthermore, the relationship between front-line employees and their managers was also unclear in terms of the collaboration required between them during the strategy transition process. Transitioning was found to be a unidirectional, from higher positional power to lower.

The block diagram also represents the factors that affect the various actors' strategy practices within the strategy transition process. The factors are the process as the most influential factor, interaction as the second-most influential factor, awareness factor as the third-most influential factor, and leadership as the least influential factor affecting the transition process. These factors in turn typify the dynamics observed for the transition process among organisations' internal actors. Based on the statistical results presented in Section 6.4.2.2, the block diagram also provides an answer to the second and third objectives, as paired with their respective second and third research questions, presented in Sections 1.3 and 1.4, respectively.

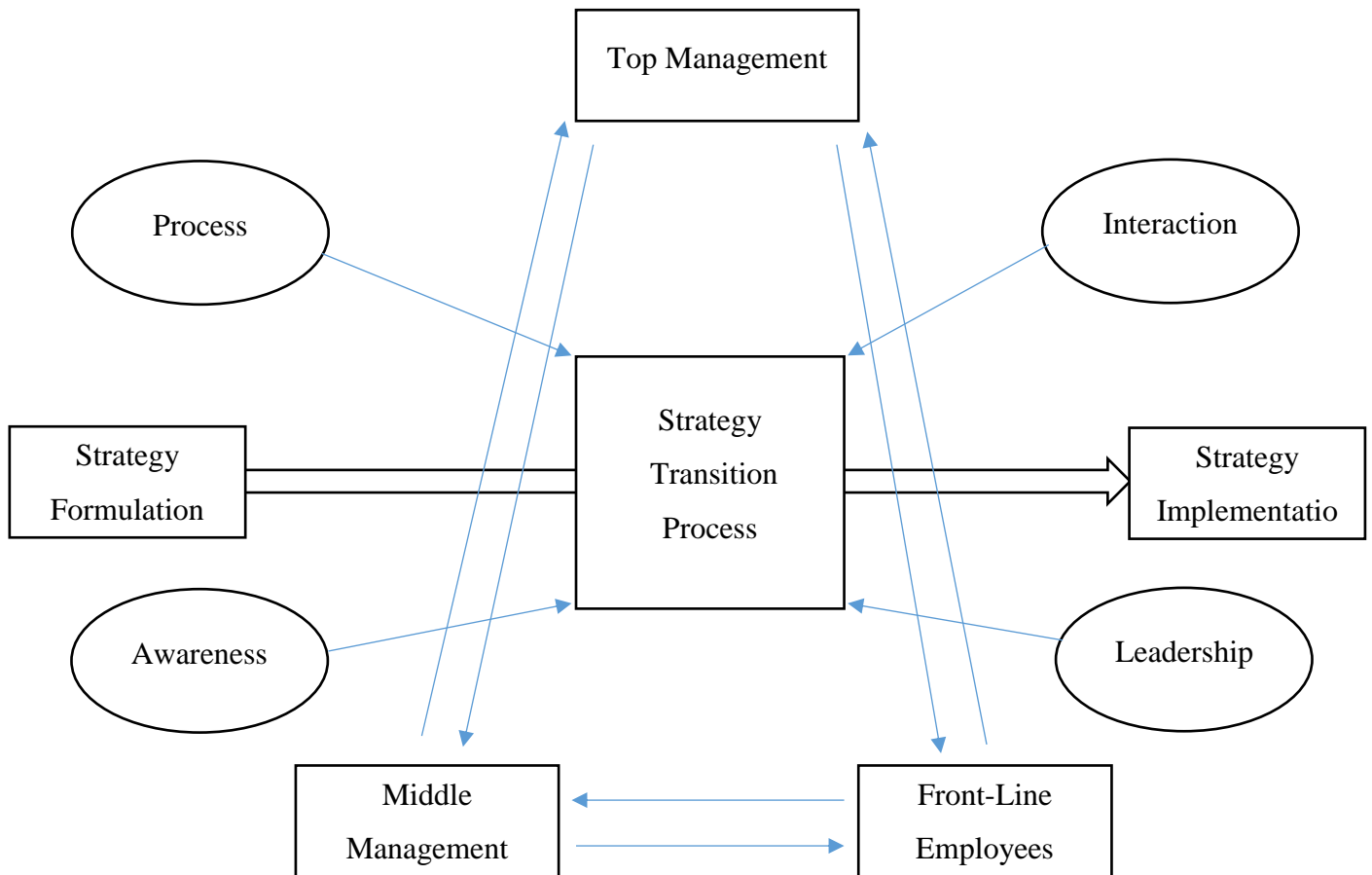


Figure 7.1: Model of the Strategy Transition Process

7.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the three main findings to emerge from the previous two chapters, namely the qualitative and quantitative analyses presented in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively. The findings were discussed in line with the available literature review and adopted theory. In some cases, the major findings were found to confirm the findings of earlier literature studies as well as more recent studies in the field, while in other cases these findings shed light on some of the aspects discussed in the literature review chapter (Chapter 2). The discussion showed that the relationships between groups of actors are complicated, and are affected by the societal culture of individuals.

The perceptions of the interviewees were consistent with Social Practice theory which provides an explanation of how strategy is practiced among groups of actors within the

transition process. The findings suggest that the consensus between top and middle managers' actions and strategy practices play a significant role in the strategy transition process itself. The findings also revealed that the societal culture that individuals have inherited have a significant effect on how they interact within the transitioning process of the strategy. The findings also suggested the importance of a control mechanism element in shaping the strategy transition process, and that process design, interaction among actors, awareness of strategy, and leadership in strategy were among the most important elements on the strategy transition among groups of actors.

Furthermore, the research findings revealed the main obstacles to an effective strategy transition process. These obstacles are the stability of strategy-actors in their positions, level of delegation, encouraging formal and informal communication, boosting reciprocity among individuals, lack of public service ethos, intervention of individuals' networks, ownership of knowledge, lack of self-efficacy, lack of technology, weak mentoring and accountability, abuse of personal power over positional power, non-engaged employees '*Al-Batala Al-Muqannaa*', ambiguity in allocating roles and responsibilities, reliance on expatriates against national manpower, and the lack of a reward system.

To summarise, this chapter provided answers to the proposed research questions, therefore fulfilling the respective objectives (See Chapter 1). Furthermore, the chapter shed light on the contributions made by groups of actors in transitioning organisational strategy between its various stages. Moreover, the chapter revealed the factors that can contribute to the dynamics of the strategy transition process and illustrating them in a representation model.

Chapter 8: Summary and Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This study has considered an understanding the strategy transition process and actors' practices during this process. The primary aim of this study was to explore how organisations effectively transit their strategies from the formulation to the implementation phase among various groups of internal actors. The research was conducted on public sector organisations in Kuwait and was further guided by Social Practice theory in order to achieve the research objectives and to provide clear answers for the research questions presented in sections 1.3 and 1.4.

A pragmatic approach was employed in this study, including the use of two phases for data collection. The primary data was obtained through Phase-1 in which 27 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the staff of one organisation. This is followed by Phase-2 in which a survey of 381 questionnaires were collected from five study organisations. The findings of this study provided evidence as to the relationships among social actors' characteristics and their social practice of organisational strategy transition, and further the effect of these practices on this transition.

Thus, in order to summarise the research journey, this chapter introduces a summary of the main research findings in section 8.2 and the contribution this thesis makes to knowledge in section 8.3. Section 8.4 discusses limitations to this research, followed by a discussion of scope for future research in section 8.5. The recommendations of the study are reported in section 8.6. Finally, the chapter summary is presented in section 8.7, followed by the epilogue in section 8.8.

8.2 Summary of Main Research Findings

The results of this study were reported in two main chapters of this thesis (Chapters 5 and 6) and followed by a discussion of these findings in chapter 7. The findings of this research showed that relationship between internal actors groups is a dynamic and a complicated one. This complexity was found to be critical as it represents the contextual actors' practices which in turn either enable or impede the smooth transition of

organisational strategies. It also regulates actors' roles due to the fact that individuals' behaviours are the most visible aspect of strategy practices. The complexity of actors' social practices emerged from their conflicting perceptions with regards to the strategy content. Furthermore, instability in positions was found to affect the functional positions of internal actors, which in turn affected their strategy practices and related decisions. Moreover, relying on social networks over the functional networks was found to negatively contribute to the alignment of the strategy content, therefore impeding effective strategy practice during the transition process stage. Also, a belief in strategy ownership was found to be the main reason why actors' social practices are considered to be complicated.

The findings of this research also revealed that the societal culture inherited by actors play a significant role in directing their practices within the strategy transition process stage. This was found to guide the actors' practices as well as how they exchange information and knowledge. The societal culture of actors was also found to be a reason for emerging informal communication networks among them. The research also revealed that the level of reciprocity among the various groups of actors controls their behaviour within the strategy transition process. Additionally, the cultural background and characteristics of actors shapes their strategy practices and information sharing, which in turn contributes to the dynamics of strategy transition.

This research also indicates that strategy practice is largely associated with the adopted control mechanism of the strategy transition. The control mechanism is considered to be a complementary part in fostering the cognitive understanding of the strategy transition process and related actors' practices. A number of reasons were found to direct the control mechanism of strategy transition and actors' practices. For instance, the self-efficacy of influential actors was found to regulate their strategic choices and practices within the web of relations. Moreover, non-engaged employees within organisations were found to derail, to some degree, effective strategy practices. The findings of this research also revealed that shifting to online community forms one of the bases of the strategy practices, and consequently adds to the dynamics of the strategy transition process stage. Furthermore, the research revealed that accountability could be ineffective due to the

strong societal culture of internal actors, which in turn contributes to the lack of control mechanism for the transition process.

The findings also revealed the factors that have direct influences on the strategy transition process stage and the adopted strategy practices. These factors were process design, actors' social interactions, strategic awareness, and the leadership spirit in the strategy process. Furthermore, the identified factors were found to typify the dynamics observed for the transition process among organisations' internal actors. The findings of this research have implications for actors' practices in terms of their engagement in the strategy transition process. It has been revealed that effective strategy practices could facilitate the transition process and improve strategy sharing among groups of actors. The results of this research emphasise the importance of actors' interactions, as perceived from their social practice context.

In chapter 7, a discussion of the findings were reported in line with available literature and adopted theory (the Social Practice), and the framework designed in this research. It was understood that that dynamics of the strategy transition process are rooted in the various critical issues that need to be carefully considered by actors. Furthermore, the results obtained from both qualitative and quantitative studies showed that there are a large number of challenges that face organisations while transitioning their strategies as stated above. Based on these results, a clear connection between the findings and the research questions and objectives was made.

8.3 Contribution of the Thesis to Knowledge

Strategy process is vital for organisations' operation and continuity. Research efforts have been emplaced to understand the dynamics of strategy stages, namely formulation, implementation, evaluation, and control. However, these stages were treated as being mutually exclusive; therefore, how strategy transitioning occurs across them still remains unexplored. Furthermore, in exploring the dynamics of each strategy stage, research efforts tend to focus on purely on single actor groups, either the top management team, middle management team, or front-line employees. However, how the interactions and practices among groups of internal actors collectively enact the strategy process still

needs further research. Drawing from this brief, this research was undertaken to investigate how these groups of actors interact with each other and how this affects the strategy transition process. Therefore, this research was conducted in public sector organisations to study their strategy transition processes from formulation to implementation phase across various groups of internal actors. This investigation was based on one theory, namely Social Practice theory.

Having conducted this study and revealing its various findings, it can be stated that this thesis offers an innovative analytical approach through the simultaneous investigation of the multiple factors that might affect the strategy transition process stage and the social practices of the internal actors within this particular stage. These factors are the process design, the actors' social interactions, the strategic awareness, and the leadership spirit within the strategy process. Furthermore, this investigation leads to a cognitive understating of the transition dynamics for intended organisational strategies as this raises new challenges for both the strategy process and the strategy practice. Therefore, this thesis made a substantial theoretical contribution to Social Practice theory by introducing the interactivity as a critical construct within the context of the theory. With this new construct, this thesis extends the already extensive discussion on the increasing importance of understating the actors' social practices within the strategy processes. One this note, several contributions to knowledge in this area of research have been achieved, as listed below:

- (1) This study clearly offers an innovative analytical approach through the simultaneous investigation of the multiple factors that can affect the strategy transition process stage and the social practices of the internal actors within this particular stage.
- (2) This study is the first, to the best of our knowledge, to address the 'strategy transition process phenomenon' and to explore the dynamics of this process in the public sector of Kuwait. Furthermore, this term is introduced into this field of research for the first time.

- (3) This study is also unique in terms of the applied methods. For the first time, a mixed method approach was used to investigate the strategy transition process phenomenon.
- (4) This research also made a substantial contribution to Social Practice theory by introducing a cognitive understanding to the strategy as practice. The theory proposed that individual behaviour is shaped based on context and is changed accordingly. Therefore, subjectivity and objectivity are inseparable. However, this research introduced interactivity as an important construct within the theory's context.
- (5) A new model was developed to explain the dynamics of the strategy transition process in terms of the encountered factors, namely process design, interaction between actors, awareness of strategy, and leadership in strategy.
- (6) In terms of the conceptual forms of strategy proposed by Mintzberg and Waters (1985), the investigation in this research demonstrated that the intended strategies cannot be realised unless processed through a strategy mechanism process in the deliberation stage of strategy, as shown in Figure 2.2.

8.4 Research Limitations

The research limitations in this study are related to certain aspects that have not been covered or have only been achieved to a limited extent. Reporting research limitations is a normal practice that reflects the reliability and validity of the conducted study. In fact, addressing research limitations was also emphasised as a practice by Denscombe (2014) as he argued that there is no research that is without limitations, so researchers should be honest and open in their acknowledgement of such as these could form the basis of future research directions. He even extended this idea to encouraging researchers to report the challenges encountered at the various stages of any given research effort including methodology, conclusions, resources constraints, accuracy and honesty of answers, alternative useful methods, and unexpected factors that arose during the course of their research. Thus, as is the nature with all research studies, this research was not without its

own limitations. However, reporting the challenges encountered does not mean that the research process has not been conducted properly or the study is somehow not reliable; on the contrary, the research is based on a strong account of an extensive literature review, research design and methodology, truthful analysis, representation of data, and its interpretation and subsequent discussion.

The first issue that could be considered as a limitation is the issue of generalisability, as is common in social science research. This is even common when researchers adopt, or their research is highly dependent, on the qualitative approach. This limitation has been alleviated in the work above by the selection of a service organisation that interacts directly with other governmental entities, as well as one that provides public services for its community. Moreover, the distribution of surveys across four other major organisations in the country made generalisability possible, as all participants were serving in the public sector domain. In spite of this limitation, there is also the possibility to generalise the findings of this study to other contexts, and indeed countries, that have similar features to the domain of this study.

Another challenge which is closely related to the above limitation is the issue of limited access to some of the targeted participants in the organisation, which could have helped in gathering comprehensive insights from various managerial positions. Also, due to the sensitivity of the researched topic, a few participants were reluctant to take part in the study. However, this limitation has been addressed by reaching other nominated participants via the snowballing technique. This, in turn, has allowed for information flow from the majority of managerial positions.

Drawing from the above limitation, another constrain was that of the purposive sampling method chosen, which might not provide all the participants with the opportunity to take part in the study. However, this was a rational choice as this study was meant to target specific actors with informed opinions, particular experiences, practices, and knowledge of the subject as arose from their positions or roles in the ministry. Therefore, the target and chosen participants were deliberately selected to meet the research objectives. Moreover, the snowballing technique led to further potential participants being

recommended by those for whom an interview had already been conducted, which also helped in easing this limitation.

Finally, giving the fact that the research was conducted within a higher research degree programme that has distinct constraints on time and financial resources, it was impossible to encompass the effect of the organisation's external environment within this research. For instance, many of the participants interviewed referred to the external environment and named a number of entities informing the strategy practice. Although some of these entities were approached, it was felt that further interaction could result in mission drift outside the original scope of the research. Therefore, useful resources, data, and information were added to the data collection process and the remaining investigation suggested above is left as a future possible extension of the current research.

8.5 Scope for Future Research

Having presented a summary of the results, the contribution to the study to knowledge, and the research limitations, it becomes important to present the areas where related future research can be possibly be conducted. Denscombe (2014) argued that good researchers should always suggest a way forward from their own research by identifying new directions that might be taken. Possible research directions could have impact at both the research level as well as the context level. The above research limitations also provide the motivation for suggesting further research. Accordingly, potential areas for future research are discussed below.

Firstly, this study was qualitatively built on one organisation and quantitatively on several organisations. Therefore, a logical extension of this research would be to apply the study in other public sector organisations that have different managerial structures to verify if new, interesting findings may be reached. In the same vein, it will be also noteworthy to extend the research to cross-national comparisons and interpretations of various results within these organisations. The rationale to this extension is that non-ministry organisations that are also governed by the public sector might differ in terms of managerial hierarchy, work nature, size, objectives, culture, values, and geographical scope. Such organisations, other than ministries, could include, for instance, councils,

bureaus, authorities, agencies, offices, charities, and others. Likewise, the study could also be extended beyond the public sector within the chosen context to cover private and public sector organisations in other parts of the world for the purposes of comparative study.

Secondly, the research can be extended through a consideration of the expansion of the adopted methods for data collection and analysis. The main findings of the research were obtained by adopting the qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews and available strategy-related documents. Further researchers are encouraged to engage in the direct observation of internal actors' practices or their participation in other forms of strategy decision-making meetings. Therefore, there is a possibility that direct observation or focus groups as alternative methods that involve internal actors across various hierarchal levels could be used, as these will allow for direct contact. This may provide the opportunity to understand their behaviour in terms of facilitating the strategy transition process in practice and consequently examining their interactions within their web of relationships and a comparison of the findings so obtained.

Thirdly, this study explores the contribution of top and middle management, in particular in the strategy transition process from which a framework with a number of constructs has consequently been developed. Further research could investigate and include the contribution of front-line employees by implementing and testing the model developed in this research, and accordingly evaluate its applicability in other contexts. Moreover, based on our developed model, a valid hypothesis can be formulated to investigate the relationships between the dimensions of this model. Consequently, a comparative study can be established, and a new, promising contribution can be achieved.

Fourthly, this study has only explored the strategy transition phenomenon within an internal environment; the external environment was not explored in any way. Therefore, an empirical investigation of the phenomenon within the external environment and how this could affect the internal environment of organisations in relation to their actors' practices might be considered worthwhile. The importance of this study would lie in providing a clear vision as to how the strategy transition is undertaken between external

agencies and internal organisations. Furthermore, this extension will reveal whether the external strategy transition process has different dynamics, constructs, and mechanism from the internal one or otherwise. Further questions in this regard could address how the alignment of the external and internal environments affects the transition process and its practices across various contexts.

Fifthly, this study focused on the practices of groups of actors within the strategy transition process, from which a model of strategy transition was consequently developed. However, the research framework has not been implemented and tested within the public sector environment in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy transition as a matter of real-world practice. The implementation of the framework in the real world would allow the opportunity to improve the performance of internal actors in the strategy transition and reconsider whether to enable or disable some of the current factors. It is worth noting that the major aim of this research was to examine how public sector organisations effectively transit their strategies from formulation to implementation phase across various groups of actors, rather than to focus on the implementation of the developed framework.

Finally, this research was mainly intended to test how effective strategy transition occurs between the formulation and implementation phases and the role of internal actors within this process. The research, therefore, did not address the impact of this study on other business areas. Based on this point, there is a possibility that the findings of this study could be merged with, and their impact be correlated, with other business topics including firm performance, quality of management, project management, human resources management, work environment, knowledge sharing, and other applicable topics.

8.6 Recommendations

Offering recommendations is considered a natural outcome of any research effort. As Denscombe (2014) argued, researchers need to suggest some way forward from their own research by providing recommendations by which to improve the situation or to enhance the guidelines and the codes of practice. The following recommendations are aimed at improving the strategy transition process and strategy practices among internal actors,

which hinge on the framework proposed earlier in the study. Due to the consistency of findings among the organisations researched in Kuwait, it is posited that the framework could also be applied to other organisations within the public sector context, and that the framework could therefore have an external validity. Drawing from this point, the study offers the following recommendations to enable an effective strategy transition to occur.

- (1) It is important for managers to have a shared understanding, and this is applicable to both top and middle managers and within the same managerial level. This was noticed from the interview responses as both managerial positions have different opinions and practices with regards to strategy transition and their practices within this process. This difference is further validated from the quantitative method which shows major discrepancies between internal actors' answers. A shared understanding would be created by providing relevant training for managers and applying case scenarios.
- (2) It is imperative to ensure all groups of internal actors are aware of the organisational strategy. A lack of awareness in this regard was evident from the interview answers. Quantitatively, the awareness factor was also one of the most significant constructs in terms of its effect on the strategy transition process. Making organisational members aware of the strategy requires increased delegation of strategy ownership and, consequently, the positional authority awarded to managers. This should be achieved through ensuring proper allocation of roles and responsibilities and through calling for more reciprocity and increased collegueship through various social programs.
- (3) It is vital to align actors' characteristics and capabilities with the nature of their particular job. The disconnection between the personal characteristics and nature of the job was evident from the qualitative phase (Phase-1). The selection of both top and middle managers should be based on their willingness to promote change to their organisations through utilising the various managerial tools available to them. In order to make this point workable, organisations should focus on prior

education and training when appointing managers in critical positions, alongside the continuous encouragement of such practices.

- (4) Groups of actors need to facilitate strategy sharing and communication between themselves and should consequently adopt an open door policy. The limitation to strategy exchange was apparent from the interviewees' responses. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis showed that the process factor, which measures how strategy transition occurs between groups of actors, was one of the four highest factors affecting the strategy transition process. In order to accommodate this point, public sector organisations should adopt technological communication methods between groups of actors to allow for convenient strategy practice and to encourage strategy sharing.
- (5) Middle managers need to have greater positional power in order to mediate the strategy between the top management team and front-line employees. The lack of such power was perceived from the interviews with both top and middle managers. To solve this issue, middle managers' roles should be balanced between being participative as well as consultative within the strategy transition process. This further requires effective functional managers to have significant stability in their positions.
- (6) Public sector organisations need to have a systematic route and practice to transitioning strategy across internal actors. This absence of this practice was clearly identified in the qualitative phase (Phase-1). This should be achieved through the introduction of a workable code of practice and a procedure that organises such practices, and associated training should also be provided. In line with the introduction of a code of practice, organisations need to ensure the accountability of the various actors, the locus of control, and mentoring among groups of actors to allow effective strategy transition to take place.
- (7) Policy-makers should promote the public service ethos among groups of internal actors. Qualitative responses revealed that this value was found to be undermined

among actors. Therefore, organisations need to promote such a spirit by utilising the capabilities of the non-engaged human resources '*Al-Batala Al-Muqannaa*' as well as restructuring the performance, and the associated reward, system. Furthermore, top and middle management need to rely on, and to trust, the national workforce while transitioning strategic initiatives.

Having presented these recommendations, it should be noted that these recommendations were put forward based on the findings of the study, which emerged according to the methods adopted during the course of the research. Hence, the researcher does not claim to have proffered permanent solutions to the challenges of the Kuwaiti ministries in particular, or other entities with similar or larger challenges in general. Rather, the recommendations offered in this study are aimed to improve the strategy transition process and actors' practices within this process. Therefore, it can only be affirmed that the objectives of the study, and the respective questions mentioned earlier, have been properly addressed in this research.

8.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has summarised the main findings of the thesis and provided a number of recommendations based on the findings gained from actors and practitioners in adopting better strategy practices. The summary of main research findings obtained from both the qualitative and quantitative methods was introduced. The contribution of this thesis to knowledge is mainly in terms of the adopted method, theory, and the context studied. The research limitations have also been reported in the literature, and consequently the possible extension of future research. The chapter also provided some recommendations to interested parties as part of the final remarks made in the thesis.

8.8 Epilogue

The PhD research journey was one of the most unforgettable experiences that has happened to me in my entire life. Although the process was coupled with isolation, worry, thinking, stress, and sleepless nights, it was nevertheless an interesting journey that allowed me to form new insights to my life. It is only now that I realised that the process of completing my PhD thesis is not the end; rather, it is the beginning of a new and a

continuous life in academia. At the beginning of the research journey in October 2013, extensive effort and time were spent reviewing the available literature in the field, and consequently designing my research methodology for formal review in order to transfer to the PhD programme, which ultimately took place in December 2014. However, the revision of the literature did not end at that point, it rather continued until the end of journey.

The first year transfer report was the first critical point in which I was able to introduce the research gap and the expected contribution to knowledge in the field. It was also an opportunity to reflect on the efforts that were in place in demonstrating an understanding of the field and the research boundaries. Within that particular learning process, I was able to attend a number of different models, workshops, and departmental seminars which have all added to my research portfolio, along with my prior teaching experience. All of these tools aided me when conducting the fieldwork which was itself, to me, another exciting experience as I was able to apply the skills gained in interacting with the study participants to collect the required data. Later, writing a conference paper with my supervisor represented another unique experience as encountered within the research journey.

Engaging in the research process and completing a PhD thesis is not only a matter of contribution to knowledge, as its true nature, in fact, goes beyond this stream. The process has equipped me with a way of thinking that allows me to look at any issue from a neutral and critical perspective, the level of thinking needed to become 'macro' instead of 'micro', being able to judge issues from different perspectives, accepting multiple and contrary opinions, and being open to suggestions, feedback, and continuous improvement. Consequently, the journey has been a changing-life process that has aided me and given me the necessary tools for my future.

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Appendix I: Supporting Letter from the Supervisor for Data Collection



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To Whom It May Concern:

Letter in Support of Research by Mr Jarrah F. Al Mansour

This is to confirm that Mr JF Al Mansour is currently doing is doctoral research at De Montfort University, UK. My name is Dr Demola Obembe and I am his research supervisor.

Jarrah's work aims at understanding the dynamics that take place between organisations developing strategies for their activities and the implementation of such strategies. This is a particularly important research as it will significantly contribute to our understanding of how effective outcomes can be ensured when organisations devise strategies.

As a PhD student Jarrah is embarking on the next phase of his research, which is collecting empirical data to aid in addressing his research thesis. Jarrah is well-informed regarding good ethical research practices and whatever information given him will be treated in utmost confidence, and used strictly for academic-related purposes.

Any assistance that can be rendered to him in his pursuit will be greatly appreciated and if you do require any further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Demola Obembe'.

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Appendix II: Interview Protocol

Research Main Question

How do public sector organizations effectively transit their strategies from formulation phase to implementation phase across various employment levels?

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<u>Interview Guide for Research Question (1)</u>		
Research question (1)	Rational of question	Sample of Available literature
How do top and middle managers contribute to the strategy transition process in public sector organizations?	To examine how ministries assess their various stakeholders and to explore how those actors influence the strategy transition process and to which extent their influence is considered.	(Freeman, 1984; Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Rainey, 2003; Bryson, 2004; Stoker, 2006; Mantere, 2008; Bryant and Stensaker, 2011; Raes et al, 2011; Ukil and Akkas, 2017; Whittington et al, 2017)
Proposed interview questions	Questions' focus	Tips / Suggestions for the interviewer to clarify the questions (when required) for the interviewee
a) Strategy practice is a collective type of work which requires different people to work together; in your opinion can you tell me how your formulated strategy is turned into action? What approaches are followed? Who is involved?	To understand the level of involvement of the various managerial levels within the organization and to assess their role within the various strategy stages 'practitioners'.	Who are the stakeholders? To date, there is no common definition on what the concept of stakeholders mean as most scholars have expressed the concept differently (Miles, 2012). For instance, Jensen (2001) viewed stakeholders as "All individuals or groups who can substantially affect the welfare of the firm" (p. 299). While Johnson et al (2005) viewed those actors
b) Which group among your stakeholders you consider to have the most power to engage with strategy formulation?	To know who are those actors and how did they become actors in the strategy cycle and on which basis they became so.	

<p>Implementation? Can you list them?</p> <p>c) In your opinion, what are the criteria used by the different actors to assess strategy sharing?</p> <p>d) In your opinion, how the contributions of various actors influence the planned strategy? What measures are used?</p> <p>e) To what extent the middle management is involved in the strategy transition process? What is their role?</p> <p>f) To what extent the front-line employees in your ministry contributes to the strategy transition process? What is their role?</p> <p><u>Possible probing or follow-up questions:</u></p> <p>g) Could you explain some challenges facing your ministry while formulating, transiting, and implementing strategies?</p> <p>h) Given the possibility of disagreement, what has been the best approach in dealing with different actors and political bodies when transiting your strategies to others?</p>	<p>To understand the various views of actors and how the organization manage their own expectations.</p> <p>To recognize the power of stakeholders in the strategy loop and how this contribution influence the strategy transition.</p> <p>To understand whether the strategy practice is a collective process or decisions are taken solely by specific actors, also to clarify the contribution efforts for each employment level.</p> <p>To understand the hidden factors or local volatility which have great influence on the strategy cycle in general and strategy transition in particular.</p> <p>To assess how stakeholders conflict is resolved and what kind of solutions or scenarios are followed to ensure effective strategy transition from planning to action.</p>	<p>as individuals or groups who depend on organization to meet certain objectives and similarly the organization depends on them.</p> <p>Based on the presented literature, the interaction between strategy formulation and implementation can be distinguished and further consideration needs to be given for the dynamics between both phases.</p> <p>Dayan et al (2017) argued that leaders and managers have an essential role in the formulation and implementation of their company strategy. However, calls to engage various actors in dividing strategy forward have been in also recognized (Friesl and Kwon, 2016).</p>
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<u>Interview Guide for Research Question (2)</u>		
Research question (2)	Rational of question	Sample of Available literature
What are the factors that are considered to be influential on the dynamics of strategy transition process?	<p>To understand the factors which affect the strategy transition process in the ministry, also to reveal the various approaches used, the applicable measures, and challenges encountered.</p> <p>Also to assess how each employment category perceive the strategy transition according to their own setting, background, education, and experiences, and how they deal with different factors and circumstances.</p>	(Al-Ghamdi, 1998; Sorooshian et al, 2010; Pella et al, 2013; Van der Merwe and Nienaber, 2015; Gebczyńska, 2016)
Proposed interview questions	Questions' focus	Tips / Suggestions for the interviewer to clarify the questions (when required) for the interviewee
a) In your opinion and given the nature of your ministry condition and environment, what do you think are the requirements or conditions for effective strategy transition in your place? What measures are applied to ensure this effectiveness?	To reveal the various employment categories personal perception on strategy transition process and the extent of its practice within the ministry and to ascertain wither effective tools and measures are used or not.	<p>According to the literature, the strategy process reflects the development of strategy from formulation to implementation. Thus, it is how the organization undertakes specific approaches to reach its desired strategic outputs.</p> <p><u>Mintzberg</u> and Waters</p>

<p>b) To what extent does the internal factors and circumstances affect your pre-determined strategies? How quickly you can respond to such changes?</p>	<p>To understand the dynamism of internal forces and their effect on the existing strategies, also to assess how such circumstances be met by responsible bodies.</p>	<p>(1985) presented a number of strategies and explained the nature of each. for instance, deliberate strategy is sought as deliberately planned and finally realized as intended. While, emergent strategy represents a strategy without previous intention and it is practiced as a part of a daily routine.</p>
<p>c) How the process of initiating strategies is achieved? For example, initiating the annual plan, preparing people, setting goals, and determining strategies? Who is involved in this process? Who should / Shouldn't be involved?</p>	<p>To recognize the ways in which the ministry achieve its desired strategic targets and the challenges being involved during the strategy process. Moreover, to know the involved stakeholders and why some should or shouldn't be involved in the process 'strategizing'.</p>	<p>The difference between both deliberate and emergent strategies rely on the respective changes occur during the strategy dynamics from what the management has thought of to what is actually realized.</p>
<p><u>Possible probing or follow-up questions:</u></p>		
<p>d) From your practical experience, can you please share a story of how internal forces affected your ministry while transiting strategy from formulation to implementation?</p>	<p>To clarify the nature of forces and their impacts on strategy transition, also to assess how did the management deal with such situations 'practices', and their experiences to overcome the same.</p>	<p>The available literature has also provided some insights of the strategy barriers that either occur during the strategy formulation phase or strategy implementation phase. For instance, some of these insights are:</p>
<p>e) From your experience, can you please share a strategy over the last period that you consider successfully realized? What were the factors contributing to such success?</p>	<p>To assess the management experiences of a successful realized strategy and understand the supportive factors.</p>	<p>* <u>Internal factors:</u> structure, context culture, leadership, communication, conflicts between various stakeholders.</p>
<p>f) Also, can you please inform me of a strategy over the last period that is not realized? What factors</p>	<p>To assess the management experiences of unrealized strategy and what hinders have been recognized and</p>	<p>* <u>External factors:</u> external stakeholders, legislation, dominant culture, future uncertainty.</p>
<p></p>	<p></p>	<p>It is important to note that other possible factors may be encountered. However, further investigation is</p>

do you think were behind such failure or termination?	why. Also to understand the approaches taken to overcome the same.	required.
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Interview Guide for Research Question (3)		
Research question (3)	Rational of question	Sample of Available literature
How can these factors affect the involvement of top and middle managers as well as front-line employees in the strategy transition process and to which extent?	To reveal the contribution level to the strategy transition process for various employment levels, also to understand how the formulated strategy is being transited to all staff within the organization.	(Jarzabkowski et al, 2007; Miller et al, 2008; Martin, 2011; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Summers et al, 2012; Paroutis et al, 2013; Vaara and Lamberg, 2016)
Proposed interview questions	Questions' focus	Tips / Suggestions for the interviewer to clarify the questions (when required) for the interviewee
a) In your opinion, what do you think the key challenges facing the ministries in general and your ministry in particular?	To obtain the top and middle management view on their expectation of various challenges both internally and externally and their re-action 'strategy practice' towards such challenges.	The literature suggests to consider the external as well as internal influences that affect the strategy practice.
b) From your experience, can you please explain how can you ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of strategy transition process?	To assess how the communication system, monitoring, and coordination between the staff is implemented and how key people ensures the effective understanding of strategic initiatives by	Strategy-as-practice concept can be discussed to assess whether the key people acknowledge the process of strategizing or special practices are normally dominant.

<p>c) As your ministry operates within its own internal environment, which in turn cannot be separated from the external environment, could you please share with me the key issues which are considered by your ministry while initiating strategies?</p> <p>d) In your opinion and from your experience, in what ways do those factors create opportunities and threats to your organization? How do you deal in both situations?</p> <p><i><u>Possible probing or follow-up questions:</u></i></p> <p>e) Among those factors, can you rank them by their importance to the strategy formulation, strategy transition, and strategy implementation?</p> <p>f) Among those factors you have discussed, changes in which force(s) would receive your immediate attention and require your urgent action? And why?</p> <p>g) You may have experienced a tough time with your internal and/or external influential bodies</p>	<p>employees.</p> <p>To understand the specific issues that are involved in the strategy transition process and examines how this understanding may influence the strategy practice through process.</p> <p>To understand the level of strategy thinking by the responsible bodies and their personal views of how they could utilize the supportive factors or deal with hinders while transiting their strategies.</p> <p>To assess how those factors are analyzed and dealt with through the various strategy stages.</p> <p>To asses which factors are considered the most important in the strategy process and why are considered so.</p> <p>To examine the degree of autonomy awarded to the top and middle management in dealing with the organization</p>	<p>The key value of previous strategy-as-practice studies (e.g. Jarzabkowski et al, 2007; Whittington and Cailluet, 2008.; Golsorkhi et al, 2010) has been to acknowledge that strategizing relies on organizational and other practices that has a significant effect on the process of the outcome of strategies (Vaara and Whittington, 2012).</p> <p>The fundamental base of the strategy-as-practice perspective includes practitioners, practices, and praxis (Whittington, 2006; Angwin et al, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).</p> <p>Deployed organizational strategy by a group of actors must induce change by overcoming the existing strategy (Gupta, 2012).</p> <p>Some researches paid great attention to the importance of the mediating role of communication and exchange process among organizational members (Putnam, 2000; Garnett et al., 2008).</p> <p>There is a need to also explore the involvement of</p>
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<p>in reaching an agreement of your strategy status, in your opinion how do you view the influence of those personalities with respect to the strategy practice?</p> <p>h) From your experience, to what extent the middle management and the front-line staff have the power to share their opinion, amend, and reject the ministry plan? Perhaps you can share some real examples.</p> <p>i) If you were given the option to formulate and implement the strategy of your ministry, what actions do you think you will be taking in order to ensure successful transition of strategy? What would you do differently?</p>	<p>strategy, also to reveal their power in resisting the external and internal forces and wither they deal independently in such situations.</p> <p>To assess the level of autonomy awarded to each employment level within the ministry and to understand whether the flow of information is single from one party over the other or mutual between all parties 'strategy information practice'.</p> <p>To evaluate the workable approaches to be taken if the degree of freedom is to be awarded to each individual to a high extent, also this may lead to provide information on how solutions are being considered and what hidden factors exist and work against selecting the best scenarios while transiting the organizational strategy 'praxis'.</p>	<p>employees from different employment levels in the strategy process and what actually they practice and how they practice the strategy (Aldehayyat and Anchor, 2008; O'Shannassy, 2011; Mack and Szulanski, 2017)</p>
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Appendix III: Questionnaire Instrument

Questionnaire Brief

The purpose of this questionnaire is to evaluate the factors affecting the effective transition from strategy formulation to strategy implementation across various employment levels at local ministries. A specific focus is given to the middle management as well as the front-line staff to assess their views towards some determined factors which are being investigated.

Most questions are close-ended type which means that you only need to select the most appropriate answer from your point of view and according to the provided question. At the end of the questionnaire, you will be provided with an option of adding any additional information or comments that you feel appropriate, useful, and representative of your opinion.

I also would like to state that the questionnaire is anonymous and all the results obtained are subject to data privacy and confidentiality. The answers shall only be used for the research purpose of my Ph.D. thesis. The data gathered will be presented in a statistical format, thus an analysis of a particular individual or group will not be possible.

Questions (Part 1)

Please select one of the following answers:

(A) Demographic information of the participating staff member

Gender:	Male / Female
Age Group:	20-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50-59 / ≥ 60
Nationality:	Kuwaiti / Non-Kuwait
Governorate:	Al-Asmah / Hawalli / Al-Farwaniya / Al-Ahmadi / Al-Jahra / Mubarak Al-Kabeer

(B) Work history of the participating staff member

Ministry:	
Occupational Category:	Top Management / Middle Management / Front-Line Staff
Number of years working in this ministry:	≤ 5 / 6-10 / 11-15 / 16-20 / ≥ 21
Tenure with the same immediate supervisor:	≤ 5 / 6-10 / 11-15 / 16-20 / ≥ 21

Questions (Part 2)

Directions: for each of the following, please cross the appropriate box to indicate how would you rate the impact of the statement on your ministry, using the Likert scale (1=strongly disagree SD, 2=disagree D, 3=neutral N, 4=agree A, 5=strongly agree SA).

1. Strategy Awareness and Structure: represents the understanding of employees of the ministry structure and strategy initiatives.

No.	Criteria	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1	I am aware of the ministry strategy.					
2	I understand the ministry strategy.					
3	It is clear to me who formulate the strategies.					
4	It is clear to me who implement the strategies.					
5	The way the objectives set helps us to achieve what is expected.					
6	Strategy is available to all employees in the ministry.					
7	It is assumed that strategy already known.					
8	The strategy does not conflict with the current organizational structure.					
9	The management normally tracks our understanding of the strategy.					
10	There is a clear strategy in the ministry followed by clear policy and procedures.					

2. Flexibility and Sharing Information: represents if there is a strategic fit with the ministry and in information exchange among various employment levels.

No.	Criteria	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1	Implementation decisions are made only after careful consideration of alternatives.					
2	I always find support from my colleagues if I need them.					
3	The management has full authority to take any decision.					
4	If I disagree with the ministry decisions, I feel free to say so.					
5	My notes are taken into consideration once I raise my opinion.					
6	Top management encourages critical ideas about the strategy process.					
7	When a new strategy is presented, I often become suspicious about the intentions of top management.					

3. Role of Leadership: is the guidance that senior leaders provide in setting organizational strategy, directions and performance expectations.

No.	Criteria	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1	In general, centralization is considered the common					

	approach in the ministry.					
2	Managers are being changed frequently and rapidly.					
3	Management allocates adequate resources (e.g. finances, time, people, and equipment) to implement strategies.					
4	The mentality of management affects how to implement strategies.					
5	There is often a lot of resistance towards new strategic initiatives.					
6	I have a tendency to ignore new strategic initiatives from top management.					
7	The phrase: "Everyone agrees, but nothing changes" often captures the essence of how we work.					
8	It is relatively easy to reach an agreement on critical strategy implementation.					
9	The implementation of various strategies is regularly evaluated.					
10	A regular accountability is imposed in case of misusing the organization resources.					
11	There is always enough financial budget for any project in the ministry.					

4. Employee Management Interaction: is the relationship between the management and the employees and how the perspectives about work are being adapted.

No.	Criteria	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1	I am fully aware of my role and responsibility.					
2	The ministry provides me with adequate training needs to accomplish my daily work.					
3	I am always involved in the strategy process.					
4	My qualification is the key to be promoted in the ministry.					
5	Personal conflicts between managers often hinder the strategy process.					
6	There is a continuous monitor on my performance.					
7	It is acceptable to change plans during the strategy implementation process.					
8	If I make a mistake I always admit it and assume full responsibility for it.					
9	The organization's environment hinders strategy implementation.					

5. Strategy Transition Process: represents the approach of how strategy is being communicated to various employment levels in the ministry.

No.	Criteria	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1	The communication of strategy has been sufficient.					
2	The communication of strategy at different organizational levels is perceived as important.					
3	I am always aware of any new concern in the ministry.					
4	The communication procedure is very clear in the ministry.					

5	The communication cycle is smooth and easy in the ministry.					
6	I feel that I have "ownership" in the strategy.					
7	New matters are being communicated to me verbally.					
8	The current way of communication in the ministry is very effective.					
9	The ministry is highly bureaucratic.					
10	I feel that my work is subject to heavy scrutiny, control and inspection.					
11	The flow of information is disrupted at some point.					
12	When the ministry attempts to pursue new strategic initiatives, the pace is often fast and proactive.					

6. Employment Perception: represents the behavior and feelings of employees and their emotional state towards achieving required objectives.

No.	Criteria	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA
1	I am always involved in the strategy formulation process.					
2	I am always involved in the strategy implementation process.					
3	I am always motivated to achieve what is required from me.					
4	The ministry provides me with a high level of satisfaction to achieve my daily work.					
5	I feel that I am a part of any successful project.					
6	I think my work affects the overall performance of the ministry.					
7	The evaluation criteria are clear and fair in the ministry.					
8	Current working procedures do not conflict with strategy.					
9	There is enough faith for the realization of strategy.					
10	Strategy is applicable in every part of the organization.					
11	The current type of applied technology affects the productivity of the employee.					
12	There will be a resistance from the employees if new technology is being adapted in the ministry.					

7. Do you have any additional comments?

Thank you very much.

Appendix IV: Sample of Transcript Coding and Analysis (Block and File Approach – Phase-1)

Sample Interview Script

Question 1: In your opinion, who are the parties involved in the process of strategy formulation in the ministry?

The formulation of strategic processes and policies starts when the Cabinet meets the ministers of the state. The Cabinet gives its outline to be implemented as commands in each ministry by each minister. However, each minister designs a policy and a strategy of his own. Therefore, it is orders of the supreme authorities given to ministry where it implements it as projects on the ground. The minister plays a political role at this stage.

Question 2: Who do you think the strongest party in the process of strategy formulation in the ministry?


The Cabinet is the strongest party and the main drive of this process. However, sometimes problems occur here; mainly when the minister concerned lacks competence. For example, Ministry of Electricity and water is of absolute technical nature therefore, the person in charge of such ministry should be qualified both technically and administratively. Those qualifications enable him to recognize and handle affairs and challenges facing his ministry. Unfortunately, this is not always the case since ministers are nominated according vague criteria. Another example is the Ministry of Health, which is also of a pure technical nature. When an administrative minister who lacks competence in the field of health directed it, some problems occurred due to his inability and lack of efficiency to handle the management challenges facing the ministry. This is by itself is considered an administrative collision and obstacle facing the strategic application.

Question 3 : You have mentioned that the individual conflict is one of the obstacles facing the strategic application, what other challenges you see that face the phase of strategic formulation before the phase of strategic execution ? (Challenges that hinder the effective communication of strategy)


It is very easy to set the strategic vision that fits the ministry and its different departments, but it is extremely difficult to apply it because of the internal and external challenges. For instance, if we want to build a power station on the ground and apply its pre-planned strategies, we will be clashing with external environment and different obstacles such as; coordinating with other ministries like Ministry of Public Work, Ministry of Transport, and Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Municipality and other ministries and departments. Such coordinating takes a very long time or even years because of document cycle, inefficient coordination or sometimes the absence of such coordination in the department itself. Adding to that, other obstacles that confront each institution separately. If we talk about the internal environment, we will find other challenges and obstacles too. They include the lack of intellectual agreement the senior management represented by the assistant undersecretary and the middle-level management represented by the management director. The former wants to implement work in a certain manner and from a pure administration perspective, while the latter rejects such implementation from a technical perspective. Hence, the personal factor and the management collision take place between the management hierarchy and the employment hierarchy.


Question 4: How do you describe the communication among the different departments? (From up to down or vice versa) how flexible is it?

Unfortunately, there is no clear model of communication among the different departments inside any ministry. In other words, each department is directed differently; some directors meets their employees and take into consideration their opinions in solving any administrative issues while other directors don't account for their employees opinions but instead they use their authority given by their position at the employment hierarchy to pass projects and topics as commands to be obeyed and implemented. Hence, we can say that each principle self-efficiency has a key role in pushing the strategic implementation of projects on ground.

-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
External formulation of strategy
See Interviews 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 22, 25
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Top-bottom communication
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Communication and process
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Political volatility and expertise
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
External formulation of strategies
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Lack of competence
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Dominant culture
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Expertise and culture
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Role conflict / Clashes / Management conflict
See Interviews 4, 5, 8, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 20, 23, 24, 25
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Communication system
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Internal environment, organizational fit, shared practice
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Accountability, monitoring, and feedback
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Role conflict / mentalities
Position power Vs personal power
See Interviews 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 14, 16, 17, 19, 22, 25, 27
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Ineffective communication
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Nature of interaction, absence of strategy practice
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Openness and reciprocity
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Individual efficacy
-  **Jarrah A IMansour**
Role of leadership and supervision

For example, one assistant undersecretary retired and later became a minister. When he wanted to solve a certain problem or process a certain strategic application, he used to coordinate with the external environment that will carry out the implementation such as the contractors of the fieldwork to check their opinions, thoughts, circumstances and ant obstacles that may hinder their work. Then he would translate those ideas and reshape them according to the ministry's facts and data. After that, he would present them to people at the top-level management and other parties concerned. The results of this approach are a work and a policy appropriate to any future application of similar projects or topics, a positive control of tenders concerned in terms of time, materials, technicalities, management...etc., and imposing interior employee to follow this procedure as a policy and a clear work stander. Giving the fact that those employees under this assistant undersecretary have limited potentials, he had to listen to the external parties, collect different views, formulate them technically and design a strategy to be followed later on.

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Individual efforts as opposed to rules and regulations

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Influence of non-engaged employees 'Al-Batala Al-Muqanna'

Question 5: From what you have said, does that mean that the strategy practice is a decision of each department or group of employees?

Ummmm... we can't simply be updated of things around... unfortunately I would say that there is no clear and common model to be followed among departments inside the ministry as each department is directed differently and operates differently. Some directors meet their employees and share the strategy and some not. Sometimes you find each department implements its own way to work and own roles. Now if you want to know the reason for such practice, you can easily say there is no systematic control shared among us... we can't deny the reality.

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Shared practice

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Practice consensus

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Policy and procedures

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Control mechanism

Question 6: Given what you have said, in your opinion, to which extent do you think that communication practice affect the strategy transition or sharing among various employment levels?

Ummmm...I would best describe the situation by saying that the information process in the ministry is transferred in the form of paper orders and that starts from top-to-down of the employment hierarchy. The cycle begins by undersecretary to an assistant agent to a supervisor to a head of department and finally reaches the ordinary employee at the first line. However, this does not mean that the employee in these levels understands fully what he does since he is following orders only. Am telling you we are not there... I even doubt if he understands the foreseen objectives of such orders as he is not being involved in discussion meetings of the different management levels. Now can we blame employees or who should we blame?


 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Direction of information


 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Employee engagement in strategy

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Strategy awareness

Question 7: You have just mentioned a successful example of a leader who used to meet all the external parties in order to crystalize ideas and to insure its transmission from down to up of the employment taxonomy, is there any policy, specific procedure, regular meetings, is it verbal transition, etc?

This process is conducted by top-level parties in a meeting of undersecretaries council where each undersecretary presents his problems and visions then both undersecretaries and assistant undersecretaries discuss about the necessary steps to left the development plans of each sector and the obstacles that would hinder them. Thus, the process is a series of meeting and orders given by the supreme authority and implemented by the low-level departments. In addition, each sector director submits plans of his sector according to earlier statistics and earlier depleted projects.

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Top management engagement only

 **Jarrah AlMansour**
Plans are linked with managers' stability in positions

Question 8: The point of meetings is a crucial point and you have mentioned that they are accomplished with parties of higher responsibilities in the ministry. What about the ordinary employee or the first-line employee. How they are identified or defined according to what has been planned earlier with the senior management? Broadly speaking, how does this employee be acquainted with the strategy of the ministry he works in or even the projects to be implemented? Would he acquaint that by emails, meetings, or the organization cultureetc?

The process is transferred through orders and promulgations from paper top-to-down the employment hierarchy. It starts by undersecretary then to a sector to an inspector to a department and finally reaches the ordinary employee at the first line. However, this does not mean that the employee understands fully what he does since his constant answer is that he is following a promulgation or an order. He does not know why he is following this promulgation or that order because he was not involved in the meeting of the different management levels. Personally, I believe this is wrong and does not match the nature of the right strategic application. Another point should be highlighted here is the fact that the employee may not necessary know about those promulgations and orders since there is no proof that he has received them in the first place, or even he may receive them but does not follow them . That is because of the absence of systematic supervision. Unfortunately, there is no electronic system facilitating this work instead, most of it is paper work going from the top to the bottom of the employment levels. It should be noted that paper work and communication do not always take long time to be passed through.


Question 9: You have mentioned the electronic system, in your opinion, how important to document the organizational strategy and track its respective objectives for employees?


Ok... it is common that you find a documentation of all strategies for different years for any private company, but not in our case... since all orders and requirements are handed-in by hand or by internal mail through all levels and not by an electronic mail... under such circumstances, I personally believe it is difficult to follow what is the strategy itself, my employees either.

Question 10: had you given the authority to change where you be the responsible of both the strategic vision and the application, what would you have done differently from what is being done now?


Ammmmm.....ok..... This is related to each principal individual act. To clarify my answer for this question let me mention a personal experience as a principal in a ministry. I am a sector director who supervises a group of departments' mangers. I have noticed lately a certain problem therefore; I held a meeting with the mangers to discuss a solution. Next, I issued some orders and promulgations, which were supposed to be followed by those mangers and passed to employees at the bottom of the hierarchy. Later on, I discovered that none of the orders and promulgations is followed. When I asked the inferior employees of the mangers, I was surprised that their direct supervisor has neither informed them about the meeting's aspects and outcomes nor passed any orders and promulgations to them. This is a major problem of work communication but the worse is yet to come, when I asked the direct superiors again they responded we had a verbal-talk meeting and there was no formal draft or meeting minute. At that point, I had to use a written promulgation and meeting minute to be passed to all department levels. other problems emerged from this; the insufficient storing of those meeting minutes since they are easy to lose , hard to refer to or even to monitor as a result, if I had the full authority, I would utilize an E-communication system where each employee has his own computer to contact his superior and his other co-workers. This will facilitate management work and its supervision similar to what is being operated in the private sector. Unfortunately we usually stumble with the lack or limited budget allocated for such change. This is the case when we talk about our small department and you can imagine what the case is if we talk about all levels of management or even the whole ministry. Also I think the budget is important for providing attractive rewards for employees to encourage them engaging in strategy sharing and achieving what is required from them.

Question 11: In your opinion, why there is a delay of implementing projects as soon as the strategic vision is set? In addition, what barriers that prevent applying them according to plans?

 Jarrah AIMansour
Singly direction of communication

 Jarrah AIMansour
Middle management and front-line staff involvement in strategy execution only


 Jarrah AIMansour
Applied communication system

 Jarrah AIMansour
Absence of monitoring, mentoring

 Jarrah AIMansour
Technology-aided support

 Jarrah AIMansour
Sectors distinction

 Jarrah AIMansour
Strategy awareness


 Jarrah AIMansour
Lack of documented proof of strategy practice
See interviews 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 14, 16, 17, 19, 22, 25, 27

 Jarrah AIMansour
Communication consensus and control

 Jarrah AIMansour
Strategy practice

 Jarrah AIMansour
Openness and togetherness

 Jarrah AIMansour
Influences of financial resources

 Jarrah AIMansour
Reward scheme

Reasons vary as the surrounding conditions vary. The commonest and main barrier is the lack of sufficient budget. Sometimes we do not know why the allocated budget was not enough, there is some disagreement with the outer sides or the demanding side of the strategy, or even the project is having internal problems inside its own microenvironment. We do not underestimate climate and daily conditions such as, temperature, laws restricting work in specific times and under specific temperature, crowdedness and other condition. On our ministry's level, we find those conditions obstructing along with some outer interventions of certain parties (businesspersons, positions and others). In addition, if the project executor is an out sider technical specifications mismatch is likely to occur, for example, different specification of the required equipment allocated implementing timing, work method to follow and other barriers. Thus, sometimes, a pre planning of implementing any project or being in accordance with the allocated implementing timing of the pre-designed strategy is necessary.

- Jarrah AlMansour Financial issues
- Jarrah AlMansour Transparency and accountability
- Jarrah AlMansour Influence of external power
- Jarrah AlMansour Legislation
- Jarrah AlMansour Political volatility and dominant culture
- Jarrah AlMansour Personal autonomy of decision-makers
- Jarrah AlMansour Nature of strategy

Question 12 : You have mentioned the point of earlier coordination for any work or project or even keeping in track with implementation time limit of a pre-designed strategy , in your opinion what is the time needed to formulate such strategy; a five-year plan, an annual plan, or implanting projects every two years ? Or what is the real situation?

Even though we have heard about a current five-year plan, I do think there is no such thing of planning for five coming years; I have seen it neither on ground nor its details on paper. I can say that the current plans are random plans that are implemented instantaneously when the project needs them. For instance, at our ministry of electricity and water, we receive sudden commands of proposing a certain tender like a tender of constructing a power station in a certain place to provide the new residential area. The problem relies on the lack of coordination among state ministries. Constructing a station or a residential area requires coordinating with different institutions and ministries; first, with Ministry of Housing to specify the available sites and comparing that with our potentials and technicalities. Second, with Ministry of Defense to insure that the sites are not an international militant spots. Third, with Ministry of Oil to insure the sites are not oil reservations. Forth, with Ministry of Public Works to insure that, the required infrastructure is available or if there were infrastructure obstacles hindering. Unfortunately, there is neither an active communication among those different intuitions nor a time schedule for each ministry to starts where the former one has finished. This alludes to another strategic problem adopted by the state of parallelism. That is to say; when new constructing areas occur, a new station has to occur. This is not right in light of technological development. Therefore, we must point out the need for strategic thinking that involves all aspects. For example, alternative sources such as alternative energy sources.

- Jarrah AlMansour Strategy practice
- Jarrah AlMansour Unstructured transition
- Jarrah AlMansour Fit and coordination among groups
- Jarrah AlMansour Roles overlapping
- Jarrah AlMansour Communication consensus
- Jarrah AlMansour Strategizing, collaboration of praxis, practitioners, practices

Question 13: You have mentioned the importance of a strategic alternative plan, how do you describe an emergency plan or an emergency strategy for the ministry? Does this kind of planning and thinking exist? Alternatively, there are just some strategic alternative at the vision stage? Is there any ready-made plan ?

I do not really think there is an emergency plan, but it is more of an immediate or random plan. Regarding the strategic alternatives, I think it is possible to apply one of them. However, the problem relies on the obstacles hindering that. For example, there is the solar power but it needs several studies and technicalities. Then we have the slab system where each family is obliged to use certain consumption units and if they stick to it, they will pay less than other consumers of different slabs will and so on. This requires two things; first, a strategic awareness plan. Second, a calculation system for citizens. According to statistics, electricity costs the ministry 35 fills but we sell it to people for only two fills.















Question 14: You have mentioned a number of, seeming to you, clear successful solutions for strategic plans. Why do you think they have not been used until now?

In this regard, there are a lot of obstacles and let me give a realistic example of a rationalization strategy of formulating the electronic counter project but it was not carried out. The project has been examined several times in many meetings and tried out on ground but when its tender was proposed to qualified and specialized companies, the tender was withdrawn for unknown reasons. Then it was proposed for a second and a third time and it was withdrawn again. As a result the strategy stopped and the project expired which was supposed to save the state a lot, and spare consumers a lot too. The project was a great success under the difficult climate conditions of Kuwait to the extend we received complains after taking off the electronic equipment. We can say now that the obstacles were; first, external interventions of beneficiaries, the businesspersons in this case, as each one of them want to win the trend himself. Second, the minister did not take the needed decision for political reasons in order to please one group over the other. Third, it could be even the minister own agenda.[Unrecorded]....Sadly, we pioneered proposing such strategies and development projects but today, the project is out of date compared with the rapid technological development of ideas and means of the new projects in the varied countries.

Question 15: I realized from your conversation that this project is now being executed again on a new residential area and under trail, but its success has been already confirmed, do you think it will face the same obstacles of the first trail? Or it will run smoothly this time and why?

This is a crucial question and the sensible answer demands the project to be implemented because of the ministry-varied information. We ought to refer to some success factors that depend on several pillars such as, limiting outer parties and their direct intervention in the ministry affairs, taking decision by the minister who represents an honestly and realistically the right image of the supreme authorities, activating supervision role of the Cabinet who holds accountability of each minister for his performance and other law-makers/legislature like the parliament who supervise each strategic plan of each ministry alone and the extend of commitment in applying them. Unfortunately, we have to admit that there are immediate plans of the moment or situation rather than deep-rooted plans that move forward. For instance, the role of the ministry has become limited to implementation rather than planning for development. In other words, similar to what has been mentioned earlier, if the state wants to construct a new residential city, the role of the ministry is limited to constructing a station to serve the area. However, this does not match the strategic role of a ministry like the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

Question 16: As you have mentioned before, the success of any strategy depends on everybody's cooperation. Now, how do account for first-line and middle-level management employees' participation in formulating and implementing the strategy?

-  Jarrah AlMansour Nature of strategy
-  Jarrah AlMansour Actor strategy practice
-  Jarrah AlMansour Strategy awareness
-  Jarrah AlMansour Unrealised strategy
-  Jarrah AlMansour Transparency and accountability
-  Jarrah AlMansour Effect of external influence
-  Jarrah AlMansour Dominant culture, customary system
-  Jarrah AlMansour Personal networks
-  Jarrah AlMansour Strategy/Actor practice style
-  Jarrah AlMansour Public service ethos
-  Jarrah AlMansour Accountability, monitoring, feedback
-  Jarrah AlMansour Barriers to strategy transition
-  Jarrah AlMansour Planning, documentation of strategy practice
-  Jarrah AlMansour Actual role in strategy practice
-  Jarrah AlMansour Strategy awareness

From my point of view, I see their participation as passive reception of the top-level management commands which I consider a wrong administration procedure. The reason behind that is those employees along with their direct superiors are the ones in the work field not the top-level, decision makers.....[Unrecorded]....Therefore, those employees know best how to handle those orders related to the required tasks. The best solution demands engaging them to the decision-taking process and taking into consideration their perspectives, then reformulate their thoughts regarding the subject matter and finally, taking decisions in order to implement the strategy thoughtfully that everyone agrees on. In addition, this down-to-top communication is reinforced. I myself do this with my employee in the sector. After all this, an individual approach not an institution culture followed by all departments.

-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Participation in strategy process
-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Role conflict
-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Employee engagement in strategy
-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Open system, mutual communication, reciprocity
-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Customary system

Question 17: If we talk about the practical performance at a sector level that is in direct contact with the public, how can we evaluate and improve its performance? Do you think it is related to the strategic implementation adopted by the ministry?

Ummmm..... In my opinion, I do not think there is a perfect successful sector at the highest standers. The improvement should be continual and concurrent. That can be achieved through involving employees in the strategic work and considering their opinions. Another important issue I want to clarify is that involving the audience who complains about workflow. Those complaints give constructive suggestions to improve work. Unfortunately, they are not taken into consideration. Throughout my current experience all these years and my gradual progress at management positions, I found out that most of the strategic obstacles can be solved by taking the audience views, who are the consumers of the ministry's service, into consideration.

-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Monitoring, follow-up
-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Employee engagement in strategy
See interviews 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 18, 19, 23, 26, 27
-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Open communication
-  **Jarrah AlMansour** Internal mechanism

Question 18: Thank you sir for taking part in this study, for your time, and for the level of information you provided that will help this wok go on.

You are welcome and I wish you have found the required answers and I wish you all the best.

Appendix V: Sample of Coding and Analysis Filing (Block and File

Approach – Phase-2)

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Strategy practice as process	Actors involvement in strategy	Strategy practice barriers	Nature of strategy in public sector
<p><i>(I-2-MM): 'We certainly use some tools as instructed by our direct managers, but we believe the results are the same, the strategy is not executed'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-4-TM-R): 'The strategy practice is blurry here and it is blurry to most if not all employees from different levels and departments... this is because they were not part of the strategy delivery process'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-11-TM): 'There are no clear standards to follow, but there is a tendency to redesign and apply some such as key performance indicators to evaluate our strategy practice... however, how</i></p>	<p><i>(I-5-TM): 'I believe that middle managers role in somehow between formulating the strategy and implementing it, however, our front-line staff are engaged in executing strategies only'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-12-MM): 'Honestly, the actual strategy practice is done with top management... now our job comes in... transplant strategic initiatives to our front-line staff and involve them into such responsibility and practice'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-17-MM): 'Middle managers should not be involved in the strategy itself... may be because we were not part of the decision-making process from the</i></p>	<p><i>(I-1-MM): 'We suffer from the continuous external interventions, we need therefore to activate the transparency and accountability, and to clarify jobs roles to prevent conflicts, also the competence of staff is significant in strategy practice'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-7-TM): 'What we need is the clarity and coordination between us by leaving our social traditions aside and work in accordance to clear work policies and procedures for real strategy practice'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-19-MM): 'I think the message should be clear and unified while transferred through</i></p>	<p><i>(I-2-MM): 'I can describe the evaluation as previously bureaucratic and with a lengthy documentary cycle'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-6-MM): 'Strategy is there but is somehow follows a lengthy documentary period'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-10-MM): 'I think the nature of the ministries' business is rigid because they are service-ministries, on the first stage'.</i></p> <p><i>(I-18-TM): 'How many plans we have gone a long way in them in spite of routine challenges and intense bureaucratic system we suffer from, before a new official comes and brings us back to the</i></p>

<p>effective these KPIs will be or how efficient will be used by the various employees is another challenge of our strategy process’.</p> <p>(I-14-MM): ‘We hear about different tools, top management are concerned about this, we use it or not, there is no feasible difference when it comes to strategy’.</p> <p>(I-20-MM): ‘From what I see in reality... I can confidently say that the problem is neither from formulation or implementation, it is rather how we turn documents into visible outcomes’.</p>	<p>beginning’.</p> <p>(I-22-MM): ‘I don’t think I understand what top managers say, they think they know everything and they pass what they know, but for me I find it difficult to know what exactly they want’.</p> <p>(I-23-TM): ‘Our role is to deliver strategy to middle managers as they need to take it forward, we are experienced, and we know exactly what we do, we meet them and deliver our organizational strategy to them to take it from there’.</p>	<p>hierarchal level in the first place... if this step is ensured, then we can easily control the coordination among people’.</p> <p>(I-25-TM): ‘It’s all about agreement and shared understanding between people... you can’t practice anything if the team members have alternative views, and what makes it worse is that if you insist to ignore them’.</p> <p>(I-26-MM): ‘I guess once communication is encouraged among staff, reciprocity will be encouraged too, and strategy sharing and practice will happen by default’.</p>	<p>beginning or zero point...we eventually go back to the social system and to the marital bureaucracy where social norms are taken into consideration’.</p> <p>(I-27-TM-R): ‘We are not a private company in which the strategy is a compass for earning money... we are a non-profit entity and that’s why our strategy move is different’</p>
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Appendix VI: Factors Ranking Matrix

Factor Ranking Matrix

Rectangular Snip

Stakeholder Group / Factor	Front- Line Employees Ref. TM	Front- Line Employees Ref. MM	Middle Management Ref. Fro-L	Middle Management Ref. TM	Top Management Ref. MM	Top Management Ref. Fro-L	Rank
Process	1	2	2	1	1	1	First
Interaction	2	1	1	NS / 6	NS / 6	2	Second
Awareness	NS / 5	3	3	2	2	NS / 5	Third
Leadership	3	NS / 6	NS / 6	3	3	3	Fourth
Flexibility	NS / 6	4	4	NS / 5	NS / 5	NS / 6	Fifth
Perception	NS / 4	NS / 5	NS / 5	NS / 4	NS / 4	NS / 4	Sixth

