



# **Effective Strategy Implementation Through Project Alignment**

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## **DEDICATION**

*I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, had it not been  
for their inspiration it would have remained a dream!*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

First and foremost would like to thank ALLAH for giving me the patience and ability to complete this paper. I would also like to extend my appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Paul; this thesis would not have been possible without his help and endless guidance. I am truly thankful to have such loving and caring family which I owe my sincere gratitude to them for being there for me in all times with continuous support and encouragement. Last but not least to all my friends for showing their support in numerous ways and having faith in me.

## **ABSTRACT**

Strategy implementation, alignment and projects are significant elements in understanding strategy. The competitive global market, changing customer preferences, computer and information technology are some of the factors affecting the external environment of the organisation. In the face of these challenges, the research seeks to illustrate the importance of project alignment to organisational strategy and establish the extent of the linkage between projects and organisational strategy to attain successful strategy implementation. This research takes the case study of three national banks in Dubai and interviews six people, two from each organisation. The research comprised a combination of conceptual analysis and qualitative research. Two self-constructed questionnaires were specifically developed for this research purpose. One designed for the senior managers and the other questionnaire designed for the project managers. Some of the findings of the research suggest that the notion of strategy pervades the lifecycle of the organisation; the divide between strategy formulation and strategy implementation is a fictional problem. In respect to alignment, it is currently considered as an important factor when assessing project success; though, to designate alignment as fifth pillar of project success along with the four acknowledged pillars would require the continual efforts of both scholars and practitioners to approve and ratify it. The role of project managers remains conventional in the organisation and project management is unproductively employed. Finally, the framework for strategy implementation must be cognizant of the primordial role of all the people that are involved in the process.

**Keywords:** Strategy, strategy implementation, project management, alignment.

## الملخص

إن تطبيق الإستراتيجية ، والمحاذاة ، والمشاريع هي من العناصر الهامة في فهم الإستراتيجية. حيث أن السوق التنافسية العالمية، وتغيير تفضيلات العملاء ، والحاسب الآلي وتكنولوجيا المعلومات هي جزء من العوامل التي تؤثر على البيئة الخارجية للمؤسسة .

ومن أجل مواجهة هذه التحديات، يسعى البحث لتوضيح أهمية محاذاة المشاريع لإستراتيجية المؤسسة وتحديد مدى الترابط بين المشاريع و إستراتيجية المؤسسة لتحقيق التطبيق الناجح للإستراتيجية.

يقدم هذا البحث دراسة حالة لثلاثة بنوك وطنية في إمارة دبي مبنية على مقابلات لستة أشخاص وبمعدل شخصين لكل بنك من هذه البنوك الثلاثة. كما أنها تمثل مزيجا من من التحليل النظري والبحث الفعلي حيث أنه تم إعداد إستبيانين خصيصا لأغراض هذا البحث ، إحداهما لكبار المديرين و أخرى لمدراء المشاريع.

بعض النتائج التي تم الوصول إليها من خلال هذا البحث تشير إلى أن مفهوم الإستراتيجية قد أصبح سائدا في الحياة المؤسساتية ، وبأن الفجوة بين صياغة الاستراتيجيات وتطبيقها هي مشكلة وهمية.

وبالرغم من أن المحاذاة في الوقت الراهن تعد من العوامل المهمة عند تقييم نجاح المشروع ، إلا أن اعتبارها كعنصر خامس لتقييم نجاح المشروع جنبا إلى جنب مع العناصر الأربع المعروفة، يتطلب جهودا حثيثة من كلا من الباحثين والخبراء للموافقة والتصديق عليها .

إن دور مدراء المشاريع لا يزال تقليديا لدى المؤسسات ، كما أن إدارة المشاريع لاتزال غير مستغلة بالقدر المطلوب . وأخيرا ، يجب أن يكون إطار تطبيق الإستراتيجية يستوعب الدور الأساسي لجميع الأشخاص المعنيين في هذه العملية.

كلمات البحث : الإستراتيجية، وتطبيق الإستراتيجية، وإدارة المشاريع، والمحاذاة.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Strategy setting is acknowledged by larger numbers of organisations in today's world, due to the growing competitive dynamic global market demanding organisations to be more and more agile and organized. Therefore, all organisations have their strategy set and written down to help direct the organisation over the long run. However, the hardest part is after an actual strategy is been analysed and chosen is translating it into organisational action. Accordingly, project management is increasingly developing into a yardstick way of doing business in numerous organisations; since projects are the tools of implementing the organisational strategy. Consequently, each project in the organisation should contribute to the business strategy plan.

Nevertheless, the aim of this research is to illustrate the actual importance of project alignment to organisational strategy and encourage the linkage between projects and organisational strategy to attain success as well as achieving the strategy plan. Therefore, measures of success do not merely rests on the four traditional pillars (scope, time, cost and quality). Moreover, because strategy is mainly selected and placed by upper management and the projects are usually chosen by other members in the organisation this research intends to demonstrate the organisational interface between strategy development and project selection. Implications of strategic alignment are examined not only as they relate to individual project selection but as they impact on project portfolio development and management. More realistically, rarely would individual projects be considered on their individual merits as contributing to the advancement of company strategy, but rather how they work together with

other projects to contribute, as an aggregate portfolio, towards the advancement of company objectives.

### **1.1 Research question**

How does the evolving role of project management in organisations help in achieving strategy efficiency- the degree to which the projects together succeed in fulfilling the organisational strategy?

### **1.2 Research sub-questions**

1. How do the top management in the banking industry formulate their strategic goals?
2. How are the projects evaluated and selected so as to fit into the strategic goals of the company?
3. How may the strategy implementation stage be improved so as to enhance strategic alignment at the project level with the organization strategy?

### **1.3 Objectives**

- Explore the importance and valuable responsibility of project managers in contributing to the organisational strategy
- Exemplify the importance of project alignment with organisational strategy in assisting organisations to achieve success
- Evaluating alignment as a measure of project success other than the traditional four pillars (scope, time, cost and quality)

- Develop an outline model to help align business strategy with projects based on the literature review and the research.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

This study is important because it tries to analyse the connection of some of the important principles that contemporary organisations are using to gain competitive advantage in the market. This understanding is necessary as it may provide the possible framework that firms may use as they try to create a niche in the global market. Thus, the actual significance of project alignment to business strategy has just recently been explored by researchers, and most of those researchers suggest the linkage between projects and organisation strategy to attain success. Many researchers such as David K. Anderson, Tony Merna and K.C Yelin (Anderson & Merna, 2003; Yelin, 2005) claim that the concept of project management and project alignment is not effective nor sufficiently explored in literature and business. Therefore, studying the importance of project alignment and exhibiting alignment as a new measure of project success along with the four acknowledged pillars in addition to the other to concept of implementation and project management will clearly help fill the gap in the area mentioned above by the researchers. Furthermore, as the era of information has transformed information into a powerful asset, an organisation that has an understanding strategy can further organisational goals and objectives (Minzberg et al, 1995; Nag et al, 2006; Porter, 1996; Schaap, 2006). Moreover, arriving at conceptual clarity pertinent to these concepts: - strategic implementation, alignment and projects, may pave the way for an easier apprehension of the complicated relation among these concepts. This in turn may increase the possibility of coming up with new paradigms to

further explain organisational success or failure. This study is significant as it explores a new approach in comprehending strategy implementation, alignment and project management.

Finally, this study would be of value to the organisations in the UAE as most organisations, whether banking or any other industry, are into managing and organising projects to comply with the growth in the country, especially, in the current period as the country is still recovering from the financial turmoil. Thus, organisations should be wise when selecting projects.

## **1.5 Thesis structure**

### **Chapter I –Introduction**

The introduction presents a brief background description of the subject matter. Research question and objectives are also stated in the introduction; as well as, the importance of the research.

### **Chapter II- Literature Review**

Literature review provides an understanding of the founding areas of this research on which the conceptual framework is based. There are nine streams examined of related literature, streams that include: **1)** concept of strategy **2)** The catalyst for change **3)** The concept of strategy implementation **4)** definition of implementation **5)** key factors affecting strategy implementation **6)** alignment the concept **7)** conceptualising alignment **8)** marinating alignment **9)** consequences of misalignment.

### **Chapter III- Research Methods**

This chapter looks at the methodology approach adopted during the study. It starts with the research approach, research sample and then research design. The justification and explanation of the questionnaire is also discussed in this chapter. Finally the chapter ends with the ethical aspects of this research.

### **Chapter IV- Findings & Discussion**

This chapter presents the data collected from the questionnaires and findings of the study are discussed and analysed. Figures related to the findings are also presented.

### **Chapter V- Conclusion & Recommendation**

Provides summary drawn from the research and it ends with recommendations and future research. This chapter also discusses research limitations that appeared during or at the end of the study.

In this chapter what has been provided are the introduction, the research questions and sub-questions, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study and ends with the thesis structure. This chapter intends to guide the reader as to what may be expected in the entire dissertation. In the following chapter, the literature review will be presented.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter a review of the relevant scholarly literatures pertinent to strategy implementation, alignment and, project management will be looked at to attain a clearer perspective and understanding of these concepts. Moreover, in this literature review, an endeavour toward comprehending the intricate relation among strategy, alignment and project management is deemed necessary as it becomes the focus wherein project success may be achieved (Okumus, 2001). As such, it is acknowledged that the necessity of apprehending these concepts and their relation is of paramount importance for organisations to attain their goals and create their niche in the business world and in the global market.

In lieu with this, discussion of various scholarly works concerning the subject matter of this research will be undertaken in this chapter. In the conclusion of the chapter, a summary of the review will be presented. Likewise, some gaps in the current research will also be given.

#### **2.1. The concept of strategy**

The notion of *strategy* is an ancient concept. The Greek term *strategos* refers to the leadership attributes of the general as he leads the troops to war (Artto & Dietrich, 2008). The term has been expanded in the recent years incorporating in its connotation managerial skills necessary in overcoming organisational difficulties and forces while at the same time steering the firm toward the attainment of its goals (Minztberg, Quinn & Goshal, 1995). In this regard, the concept of strategy as used in both the military and the management entail discourses concerning (1) relative advantage position in competitive environment, (2) establishment of activities that highlight means in attaining the goal and, (3) directed toward creating a mark in the environment

as success is achieved (Chaffee, 1985). This approach in understanding strategy gives emphasis on the idea that strategy is a rational decision, which has been consciously chosen and undertaken as the approach that will bring into reality the desired goal (Artto & Dietrich, 2008).

The inclusion of strategy in business is a result of the dynamic changes that are happening in the business world (Artto & Dietrich, 2008; Parthasarthy & Kotha, 1995). Before the 70's, scholars and practitioners of management focused on 'business policy' as a means of corporate adaptation to changes (Nag, Hambrick & Chen, 2007). However, by 1979 'business policy' has been relabelled and reconceptualised within the framework of strategy (Schendel & Hofer, 1979). This abrupt change introduced the interdisciplinary approach in the understanding and use of strategy in management and paved the way for the inception of strategy management (Nag et al, 2007; Parthasathy & Kotha, 1995; Artto & Dietrich, 2008).

In this regard, strategy is considered as the response of the organisation to external and environmental changes. As such, strategic theories have focused in elucidating paradigms that will help organisations establish business strategy that accounts for the firm, its external environment and, the firm's goal in achieving success in terms of performance, market share and growth (Parthasarthy & Kotha, 1995; Schendel & Hofer, 1979).

As a response, strategy activities are generally comprised of three elements – the strategic analysis, the strategic choice and the strategic implementation (Van der Merwe, 2002). *Strategic analysis* pertains to the assessment of the organisation's strategic position in the market (Van der Merwe, 2002). While, *strategic choice* refers to the formulation of the possible course of action, its evaluation and the choice among the possible actions. Finally, *strategy implementation* is putting into action the strategic choice which includes planning and the necessary management and structural changes to make the strategy effective (Van Der mewe, 2002).

### 2.1.1. The catalyst for change

Central in the notion of strategy is the concept of change. It acts as one of the important impetus that drives firm in conceptualising strategies appropriate for its context and condition (Parthasarthy & Kotha, 1995). However, the contemporary period is beset by conditions that are considered as unique only in this period and these changes have transformed almost all human interactions in global scale (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). These factors are:

First factor of change is *globalisation*. Globalisation has acquired various definitions and interpretations (Soros, 2002). However, generally, globalisation is understood as the removal of trade barriers among nations allowing for freer movements not only of goods, capital and services but also of people, culture and national identities (Soros, 2002; Balakrishnan, 2003; Fischer, 2003; Coatsworth, 2004). Furthermore, as globalisation opens the global market it created transnational corporations and multinational corporations (*Small Medium Enterprises*, 2007) which, in turn prodded local and national corporations to be more dynamic as local, international and global markets open and become more competitive (SME, 2007; Grant, 2007; Kumar & Waheed, 2007).

Second factor that acts as a catalyst for change in the contemporary period is the fast phase development in computer and information technology (Calder & Walker, 2008; Purser, 2004; Axelrod, 2004). This development is integral in understanding the contemporary business environment since computer and information technology is appreciated as an essential tool that can either make or break an organisation in the contemporary period (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1999; Berger, 2003). Moreover, developments in computer and information technology have changed the status of information in business enterprise (Purser, 2004; Calder & Walker, 2008). Information is central in the conduct of businesses in such a way that information

and knowledge are now deemed as part of the primary assets of firms and an integral requisite for success in the era of information (Calder & Walker, 2008).

The third factor is the changed nature of corporations in the contemporary period. Contemporary firms have recognised the fact that they have to respond not only to shareholders' interests but also to stakeholders' interests to survive and respond to the demands of the global market (Hemingway, 2002; Zolsnai, 2006). This shift is integral in comprehending business strategies employed by corporations. It highlights the truism that organisations are no longer just driven by profit and is removed from social realities. Rather, it presents the reality that firms are social actors (Tencati & Zolsnai, 2009). As social actors, they are members of the society where they are physically present and as such, their actions influence the environment, the people and, the society where they belong (Zolsnai, 2006). In this regard, firms respond to both the shareholders' interest and stakeholders' interests.

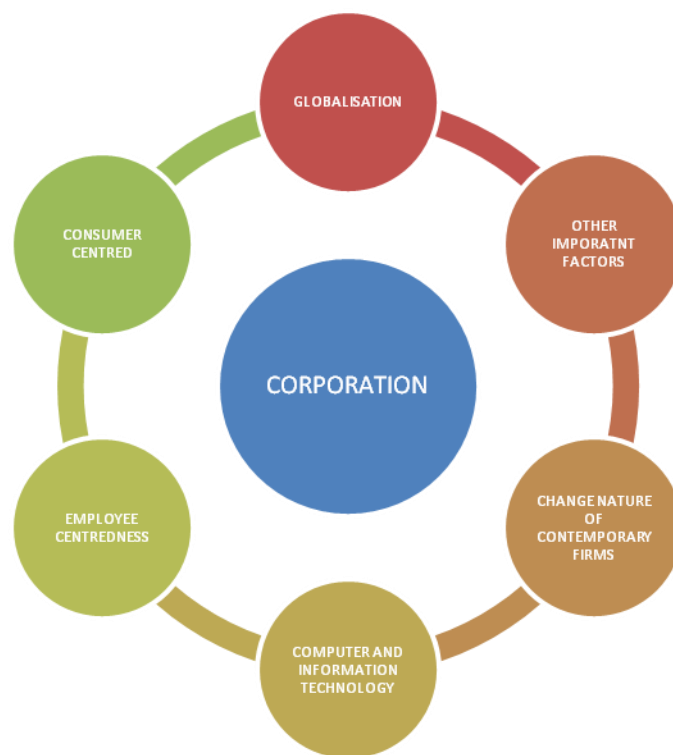
The fourth factor is the recognition of the central role employees have if success of the organisation is to be attained (Kaplan & Norton, 2005) This change is of primary importance since workers are now appreciated as integral part of the organisation and not as tools that are to be used in achieving the goals of the firm (Kaplan & Norton, 2005). The human centeredness of contemporary organisations has enabled the empowerment of the workers to the extent that recognition of their vital roles in firms are considered as one of the most effective strategies for success (Becker, Huselid & Ulrich, 2001; Becker & Huselid, 1999).

The fifth factor which, continues to define and redefine business strategy in the contemporary period is the empowerment of the customers (Hastings & McDermott, 2006; Mehta, 1994; 2000). Customers are no longer considered as mere passive recipients of information and products (Mehta, 2000). In fact, at the heart of all marketing strategies in the

contemporary period is the satisfaction of consumer preferences (Hastings & McDermott, 2006). In fact, no matter how changing consumer preferences are firms have to be constantly abreast to these changes as meeting, satisfying and, responding to consumer, to their preferences are the way to survive the competitive global market.

There are still many other factors that are essential in understanding the dynamic external environment of corporations in this period like political climate, virtual reality, issues of the physical environment and many more. However, the five mentioned factors are deemed to be dominant catalysts for change as it directly affects the conduct of business regardless of the structure, nature and location of the firm (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997)

**Figure 1: Catalyst for change**



SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study.

This figure shows that as corporations enter the market, they encounter the above external elements that require appropriate response from the corporation for it to survive and thrive in the global market. As noted, there are other factors that may be encountered by individual corporations in the society where they belong. These factors are generally considered as the basic elements that firms, regardless of their nature and location in the contemporary period, have to contend with as they try to compete in the global market. In effect, it can be impugned that the figure presents the contemporary condition corporations are confronted with as they engage in the market. However, it should be borne in mind that this figure only presents the external environment that organisations and firms are dealing with. The internal structure is not yet being considered.

Moreover, note that the degree of influence and the nature of the response from one corporation to another may vary according to the context and nature of the organisation. This figure is provided to show the complexity of the contemporary condition corporations are confronted as they thrive in the global market. Recognising the intricate environment of firms, the importance of business strategy becomes more urgent as firms respond to the challenges brought about by the factors of change.

## **2.2. Strategy implementation: the concept**

Recognising the implications to businesses of the interactions of the various factors of the catalysts for change, practitioners and scholars have come up with an approach that will equip firms and organisations as they deal with the contemporary demands of the business world - strategic management (Stead & Stead, 2008).

The concept of strategic management is deemed as a response that is adopted by the corporation as it continuously scan, study and learn from the environment. (Stead & Stead,

2008). It is not just an annual inventory of policies and strategies adopted by the business but, it is a continuous process wherein efforts of strategic managers are geared toward establishing 'the fit' between the organisation and its environment by developing competitive advantages (Parthasathy & Kotha, 1995; Stead & Stead, 2008). The competitive advantage is generally considered as optimising advantages, capitalising on company strengths and minimising threat and the possibility of risk happening (Stead & Stead, 2008; Jones, 2002). In this regard, strategic management encompasses "developing a firm's mission, deciding on the goals it wants to pursue, implementing strategies to accomplish its goals, considering what internal and external information is important, and determining how to measure success around its strategic vision." (Stead & Stead, 2008, p 66). In this sense, it can be deduced that strategic management involves working within the boundaries of the organisation as it creates competitive advantages for the organisation which, is concretely perceived in an increase market share and growth in terms of profit. Furthermore, this process is anchored on adaptive learning; it is founded on the vision of the organisation itself, anchored on its core values and driven towards what it seeks in becoming. It is in this framework of strategic management that the notion of strategy implementation is apprehended.

### **2.2.1. Strategy implementation: definition**

As the importance of strategy in the survival of corporations in the 21st century becomes undeniable, understanding the elements of strategy becomes integral. However, it has been observed that although there is a seeming consensus between the scholars regarding the significance of the elements of strategy, compared with strategy formulation and other strategy issues, there has been minimal discussion regarding strategy implementation (Okomus, 2001; Parthasathy & Kotha, 1995; Artto & Dietrich, 2008; Li, Gouhou & Eppler, 2008; Thiry &

DeGuire, 2007). This despite the observation that strategy implementation is considered as one of the most difficult challenges that contemporary organisations is facing (Li et al, 2008). In fact, in a survey conducted by the *Economist* involving 276 senior executive officers, it has been found out that 57 percent of the firms in the survey failed in implementing the strategies formulated (Allio, 2005). In this regard, arriving at clear definition for strategy implementation becomes essential as it may provide the parameters with which the concept may be understood.

There are several definitions proffered for strategy implementation. However, according to Li et al (2008), there is no universally accepted definition for the term. In effect, there are three categories with which the definition of strategy implementation is grouped. These are the process perspective, the behaviour or action perspective and the combination of process and action which is termed as the hybrid perspective (Li et al, 2008).

Under the process perspective, strategy implementation is defined as the process which, follows immediately after formal strategy selection, when broad objectives are translated into action plans, schedules, budgets and metrics (Claudiu, Flaviu, & Georgeta-Madalina, 2008, p. 106). Harrington (2006) defines strategy implementation as an iterative *process* of implementing strategies, policies, programs and action plans that allow a firm to utilize its resources to take advantage of opportunities in the competitive environment (p. 374). While, Lehner (2004) maintains that strategic implementation is not just a phase in business strategy but it is in itself the response to the imperatives of organization, strategic, and environmental challenges - strategy implementation becomes the goal for which the preliminary planning is geared. This is possible since strategy implementation is a process inducing various forms of organisational learning, because both environmental threats and strategic responses are a prime trigger for organisational learning processes (Lehner, 2004).

Another way of defining strategy implementation is through behaviour or action perspective. Under this view, strategy implementation is defined as the actions started within the organisation and in its relationships with external constituencies to realise the strategy (Varadarajan, 1999). It is those *senior-level* leadership *behaviours* and *activities* that will transform a working plan into a concrete reality (Schaap, 2006). Moreover, strategy implementation is seen as series of interventions concerning organisational structures, key personnel taking *actions*, and control systems designed to control performance with respect to desired ends (Noble, 1999). In this sense, some perceive strategy implementation as a control tool for the effective containment of middle management's self-interest (Guth & MacMillan, 1986). This is apparently a take-off from the agency theory and its application at the operational (mid-organizational) level.

Still another connotation of strategic implementation stems from the hybrid perspective which sees it as an *action-oriented process* that requires administration and control (Govindarajan, 1988). In other words, strategy implementation is the combination of activities and actions undertaken to attain a desired goal. These actions, however, are implemented step-by-step (Singh, 1998; Smith & Kofron, 1996). One limitation that has been raised against these various definitions is its silence regarding the value of the contribution of non-managerial workers toward the achievement of the goals of the firm (Li et al, 2008).

Nonetheless, these various definitions that are attributed to strategic implementation show that there are several possible means that may be used to understand strategy implementation. These varying perspectives do not deter the idea that at the centre of strategic implementation, whether it is deemed as an action, activities or process, is the truism that strategic implementation is recognised and adopted by the business for the attainment of a

particular goal or vision and for its survival in the competitive global market. Moreover, as an element of strategy, it can be claimed that in strategy implementation it is ‘all systems go’ regardless whether one appreciates it as a process or action or a hybrid. Since, strategy implementation is “a dynamic, iterative and complex process, which is comprised of a series of decisions and activities by managers and employees – affected by a number of interrelated internal and external factors – to turn strategic plans into reality in order to achieve strategic objectives” (Li et al, 2008, p. 6). In this definition proffered by Li et al (2008), non-managerial employees are already included, thus, filling in what has been missing from the various definitions of strategy implementation.

The understanding provided by the definition of strategy implementation has removed some ambiguities of the concept. By categorising the definition of the concept through various perspectives, it affirms that there is indeed no universally accepted definition for the term but, there are several perspectives open which, can be used in gaining an initial comprehension of the concept.

### **2.2.2. Key factors affecting strategy implementation**

Working on the assumption that strategy opens and establishes the ‘fit’ between the organisation and its external environment which, in turn, provides an opportunity for the organisation in gaining competitive advantages that is quantified through increase market share and growth, several key factors have been identified as contributing to the success of the strategy implementation (Okomus, 2001; Li et al, 2008; Artto & Dietrich, 2008). These factors are (a) *strategy formulation*, (b) *relationship among different units/ departments and different strategy levels*, (c) *organisational structure*, (d) *administrative systems*, (e) *people who are the executors of the strategy*, (f) *communication which includes the implementation tactics*, (g) *consensus and*

*(h)commitment* (Li et al, 2008). Aside from these factors, Okomus, (2001) includes *resource allocation, culture, and general uncertainty of the environment, control and outcome* as important variables in understanding and attaining success in strategy implementation. It should be noted that these variables are not extensive and that there may be other variables which, may be identified in the course of the discourse (Okomus, 2001; Li et al, 2008). Nonetheless, currently these variables are considered of primary significance as they have been individually identified by scholars and practitioners of the field as exercising essential influence over strategy implementation (Homburg, Krohmer & Workman, 2004; Okomus, 2001; Li et al, 2008).

1. *Strategy formulation.* Strategy formulation is considered as the initial phase or the first element in strategy (Van der Merwe, 2002). It has been postulated that that there is a need in having a clear strategy formulation as it provides the conceptual framework with which the strategy is to be undertaken (Singh, 1998). Good execution or implementation of strategy cannot overcome bad planning or shortfalls in strategy formulations (Hbereniak, 2006). Moreover, it is but logical to assume that a good implementation starts with a good and clear strategy formulation (Allio, 2005). As strategy formulation precedes strategy implementation, it has been claimed that it has to be sufficiently anchored on systems that can be flexible enough if there is a necessity for change and solid enough for it to give a substantial support for the strategy (Gebeur & Lee, nd). Being such, a clear formulation acts not only as the conceptual framework but, it can be seen as the mind or the very think tank of the strategy. As such, its value cannot be down played or ignored. In fact, Singh (1998) calls it as the cognitive dimension of strategy.
2. *Relationship among different units/ departments and different strategy levels.* The importance of the relationship among the different units or departments rests on the

supposition that each department/unit performs a particular function and addresses a specific need that is integral in attaining the success of the strategy implementation. In this regard, functional competencies, resource allocation, decision-making participation, coordination, possible conflicts and interdepartmental functional dependency are clearly manifest in the existing relationship among the units (Walker & Reukart, 1987). The interdependence among the departments creates synergy while maintaining the autonomy of each department as information and knowledge are shared among the departments. However, there are cases wherein departmental competition is encouraged by the organisation itself (Berger, 2003). In a study, it has been found out that although it increases individual departmental productivity, it has no significant positive effect in the overall productivity of the organisation. Instead, it fosters fragmentation in the inter-organisational structure which, in the long run is detrimental to the firm as each department pursues its own agenda resulting in uncoordinated and establish a hostile working environment as each department competes with one another (Berger, 2003). Implementation success is harnessed by coordination and communication among the departments and is hampered by conflict (Chimhanzi, 2004). In fact, lack of linkage among the department is considered as one weakness that has to be addressed (Loch, 2000).

Likewise, in a study conducted by Slater & Olson (2001), they have found out that having the appropriate business strategy match with the suitable marketing strategy yields superior performance. This study shows that link among the units of the organisation is necessary if it is to attain superior performance.

3. *Organisational structure.* Organisational structure is the “sum total of the ways in which the organisations divides its labour into distinct tasks and then achieves co-ordination among them” (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 66). The structure presents the integration and differentiation of the various works involve in the tasks (Van Der Merwe, 2002). Integration because it is requisite that co-ordination among those who are involved in the work be maintained while at the same time it differentiates and demarcates one function from another as the work requires to be broken down to several tasks each contributing differently toward the fulfilment of the work or goal. The structure of the organisation is normally seen in the organisational chart. This is important in the strategy implementation since it shows the “authority relationship in the chain of command, formal channels of communication, formal work groups and formal lines of accountability” (Van Der Merwe, 2002, p. 403).

However, this factor is also considered as the second most important barrier in implementation if the structure cannot and is not willing to adapt to changes (Heide, Grønhaug & Johannessen, 2002). In this regard, the structure can be described as rigid and tall. Recognising the truism that one of the most important gradients for survival of firms in global market is flexibility, organisations are now more open in undergoing structural changes. Especially now that organisations are facing a dynamic and heterogeneous environment, the need to adapt changes or shifts in the structure becomes necessary for it to be effective and efficient (Heide, Grønhaug & Johannessen, 2002).

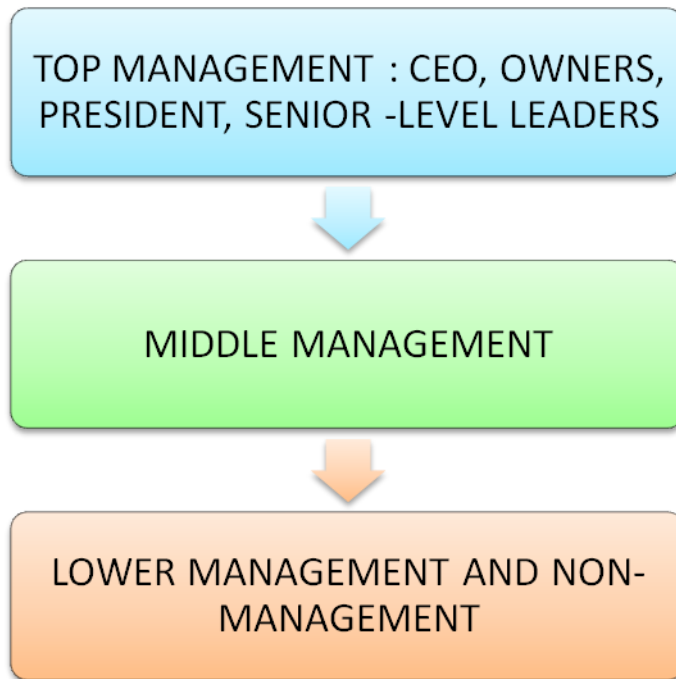
4. *Administrative systems.* Administrative system is considered as the concrete application of the underlying philosophy or principles that guides the organisation (Gupta & Govindarajan, 1984). Administrative mechanisms can be determinative as firms cope

with uncertainties. It helps in determining structural changes - decentralisation. It can resolve budget constraints and issues – budget evaluation. Likewise, it gets to the bottom regarding the managerial selection which is the locus of control (Li et al, 2008).

Govindarajan (1988) in a study has shown that alignment among the following, decentralisation, budget evaluation and behaviours of managers provide superior performance. This study is significant as the three factors mentioned are the focus of administrative system. Since, administrative system spans wide coverage, its effect in strategy implementation is critical.

5. *People*. In the context of strategy implementation, discussion pertaining to people revolves around the question who are the people involved in the implementation. Or *who are the executors?* While, some focus on the actual executors of the implementation others include the developers of the strategy in response to the reality of emergent issues that requires emergent strategies (Huselid & Becker, 1997; Harrington, 2006; Becker, Huselid & Ulrich, 2001; Smith & Kofron, 1996). In addressing the question who are the people involved in the implementation, the *ideal* is that everybody should be involved in the implementation of the strategy (Li et al, 2008). This comes from the supposition that as contemporary organisations recognise the integral role of the workers in attaining the goals of the firm, it is but rational to expect that for strategy to be effective and successfully implemented the concerted effort of everybody is a prerequisite. However, it is also recognised that there are varying degrees of participation required from the people involved in the strategy.

**Figure 2: Management hierarchy**



SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study

Top management has always been considered as inherently engaged in the formulation and development of strategy. In fact, this scenario is accepted as part of the dynamics of strategy (Li et al, 2008). There are now existing literatures that support the position that top management's involvement in strategy is no longer just limited to formulation and development, but is extended to the strategy implementation (Smith & Kofron, 1996). It is believed that the active participation of the top management in the implementation stage or phase leads to greater commitment to firm's goals. However, in a study conducted by Schaap (2006) it has been found out that there is weak empirical connection between the participation of the top management in strategy implementation. In fact, it is recommended that further empirical studies be conducted in this field to know the degree of influence and connection between top management and strategy implementation (Li et al, 2008).

On middle management, there are numerous journals highlighting the integral role of middle manager in the implementation of the strategy (Gupta & Govindarajan, 1984; Huselid & Becker, 1997; Guth & Macmillan, 1986; Becker & Huselid, 1999). Li et al (2008) has observed that existing literatures regarding the role and influence of the middle managers can be grouped into three categories. The first category deals with the match between the strategy and the leadership style of the manager (Gupta & Godivaranjan, 1984; Godivaranjan, 1988; Guth & MacMillan, 1986). The second category deals on how behaviours middle managers are affected by strategy implementation. The third category pertains to the relation between the top management and the middle management and on how this influences strategy implementation (Kaplan, 2005).

Gupta & Govindarajan (1984) claims that the middle managers attitude toward risk and ambiguity influences not only the decision pertinent to the manner of implementation but, it also affects the attitude and perspective of the workers. They have found out in the study manager's willingness to take risk and tolerance of ambiguity is fruitful; for 'build strategy' but, ineffective in 'harvest strategy'. Govindarajan (1988) also claims that the individual characteristics of managers and their experience play a crucial role in strategy implementation. However, in the research conducted by Guth and Macmillan (1986) they have found out that middle managers tend to protect their own interests in the implementation of the strategy. They claim that if the strategy will be beneficial for the manager's position and status, they fully support the implementation. On the other hand, if the strategy puts their position in quandary, there is an increase

tendency for managers to hamper or derail the implementation of the strategy, reduce the quality of implementation and even 'sabotage the execution' (Guth & MacMillan, 1986).

In the second category, middle managers' shifts their behaviours depending on what is necessary for the implementation of the strategy. This category shows the flexibility of middle managers as they adjust to the demands of the implementation (Li et al, 2008). Nonetheless, this category should be further tested as it does not clearly present the motivation of the manager in shifting behaviour. Likewise, it is silent as to how this shift influences the outcome and the attitude of other employees.

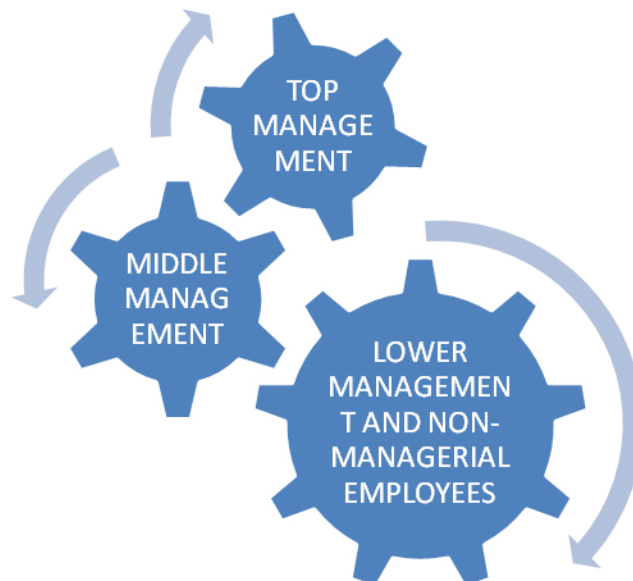
In the third category, the focus is the relation between the top management and the middle management. Middle managers expect support and guidance from the top management while the top management expects the middle management to question and analyse the strategy implementation. Floyd and Woolridge (1997) have come up with four managerial attitudes that define how middle managers react and involve themselves in the implementation. These are championing alternatives, synthesising information, facilitating adaptability and implementing deliberate strategy. For these attitudes to yield positive performance or output, it has to be balanced and capable of addressing organisational needs (Floyd & Woolridge, 1997). Furthermore, championing alternatives and synthesising information results into high performance if there is openness in shifts and networking capacities (Floyd & Woolridge, 1997). Whereas, facilitating adaptability and implementing deliberate strategy are effective if there is a balance between organisation's needs and flexibility.

Middle managers are directly involved in the implementation of the strategy. They are in contact with both the top management and the lower management; as such

they are in better position to question the top management and to encourage the lower management and non-managerial employees who are actually doing the implementation. In this regard, it can be impugned, that their position is pivotal in the success or failure of the implementation.

There are a limited number of studies conducted regarding the influence of lower management and non-managerial employees to strategy implementation (Li et al, 2008). Although what is known is that if there is improper communication, low training and insufficient level of knowledge and capacity in the performance of their functions and when departmental heads do not provide adequate leadership and direction, lower management and non-managerial employees may obstruct the implementation of the strategy (Li et al, 2008). In this regard, it is advocated that training and dissemination of information should be constantly undertaken as strategy implementation is carried out.

**Figure 3: The relation**

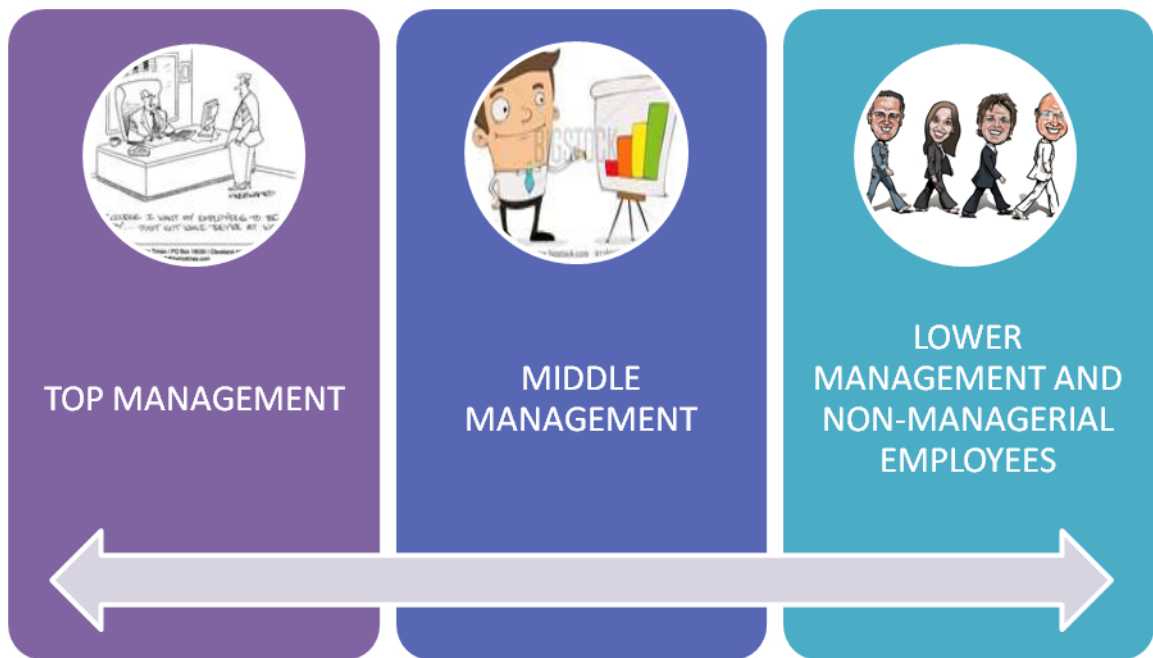


SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study

This figure shows that as the involvement of all the members of the organisation is necessary for the success of strategy implementation ideas should be free flowing from all levels. Sterling (2003) says that employees' involvement in the implementation is dependent whether they are perceived as part of the team or are just mere passive receivers of the project to be implemented. In this figure, the dynamism of the involvement of all the members of the organisation addresses the questions who are involved in the implementation.

6. *Communication.* The importance of communication in organisation is unquestionable. Surprisingly, there is minimal literature pertinent to the influence and connection between communication and strategy implementation (Li et al, 2008). However, despite this reality, scholars are in agreement that communication is vital for implementation of the strategy (Schaap, 2006; Sterling, 2003; Heide, Grønhaug and Johannessen, 2002; Andersen, 2006). Communication, whether vertical or horizontal, facilitates sharing of information and knowledge, critical in training and learning, it enhances consensus, it encourages group dynamics, it fosters shared values and attitudes, enhances performance, it affects the relationship not only with the external stakeholders of the firm but also with the internal stakeholders as well, and, it encourages autonomy and respect for the employee regardless of one's stature in the firm (Schaap, 2006; Sterling, 2003; Heide, Grønhaug and Johannessen, 2002; Andersen, 2006; Li et al, 2008; Artto & Dietrich, 2008; van Der Merwe, 2002)

Figure 4: The flow



SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study

In this figure, the arrow which, goes in both directions represents communication. This implies that communication is not a one way process but, that it has to be free flowing and open to all members of the organisation. Moreover, it shows that there is no one segment of the organisation that controls communication. Each level of the organisation may assume the different facets in communication- speaker and listener - depending on the context and condition. In this regard, the benefits derive from communication is optimised and implementation of strategy becomes easier because of the open lines of communication in the organisation.

In terms of implementation of tactics, if there is an open communication, discussion pertaining to the strategy is encouraged. Members of the organisation gets the chance to understand what the strategy is all about, what needs to be done, why is it being

done and how it is going to be done. In this regard, persuading the employees to participate in the implementation of the strategy is based on their own knowledge and understanding of the strategy and not just because they are told to do so (Lehner, 2004). Moreover, through communication employee empowerment is attained because employees are regarded as capable of articulating their ideas and are given the venue to discuss it, thus, encouraging innovation, creativity and participation (Lehner, 2004).

7. *Consensus.* Consensus is the agreement among the top management, middle management and operation managers regarding strategy implementation. Sharing ideas does not imply that there is an agreement. Consensus, on the other hand, is built on common understanding and creates a common commitment for the strategy (Floyd & Woolridge, 1992). Consensus is necessary as it establishes unanimity in action which opens the door for co-ordination, commitment and superior performance. Although, in a study it has been shown consensus does not necessarily speed up implementation but it ensures a more effective implementation of the strategy (Dooley, Fryxell & Judge, 2000). More than that, organisation benefits from consensus through greater functional and organisational performance (Li et al, 2008).
8. *Commitment.* Strategy implementation is going to fail if there is no commitment from the lower management, non-managerial employees and middle management. According to Li et al, the way to avoid this is to involve middle managers and lower management right at strategy formulation. Involvement and commitment “should also be developed and maintained throughout the implementation process. If middle and lower level managers and key subordinates are permitted to be involved with the detailed

implementation planning, their commitment will be likely to increase” (Li et al, 2008, p. 24)

Okomus (2001) states that culture, general uncertainty of the environment, control and outcome are some variables that affect strategy implementation. However, he does not provide discussion on how these variables influence strategy implementation. This is because current literatures are not deeply discussing the connection and the degree of influence between these variables and strategy implementation (Okomus, 2001).

As noted earlier, these factors are not exhaustive and there is a possibility of other individual factors being identified as influencing strategy implementation. What is significant is that there is recognition among the scholars and practitioners that there are certain individual elements that have an effect on the success of the implementation. The identification of these variables serves as a guide in the implementation, making the executors of the strategy aware of how certain variables at play -internal and external of the organisation - affect the strategy in particular and the organisation in general.

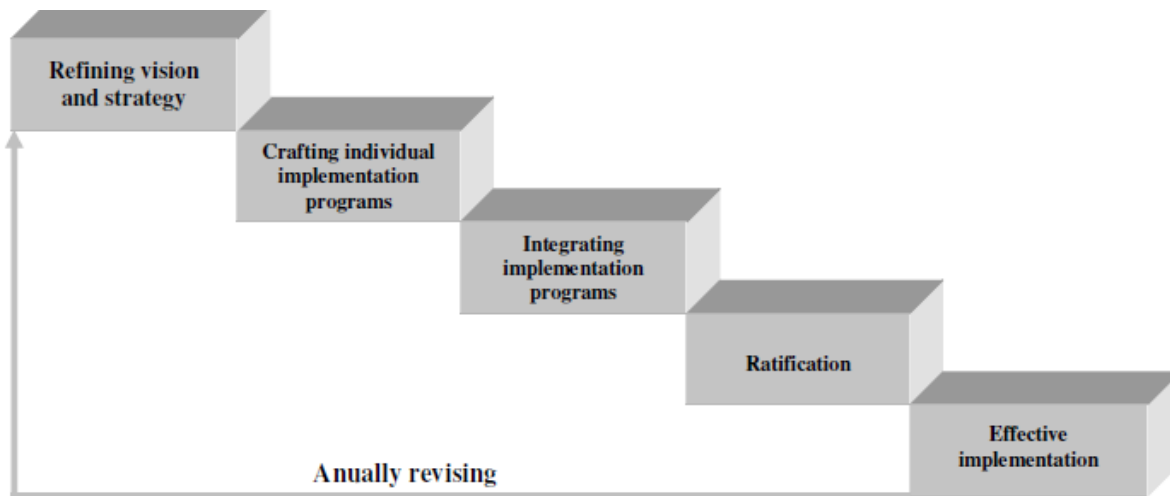
In this regard, several models or frameworks of strategy implementation have been developed to gain a more holistic perspective regarding strategy implementation.

### **2.2.3. The frameworks**

As strategy implementation is considered as one of the most pressing challenges that contemporary organisation are encountering, various frameworks or models have been proposed not only to create a bigger picture of the dynamic interaction of various factors affecting strategy implementation but, it also provides foundation with which individual organisations may implement strategy according to their own context and condition.

There are five steps in the strategy implementation process, which are graphically depicted below in figure 5.

**Figure 5: Five steps in strategy implementation process**



SOURCE: Allio, 2005 in Claudiu, Flaviu & Georgeta-Madalina, 2008, p. 107

Step 1 call for refining vision and strategy, which essentially is a review of the output of the strategy formulation phase. This step will analyze the results of the formulation phase and construct a concise report that contains the vision statements, a set of broad strategies, initial performance measures, a preliminary list of resource requirements, the results expected, critical issues expected to be encountered, and the underlying strategic rationale for the foregoing decisions. The end result of this phase is a streamlined and updated input from which the rest of the process shall take off (Claudiu, Flaviu & Georgeta-Madalina, 2008).

The second step involves the crafting of individual implementation programs with a specification of manpower needs and responsibilities, the steps to be undertaken and the costs

expected to be incurred. Step 3 involves the integration of implementation programs, wherein the respective program managers come together to discuss the overall effects of the programs put together. An overall consensus is arrived as to whether the project is feasible, affordable, and in line with strategic goals; and if not, what compromises or tradeoffs can be made in order that they become viable (Claudiu, et al., 2008).

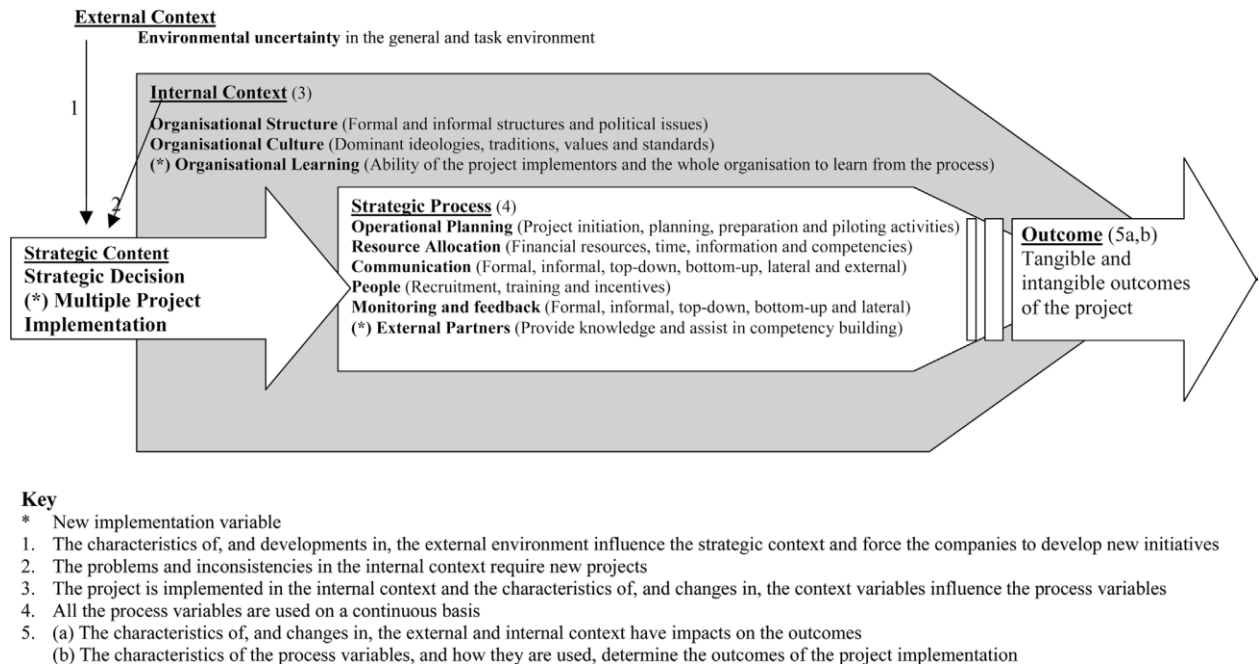
The fourth step involves the ratification of the strategies and implementation programs arrived at by the managers in the preceding step. Finally after the formal ratification of the vision and strategies, the plans could be actualized by communicating and monitoring the strategic plans in operational terms that may be easily understood by the first line staff (Claudiu, et al., 2008).

In effective implementation, eight guidelines have been developed by Claudiu et al., (2008), namely simplicity; establishment of a common language; assessment of roles, responsibilities and time frames; balancing the short term with the longer term; accuracy, usage of a common format to enhance clarity and communication; regularly structures and time-limited reunions among teams to share information and re-assess priorities; and link up of implementation activities with the firm's financial infrastructure (e.g. budget, metrics, rewards).

A similar, though differently directed, strategy implementation process is envisioned by Anderson and Cook (1995, p, 39), who see strategy implementation as integrated with total quality concepts. It is thus affected by the four stages of the TQM process, namely (1) definition and demarcation of the TQM environment; (2) identification of key project pursuits; (3) deployment of the project plan; and (4) application and improvement of the TQM plan. This latter view admits of a wider scope than the earlier definition, and therefore a more comprehensive perspective.

Another framework which intended to show the intricate connection of the various individual variables within the perspective strategy implementation is given by Okomus (2001).

**Figure 6: Okomus framework.**



SOURCE: Okomus, 2001

In this figure, Okomus (2001) presents the framework as having four parts: the content, the context, the process and the outcome. Included within *content* are strategic decision and multiple project implementations while *context* is grouped into two – the *internal context* contains organisational structure, organisational culture, and organisational learning. The *external context* is comprised of environmental uncertainty in general and task process environment. In process, operational planning, resources allocation, people, communication, monitoring and feedback, external partners and *outcome* tangible and intangible outcomes of the

project are incorporated. The Okomus framework is considered as revision of the Pettigrew framework which also uses content, context, process and outcome. What distinguishes Okomus framework is that it provides a holistic approach to strategy implementation. In the framework, it shows that the content is affected by the context. This is considered as an extension of the understanding of strategy since content includes both the internal and external context while generally strategy is apprehended as a response to external environmental uncertainty. In this sense, Okomus' framework gives a wider perspective of what the organisation is responding to as it takes into account both the internal and external context of the firm. Moreover, this inclusion is significant as it draws attention to the fact contemporary organisations are social actors and that they have their own identity as they thrive in the society where they belong and in the global market where they compete. In the same manner, Okomus (2001) emphasises that each variable is intricately connected and that a failure in one the variables may lead to inefficiency.

This framework address the gap in the literature wherein the relation among the variables and the strategy implementation is clearly manifested (Okomus, 2001). Moreover, the framework shows that there is a need for coherence and coordination among all the variables. Although it is admitted that coherence and coordination may be difficult to attain (Li et al, 2008). However, it clearly stipulates that the only way to successfully implement a strategy is for all the variables to be working together. In this regard, the Okomus framework has presented the notion that the intricate relation among the variables is such that there is a necessity for coherence and working together of all the factors to ensure successful implementation of strategy.

Strategy is an important approaches that contemporary organisation use to survive and overcome the challenges of the competitive global market. In this regard, it is not surprising that

scholars and practitioners of the field have continuously elaborated on the topic and have come up with discourses which, do not only clarify the concept but, pave the way for the inceptions of frameworks and identification of key factors that may be used by corporations as they execute specific strategy appropriate for their firm and attain success in strategy implementation and achieve their goals.

In lieu with this, alignment, another important concept that is closely connected with strategy implementation and necessary in understanding strategy will be discussed in the following section. The need in elucidating alignment arises from the supposition that strategy by definition is the ‘fit’ between the organisation and its external environment. In this sense, what is that ‘fit’, what is alignment?

### **2.3. ALIGNMENT: THE CONCEPT**

Currently, there is a debate regarding the nature of alignment, how firms go about alignment, why is it needed and what actually alignment is (Avison et al, 2004). As such, there is no clear definition of “alignment” although it pertains to desirable organisational features. Furthermore, its origin is unclear. However, despite little agreement regarding conceptualising alignment, there are several terms which are considered as synonymous with alignment. These are *fit* (Porter, 1996), *integration* (Weill and Broadbent, 1998), *bridge* (Ciborra, 1997), *harmony* (Luftman et al, 1996), *fusion* (Smaczny, 2001) and *linkage* (Henderson and Venkatraman, 1989). However, it has been observed that these synonymous terms are all derived from alignment and IT discourse (Avison et al, 2004).

Considering the paucity and vagueness in literature regarding alignment (Avison et al, 2004; Srivannabonn, 2006). Alignment benefits firms in three ways. First, it maximizes return of IT investment (Avison et al, 2004). IT investments are often seen as costs but, if the IT

investment is aligned with the business strategy and that proper coordination between the IT department and the business is observed, alignment yields positive outcome for the organisation. Second, alignment helps in achieving competitive advantage in IS. In the era of information, alignment increases the possibility of coming up with IT/IS that is more responsive to the needs of the organisation as it responds to both internal and external factors and challenges. As such, it helps in establishing and formulating strategy that fits the organisation and its environment. Finally, the third benefit that can be derived from alignment is that it enhances the economic performance of the organisation, increases synergy, it facilitates business plans and it increases profitability and efficiency (Ciborra, 1997; Avison et al, 2004).

However, despite the seeming advantages and benefits derive from alignment, some are criticising the concept of alignment on the premise that alignment is not in sync with reality (Ciborra, 1997; Maes, 1999; Galliers & Newell, 2003). It is claimed that in real life, the human condition is characterised by uncertainty and human response to situation is guided not by full control or amalgam of information but is steered by flexibility and unstructured thinking and action. Being such, alignment is deemed as illusory (Maes, 1999).

Moreover, question regarding measuring the extent of alignment is also raised. Ciborra (1997) maintains managers in their formulation and planning can always use the flowchart and smart art in measuring alignment. However, when one goes into the real world, there are no existing definitive measures which, can be used to know the extent of alignment. In fact, even indicators of alignment are claimed to be non-existent (Avison et al, 2004). Furthermore, question whether alignment is an outcome or as a dynamic process has been brought out. The more dominant view is that it is an outcome (Porter & Millar, 1985; Earl, 1989). However, the notion that it is a dynamic process (Ciborra, 1997). The seeming inherent ambiguity in the

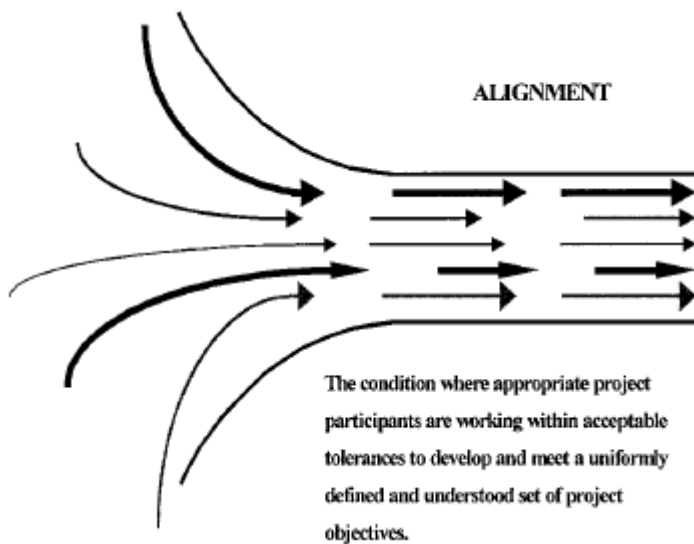
concept of alignment is confounded by the fact that “no studies focus on how organisations actually achieve alignment (though clearly there are some organisations that attempt this) or, indeed, whether alignment is the right way of looking at the issue. Most models of alignment assume that organisations are built on mechanistic principles and that management uses structured, planning-oriented approaches to business objectives” (Smaczny 2001 as cited in Avison et al, 2004).

In this regard, it can be impugned that there are still many questions and clarifications that research has to address regarding alignment. The issues that need to be further clarified spans from alignment’s conceptual clarification and framework to its practical achievements and application in the real world (Avison et al, 2004). However, despite the debate surrounding alignment, its benefits are undeniable and as such scholars and practitioners continue to apprehend and elucidate alignment.

### **2.3.1. Conceptualisation of alignment**

The current conceptual ambiguities regarding alignment do not deter scholars and practitioners in coming up with frameworks that will enable organisations to understand the rudiments of alignment. The following discussion presents some approaches pertaining to alignment which, have been developed.

The figure shows the conceptualization of alignment by Griffith and Gibson (2001).



**Figure 7: Graphical representation and definition of alignment (Griffith & Gibson, 2001, p. 70)**

In the above figure, the arrows adjust direction from various orientations into one uniform flow, a representation of the acceptance and commitment of the team to the overall project objectives. This is the end towards which alignment is intended. The project objectives must meet the business requirements as well as the overall corporate strategy, which are formed early in the course of the development of the project, which could critically impact on the project's overall success (Griffith & Gibson, 2001).

Typically, a pre-project team is composed of a variety of individuals with varied competencies and experience, representing diverse functional groups with different priorities, expectations and requirements. Alignment is the process of incorporating all the distinct priorities, expectations, and requirements and integrating them into one uniform set of project

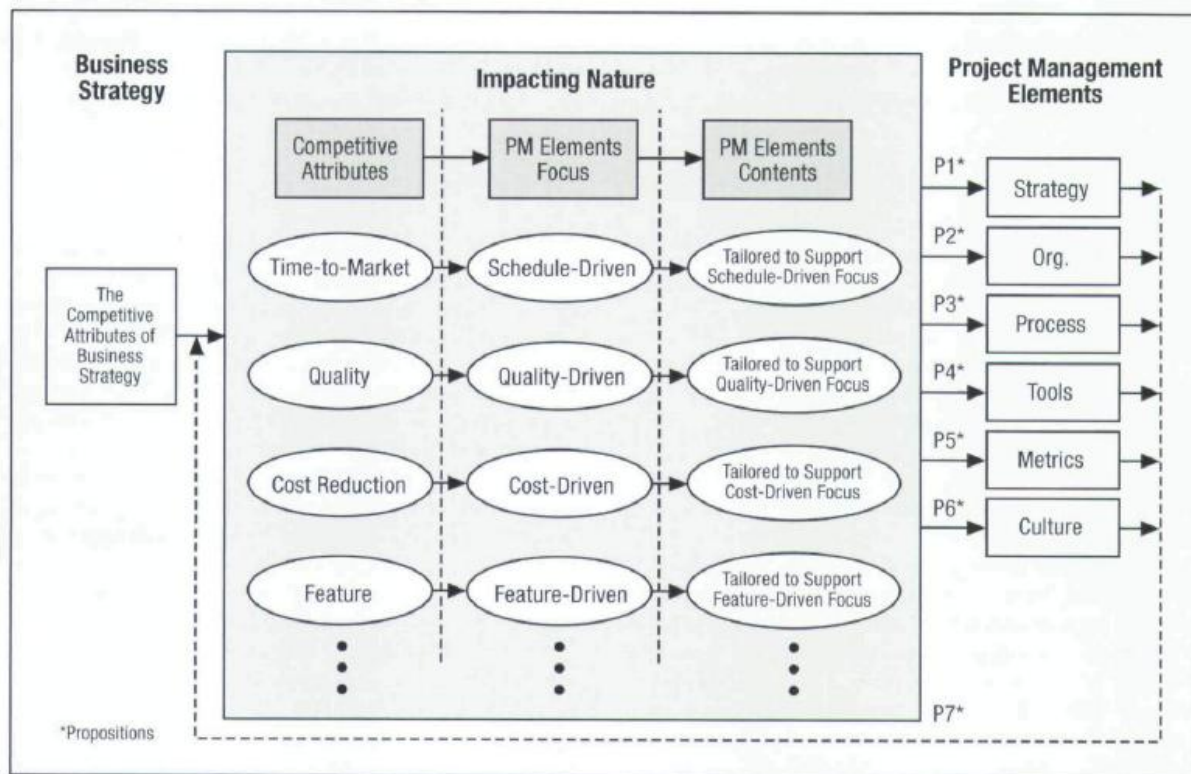
objectives that effectively achieve the business needs in the proposed project (Griffith & Gibson, 2001).

In organisations, business strategy planning, portfolio management, and project selection are the traditional responsibilities that are taken over by senior managers, while the project planning and execution processes fall within the responsibility of project managers and their respective project teams. When the two groups of activities (pertaining to those activities performed by senior managers and those by project managers and their teams) are aligned, then “the strategic element feeds the portfolio element, the portfolio element feeds the project management element, and the project management element feeds projects and the team’s execution” (Milosevic & Srivannaboon, 2006. p. 98). There are two aspects involved in the alignment of project management:

- (1) A two-way influence linking business strategy and project management (i.e. how business strategy influences project management and how project management influences business strategy), such as to define the nature of the alignment between project management and business strategy; and
- (2) A process that implements the alignment of project management and business strategy.

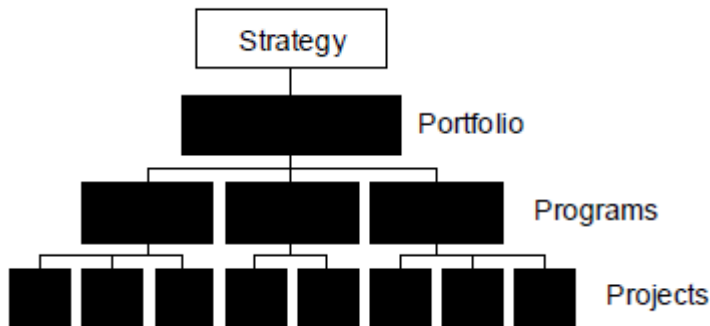
The following figure shows the theoretical framework developed by Milosevic & Srivannaboon that charts the nature and process of the alignment.

**Figure 8: A theoretical framework for the nature of the alignment (Milosevic & Srivannaboorn,, 2006, p. 104)**



The Milosevic and Srivannaboorn framework approaches alignment in the form of a matrix, where the elements are the result of the interconnections among competitive attributes, elements focus, and elements contents. The project portfolio model of Buys and Sander (2010), on the other hand, adopt a simplified hierarchical framework where the strategy is implemented through a portfolio of programs which are themselves comprised of projects. The hierarchical structure allows for a clear chain of command and responsibility in ensuring the alignment of projects towards program objectives, and programs into objective of the organisational strategy.

**Figure 9: Hierarchy of projects (Buys & Stander, 2010:61).**



### **2.3.2. Tools for project alignment**

The concept of alignment may be easy to comprehend, but in the course of implementation one is faced with the problem of how to actualize the concept with actual tools and techniques to create the so-called alignment. One effective tool would be categorization (Crawford, Hobbs & Turner, 2006), which effectively links project delivery capability with corporate strategy. It springs from the realization that managers will be employing limited resources to what is essentially a limitless host of alternatives. Not only should assessment be made during the selection of projects, but also during their completion in order to ensure that they had resulted in the desired outcomes – or if not, so as to determine what factors contributed to their failure to deliver, and if such factors may be avoided in the future.

It is also important, in the determination of which project portfolio provides the best alignment, to analyze if the projects are within the capability of the organization to deliver. The organization's management should ask the questions: Is the project within our competency? How should the organization's competencies be apportioned or assigned to the different

projects? How may the projects be executed in order to deliver most efficiently and effectively on its objectives with the present available resources and organisational competencies? To answer such choices, the technique proven most expeditious is to assign such labels or attributes as may provide a basis for the categorization process (Crawford, et al., 2006, 38).

Three challenges to developing the most appropriate categorization process include comparability, visibility and control. Comparability refers to the ease by which projects, though they may be of apparently divergent natures, may be compared objectively with each other. The standardization will pose a challenge, as projects can be highly complex, and the important attributes concealed. This step necessitates the reduction of variety and complexity of the way a thing is viewed, and to highlight the simplest, most important factors. Care should be taken to avoid rigid obedience to any set of rules, because lack of flexibility and sensitivity to other factors may lead to inadequate or inappropriate decisions (Crawford, Hobbs & Turner, 2006).

In evaluating visibility, it helps to consider such aspects as the scope and coverage of the categorization system, the non-project activities (operations and maintenance) involved, and the critical boundaries along which to draw distinctions, and attributes or metrics by which to identify such distinctions. It is during the process of determining visibility that lines are drawn between the items on which attention shall be focused (i.e., become visible), and those which would tend to be glossed over or ignored (i.e., become invisible).

Finally, categorization, by making certain aspects visible and some not, will essentially be defining the manner by which control shall be exercised. When one has control, it means that one is able to exercise his discretion over how rules for categorization are chosen, and how results are to be interpreted. The judgment employed in determining these measures of control is

based on experience, training, and the power of the organization. (Crawford, Hobbs & Turner, 2006:40)

The three challenges balance each other off: high visibility and comparability tends to reduce control; increased control introduces variance into the system and therefore reduces comparability; finally the greater number of attributes in the categorization process tends to increase the visibility, but it reduces control, of the categorization system (Crawford, Hobbs & Turner, 2006:40).

### **2.3.3. Maintaining alignment**

Once alignment has been achieved, it is a further task of management to maintain that alignment until the completion of the project, since in the implementation phase incidents occur that would tend to misalign the project from its original direction. The key is maintaining alignment is in effective team management, for which the following best practices are offered by experts (Michelman, 2004):

#### *(1) Connect each project to strategy*

It is a practice at Hewlett Packard that for every new initiative, two project managers are assigned to work together, one for business and the other for technology. Both managers are held equally responsible for the successful implementation of the project, meaning that it must not only be completed on time and on budget, but that it must as far as possible advance the company towards its goals. This involves weekly updates from both managers, from the planning to the execution phases, to the vice-president for strategy and development. If at any time upper management feels that the project is heading towards a direction inconsistent with the firm's overall strategy, the project is put on hold until its strategy is fine-tuned to that of the firm's. This tactic of putting a project on hold may entail additional cost due to project delays,

but it oftentimes yields much better results the benefits of which far outweigh the cost of the delay (Michelman, 2004).

### *(2) Measure and reward*

Metric and reward systems that are tailored to support company strategy lie at the core of successful well-aligned businesses. Teradata, a division of NCR, applies this technique at all levels of the organization and at all stages of a project's planning and implementation. The aim of applying metrics is to facilitate decision-making that is strategy-driven, fact-based, and has broad access to timely, accurate, and complete data. Additionally, applying the right reward system creates and maintains the proper motivation among project teams. This involves linking the team's total compensation to its specific results which they must relate to overall company strategy (Michelman, 2004).

### *(3) Wage war on short-term thinking*

In all phases of a project's development and particularly during implementation, there is a tendency to emphasize on immediate results and short-term gains. This is often driven by the team's (or management's) penchant to see some evidence of immediate tangible results, although excellent results in the long-term may provide no evident intermediate yields in the short term. The best practice to address the tendency to think short-term is to tie in individual performance with strategic goals. This may be addressed by providing each employee a document with a list of the company's strategic objectives, and asking each worker to list five or six initiatives he feels the company needs to accomplish in the year towards the company's goals. Managers then consult with their subordinates on their initiatives, which are then broken down into 90-day objectives, and then further resolved into action items. Managers then meet with their workers on a weekly basis to "coach them on their progress (Michelman, 2004).

There have been other studies that embark towards a more systematic approach through the “soft side” of project implementation, dealing with its behavioural aspects to ensure strategic alignment. Behavioural processes within organisations should be closely associated with the type of strategy or competitive behaviour that is desirable in the firm’s industry. Such processes would take into account distinct individual behaviour and direct these towards a tangible organisational and competitive collective firm behaviour. Strategic alignment is served when an organization is able to custom-build its processes to foster behaviour that harnesses individual talents and initiatives and harmonize them to attain company objectives (Lehner, 2004).

#### **2.3.4 Consequences of misalignment**

In any alignment process, the final stage should arrive at the acceptance and commitment of all members in the team to the overall project objectives as they relate to the overall strategies articulated in the strategy formulation phase. Absent the commitment of team members and endorsement of team sponsors, there is no alignment.

Griffith & Gibson (2001) have an interesting analogy of a misaligned project; they liken it to a car with the front end out of alignment. In this case, three situations may apparently result: the ride may well be uncomfortable for the passengers, the tires will eventually wear out faster than expected, and there is every chance that the car may end up off the road. A project team that is misaligned is likewise misdirected. The outcome of the project will not entirely be up to standard, participants are continually in conflict due to their varied viewpoints, and costs will run up higher due to reworks, revisions, and delays (Griffith & Gibson, 2001, p. 70).

In Fox, Donohue & Wu (2007), the consequences of HR goal misalignment in the projects leading to the 2008 Beijing Olympics were explored. The study discussed the failure of the People’s Republic of China to strategically align the projects’ human resource activities with

the national image enhancement goals. It was China's strategy to show the world that it employed fair and ethical labour processes that are globally perceived to be such, and then this would have redounded to an additional benefit to the country. However, China's failure to align the projects to strategy resulted in an image that was less desired, unintended, and disadvantageous to the country's image (Fox, Donohue & Wu, 2007).

## **2.4. Projects: the concept**

Projects are considered as vogue in contemporary business world (Söderlund, 2004; Srivannabonne, 2006; Hyväri, 2006). However, the concept of project management is considered as a mature issue in the field of engineering and architecture (Van Der Merwe, 2002). Project management developed side-by-side with PERT and CPM. In this sense, it has been maintained that project management is a "specific problem-solving method, of delimiting and grouping activities by using various types of techniques and methods" (Soderlund 2004). This perception of project management is in lieu of its engineering and architecture origin. However, aside from the mathematical side of project management (PM), the origin of the business facet of PM is attributed to the article of Gaddis which, discussed project management as an art and a field.

In this regard, Projects are defined as "organization unit dedicated to the attainment of a goal—generally the successful completion of a developmental product on time, within budget, and in conformance with predetermined performance specifications" (Gaddis 1959 as cited in Soderlund 2004). While PMI (1996) defines it as "a temporary endeavour to create a unique product or service" (p. 4). Still, British Standard 6079 (1996) defines project as "a unique set of co-ordinated activities, with definite starting point and finishing points, undertaken by individuals or organisations to meet specific objectives within defined schedule, cost and

performance parameters” (p. 2). From these definitions, it can be observed that the notion of project has well defined nature whose elements and parameters have been clearly set by its practitioners and scholars.

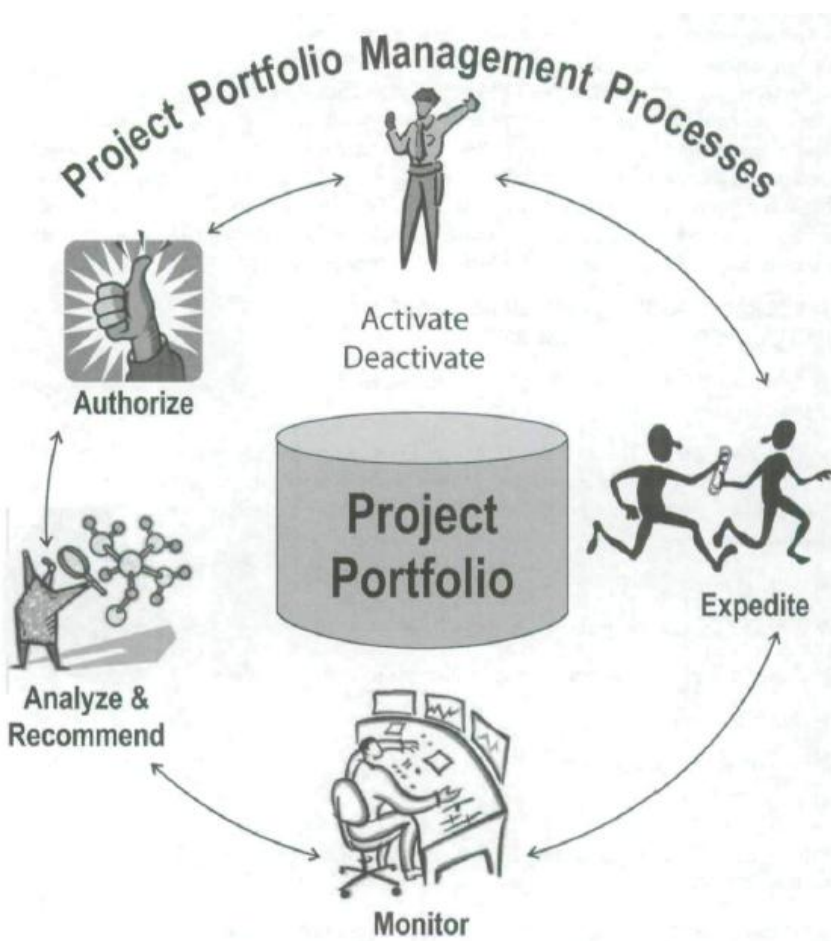
However, despite this clarity in definition, there are certain concerns regarding projects because the focus of current research is finding the success/ failure factors of projects while not much research is being done on important questions like, why projects? Why projects and project organisations differ? And what is the value of projects in the organisation? (Söderlund, 2004). In raising these questions, it does not imply that concerns regarding success/failure criteria are less important. What is being highlighted is the fact that as focus centres on success/failure criteria, which is an important facet in understanding projects and its dynamics, other important elements of projects are not given ample attention. So much so, that until now there is paucity of scholarly literatures addressing the above mentioned questions (Söderlund, 2004). As such, there is a need to fill in the scholarly gap that has become perceptible in project management literature (Hyväri, 2006; Söderlund, 2004; Van Der Merwe, 2002; Besner & Hobbs, 2008)

Projects are chosen because there is a complex problem that has to be solved (Van der Merwe, 2002). It is a way for creativity and innovation to be released as participation is enhanced while control is minimised if not totally eliminated (Kreiner, 1999). Moreover, it is an effective option to increase competitive advantage (Hodgson, 2002). If projects are chosen because these reasons (giving decision a rational element), why do projects and project organisations differ? Articles addressing this query points to differences in tasks and organisation contexts (e.g. Midler, 1995). However, deeper explanation of the difference has not yet been articulated and that there is a need to further explain the difference because there are other that

may be affecting the difference such as stakeholders' interests, socio-political dimension of the society where the firm is and organisational culture.

#### 2.4.1. Project portfolio efficiency

Project portfolio refers to the project mix combined in one particular portfolio. The efficiency with which the project mix is undertaken is achieved through the efficient management of the project portfolio. This is within the purview of project portfolio management (PPM), which is a set of processes to analyze, recommend, authorize, activate, expedite, and monitor projects to meet organization improvement goals. The project portfolio management process is shown below:



**Figure 10: Project Portfolio Management Processes (Kendall, 2006, p. 291)**

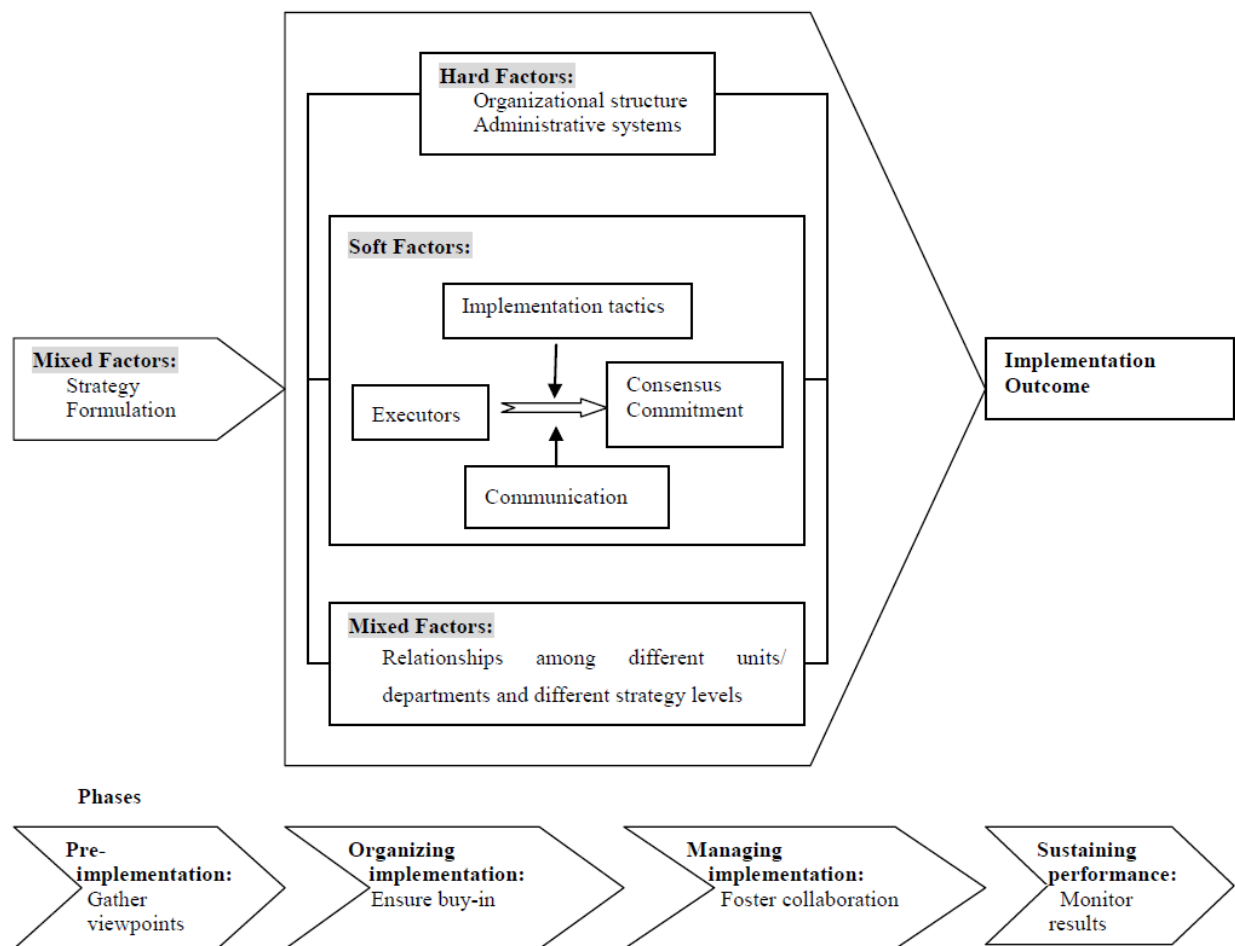
PPM has the primary objective of improving the rate of investment at the project level (Kendall, 2006), so as to contribute to the improvement of the ROI at the firm level. To do this, PPM seeks to ensure the competent performance of the following activities:

- (1) *Choosing the right project mix* – Projects must be chosen that will leverage the firm's valuable resources in order to bring tangible, measurable value to stakeholders. The choice of the right projects is critical as projects not well chosen, even if well implemented, will not achieve its objectives of bringing optimum value to the firm.
- (2) *Executing quickly, in the correct sequence* - People who actively participate in PPM must have an understanding of the organization's project capacity, and advice management when the limit has been breached. An overload of projects will dramatically increase resource multi-tasking and sharing, and would tend to slow the project implementation flow.
- (3) *Ensuring the correct scope* – Projects and content are aligned cross-functionally, in order that combine changes result in measurable improve in meeting organisational goals. The present trend is for projects, particularly those technical in scope, to find relevance in a single functional area, and in the course paying little attention to the impact assessment on overall organisational goals (Kendall, 2006)

Such project portfolio optimization techniques had been applied in practice in Hydro Ottawa, Ltd., in projects addressing the equipment maintenance and replacement in North American power grids. The execution of such projects as these must evidently align with the broader strategy of the company; otherwise inefficiency in the project execution could easily derail crucial power services to a wide area of the company's franchise area, resulting in customer complaints and possible loss of license to operate (Bennett, Lusney & Cliteur, 2007).

Portfolio efficiency, which includes portfolio optimisation, includes creating models that allow for inter- and intra-dependencies among projects to be integrated. This concept was applied by Al-Harthy & Khurana (2008) in the matter of five offshore oil field development projects. The key concept is to capture intra-project and inter-project dependencies, and to work out a system by which these dependencies may be explored to optimise the use of resources among these projects and allow their dependencies to work towards more satisfactory results in the projects (Al-Harthy & Khurana, 2008).

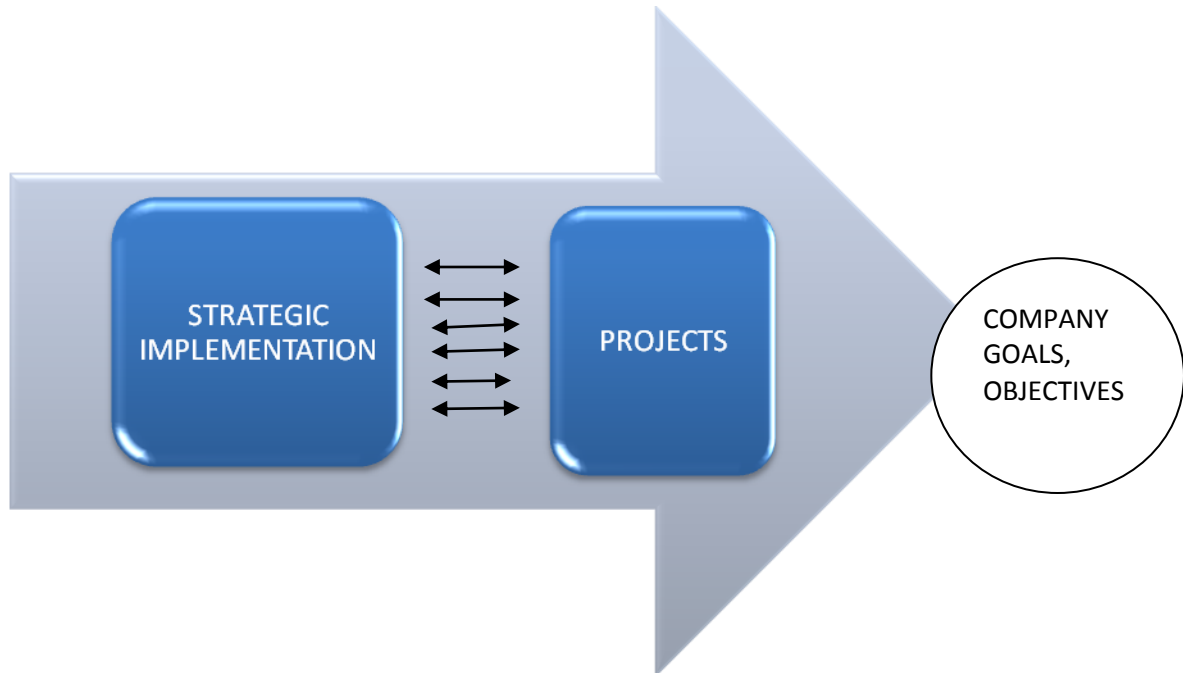
## 2.5. The selected framework



**Figure 11-** SOURCE: Li et al, 2008

This current framework by Li et al (2008) provides the most extensive discussion of the intricate relations existing among the identified variables affecting strategic implementation. However, that although there are many variables that are at play in strategic implementation, it is only one part of the whole process. The other two factors which are alignment and projects are not yet presented. In this regard, it is important to note that the notion of alignment is questionable in lieu of the fact that there are scholars who are questioning the reality this concept. So much so, that even claimed indicators of alignment are doubted (Ciborro, 1997). On the other hand, the concept of project is different. The notion is well-defined and has been used in the field of engineering and architecture for a time already. In this sense, the current relation among these three important concepts following the discourse of the scholars and practitioners of the field can be presented as

Figure 12: literature summary framework



SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study

This figure shows the current connection and interrelation of three concepts are presented in this figure. This figure does not present the intricate connection that comprises each concept. It is important to note that what is significant is that the interrelation among these three concepts is such that the actions and activities are purposive and is directed toward the achievement of the goals of the organisation. Sometimes, people get stuck into the intricacies of each concept that the whole discussion regarding the primary intention of these concepts are lost – to attain the goals of the company. However, it is significant that for the organisation to attain its goals and gain competitive advantage, the nuances of each segment be given clarification so that the intricate connection among the three be understood.

In this chapter it has been shown that strategy has always been part of human history. Its contemporary application in the business world is seen as a response to various factors that are

effecting changes in the external environment of organisations. In this regard, strategy implementation is perceived as the necessary actions/activities/process that organisations have to undertake in order to maintain and sustain competitive advantage. However, understanding strategic implementation entails not just understanding parts of the environment or the process which, the organisation takes. It is in fact, understanding the intricate relations of several variables that are deemed to be integral in the life cycle of the organisation. Moreover, it requires a look into the internal elements that influences the firm.

It has also been shown that understanding strategic implementation is only one phase of the entire process. In this sense, knowing the notion of alignment and comprehending the role and stature of projects in the entire strategy completes the picture. It has been presented that both alignment and projects are in themselves complex concepts. As such, it becomes understandable why it is possible for scholars to study these concepts separately. However, as the current demands of the global market necessitate strategies that cut across the pluralist global society, it becomes necessary that the intricate interrelation of the three concepts of strategic implementation, alignment and projects be understood in order for organisations to attain competitive advantage.

In the following chapter, the methodology employed for the research is presented.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter provides a structure on how the data was collected and examined to find the answer to the research question. The section begins with the data sources, then the applied research approach, research design and subsequently, the methods and tools used in the research will be presented. Finally, it ends with the ethical considerations undertaken by the research.

#### **3.1 Data sources**

The paper began with secondary research, which was the literature review as the foundation for this study. Various types of secondary data were utilized such as books, databases, articles and the web were searched to gain more knowledge about the topic and what other scholars have documented. This was achieved using a combination of key terms related to the study: - strategy, strategy implementation project alignment, project success and misalignment. The advantage of using secondary data is that it can be used as the baseline to compare the primary data collected from this research. Furthermore, to take this research a step further a Primary research was also adopted as it entails first hand information or data derived from people who participated in the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In this regard, the data gathered from the interviews conducted served as the primary basis for the research.

#### **3.2 Research approach**

Most often researchers tend to use either qualitative or quantitative approach for a research study. However, this research takes the qualitative approach to provide greater depth into the

question that this study intends to address, making it the most suitable way to achieve the objectives of the study. This is because for example, if quantitative approach was used there is a chance of leaving out factors which are crucial to the real understanding of the problem.

Basically, qualitative research goes beyond the objective, numerical hard data derived from a quantitative research, it is considered more of a scientific research (Golafshani, 2003). It approaches an inquiry via understanding it within the actual context from where the phenomenon happened. It does not intend to put numerical values to the phenomenon but it seeks to elaborate the event out from how people actually experienced it (Patton 2001; Seale, 1999; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As such, qualitative research is conducted in "real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). In this regard, qualitative research, broadly defined, is "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Instead, it is the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the "phenomenon of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2002, p. 39).

The decision to use qualitative research over quantitative research does not imply that one form of research is better over another. What it simply shows the truism that there are many approaches in arriving at truth, that there are many ways with which a question may be addressed (Golafshani, 2003). As such, the decision to undertake a qualitative research for this study rests on presupposition that this research seeks to understand the intricate and intertwined connection among strategic implementation, business strategy, alignment, project management and success via the actual experience of people who are involved in such transactions as they perform their assigned tasks (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The advantage of embracing this type of research is that it creates openness because it promotes people to elaborate on their responses, which is a

major advantage as it can untie new areas that were not initially thought of or considered by the researcher.

### **3.3 Research design**

There are three recognized methods for collecting qualitative data (The national science foundation, 2010):-

- In-depth interviews
- Focus groups
- Observation

However, this research implemented the in-depth interviews and observation methods to investigate- “how does the evolving role of project management in organisations help in achieving strategy efficiency- the degree to which the projects together succeed in fulfilling the organisational strategy”.

In depth-interviews provides more comprehensive data due to the quality of information gathered. This is because the interviewee is not restricted in expressing his/her thought and feelings which elicits rich detailed information. As a result of face to face communication that takes place during the interview adds advantages to the interviewer as it permits them to clarify and help explain questions to the participant which amplifies the likelihood of constructive responses. Here are four conditions where in depth-interviews are deemed appropriate as stated by Patton (2001):-

- 1) Complex subject matter
- 2) Detailed information sought

- 3) Busy, high status respondents and
- 4) Sensitive subject matter

The above conditions apply to this research as it touches on a sensitive matter, the strategy of an organisation. Secondly, detailed sum of information is required from the participant in order to come-up with an effective and efficient study. Thirdly, the study subjects of this research are senior managers and project managers known as busy individuals due to their role within an organisation and high status. Lastly, exploring the organisational strategy, projects and alignment of an organisation is considerably sensitive matter that not all organisations would like share.

### **3.4 Interview techniques**

One of the interview techniques used in this research's in-depth interviews is the extensive probing method. Questions related to this paper's issue were developed using open-ended questions, as well as suggested probes for following up on significant topics were also exploit (loftland and loftland, 1995). The interviewer used the skill of being an exceptional listener and inquirer by avoiding a two-way communication style (Patton, 2002).

Observation was the other qualitative method used in the research study. This method provides the assessor a chance to accumulate information on wide range of behaviours and processes to capture a range of interactions and to explicitly investigate the topic (The national science foundation, 2010). So using this method will also enhance the research to examine other aspects that take place in the organisation such as office layouts, interaction among employees, reports and other non verbal signs, which will convey a great deal about the organisation.

### **3.5 Research sample**

This research took place in three organisations in the banking industry in the UAE and specifically Dubai. All banks are eminent banks in the country with respectable number of experience. This industry has been chosen because Dubai is a flourishing city that underwent rapid development in past couple of years making it one of the important business hubs in the world; accordingly, there has been increase in the number of banks in the country. Banks organizes and manages many projects internally and externally making it a suitable candidate for this research.

### **3.6 Subject of study**

- Project managers- they are an essential part of the study as this research revolves about their role within an organisation. In terms of how their currently operating, whether there part of the decision making, how do they mange projects and their insights and understanding about project success and alignment.
- Organisation- the organisation is also a vital part of the study since it's the environment those senior managers and PM mangers work in, usually under certain culture and guiding principles that may affect their role.
- Senior managers – they have an adequate part of this study as they have the highest level of control of determining what, how and when things take place in the organisation. Their currently are an important variable in this research due to the span of authority and control they hold.

### **3.7 Interview schedule**

Given that the framework of this research the study focused on three banks in Dubai. Three senior managers and three project managers from each bank were interviewed. Sampling individuals coming from three different banks gave a better sense of the matter and added multiple views, which assisted the research from being bias. Time given to each interview was 60 minutes to 75 minutes maximum. The interviews were semi-structured which helped guide the interviewee on the relevant information required; yet not controlling. This allowed the respondent the advantage of reflecting their feeling and attitude, and also the ability to feel free to add extra information that the researcher might have neglected in the interview questions. Two different interview questions were designed for this research, one consisting of 16 questions for the senior managers and the other one with 12 questions for the project managers. In addition, two instruments were used to record the data: a tape –recorder and note taking. Interviews in the three banks were scheduled in different days in order to have enough time to comprehend and analyse the data collected.

### **3.8 Pilot interview**

A pilot interview had a significant impact on building the interview questions for this study. This is because conducting a pilot interview is an essential stage in verifying the clarity and quality of the questions used in the interview. Thus, it was important to choose the right person for this interview, a senior manager from a commercial bank has volunteered to participate in pilot interview. This was conduct approximately a week prior to the formal interviews to help bring in valuable insights and improvements to the actual interview. Here are the points of improvements noted after the interview:-

- Increase in the number of questions – to have comprehensive answers that cover the research purpose.
- Increase in the duration of the interview- as initially thought 30 minutes were enough time to collect the data.
- The interviewee recommended a short introduction about the objective and aim of the research paper which will help increase the interviewees' awareness and interest.

### **3.9 Instrument justification& alignment**

There wasn't a suitable instrument available to measure the research concepts adequately; consequently, the following questionnaire was created. To ensure justification each question in the instrument is validated, by a given explanation. Furthermore, the following concepts: alignment, strategy implementation, project management and success were aligned to the questions in the instrument below to ensure that the instrument used supports and addresses the research purpose.

#### **Interview questions:**

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Nationality:**

**Education level:**

- 1) How long have you been holding this position? What are the entailed functions of your office?**
- 2) Are you aware of the organisational strategy?**

*These questions are necessary in order to establish the length of service and experience of the participant in the bank and the banking industry.*

**3) How are projects assigned to you?**

*This question addresses the communication and culture of an organisation which can unravel a lot about how things run in an organisation.*

**4) How to you view strategy implementation, alignment and project management?**

*The aim is to get the opinion of the participant regarding the concepts of projects, strategy implantation and alignment.*

**5) Do you see strategy implementation, alignment and project management as necessary in every project? Why? How?**

**6) Is it important that these concepts be connected with the overall goals of the bank? Why? How?**

*These questions intend to know whether the participants perceives these importance of the following concepts as connected with other projects in the bank and with the goals of the bank as whole.*

**7) Can you share some of your experiences on how these three concepts have worked in one of the projects that you have been involved?**

*To give genuine example of how the concepts have worked in previous projects, this will give valuable insights to the research.*

**8) What is the extent of your participation in strategy planning and implementation of a project?**

**9) Do you have regular meeting with management**

*Intends to gain insight regarding the relationship between the management and project managers.*

**10) Base on what you have shared, how can the relation of the three concepts can be further clarified, strengthen?**

*Obtain the participants perception on ways to strengthen the connection between the three concepts.*

**11) How do you define project success?**

**12) To what extent do projects affect the organisational success?**

*These questions assist the understanding of success and the impact of projects on the organisation's accomplishments.*

However, there are few additional questions which were targeted solely to senior management in relation to their roles.

**1) Do you have regular meetings with departments, project managers?**

*Intends to gain insight regarding the relationship between the management and project managers.*

**2) When selecting a project do you consider the project as a separate unit?**

**3) How do you prioritize the project among other projects?**

*These two questions look at how does the management view project and what criteria, processes or even framework do they use when selecting projects*

**4) Do you align projects to the organisational strategy? , if so how?**

**5) Against what is the output of a project is evaluated in term of matching requirements?**

*These two questions intend to investigate how the management ensures alignment and the evaluation of projects.*

**6) How to you plan, analyze and evaluate a project?**

*This question illustrates the methods adopted by the participants*

### **3.10 Ethical consideration**

Nevertheless, to ensure human subjects protection and to ensure that the answers are genuine it is guaranteed that the data collected from all interviewees will be confidential and to be used only for research purpose. This is done in respect for the autonomy, freedom and dignity of the interviewee (De Feyter, 2005). Therefore, all banks and participants names have been renamed.

### **3.11 Limitations**

An evident limitation in this study is the small number of participants due to the limited timeframe. As there is a robust UAE banking industry, interviewing 6 practitioners of the field is not enough to represent even 10 percent of the population. However, since this is a qualitative research, technically, the number of participants palter compared with the quality of the narratives that the participants shared. Nonetheless, recognizing the impact of this limitation, a minimum of 10 years experience in the industry was posed so that there will be more for the participant to share.

### **3.12 Data analysis**

This phase looks at interpreting the qualitative data gathered from interviews; note taking and observation into a form of justification and clarification of the findings obtained from the participants and the examined situation. Coding is the qualitative data procedure used in this research, where the data gathered are coded based on concepts/categories. This was adopted to compose more straightforward findings, making it easier to read and interpret. The research also includes raw data (i.e. direct quotation) from the participants which adds more credibility to the data presented. (University of the west England, 2009)

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In the last three chapters, the introduction, literature review and the methodology used in the conduct of the study has been presented. In the literature review, it has been shown that the current body of knowledge regarding strategy implementation, alignment, project management and efficiency is complex and the understanding of these concepts varies among scholars. The reason for this is based on the premise that as scholars disagree as to the origin and nature of alignment, there is agreement with regards to the notion as to what projects are and what strategy is. However, despite this initial difference what is significant is that most authors agree that these three elements are vital for the survival of business firms in the contemporary global market.

Recognising the centrality of the intricate relation of these concepts in the business world, the following are the findings of this research.

The findings and discussions for this research cover two grounds, the theoretical findings of the research and the other part deals with the empirical findings of the research which, have been drawn from the conducted interviews. Both parts are presented here as an integrated discussion of the eight key findings from the research.

First, according to the literature the concept of strategy has long been part of human history (Artto & Dietrich, 2008; Van Der Merwe, 2002). From the ancient period until the

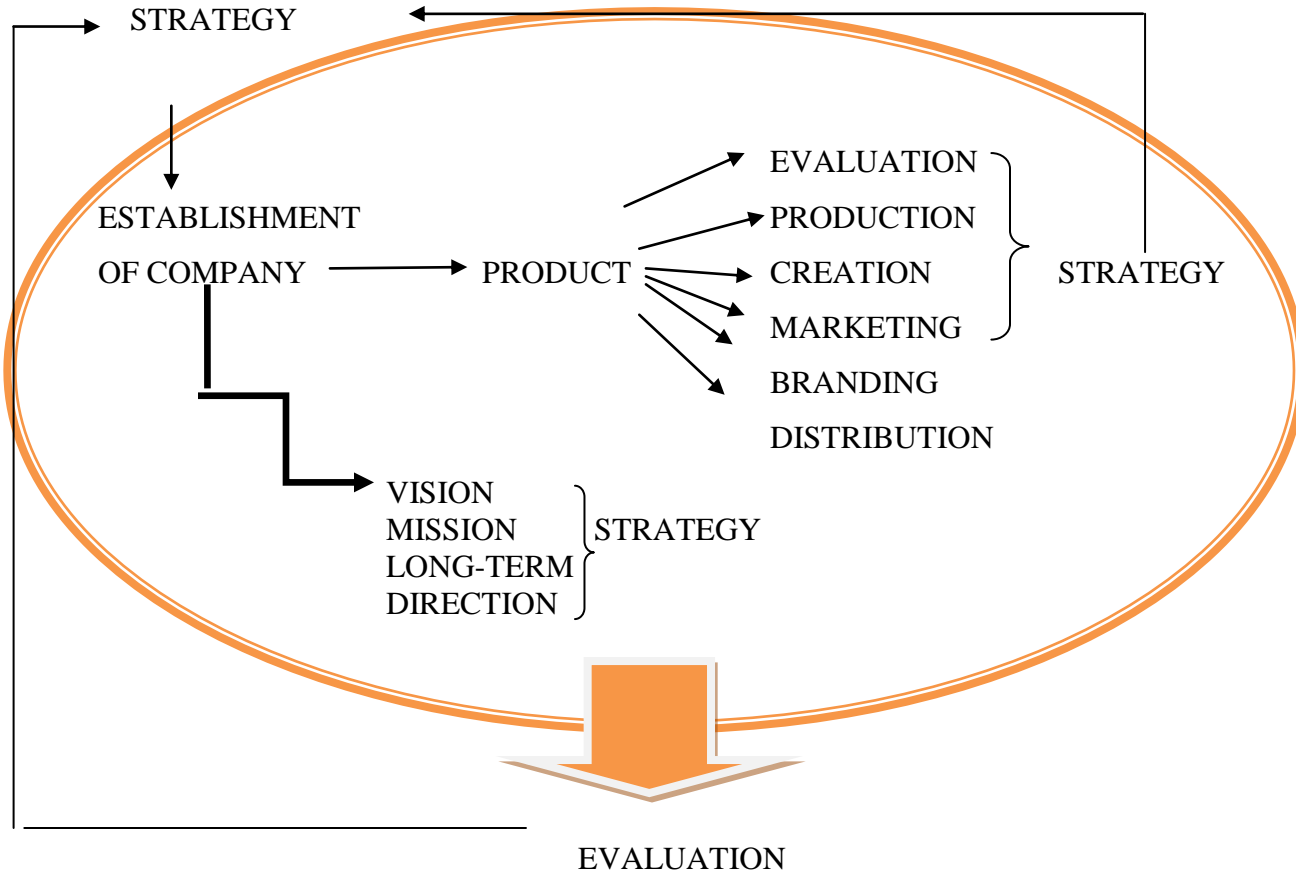
middle ages, the concept has been associated with warfare (Van Der Merwe, 2002). This view regarding strategy holds until the Middle Ages. Since, during this period, the notion of strategy moves away from the concept of war and has entered national policies, “principles of mass economy of force and the destruction of enemy forces have become the focus of strategy during the later stages of middle ages. In this regard, the development of strategy as being integrated in the business world and first developed by Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation is a shift from the origin of the word. In this shift, strategy in the business world has been understood with the context of strategy management and is consisted of five interrelated managerial tasks” (Van Der Merwe, 2002, p 403). Noticeable in this shift, the new concept of strategy is now being used in the business world, which can be considered as different from *war* per se, but in some facets are similar to it. Similar in the sense that strategy becomes necessary for both worlds if competing nations or companies intend to win the battle - be it in business or in war.

In this sense, strategy as use in the business world, which, is generally viewed as a vision that directs the organization to where it is going, thereby, infusing the organization with a sense of purpose and provides it with a long term direction and a clear mission. This abstract understanding of strategy is converted into measurable objectives through:-

- Crafting strategy to achieve desired results.
- Implementing and executing the chosen strategy.
- Evaluating performance, while reviewing new developments that could lead to initiating corrective adjustments in the long-term direction, in the light of actual experience, incorporating changing conditions, new ideas and new opportunities.

This finding is significant as it points to some conceptual factors that are inherent in the concept.

**Figure 13: Strategies**



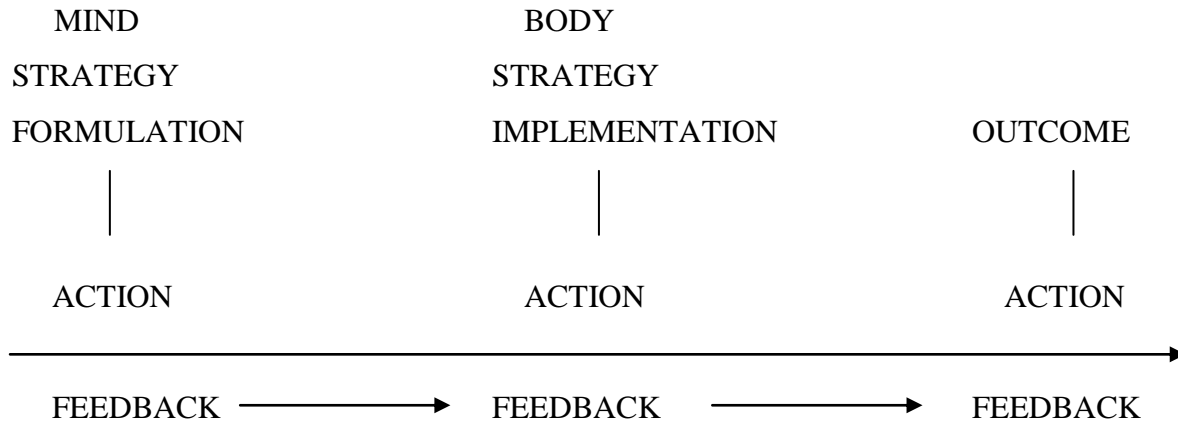
SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study

Figure 13 strategies as illustrated from the literature and the data collected shows that the notion of strategy as applied in the business world is not just a limited to one segment or aspect of the corporation. Rather, following the conceptual framework laid down for strategic management, it highlights the fact that strategy permeates the life cycle of business. As such it can be deduced that strategy is not just a part of some sectors or department of the business but the whole concept of strategy is to be seen as an integral part, fundamental for business' operation and survival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global market.

This first finding is essential in the understanding of strategy not because it offers a new understanding of what the concept of strategy is, rather, it is a reminder to practitioners and scholars alike that strategy is an intangible principle that pervades in the organisation. Strategy is integral in the inception of projects and other business undertakings but, more than that strategy is an intangible approach that contemporary firms incorporate in their life cycle. If strategy is infused in the organisational life, strategy implementation becomes critical since it is the actualisation of the strategy, the turning into a reality of an idea and, the embodiment of the formulation. The senior manager of bank X shares *“Strategy is suffused in contemporary business. The intense business climate demands that strategy be constantly defined, refined and studied.”* This view is also shared by the senior manager of bank Y, who says *“I cannot think of a better way to approach the challenges and demands of the intense business environment other than strategy. We are not only vying for customers but we are rendering services to our clients who have entrusted us with their wealth. We cannot fail this trust. It is in keeping with their trust that has made us.”*

The second theoretical finding of this study is that the divide between strategy implementation and strategy formulation is more like the mind- body dichotomy. Strategy formulation is the mind of strategy and strategy implementation is its body. This manner of looking at strategy formulation and strategy implementation is already alluded to in the works of Li et al, (2008), Allio, (2005) and Crawford (2005). This point is being raised because strategy implementation is considered as one of the most challenging concerns that contemporary organisations are facing (Li et al, 2008; Allio, 2005; Crawford, 2005). Instead of looking at it from a negative perspective, this dichotomy should be appreciated not as an inherent contradiction but as a necessary element in the flow of strategy.

**Figure 14: The continuum of strategy**



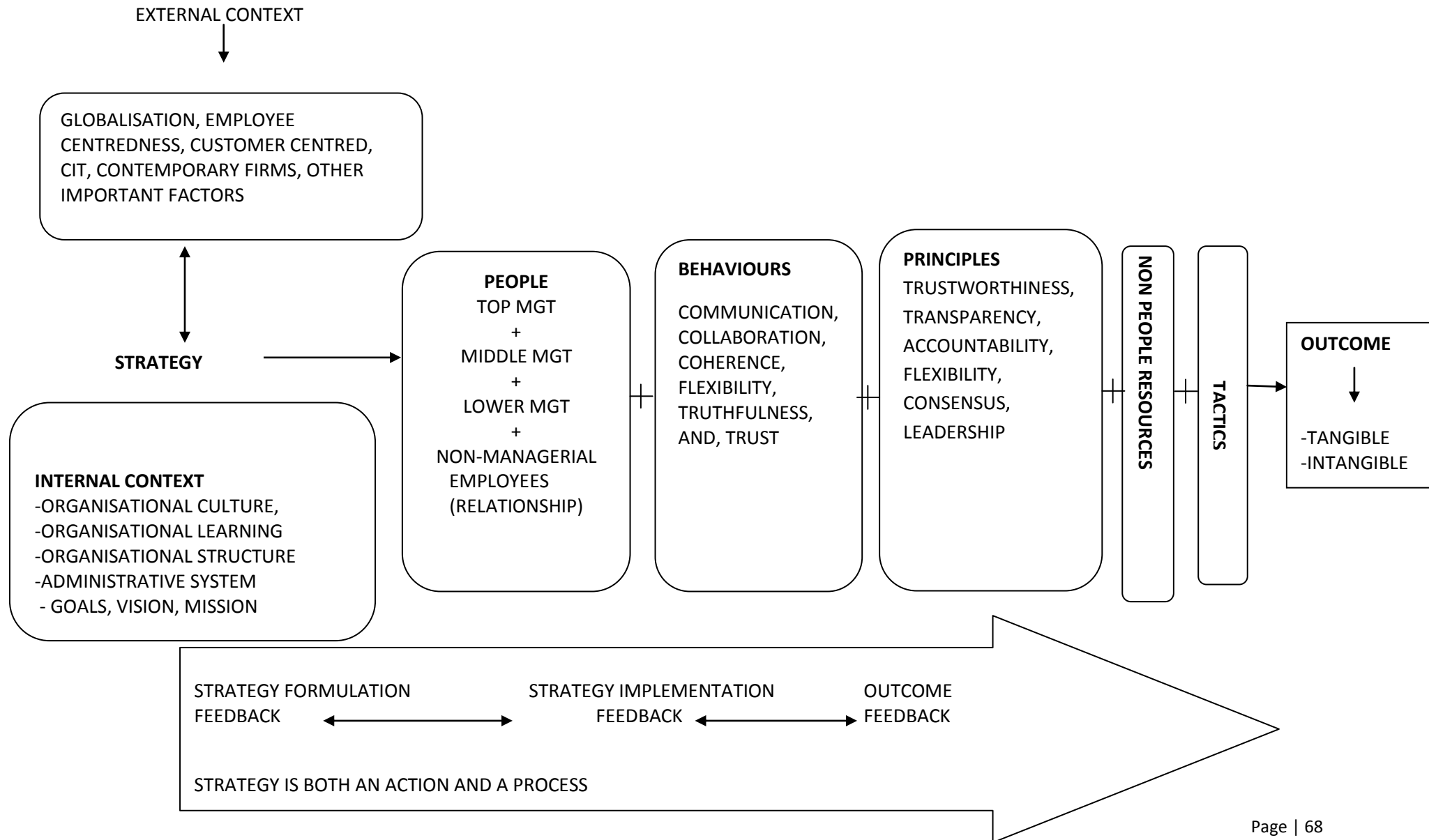
SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study

Strategy is geared towards a particular outcome as illustrated in Figure 14. However, before reaching that outcome, formulation and implementation of strategy should be undertaken. Formulation is basically the planning stage while the implementation is the execution stage. The arrows show the relation among the three elements. Strategy is a dynamic process wherein actions or activities are continuously undertaken. In the entire stage or activities, there is a constant feedback to show not only the dynamism of the entire activity/process but also the flexibility of the entire process. Response to the feedback shows the willingness of those people who are involved in the process to modify or alter the strategy depending on the condition or context. Manager Z stated, “It is vital that strategy should be flexible to change and we as senior managers have to demonstrate that. Take into account the latest economic crisis where we as an organisation had to slightly alter our strategy and the projects that came along with it”. This is the principle of flexibility that alters the value of the ‘apparent dichotomy’ between strategy formulation and strategy implementation.

It is apparent from the research finding that the dichotomy is not a contradiction. It only becomes a contradiction if the difference between formulation and implementation is turned into the question of boundary or separation which is infused in the mind-body dichotomy but, is not a necessary element of formulation-implementation distinction. Rather, the distinction between the two lies not in the condition where it is applied but two are intertwined as both activities/phases are directed towards the same goal. This notion is being clarified for there is an ongoing discussion regarding the seeming difference between the two (Andersen, 2006) which is claimed to have affected the success of the implementation of the strategy (Li et al, 2008). In this research, it was evident among the three project managers as they all agreed that the contradiction between formulation and implementation is not an issue of irreconcilable difference rather the question is whether the people involved in the strategy and the organisation itself are flexible enough to change strategy formulation and strategy implementation as they respond to emergent context and conditions not stipulated during the formulation. The idea of emergent strategies stems from the notion of conditions which, are not stipulated in formulation but, are encountered in the actual execution of the strategy (Minztberg et al, 1995).

The third research finding of the study relates to strategy implementation. See figure 15

**Figure 15: A framework for strategy implementation obtained from the research** (SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study)



In the current literature review discussion regarding strategy implementation several variables and frameworks have been developed and adopted by organisations (Okomus, 2001; Van Der Merwe, 2002; Claudiu et al, 2008; Allio, 2005; Li et al, 2008; Dooley, Fryxell & Judge, 2000; Lehner, 2004; Artto & Dietrich, 2008). This acknowledges the truism that contemporary businesses recognise the integral role of strategy implementation in their survival. However, it has been noted in the research that focus is either directed to the identification of the variables affecting implementation by either look for the individual factors (e.g., Heide, Grønhaug and Johannessen, 2002; Andersen, 2006; Floyd & Woolridge, 1997; Sterling, 2003; Huselid & Becker, 1999; Guth & MacMillan, 1986) or is geared towards creating a holistic approach wherein a complete relation of the factors identified is established (Okomus, 2001; Allio, 2005; Claudiu et al, 2006; Li et al, 2008). Both the efforts of identifying the variables affecting implementation and the frameworks are laudable as they provide guidance in strategy implementation.

However, in the new framework that has been provided which, is the result of this study, new variables have been incorporated in the framework to account for changes in the external environment and current demands made by stakeholders. These variables were addressed and discussed by the interviewees and for this research purpose and to make it easier to read and interpret figure 15 was developed.

Figure15 shows that strategy is a result of both the external and internal contexts of the organisation. In the framework of Okomus (2001) he failed to include the workers and non-managerial perspective in strategy implementation. While, in Li et al (2008) framework, though more comprehensive than Okomus (2001), does not include an explicit discussion regarding the

external factors that affect the strategy. Moreover, what differentiates this approach from other frameworks are the following:

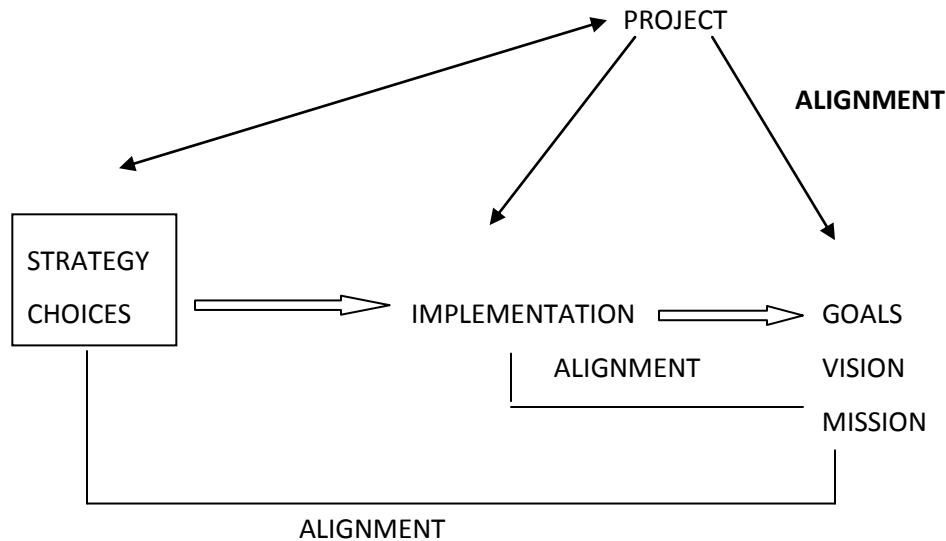
1. It explicitly identifies the external factors affecting company's strategy. It is important to note that these elements play an integral role in the current external condition of organisations regardless of nature and location of the business firm (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1999; Teo & Ang, 1999; Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004; Coatsworth, 2004).

2. It recognises the fact that the involvement of all the members of the organisation from the top management down to the non-managerial employees is necessary since everybody is part of the organisation. This development is undeniable in the light of the changes regarding the role of human resource in organisations (Huselid & Becker, 1997; Becker & Huselid, 1999; Becker, Huselid & Ulrich, 2001). In the same manner, the central roles of the people involved in strategy implementation are the managers that have been interviewed. The manager of bank X says, *"Each and every member of the team has a unique contribution for the success of the project. One cannot deny this. Performing one's function in the best possible way and sometimes even going beyond what is needed is a sure way to success. The team knows this."* Similarly, the manager of Bank Y states, *"The team, the Bank is not a one man show. We work together towards providing premier service to the clients. As part of the service sector, our service is our product, so everybody has to ensure quality service to the customers. We rely on each other's strengths as we move towards our goals."*

3. It values certain behaviours of both the individuals and the organisation is affecting the success of the implementation (Li et al, 2008; Schaap, 2006; Andersen, 2006; Lehner, 2004; Dooley, Fryxell & Judge, 2000).
4. It accepts several principles as necessary since it serves as the foundation of the relationship. This is a notable change in the framework as it integrates specific tenets as vital for the success of the implementation.
5. Clear cut tactics are essential in the implementation as it directly address the what actions to be taken and how it will be undertaken. Without this, everything will still be considered as hypothetical.
6. Following Okomus (2001), all of these variables must be working together if success of the implementation is being sought. Misapprehension or misreading of one of these variables may reduce success of implementation and increase the probability of failure.

Fourth finding of the research is that although the concept of alignment is being debated, its importance in strategy should not be underestimated as alignment is critical in implementation. As it was evident in this research the importance of alignment in relation to strategy; since, both senior and project managers indicated its vital role in an organisation. There was a consensus among the managers in the regard that alignment helps them efficiently and effectively choose projects. This because they believe that with the rapid development in today's world and market competition managers and organisations may get carried away with projects that aren't useful and beneficial to the organisation.

**Figure 16: Alignment**



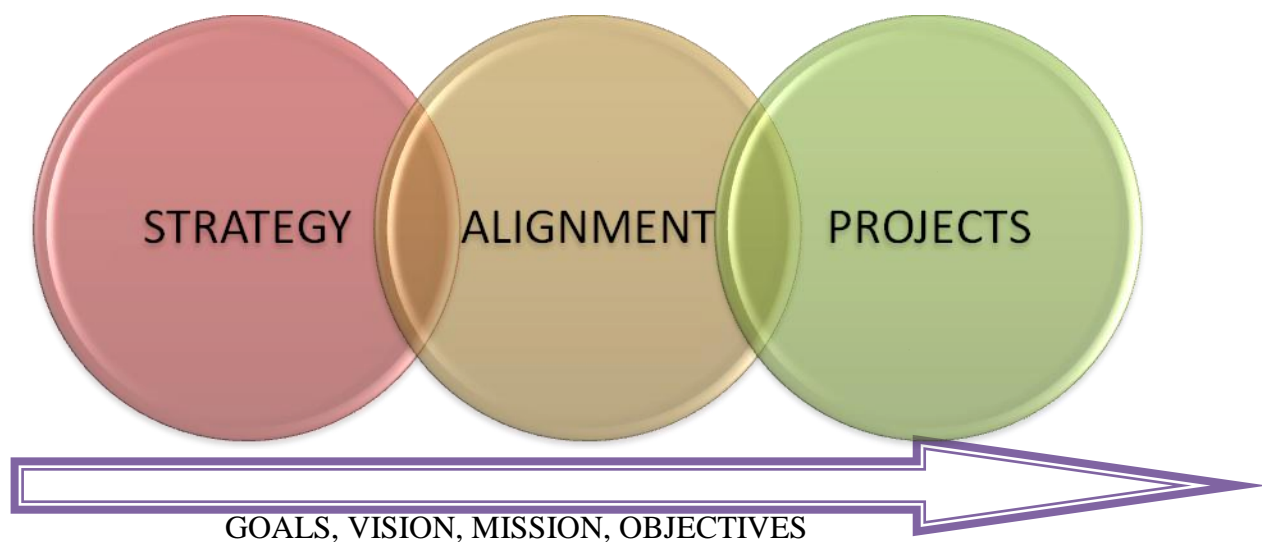
SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study

Figure 16 shows a simplified understanding of what alignment is while at the same time it shows how alignment permeates in the strategy, implementation and project. It is the intangible criterion that links and bridges the strategy with the goals, vision and mission of the company. Alignment is the invisible bridge that connects all activities and projects of the company with the objective goals. Although, some complex matrix presents the nature of alignment (see Milsovic & Srivannabonne, 2006), while other show it as a directive (see Griffith & Gibson, 2001). On the other hand, the above finding known as figure 16 does not provide elements for alignment but it shows how alignment is crucial in strategy and as such an essential tactic for the company. Without alignment among the strategy, the implementation, the project and the goals, then, the organisation will suffer from losses such as, low quality of products, increase costs due to delays, revisions, and reworks and consequently breakdown. Furthermore, alignment is the bond that

connects all strategies and projects with the goals. Manager in bank Z is in agreement with the idea that alignment is the bond, saying “*Alignment directs the projects and other activities to achieve the organisational strategy*”. This does not imply rigidity in the connection. Rather, it encourages creativity, flexibility and, innovation as alignment responds to the challenges of the real world.

The fifth finding of this research is the combination of strategic implementation, alignment, and project management. Combining figures 15 and 16, it has been observed that the relation among strategy implementation, alignment and projects is such that they are necessarily connected with one another and that apprehending one of these concepts entails a necessity in comprehending the other two.

**Figure 17: Relationship between the three concepts.**



SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study

This figure is not only supported by the theoretical underpinnings that have been discussed in the study. Likewise, in the interviews that have been conducted, it is observed that the interviewees all agreed that there is a need to apprehend the interconnection among the three concepts if organisations intend to maintain and sustain their competitive position in the market. Project manager of Bank X says, *“The importance of these three concepts cannot be undermined. They are the necessary pillars supporting the organisation.”* Project Manager of Bank Y claims, *“The interrelation of these three concepts is concretely experienced in terms of failures or success. One cannot simply remain theoretical about it. The real world will teach you that one of the major, if not the major determinant of the success or failure of an organisation, is its appreciation and application of the three concepts of strategy implementation, alignment and projects. Understanding it is necessary as organisations reach and attain their goals and objectives. In the same manner, Senior Manager of Bank X shares, “Without these three concepts working together, waste in terms of time, quality, costs and resources will be incurred. Everybody knows that. On the other hand, if these three are in sync, success in terms of gains both for the shareholders and the stakeholders is inevitable. This reality is undeniable. As such, the relation among strategy implementation, alignment and projects pumps up the organisation and the misappropriation of their relation leads to losses for the firm.”* Likewise, Senior Manager of Bank Y says, *“Strategy permeates the life of the organisation. Strategy implementation, alignment and projects are ingredients of strategy. Risks lurks if you do not see the connection of these three with one another, of these three with the specific goals and objectives of the project and of these three with the objectives of the organisation. One cannot just dismiss their significance. In fact, if one is aware of the workings of these three concepts side by side with the clear objectives of the organisation, one gets anchored on what ought to be*

*done, how to get it and when one is already.”* These insights present the notion that among the top management and project managers the congruence of these three concepts are necessarily considered as integral for the success of the organisation. In this regard, it can be impugned that the importance allotted by the scholars to the concepts are in effect the same with how practitioners in the field of banking value the three concepts of strategy implementation, alignment and projects. As the project Manager of bank Z says, *“Alignment is given. You just know that together with the four traditional pillars, alignment is the intangible guide that ought to be maintained. Otherwise, if there is misalignment the probability of lost, waste and unproductiveness increases manifold times.”*

Aside from the importance attributed to the concepts, the interviewees also noted that although one can discuss these concepts as if it can be separated from what is happening in the real world, the truth is, one always has to be on guard for any emerging risk which may have not been raised or stipulated during the planning stage. Cautiousness is necessary in all the stages to ensure that appropriate changes may be made in case there is a need for it as the Manager of Bank X shares, *“Sometimes, we thought that we have covered almost everything in the planning only to find out in the implementation there are still things which, have to be discussed. Normally, when these things happen they require immediate actions and the willingness to be flexible and adopt changes in the plan. But it is not easy because you know that one move will influence the other plans. So you really have to be focus to the goals and objectives. Otherwise, the risk of failure increases.”*

The sixth finding of the study is that there is no “one size fits all” paradigm for the corporations to use. Frameworks are provided to serve as a guide. It presents what may be the best possible approach that firms may adopt as they respond to the challenges of the customer

and the market. This finding is integral in apprehending the reality of the movement of the market and of the increasing and shifting demands of the customers (Mehta 1994, 2000). This truism is felt more in banks as they provide services to clients. The Senior Manager of Bank Y says, *“We treat each project as new baby. We formulate projects that are suited to the nature of the strategy. But we also get points from previous similar projects. This is to guide us on how we may go about the project. It is really like rearing a child. You do not really start from nothing. You have heard stories and learned from what others have shared. We find the best for the project while keeping it aligned with the goals of the organisation as a whole”*. In addition, the project manager of bank Z said *“Since projects are the tools or drivers in achieving the organisational strategy one has to be smart in selecting the project. However, we do have a small say but the critical decisions are made by top management”*. All managers in three banks gave an example of how their banks strategy has totally changed or slightly altered during the economic crisis, emphasising that the nature of the projects and activities undertaken has also changed.

The seventh finding of this research is that the goals and objectives as well as the merits of individual projects are seldom recognised as singly contributing to the goals and objectives of the organisation as a whole. Instead, what is often done is that it is combined with other projects of the firm forming an aggregate portfolio with which judgement of alignment and advancement of the organisation is often based. This observation has been made at the beginning of the research. However, in the literature search the authors have been silent regarding the number of projects necessary for it to claim that it contributes to the advancement of the firm. However, what has been explicitly claimed in the findings of this research is that projects ought to be aligned and implemented in such a way that it reaches and attain the goals of the organisation.

There is no mention of the necessity of the number of projects required before it can be deduced that the company's objective have been attained. This sentiment is shared by the managers of Bank Z. The Manager of bank Z shares, *"Sometimes we are trapped in counting how many projects we have. As I see it, it is not just the quantity of projects that you have, but it is also the quality of the projects, the manner with which you have handled the projects and the approaches used in handling the project. Since, if one sees the project as a challenge, one should be constantly innovative and be creative in tackling the project. One should not be caught in just counting the numbers, due to the fact that you can have one properly aligned project will do the organisation better than 3 not carefully aligned projects"*.

The interviewees mentioned that the value of the project is not only measured by the individual success of the project but it is combined with other projects and how it contributes to the attainment of the overall objectives and goals of the firm. Does this situation posit a contradiction? The researcher is of the opinion that it is not really a matter of debate between parts vs. whole. Rather, this should be seen from the perspective that aggregate portfolio is a lot easier to measure compared with a single project. Probabilities and statistics regarding success or failures can be better understood not just with one instance. Instead, it can be scrutinised more if there are several instances, projects or samples with which alignment and success or failure can be analysed. Of course, this does not deny the validity of a single instance but, for pragmatic purposes aggregate portfolios are given more weight in determining how projects contribute to the advancement of the organisation's goals.

The eighth and final finding of this research is that coming up with a framework that will encapsulate the necessary and intricate relation existing among strategy implementation, alignment and project management is vital in understanding the primordial role that each concept

plays in the attainment of the objective of the organisation. Recognising this, it is significant to note that as one presents a simplified diagram of the relation among the three concepts; one has to apprehend that each concept entails a significant detail that should not be missed. In this regard, this study observes that the traditional pillars of measures of success are insufficient in covering the relation existing among the concepts that have been covered in this study. The reason for this claim is based on the following premise:

1. Goals and objectives of contemporary firms in the banking industry are primarily established on the premise that contemporary banks have developed into a service industry that caters to the demands and needs of clients. In this regard, it can be impugned that customer satisfaction, while upholding shareholders' interests and protecting stakeholders' interest as well becomes the beacon with which strategies goals are formulated.

2. Project evaluation is done not only at the end of the project but, it should be undertaken in the form of feed back at every stage of the project. The study has shown that alignment as an abstract notion can be made clear only through a continuous feedback. In this sense, 'the fit' is assessed not only during its final stage but is made all throughout the entire duration of the project. This becomes important in order to make the necessary adjustments required if the situation calls for it (Griffith & Gibson, 2001; Milosevic & Srivannabonne, 2006).

3. Furthermore, as scope, time, costs and quality cannot fully gauge organisational success or failure, what is needed is the incorporation of not only the tangible goals but also the intangible contributions, principles, ethos, objectives that drives the people in the organisation and the organisation itself to reach for the attainment of its goals. Again, to survive in the competitive global market, it is not just a one man show but it is the result of the consorted effort

of all the members of the organisation from the top management down to non managerial members and staffs.

In this chapter, the findings and discussions of the study have been presented. It has been shown that the theoretical underpinnings of the concepts of strategy implementation, alignment and projects have paved the way for the creation of new frameworks that may be used. However, it has been observed that individually, each concept is complex and requires necessary explanation and clarification. As such, when these three concepts are combined to apprehend their interrelation what should be borne in mind is that the simplified presentation of the connection of these concepts presupposes the understanding of the intricate details that are entailed in each notion. As such, comprehending the dynamic relations of strategy implementation, alignment and projects is founded on the appreciation of each concept with their inherent complexity.

In the following chapter conclusion and recommendation will be presented.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The final section of this research will review the conclusion and the validation of the research objectives. Recommendations are explored along with the difficulties encountered during the research and future research is also suggested.

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

Strategy implementation, alignment and project management are all requisites for organisations in the contemporary period to create, maintain and, sustain competitive advantage. This has been the case since; strategy has been incorporated as part of the response of businesses to the demands of the dynamic and competitive global market. In this regard, understanding the intricate interrelation existing among these three concepts has yielded to a better understanding of the influence of projects on strategy implementation in particular and of organisational success in general.

Strategy implementation is a challenge to contemporary organisations. It was observable that strategy implementation is easier written than putting it into actions. Activities and policies related to strategy implementation mainly remains in the hands of senior managers. Senior managers make an effort in transforming the organisational strategy into attainable plans responding to the imperatives of organisation, strategic and environmental challenges. Nevertheless, the managers neglect key factors contributing to the success of the strategy implementation identified in the literature, which if utilized would improve strategy implementation operations. Variables such as i)relationship among different units/ departments

and different strategy levels, ii)organisational structure, iii)administrative systems, people who are the executors of the strategy-for example project managers ,iv)communication which includes the implementation tactics, v)consensus, vi)commitment, vii)resource allocation, vii)culture, ix)general uncertainty of the environment, x)control, xi)outcome( Li et al,2008 &Okomus,2001).

Alignment, on the other hand, is seen as abstraction. It is seen as a given idea. In fact, all managers identify the importance of alignment and consider it as a fundamental element that organisations should take into account when choosing projects. However, so far not all managers or organisations take in consideration that alignment can be deemed as a new measure to success just like the four known pillars. This is because it can be deduced that the concept of alignment is best understood in terms of the numerous synonyms that are associated with it. Alignment as an idea simply means congruence, fit, link or bridge. As a result, the vagueness of the concept as an additional component to the four known measures of success (cost, quality, time and scope) has led some to question its validity.

Projects, unlike alignment, have a clear parameters and purpose – it is undertaken and chosen on the premise that it can pursue, actualize and achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation. In this sense, projects can be claimed to be purposive actions or activities undertaken by the organisation that are strategically implemented. The project success is secured by the fact that it is aligned with the goals and objectives of the organisation. It is apparent that projects play an important role in organisations today, due to the fact that their regarded to be the tools or vehicle to strategy implementation.

In conclusion, as the global market becomes more competitive, the role of aligning projects with organisational strategy becomes more pronounced. This is evidence as organisations and managers acknowledge the fact that projects are the vehicles to strategy implementation. This is because if projects are not aligned with organisational strategy it can cost the organisation millions of dollars in what is regarded as wasted projects spending. As a result, all projects should be aligned and the strategic success of a project ought to be evaluated with aggregate projects outcome and not individually. Thus, organisations should significantly recognize and enhance the role of project management as a functional strategy. If project portfolio management is effectively applied it will assist and ensure the selection of the right projects at the right time. In respect to alignment, it is currently considered as an important factor when assessing project success; though, to designate alignment as fifth pillar of project success along with the four acknowledged pillars would require the continual efforts of both scholars and practitioners to approve and ratify it.

## **5.2 Evaluation of research attainment with research objectives.**

Reflecting back on the research problem, which consisted of finding the degree to which the projects together succeed in fulfilling the organisational strategy through four objectives, the following results emerged.

First, as one of the objectives of the study is to explore the importance and valuable responsibility of project managers in contributing to organisational strategy, the study has found out that project managers have minimum contribution towards the strategy. As it was visible during the interviews that project managers role was more active later at the implementation

stage. This indicates that project managers' role remains more conventional, controlling and monitoring projects. Although, scholarly journals and the opinions of senior managers hold that objective central, that the project managers are key members in the entire strategy process. Knowing that project managers are the ones responsible for implementing the projects and the projects being the tools to strategy implementation. On the other hand, in reality that is not detectable in the organisational culture and actual works. Thus, the research re-affirms that this objective is mainly attested in theories and it is not carried out by managers in their actual works.

Second, another objective of the study is exemplifying the importance of project alignment with organisational strategy to achieve success. This objective has been achieved in the sense that there is a common consensus among the interviewees that alignment is necessary in achieving success. However, as the study has found out that project management and project alignment is not effectively nor sufficiently explored in literature and business. The study has moderately contributed in promoting and supporting the concept. In this regard, the researcher holds that further research by scholars and practitioners should be undertaken to profoundly clarify the importance of project alignment to organisational strategy.

Third, alignment as a measure of project success with the traditional four pillars is still an objective of this research. As expected, there is an agreement both in theory and among the interviewees regarding this principle. This objective is attained in the study. In effect, this agreement regarding alignment as a measure of project success is considered as a fundamental principle that has to be accepted as a given evidence by responses of the interviewees. However, the researcher holds and as noted earlier, there is a need to further clarify and testify the concept to fortify its position as one of the measures of project success.

Finally, the fourth objective of this study is to develop an outline model. This objective is attained as shown in figure 15 (refer to page 68). The study has found out that there is a continuous effort in coming up with the framework that may be used as a guide, the research has come up with more comprehensive paradigm that accounts for both the external and internal factors influencing the relation among strategy implementation, alignment and projects. While at the same time proposing the inclusion of non-managerial staffs, feedback at all the stages of the strategy, feedback from all the members of the team and a more holistic approach in understanding the existing intricate relation among the three concepts.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

To attain the most benefit out of this research the following recommendations are provided:

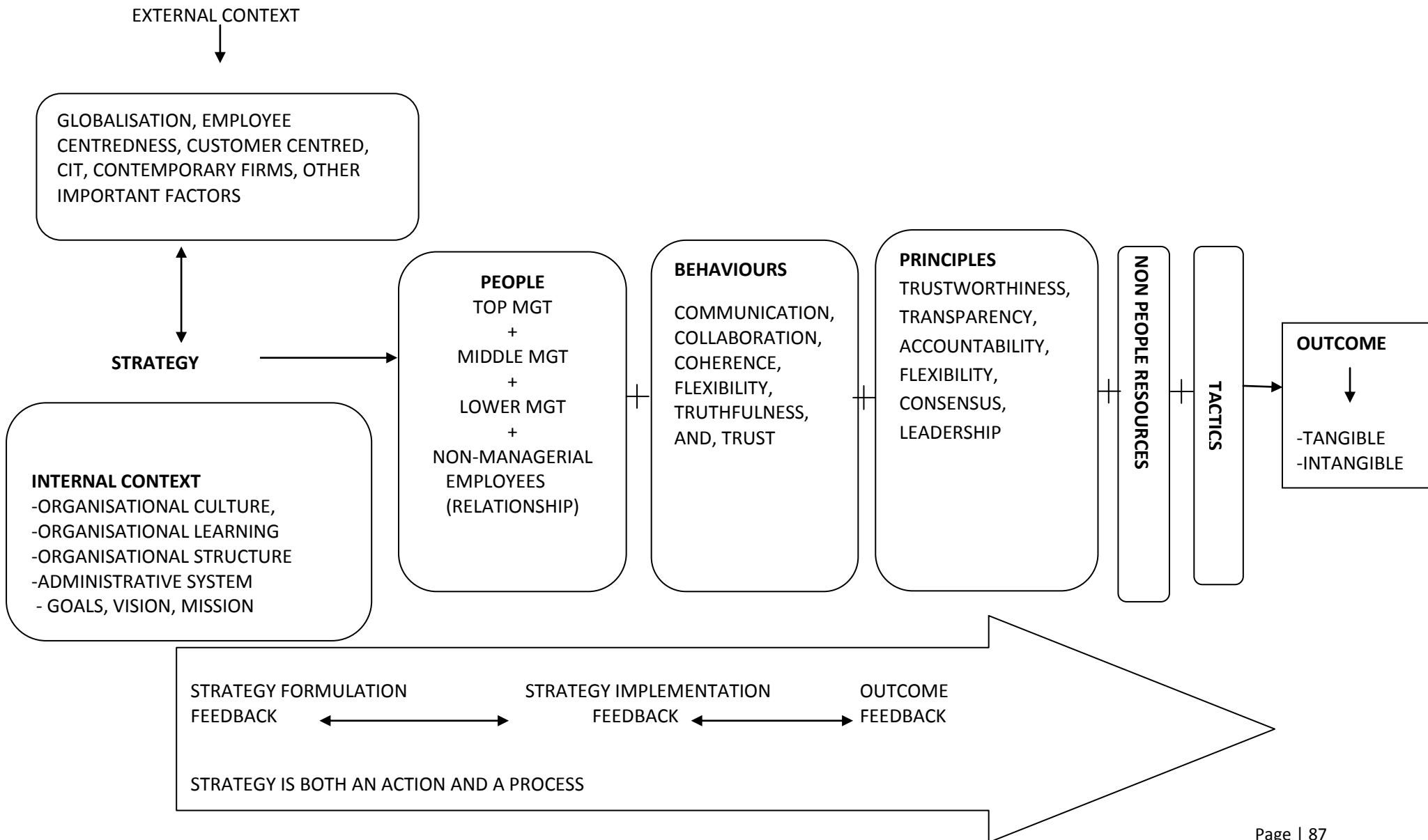
1. This research has shown that there is poor understanding by senior managers and project managers of the complexity of the three concepts, strategy implementation, alignment and project management. As such, there should be a more concerted effort on both the part of scholars and practitioners to further clarify each individual concept. This is recommended so that when the three concepts are combined, the inherent vagueness or ambiguities of each concept are minimised or eliminated. After, having a proper understanding of these concept managers will be able to effectively and competently use them to better serve the organisation.
2. It was evident in the interviews that the role of project portfolio is not very active. In order to ensure alignment and best selection of projects, project portfolio management

should be given a more constructive function. This will positively help the organisation ensure project alignment with strategy

3. According to the findings of the research, the alignment of the project with organisational strategy is best achieved if all the members of the team from senior managers to non managerial members are familiar with the organisational strategy and are given the chance to participate in the process. The participation of the members of the organisation in strategy process is not only responsive to the principle that human resource is the most important resource of an organisation, but it also increases employees' commitment, awareness and motivation as they feel worthy and appreciated.
4. Developing the skills of project managers will enhance the strategy. As project managers are aware of how their projects support the organisational strategy; accordingly will lead them in using their knowledge to help attain the required resources to success.
5. As expected and manifested during the research that alignment between projects and organisational strategy is considered as fundamental principle in the success of the project. In this regard, feedback should be made from the beginning until the end of the project at all levels; and not only in the evaluation stage. For it is one sure way that they can check whether alignment exists among the strategy, project and intended goals.
6. It is proposed that figure 15 (refer to page 87) to be tested by organisations as one of the new frameworks that can be used in understanding project alignment with the organisational strategy. This figure intends to present a more holistic approach in

clarifying strategy implementation. Since, (1) it considers the role of all the members of the organisation as important for the success of the project. (2) It recognises the significance of incorporating both the internal and external environment of the organisation. (3) It integrated in the framework feedback at all stages of strategy. (4) It provides a clear outlook towards strategic implementation – it is both an action and a process.

**Figure 15: A framework for strategy implementation obtained from the research** (SOURCE: Created by the researcher for this study)



#### **5.4. Difficulties encountered during the research**

One of the difficulties that have been encountered during the research concerns with the notion of projects. Each organisation adopts and chooses projects that have the highest probability of becoming successful. However, depending on the nature of the organisation there are also different kinds of projects. In this regard, the difficulty of choosing the appropriate approach in understanding the intricate relation of strategy implementation, alignment and projects becomes more pronounce. Since, one can focus on projects, or strategy or alignment or combination of other necessary elements in order to understand strategy and its elements.

Another difficulty that has been encountered is the silence of the interviewees regarding the strategies that they have been using in their projects.

#### **5.5 Future research**

The frameworks that have been formulated out from this study can be further refined through an empirical study. Likewise, the findings of this study and open for another study of the same concepts in a different industry such as the construction industry or the manufacturing industry. Finally, the framework that has been developed can be further tested by organisations.

# **APPENDIX**

**APPENDIX A: PROJECT MANAGERS- QUESTIONNAIRE**

**APPENDIX B: SENIOR MANAGERS QUESTIONNAIRE**

**APPENDIX C: PARTICIPATION LETTER**

**APPENDIX D: GENERAL PARTICIPANT INFORMATION**

## **APPENDIX A: PROJECT MANAGERS- QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Nationality:**

**Education level:**

- 1) How long have you been holding this position? What are the entailed functions of your office?**
- 2) Are you aware of the organisational strategy?**
- 3) How are projects assigned to you?**
- 4) How to you view strategy implementation, alignment and project management?**
- 5) Do you see strategy implementation, alignment and project management as necessary in every project? Why? How?**
- 6) Is it important that these concepts be connected with the overall goals of the bank? Why? How?**
- 7) Can you share some of your experiences on how these three concepts have worked in one of the projects that you have been involved?**
- 8) What is the extent of your participation in strategy planning and implementation of a project?**
- 9) Do you have regular meeting with management**
- 10) Base on what you have shared, how can the relation of the three concepts can be further clarified, strengthen?**
- 11) How do you define project success?**
- 12) To what extent do projects affect the organisational success?**

## **APPENDIX B: SENIOR MANAGERS QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Nationality:**

**Education level:**

- 1) How long have you been holding this position? What are the entailed functions of your office?**
- 2) Are you aware of the organisational strategy?**
- 3) How to you view strategy implementation, alignment and project management?**
- 4) Do you see strategy implementation, alignment and project management as necessary in every project? Why? How?**
- 5) Is it important that these concepts be connected with the overall goals of the bank? Why? How?**
- 6) Can you share some of your experiences on how these three concepts have worked in one of the projects that you have been involved?**
- 7) What is the extent of your participation in strategy planning and implementation of a project?**
- 8) Base on what you have shared, how can the relation of the three concepts can be further clarified, strengthen?**
- 9) How do you define project success?**
- 10) To what extent do projects affect the organisational success?**
- 11) Do you have regular meetings with departments, project managers?**
- 12) When selecting a project do you consider the project as a separate unit?**
- 13) How do you prioritize the project among other projects?**
- 14) Do you align projects to the organisational strategy? , if so how?**
- 15) Against what is the output of a project is evaluated in term of matching requirements?**
- 16) How to you plan, analyze and evaluate a project?**

## **APPENDIX C: PARTICIPATION LETTER**

Dear manager

I am writing this letter to ask for your participation and support in my dissertation paper conducted as a requirement for my graduation. My research paper addresses the question “How does the evolving role of project management in organisations helps in achieving strategy efficiency- the degree to which the projects together succeed in fulfilling the organisational strategy”. Therefore, your contribution and knowledge as a Manager in bank X would be a great value for the paper. All information provided by you is going to be for research purpose and is going to be handled with confidentiality.

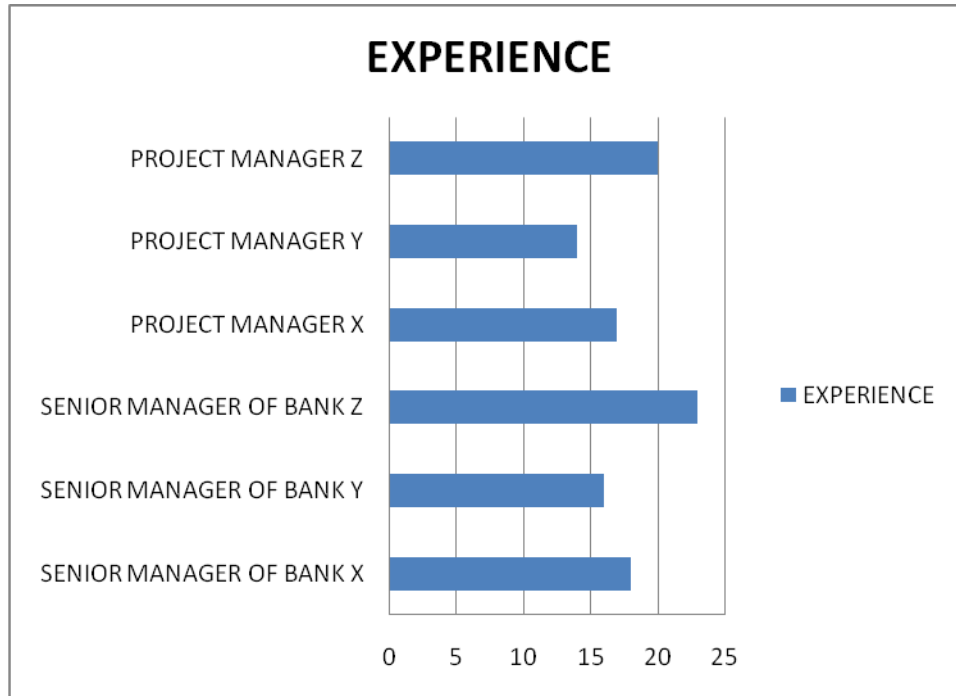
If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me on the following email [Latifa.buid@gmail.com](mailto:Latifa.buid@gmail.com).

Thank you very much, and hope to hear from you soon.

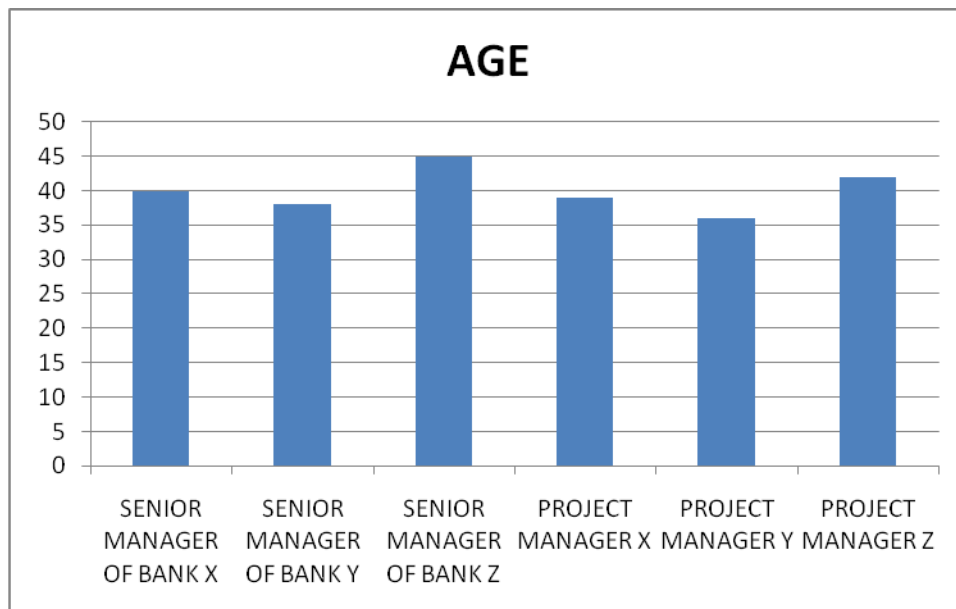
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## Appendix D: General participant information

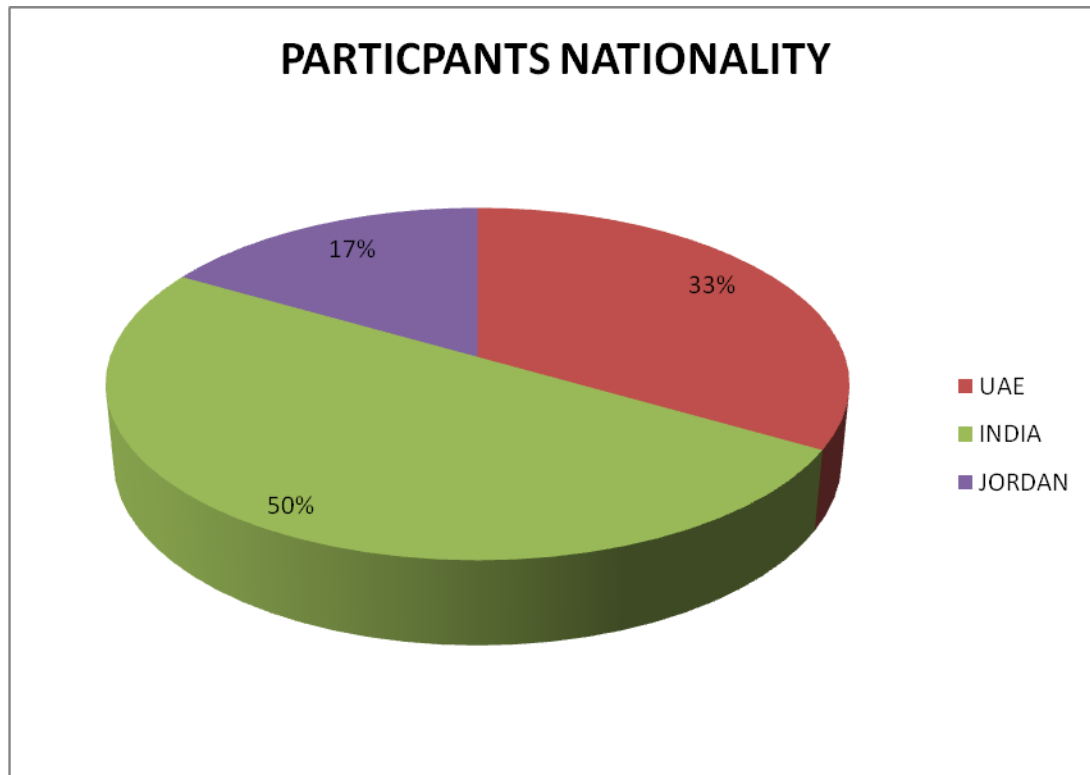
### PARTICIPANTS YEARS OF EXPERIENCE



### PARTICIPANTS AGE



## PARTICIPANTS NATIONALITY



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