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Stakeholder engagement: A service delivery-based strategy formulation process in the Public Sector of South Africa



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ABSTRACT

This paper explores stakeholder engagement in the strategic management process for service delivery in government. The main objective is to determine the factors influencing insufficient stakeholder engagement of strategic management processes for service delivery by a government department. The four moments of translation concept of Actor Network Theory (ANT) was utilised as a theoretical framework to understand and explain the interplay between the initiator of the network of service delivery and other actors in the network in aligning diverse interests to achieve service delivery goals. The assumption was that the phenomenon was ontologically subjective and that it was appropriate, epistemologically, to adopt an interpretive paradigm as the leading research philosophy, using a mixed approach of qualitative and quantitative elements wherein quantitative data was used to test the reliability of the qualitative data. Using the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) as a case study, a sample of 26 participants included 11 managers of WCED and 15 Khayelitsha Education Forum (KEF) members representing the community, school governing bodies and school principals and educators of 64 schools around Khayelitsha township. The study revealed that stakeholder engagement could address non-service delivery during service delivery strategy formulation and implementation. The findings suggest that a network of aligned interests should be established for continuous engagement in implementing strategic plans and service delivery in line with the mandate of Government departments and entities. The results imply that intense arrangements and relationship building between government departments and citizens are needed to improve stakeholder relationships and alignment of service delivery expectations to reduce service delivery challenges.

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Introduction

The study was inspired by service delivery issues in government which have raised concerns about the weaknesses in the use of strategic management as an instrument for delivery of public services. These weaknesses have led a need for critical analysis of the key factors causing inadequate service delivery and unrest. The main objective of the study was to determine the factors influencing insufficient stakeholder engagement in strategic management processes for service delivery by the South African government using the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) as a case study. As such, it is arguable that there is a non-alignment of strategic management processes with internal and external stakeholders to fulfil service delivery expectations. Given the nature of the service delivery unrest in South Africa, It was assumed that the strategic management process of government was undertaken by senior officials and there was no involvement of subordinates and other stakeholders during the formulation of the strategy, which created non-alignment of interests between senior management, officials and the external stakeholders. Drawing from Hudson, Hunter and Peckham (2019: 3-6), this non-alignment of interests is attributed to weakness of collaborative policy-making, failure to establish a common ground for public problem-solving, a lack of effective communication of strategy, a lack of political will; weak leadership; shortcomings of management and inadequate institutional design. This phenomenon is institutionalised in most government departments to such a degree that it has resulted to inadequate allocation of resources to meet service delivery expectations of citizens.

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Given the work of Hudson, Hunter and Peckham (2019: 6), improving and providing better services to citizens will require processes that derived from legislation to inform service delivery systems. The South Africa National Treasury (2007:1) emphasised that any public entity is likely to perform well if good systems are in place and performance is monitored. This means that stakeholder engagement in strategic management is vital for improving service delivery in government. It is arguable that the current strategic management framework would yield positive results when diverse interests are aligned.

Literature Review

A literature review established the theoretical background for this study. Strategic management literature was reviewed in its past and theoretical context. This assessment briefly presented the most imperative matters of strategic planning literature related to this study. A framework on ANT was employed as a lens to understand the factors influencing the non-alignment of interests of actors involved or should be involved in the strategy formulation and implementation of service delivery. The overview of the literature on strategic management is discussed below.

Strategic Management, Alignment, and Processes

According to Bauman (2018:213) strategic management refers to a set of managerial decisions and actions that result in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of actions that are necessary for sustaining the success of an organisation's long-term performance. Functions and resources of businesses are incorporated and synchronised to implement articulated strategies associated with the environment. This is done to achieve the long-term goals and objectives of businesses and to attain a competitive advantage by adding value for the benefit of stakeholders. Authors like

Katz (2017: 34) refers to strategic management as a concept described by many definitions that are different in scope and content. The researcher also acknowledges that there are several different concepts with no simple explanatory model of strategic management, as the level of complexity that is being considered cannot be reduced to one model. Elkhedr and Hassan (2019: 58) point of view on strategic management is that "It (strategic management) is a process of predicting the future based on interpretation of today's trends and signs, which help the organisational leadership to select the right direction for stability and growth". In other words, strategic management entails the identification of the institutional vision, mission statement, environmental analysis through the identification of; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation of the results. It defines the present and the desired future state of the organisation.

Kruger (2017) elaborated this further by drawing some definitions from the research of Mintzberg such as: strategy as a plan to do something; strategy as a backwards-looking pattern of unswerving behaviour and strategy in view of the organisation's position in its wider external environment. The definitions elaborated above are key elements of a strategy which includes choices, incorporation, differentiation, and sustainable benefit. With these elements combined they then define strategy as a mixture and integration of choices that, if successful, will provide the institution with a competitive advantage (Kruger (2017).

According to Dlamini *et al.*, (2019:5-6), the strategy is at a high level and answers the question, "How do we get there?" The answer includes the development of strategic initiatives implemented through projects. When projects are aligned and integrated, it is envisaged that there will be successful completion of the vision and mission statement of the organisation.

Brierley and Bruckman (2018: 14) stated that alignment is important for the success of an organisation. Alignment is the point where the strategy, employees, consumers, and major processes work together to inject positively into the company. It is believed that, when organisations are aligned, they benefit from greater customer and employee satisfaction and produce superior returns for shareholders (Labovitz, 2004: 30). Alignment is crucial because it improves the effectiveness of an organisation. For an organisation to reach its goals, its business units and activities must be aligned to address the common goal. For an organisation to achieve its goals, the key focus should be on aligning strategy, business, employees and management processes. Additionally, employees should be motivated and satisfied in their work because they are key drivers in implementing the organisation's strategies. Fonvielle & Carr (2001: 5) stated that alignment comprises joint agreement about goals and means, and they agree with Labovitz's (2004) statement which emphasised that alignment is an essential condition for organisational success.

These authors agree that alignment provides managers with the ability to implement good business strategies; to be customer driven; to make provision for staff to focus on customers; to encourage the focus on customers and to encourage continuous improvement of business processes. Khadem (2008) and Kim and Mauborgne (2009) agreed that alignment is vital for implementing an effective strategy. Based on the previous definition of alignment, it is understood that economic performance can be enriched by alignment, which is about discovering the appropriate fit between internal arrangements and external positioning (Ciborra, 1996). It is generally believed that when the organisation focuses strongly on aligning its business processes with its business plans, it will achieve its maximum potential.

Strategic management processes are implemented in the private and public sectors. In recent years, the interest in strategic management and planning has been focused on the public sector (Poister & Streib 1999; 2005: 46). This process applies to both public and private institutions. The difference between the two entities is that management deals with multiple stakeholders in the public sector. In the public sector, strategic management should emphasise that stakeholders work together to ensure synergy in their strategic plans. The Public Service Regulations and the Treasury Regulations govern the strategic management process in the South

African Public Service. Public institutions are required to assess strategic management processes to ensure that the tools to measure the effectiveness of the process are compatible. It is a competitive advantage to have a strategic management process in any organisation as it gives guidance on management, execution, and implementation of plans. Poister and Streib (1999: 317) emphasised that, the development of a strategic planning process, implementation and execution are the responsibility of the strategic management team because the process is continuous. These authors also stress that the strategic management team should meet regularly to discuss issues, monitor progress and provide strategic management and leadership. Hills and Jones (2008: 7) corroborated that some academics have stressed that strategy results from a good planning process. Therefore, strategic management plays a critical role in this process.

Katsioloudes (2006) said: "This being the case, we conceptualise strategic planning as a continuous process and define a dynamic strategic management process as one that involves the formulation of a strategy, the implementation of the strategy, and the evaluation of the strategy's success." Considering this paragraph, it is evident that, institutions should utilise the strategic planning process to formulate their organisational strategies.

Strategic Management in The South African Public Sector

The public sector has faced various challenges to transform the mission, the organisational culture and practices of the legislative bodies such as the legislature or boards of directors. These challenges limit the flexibility and independence of the public sector to perform its duties. Goals are often impractical and always defied. The authority of leaders is limited, political interference and public scrutiny is a common practice while the strategy is being formed. Additionally, there is broad accountability to the public, and performance expectations constantly shift. Alford and Greve (2017) argue that the way the stakeholders view and understand things paints a clearer picture than the claims made by the government. Public institutions are different from private institutions in terms of environmental, social, and economic factors. The environmental factors comprise economic and political influence, which has been placed on government institutions by legal mandates and "market forces" of important role players who expect the public sector to join forces to achieve social aims. The transactional factors which are subject to public scrutiny to enforce accountability and collective ownership in the public sector involve coerciveness and scope of impact, which is more comprehensive than in the private sector and must include Batho Pele principles (fairness, openness, inclusiveness, and honesty). Given that the public sector is not profit-driven; measuring its performance is difficult and complex. Thus, incentives are not easy to organise as the sector is not for financial gains; but instead, is driven by ethical standards, crucial problems that need to be solved, important tasks and important roles and responsibilities.

The public service is protocol-driven and is also fettered by legal constraints. The nature of the public service where the market environment and achievements are concerned, has a definite impact on the model's accessibility to strategic management (Alford and Greve, 2017). It is crucial for public institutions to position themselves within the authorising environment by producing results and adjusting their scope. Strategy sets the long-term direction due to the uncertainty of the environment. Lax & Sebenius 1986; Moore, 1995 in Alford and Greve, 2017 stated that it will be more difficult to set long-term goals in the public sector but delivering good products and services to satisfy current public needs is more important. Strategic fit can be realised by taking full advantage of public value and by attracting full permission and compatible resources (Heymann, 1987 in Alford and Greve, 2017). The researcher believed that strategic fit could lead to trade-offs according to what is seen as valuable and acceptable in the present political environment Alford and Greve, 2017 stated that strategic leaders are encouraged to utilise internal capabilities and garner support from co-producers and external stakeholders. Organisational strategy must look convincing to both internal and external stakeholders.

Framework for Strategic Planning in The Public Sector

According to Dlamini, Mazenda, Nhede, Masiya and Tyanai, 2019 strategic management starts with crafting an organisational strategic management model and must have an organisation's core values. Therefore, the purpose of the framework is to encourage institutions to figure out who the role players are, create a platform for constructive engagement, and develop good strategies and implementation plans. It is believed that this framework will improve the relationship between the department and its stakeholders for decision-making. Public institutions adopt the strategic planning framework in Figure 1 below in South Africa to assist departments in planning, leading, organising, controlling their resources and reaching their full strategic management capability. Drawing from Dlamini *et al.*, 2019 this framework suggests a collective agreement on the vision, mission and within the government institutions, includes management, employees, and external actors. Given the work of these researchers it is agreeable that effectively communicated strategy should guide the organisation to focus on important strategically driven issues. These issues should flow from all the plans developed within institutions to accomplish their mandates; thus, should include performance agreements between the President and Ministers as well as Service Delivery Agreements entered in terms of broad strategic outcomes (National Treasury, 2010).

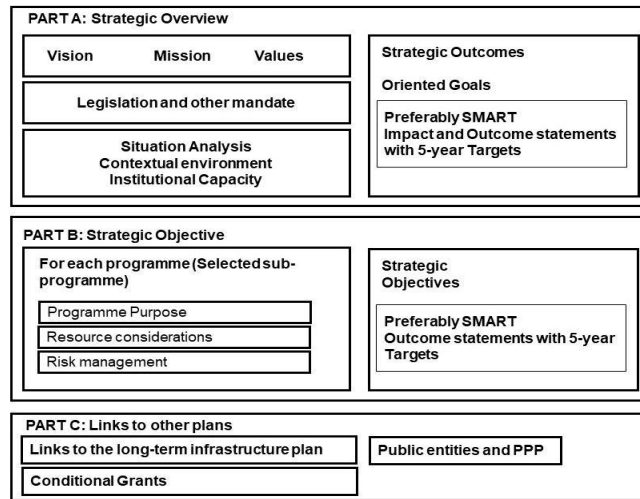


Figure 1: South Africa Public Sector Strategic Plans Framework (National Treasury, 2010)

Part A of the Strategic Plan Framework pay focuses on a strategic overview of the institution which stipulates the vision, mission, values, and the strategic outcome-oriented goals the public institution intends to attain over the five-year period.

Part B focuses on strategic objectives, resource implications, the risks entailed in the strategic objectives, and how to manage and achieve them. Strategic objectives should be deliberated within the framework of approved programme budget structures.

Part C reflects links to other plans such as the institution's long-term infrastructure plan, its conditional grants and plans to review its public institutions and how to manage the public-private partnerships (National Treasury, 2010).

Service Delivery Strategy of South Africa

Vision 2030, as defined in the National Development Plan (NDP), emphasised that the challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment need to be addressed by a state that is capable of performing a transformative and developmental role (Statistics South Africa, 2015/16 – 2017/18). This requires an effective and a well-run institution, which employs skilled and professional public servants who are able and willing to work and deliver high value services to all citizens, without compromising the nation's developmental objectives. The Medium-Term Strategic Framework (2019-2024), (MTSF) stated that the improvement in service delivery must be accompanied by operational accountability to citizens. The responsiveness of the government institutions to its role players is based on the recognition and renewal of the Batho Pele Programme, and implementation of the Public Service Charter.

Statistics South Africa's Service Delivery Improvement Plan (SDIP) focuses on providing a continuous improvement approach on key products which are in line with the Batho Pele principles, which serve to safeguard effective and efficient service delivery by putting 'People First' (Statistic South Africa, 2015/16 – 2017/18). The aim of the SDIP and the strategic plan is to meet the stakeholder needs and to identify areas for improvement in order to serve stakeholders with excellence and integrity (Statistic South Africa, 2015/16 – 2017/18). Improving public service delivery means rectifying the disproportionality of the past while sustaining good service to the society and concentrating on meeting the needs of the 40% comprising the poor and previously disadvantaged citizens (Public service and administration, 1996). The intentions include welfare, equity, efficiency and so on. This will also make a substantial difference on how services are provided. This moves away from inward-looking, bureaucratic systems, processes, and attitudes, but towards new thinking and innovative ways which put people and their needs first in a more responsive way (Public service and administration, 1996).

Strategic Management in The Private Sector and Compared with The Public Sector

From a business perspective, the aim of strategic management is about producing envisaged results for the organisation in an uncertain environment (Kruger, 2017). Strategic management is a competitive advantage for the private sector because it provides an opportunity for business to be opportunist. Strategy is about sustained choices. Strategic management is about forming a strategy, making the best choices, and implementing aggressive strategies in competitive markets (Dlamini *et al.*, 2019).

Maleka (2014) in Dlamini *et al.*, 2019 stated that strategic management is about the formulation of vision, mission of the organisation, goals and tools to be utilised systemically. The strategic management concept is about planning for the future of the organisation by employing practical and achievable goals to sustain the organisation for the long-term.

Strategic planning is used by both private and public sector as a tool to manage performance and development. Strategic planning is utilised to provide guidance to both sectors by clearly defining their vision, mission, and goals. However, the sectors adopt different approaches, and the usage of the tools differ. Private sector strategy focuses on one's own organisation and what it can do to improve its performance while public sector strategy focuses on what impact it will have in respect of improving service delivery to

communities (Knowledge Editor, 2019). According to Murray (2022) the private sector performs better than the public sector in efficiency and results oriented action. The private sector is more concerned about making profits, while the public sector focuses on results. Strategic planning in the public sector focuses more on the management part of the process than on implementation. Consequently, delivery of services is sometimes delayed or is never delivered. (Nartisa, *et al.*, 2012) argued that in the private sector, risk takers such as entrepreneurs tend to focus on short term results; which reveals a lack of foresight into the future; thus, limiting prospects for growth. This researcher also alluded to the fact that, in the private sector there is a lack of delegations of duties. Also, there are no clear roles or responsibilities as entrepreneurs tend to mix responsibilities to attain better results. In a nutshell both sectors could learn from each other and thereby improve competitiveness and performance. The private sector should learn how to develop long-term goals and plans with realistic timeframes and the public sector should learn how to transform their long-term goals into action. Both sectors should be more responsible about the way they operate and should concentrate on creating fit for purpose organisations that deploy capable resources to satisfy their stakeholders.

Table 1: Summary of The Difference Between Private Sector and Public Sector Strategic Management

Factors	Private Sector	Public Sector
Stakeholders	Limited or few stakeholders	Multiple stake holders
Driver	Profit driven	Service delivery focus
Politics	Less political influence	Too much political influence
Policy & Regulations	Shareholders and Boards	National Treasury, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and Public Service & Administration
Performance Monitoring	Key performance Indicators	Balance Scorecards

Source: Alford and Greve, 2017.

Overview of The Theoretical Framework

The four moments of translation (MOT) concept of Actor Network Theory (ANT) has been used as a theoretical lens to understand and interpret the interplay between both the initiator of the network of aligned interests and other actors to align their diverse interests to achieve a common goal. According to Twum-Darko and Harker (2017), MOT has been used in many interpretive case studies embedded with sociological processes. In the case of this study, the logical relationship between legislation and the aligned diverse interests of actors in a social network, by means of strategic management. Thus, social change can be enacted using negotiation and alignment of diverse interests of actors who might otherwise oppose transformation. Twum-Darko and Harker (2017) argues that ANT is not a firm body of knowledge that can be utilised by scholars without problems because the developers of ANT have revised or prolonged elements of it. The common understanding is that there are some simple concepts of ANT which have remained consistent in recent years and have been applied in this study. Given the problem, the preliminary literature review and the theoretical framework, a conceptual framework was designed to create a suitable data collection instrument. Figure 2 illustrates how through the lens of ANT; the phenomenon of poor service delivery can be studied.

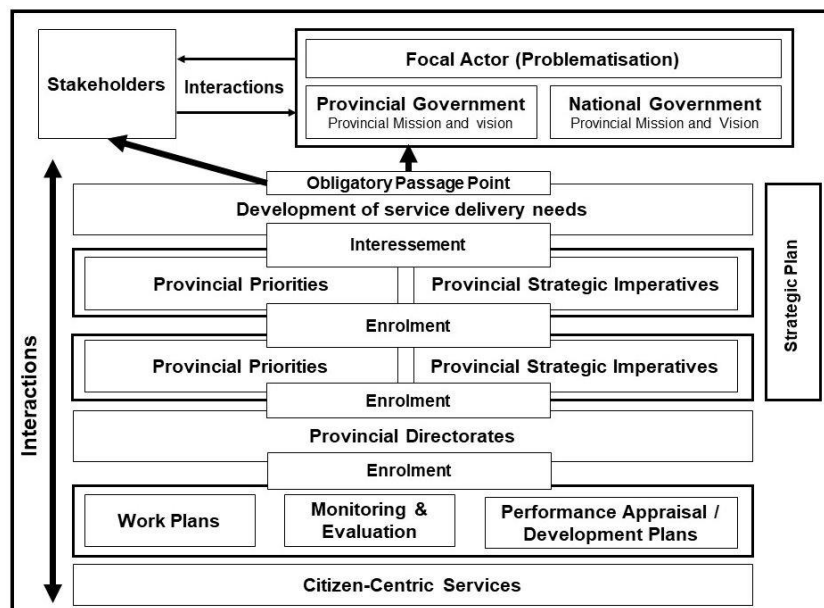


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Research and Methodology

Given the ontologically subjective nature of the phenomenon, it was considered appropriate, epistemologically, to adopt an interpretive paradigm as the leading research philosophy, using a mixed approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative elements (Yin, 1989) wherein quantitative data was used to test the reliability of the qualitative data to determine the truth. The mixed methods approach was made to conduct an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon from the inside rather than using a well-defined research problem and a clearly stated hypothesis. Furthermore, a qualitative approach provided deeper information of the complex situation that prevailed, but generalisation from the study proved far more difficult. Thus, as primary data, survey was conducted and tested the reliability of the outcome using face to face focus group interviews with relevant stakeholders from selected departments in order to understand and interpret the complex phenomenon of the strategic management's impact on service delivery. The secondary data was drawn from various reports and literature.

The Western Cape is among the most attractive provinces of South Africa and one of the leading beautiful cities around the world (Western Cape Government Provincial Strategic Plan, 2014-2019). It was chosen as a Case Study because it has a positive impact on the economic growth of the South Africa but faced with some challenges emanating from the apartheid regime, such as unemployment and poverty in disadvantaged communities in Cape Town.

Furthermore, the view of the Western Cape Government is that development must be established on a "whole-of-society" where participants actively partner with the state under the banner "Better Together" (Western Cape Government Provincial Strategic Plan, 2014-2019). As stipulated in the Provincial strategic plan, 2014-2019, the Provincial strategic plan is based on six core values, namely: caring, competence, accountability, integrity, innovation, and responsiveness. WCED was used as the Unit of Analysis of the Case as it is responsible for public schooling in the province, from Grades R to 12 and has the vision to create opportunity for all through improved education outcomes by means of the following: (a) Inclusive planning for, and administration of, the education system; (b) Providing education in public ordinary schools; (c) Providing support to independent schools; (d) Providing education in public special schools; (e) Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Grade R; and (f) Providing training prospects for teachers and non-teachers. WCED has an earmarked feeding programme and other poverty eradication and welfare measures to support teachers by means of providing basic conditions of service and other related programmes (Western Cape Provincial Strategic Plan, 2014-2019).

A sample of 26 participants including management was utilised (see Table 2) and the data analysed and interpreted to achieve the desired outcomes. This approach was considered suitable to understand the underlying reason, motivations, and opinions concerning service delivery challenges from participants. The sample size was typically small, and the respondents selected fulfilled the purpose of this study (see Table 2 below). This method further assisted with uncovering trends in people's thoughts and opinions and went deeper into the root of the problem. The selection of the KEF which represents the citizens was based on a snowball non-probability sampling effort across Cape Town, due to the sensitive nature of the local politics; and giving locals an opportunity to rely on subjective judgement.

Table 1: Unit and Objects of Analysis

Department		Participants	Primary Data	Secondary Data
A government department		5 Senior Managers	Survey Questionnaire	Annual Reports
A government department		6 Middle Managers and Supervisors	Survey Questionnaire	Annual Reports
General citizens from Cape Town (refer to the table illustrated below)	Cape table	15 members of the Khayelitsha Education Forum which represents the community 64 School Governing Bodies around Khayelitsha with partnership with KEF and represented by the forum and 64 school principals from high schools and primary schools with a partnership with KEF	Focus group Interviews	Annual Reports

The quantitative data gathered through a questionnaire was analysed using quantitative data analysis packages - a computer software package known as Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyse numerical and/or thematic data. Patterns, relationships/correlations, and frequencies that emerged from the data played a crucial role in the implications of the findings. In

addition, the qualitative data collected was analysed using qualitative analysis data package - Atlas.ti that kept the qualitative data in a scripted form and referenced to generate analytical categories and theoretical explanations (Fries, 2019). All data was classified, sorted, organised, categorised, and linked through the process of Constant Comparison to establish analytical categories. Content analysis was utilised which entailed systematic coding and categorisation of the rich data analysed, to provide meanings for the problem under study. It was acknowledged that although this approach may make it difficult to generalise results due to the potential of bias, the survey data was used to test the reliability of the the interview data; to remove the judgemental elements associated with snowball sampling.

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyse the findings obtained from the survey data. This entailed the process of describing and summarising the data obtained the unit of analysis achieved (Nakasholo: 2021:49). This incorporated analysing and interpreting of the sample data numerically. Reliability and Validation was used to improve the credibility, reliability and validity of qualitative analysis which entailed the maintenance of effective data collection and analysis methods (Kruger, 2017). The reliability of the data was ensured by producing the same results from different objects of analysis in the unit of analysis. Also, the validity of the data analysis was used to ensure trustworthiness in such a way that it related the honesty and the authenticity of the research data to the qualitative data (Akaranga & Makau, 2016 in Nakasholo: 2021: 42). This was to ensure that what was said or answered by the participants during the interview was exactly what was reported and disclosed in the findings.

Drawing from Arifin (2018: 30) matters of credibility in relation to ethical issues to highlight our claims for trustworthiness to underscore the integrity of the study were considered due to the nature of the phenomenon which involves interventions into the lives of the participants and their social lives in general. The seven principles (Respect for persons, Beneficence and non-maleficence, Justice, Informed consent, Confidentiality and data protection, Integrity, and Conflict of interest) of research ethics were considered to prevent the possibility of participants being put at risk for providing information that might be sensitive.

Findings and Discussions

Factors Leading to Service Delivery Unrest as Unstable Actor Network

The Khayelitsha Education Forum (KEF) consists of the members of the community of Khayelitsha, the SGB's of all the schools in Khayelitsha and the Educators of the schools in Khayelitsha. Therefore, KEF is considered in this study responses as stakeholders. The stability of the network of aligned interests depends on the four 'moments of translation', however, given the responses from all actors indicated in Table 2 above, the stakeholders raised the following factors as contributing to service delivery unrest and/or unstable Actor Network.

Infrastructure Planning:

- i. Planning and building infrastructure is a major area which needs intervention.
- ii. We complain to the department about the infrastructure and only then the department will react.
- iii. The WCED does its research of infrastructure intervention based on the desktop or boardroom exercise and do not engage with stakeholders, as a result the following challenges are experienced:
 - a. Insufficient space to accommodate learners with the existing infrastructure
 - b. Inadequate planning with regards to the migration of learners from other provinces
 - c. Lower learner attendance due to gangsterism in schools and surrounding areas in and around Khayelitsha.

Performance of Schools:

- i. At times we engage with school principals for fact finding regarding lower performance in schools.
- ii. The school principals feel more comfortable when dealing with the KEF than with officials from the Western Cape Education Department.

The challenges recognised are due to inadequate planning and lack of consultation during strategy formulation. Furthermore, during the interviews with the stakeholders, school principals and School Governing Bodies feel more comfortable discussing issues with KEF than with officials of the WCED. Drawing from the responses stated above, the recipients of essential services of the WCED as an actor who are supposed to be part of the strategy formulation sessions are excluded and only get involved during the implementation phase. This contributes to inadequate planning because KEF (actors) who are also the implementers and further play an oversight role, are not involved in strategic planning sessions of WCED. These responses suggest that WCED is not fully aware and informed of the real issues and what needs to be prioritised during strategy formulation. The data collected, shows that lack of consultation seems to a barrier in properly addressing the real challenges. Maleka (2014) in Dlamini, Mazenda, Nhede, Masiya and Tyanai (2019:7) argued that in most cases, SP are not developed and implemented properly. Maleka (op. cit.) refers to a number of reasons such as failure due to senior management failing to set aside the time to develop the strategic plan, as a collective teamwork product. Drawing from Dlamini *et. al.*, (2019:3), strategic planning process is the culmination of various integrative and consultative processes that clearly define delivery agreements for tracking the performance of an organisation. The emphasises is on strategic planning providing direction to organisations and the activities they need to carry out to make progress. It also drives business

processes success. According to Nickols (2016) in Dlamini *et al.*, 2019 (6-7) and given the responses above, it is agreeable that the techniques in strategic planning include some variation of the following:

- i. a strategic review or audit intended to explain factors such as mission, vision, strategy, driving forces and the concept of the business.
- ii. a stakeholders' analysis to determine the interests and priorities of the major stakeholders in the organisation (for example, board of trustees, employees, suppliers, creditors, clients, and customers) and,
- iii. an environmental analysis by doing a SWOT analysis in terms of external threats and opportunities, as well as internal weaknesses and strengths, leading to the identification and prioritisation of strategic issues.

It is therefore necessary for the WCED's senior managers, officials, and stakeholders to be involved from the strategy formulation and execution phase. Strategy formulation is a phase of strategic management where the institution creates its own vision or direction, defines its objectives, and sets a road map for an organisation to follow (Kruger 2017: 83). Drawing from Kruger (op. cit.), it is important that WCED and its stakeholders (KEF) share a common vision, mission and goals and set a road map to achieve desired outcomes.

Working Relationship:

KEF

The KEF referred to their dissatisfaction with their working relationship with WCED. They claim that the relationship is poor and not in accordance to their expectations as an organisation.

The community wants to be engaged on issues and procurement of services revolving around their needs; as a result, they have drawn attention to the following matters:

- i. *The employee from the WCED only attends meetings with the KEF once per term, which is not sufficient to address issues.*
- ii. *The WCED deployee also engages with us when there is an emergency which requires the WCED's intervention and the WCED district structure does not have KEF representation in their strategic meetings.*
- iii. *The WCED deployee only helps in filling information gaps and sharing outcomes of their strategic meetings.*

If the deployee is unable to provide sufficient information to the KEF on strategy implementation matters, he/she consults with WCED and then provides sufficient and relevant information at a later stage to the KEF. The deployee operates as a liaison officer between the KEF and the WCED.

Stakeholder Service, Stakeholder Satisfaction, Stakeholder Relationships

The survey results as discussed below, illustrate that the WCED is satisfied with stakeholder service, stakeholder satisfaction and stakeholder relationships. The respondents from the WCED agree that the department offers a good service to stakeholders. Furthermore, they indicate that there is stakeholder satisfaction and a stakeholder relationship.

WCED

This is a contradiction from the stakeholder perspective as they have indicated the following:

- i. *We are not fully satisfied with the services rendered by the WCED, due to our lack of involvement during the strategic planning of the WCED.*
- ii. *The nature and the way our relationship is structured is not satisfying nor according to our expectations (KEF).*
- iii. *We want to participate and be represented in the strategy session of the department and other issues that affects community education. This should be mandatory because it is not fair that the WCED discusses and comes up with implementation strategies on matters that directly involve us. The WCED has never invited any representative of the community to their sessions*

The statements above reflect that, those on the planning (i.e., WCED) part and the implementation part (e.g., educators/ principals/ SGB's) are not comfortable with each other, which contributes to service delivery or strategy implementation challenges. Deducing from the above responses, it is arguable that the views of the educators and SGB's do find expression in the formulation and the implementation of the strategy because they are at the front line of service delivery to communities. Given the responses, there is clearly a need for further engagements and relationship building which might improve the relationship, and lead to alignment of service delivery expectations and reduce service delivery challenges.

Financial and Economic Viability:

- i. *Money is not enough. Most schools in Khayelitsha are no fee schools and they depend on WCED to function. Only a few parents are contributing because most parents come from disadvantaged backgrounds (KEF).*

ii. *We are financially and economic viable (WCED).*

Based on the response from the KEF, it is evident that stakeholders (actors) are not satisfied with the financial allocation for their schools from the WCED. This has resulted in key fundamental matters not being addressed and executed because of insufficient funding to execute the plan, and to meet the demands of stakeholders.

Service Delivery

Sometimes, the department would do things without the district knowing (KEF)

This means that stakeholder's expectations are high compared to the services they have received from the department. This shows that there is a need for improvement on service delivery expectations and consultation by the department. It is important for the WCED to be transparent on strategic matters and service delivery processes of the organisation and to follow guidelines in terms of the service delivery charter and policies. Statistics South Africa's Service Delivery Improvement Plan (SDIP) focuses on providing a continuous improvement approach on key products which are in line with the Batho Pele principles.

These principles are meant to safeguard the effective and efficient service delivery by putting "People First" (Statistic South Africa, 2015/16 – 2017/18). Given the above response by KEF, it is important to recognise that the aim of the SDIP and the Strategic Plan is to meet the stakeholders needs and to identify areas of improvement to provide quality services to beneficiaries (Statistic South Africa, 2015/16 – 2017/18).

Creating A Network of Aligned Interests: Service Delivery Improvement

This study emphasised the importance of alignment of interests between managers, officials and external stakeholders for the stability of public institutions, communities and the economy of the country. Strengthening relations can lead to improvement of service standards which can result to the reduction of the service delivery unrest. The study intended to enhance the body of knowledge by proposing a normative framework to guide stakeholder engagement towards service delivery improvement within the public service in South Africa. Thus, the role of stakeholder engagement in strategic management of service delivery and other areas that can be addressed to reduce service delivery protests. To this end, the following steps are recommended to government departments and public institutions:

- i. Provide leadership to improve stakeholder engagement with managers, leaders, employees, and the community towards effective and efficient service delivery (McBain & Smith, 2010).
- ii. Provide the space for strategic alignment between policy, planning and budgeting with all stakeholders associated with service delivery.
- iii. Ensure the alignment of interests between management, officials, and community for the stability of the public institutions, communities, and the economy of the country to avoid continuous services delivery unrest.
- iv. Ensure that performance appraisal/management of government officials is linked to continuous stakeholder engagement towards strategy formulation and implementation.
- v. Ensure that work plans of public Institutions are derived from the SP to inform the activities of stakeholder engagement towards basic service delivery to communities.
- vi. Ensure that stakeholder engagement activities towards strategy formulation and implementation are monitored, evaluated, and reported to forewarn against possible service delivery unrest.
- vii. Ensure that the SP for service delivery of public Institutions are addressed.
- viii. Systems' preservation and enhancements of public resources.
- ix. Provide safety and security to all citizens.
- x. Enhance environmental stewardship.
- xi. Encourage economic vitality and financial viability.
- xii. Increase organisational efficiency, productivity, and improve internal processes.
- xiii. Introduce factors that will improve employee morale.

The above recommendations are summarised below as a general framework to guide government departments and entities to consider stakeholder engagement as a priority for successful strategy formulation and implementation of departmental Strategic plans to improve service delivery.

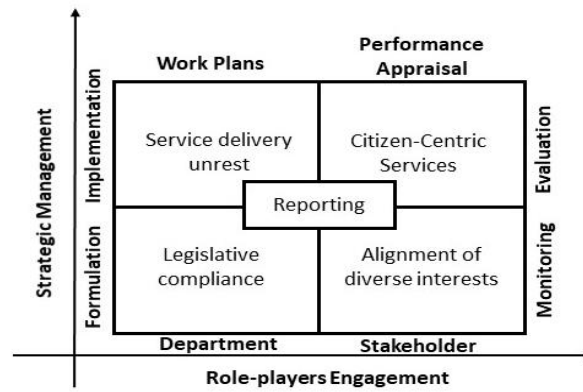


Figure 3: Proposed General Framework for Stakeholder Engagement

Implications

Planning in government is informed by the Government Framework for Strategic Planning (SP) and Annual Performance Plans (APP) which was introduced by the National Treasury (NT) in 2010. In 2019, the framework was revised by the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) with the purpose of building on the foundation of the initial framework and to reaffirm the planning logic and institutionalise planning to enable better service delivery (DPME; Revised Framework for SP and APP, 2020). While revisions were made, South Africa is still faced with continuous service delivery unrests due to inadequate services delivered to communities and its beneficiaries. The proposed general framework in Figure 3 argues that inadequate services are caused by non-alignment of diverse interests between the department as internal stakeholders and the external stakeholders (recipients of the services). It is argued in this study that external stakeholders are not consulted nor involved in the strategy formulation of the department, as a result service delivery is not according to their expectations. The proposed general framework further illustrates how internal and external stakeholders should be involved in the strategy formulation and strategy implementation of the department. Given Figure 3, it is argued that the alignment of diverse interests of internal (department) and external stakeholders (recipients of services) will prevail, due to stakeholder engagement from the beginning of the planning process until the implementation phase.

The study further argues that when external stakeholders who are the beneficiaries of the services are involved, they would then be able to engage and recommend to government which services should be delivered, how the services should be delivered and over what period should the services be delivered to the people. Given the findings, stakeholder engagement is the solution to the alignment of diverse interests which will have a positive impact on citizen-centric services and reduce service delivery unrest in the South African public service. Through the lens of MOT of ANT, the proposed general framework argues that, if all stakeholders are involved during the strategy formulation and implementation phases, they will negotiate their interest and align with the initiator of the network of aligned interests and by so doing will automatically own the process. It is agreeable that this framework will entrench all stakeholders into a network of aligned diverse interests with a purpose to achieve the desired goals and outcomes of government and government departments. The suggested general framework will also guide internal and external stakeholders to monitor the implementation of the strategy and ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved and safeguard their own interests. Additionally, the proposed general framework enforces the performance appraisal system (PAS) for Internal stakeholders such as senior management, middle management, supervisory and lower-level employees.

Conclusion

Given the proposed general framework, the PAS is realised through the implementation of individual work plans that will emanate from the institutional work plan, which is derived from the strategic plan of the department. According to Ncede (2013: 82), strategies such as fair performance appraisal practices, merit-based recruiting, training, and development opportunities may turn out to be a competitive advantage for the organisation. Furthermore, Yang, Jang and Cheng (2022: 1-2) referred to the fact that personal recognition is a powerful tool for building morale and motivation. The proposed framework suggests that internal stakeholders should play a leading role in monitoring and evaluating results and ensuring that correct services are delivered to the intended beneficiaries, in line with planning, budgeting, and instituting a policy framework. Furthermore, it is recommended that, reporting on service delivery should happen periodically and annually to all key stakeholders in the process such as the department, oversight bodies and the beneficiaries of the services. It is envisaged that this framework will entrench all stakeholders into a network where they will offer advice, agree on the services to be delivered and entrench stakeholders to reach a point of irreversibility which will improve the service delivery to the beneficiaries and communities, and thus promote effective service delivery and make it a best place to work. Smith (2010) in Ncede (2013:77) argued that people are more committed when there is a process for them to share their knowledge

and ideas. Drawing from this narrative, stakeholder engagement is for improved service delivery in the public sector and for the growth and the future of public institutions as it will have a positive impact on productivity and effectiveness.

South African literature pertaining to the role of strategic management on service delivery is lacking. For that reason, the paper intends to enhance to the body of knowledge by proposing a normative framework to guide stakeholder engagement towards the formulation and implementation of strategic management within the public service in South Africa. This paper offers the entire public service some direction as to the role of stakeholder engagement in strategic management of service delivery and other areas that can be addressed to reduce service delivery protests.

As argued in this paper, the alignment of interests between managers, officials and external stakeholders is vital for the stability of public institutions, communities and the economy of the country. Additionally, it is crucial to provide good strategic alignment to improve the good relationship between managers, leaders, employees and the community. Therefore, an interesting direction for further studies would be to broaden the scope to other strategic management processes, techniques and implementation tools that can be applied in the public sector to improve and align service delivery with stakeholder needs. Another direction of future studies could be exploring how performance management could be entrenched to improve service delivery to our communities, which in this research is related to the role of stakeholder engagement in service delivery.

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