Dynamic capabilities in strategy formation and knowledge conversion in Zimbabwean organisations

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, Wits Business School, University of the Witwatersrand in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2023

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study adopts a Strategy-As-Practice approach to theorise organisational strategy formation and knowledge conversion processes. Using the theoretical lenses of Contingency Theory and Institution-, Resource- and Knowledge-based views, the study explores the dynamics of the interactions between organisation systems and people activities in strategy formation.

The research context is Zimbabwe, a developing country with high literacy levels but has traditionally been marred by poor institutions and high levels of regulation.

The research adopted a generic qualitative research design with triangulated interviews, documents, and a review of records. Data was collected from 13 participants using semi-structured interviews. The participants were senior management and employee representatives who were purposively selected from large organisations from each agriculture and tourism sector, two industry institutions, and one consultant from each sector. This was supplemented with data from documents, records, and minutes of strategy meetings and organisational processes. The findings suggested that:

a) While the strategy formation process is formalised, structured and well recorded, the praxis is instead to follow the expectations of tradition and of stakeholders, which produces aesthetically compliant blueprints which are archived;
b) Organisations abide by tenets of Contingency Theory in their wish to establish the best fit between internal and external environments. However, they tend to achieve the fit through random and often chaotic systems that feed off the tacit capabilities of individuals or views of managers in positions of power and authority;
c) While managers enlist strategy consultants, 'politically correct' institutions and specialist technical advisors in sensing the environment, it is the firm owners that direct the seizing and configuration decisions and determine the ideal culture and strategies;
d) Tacit knowledge among shop-floor employees is a key but poorly tapped intelligence source, as management elects to preserve the privilege of strategising.

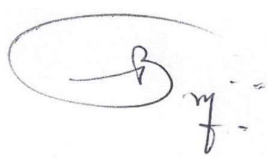
The study concluded that due to an overriding desire for perceived political and procedural correctness, there is fractured and inconsistent understanding and interpretation of the strategy formation processes and strategic outcomes. Strategy-making in Zimbabwe is not absolutely defined and, therefore, is positioned between deliberate and emergent. Organisations navigate the context through turbid harnessing of internal social dynamics, individuals' tacit knowledge and a broader range of stakeholders.

The study makes two theoretical contributions. In the Knowledge-Based View, the study proposes a review of the assumptions to include that tacit knowledge in its pure form is intrinsic and unshareable. Therefore, individuals may only transfer and share those skills they have conscious control of and voluntarily wish to impart to others. To the Institution Based View, the study proposes; the isolation and recognition of the owners or founders of organisations as a distinct Institution that falls in a realm between the external and the internal environments of the organisations. These founders or owners (and sometimes through their representatives, the Board of Directors) are not just advisors but are actually definers of the organisation's culture, mission and broader goals. Management are therefore mere implementers of the institutionalised practices. This challenges the traditional theory, definition and role of management to imply that they are not deciders, planners, organisers and controllers but are simply administrators.

Key words: *practice, praxis, practitioners, process, strategy formation, knowledge conversion, tacit knowledge, strategy-as-practice, contingency theory, knowledge-based view, resource-based view, institution-based view, Zimbabwe*

DECLARATION

I, **<u>BRIAN VICTOR TINASHE KAGONDO</u>**, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Commerce Law and Management (CLM), Wits Business School, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.



Signed : ____________________ on the 15th day of May, 2024.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to;

* my parents, Paul and Raina Kagondo who believed in me before I even imagined taking on this challenge;
* my wonderful children Thebogoh, Thandekah and Thandiswah who lost their attention to this project for a significant part of their lives; and
* my dearly beloved wife (*the late*) Rutendo. You called my success, planned the celebration of this achievement, but left this earth ahead of time!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude to Wits Business School for accepting my application to do this research and placing me under two of the most sublime supervisors Professors Terri Carmichael and Chris Van der Hoven. What an amazing learning experience.

Many people assisted and encouraged me (in various ways) to pursue this project. I would like to acknowledge; Tawanda Ignatius Kagondo (my dearly beloved brother), Dr. Beaullah Mugwangwavari and Chishamiso Chikoore (my trendsetter daughters who encouraged me daily), Joyleen Shadaya (my second parent and dear friend), Dr. Eunice Cross and Dr. Evelyn Tiren (my study buddies), Dr. Ogundiran Sounomi (my bouncing board on knowledge concepts), Richard K. Zirobwa and Christopher N. Gwatidzo (my mentors), Curthbert Chirenda (my brother and tech tutor), Lorraine Chadhliwa (a ment·ee who became an inspirational source), Agnes Matiza (my beloved sister), the WBS accommodation team – Claudine Prim, Rozelle Tise and Nokuthula Maqwati who always made sure my preferred Trematon Flat 10 was clean and welcoming, Sinikiwe Gwatidzo, Angela Mabhurukwa, Sharon Masaraure (my friends and inspirers), Paul Spear (my boss and coach at Ariston), Zerippah and Jennifer Banda (the twins who kept me encouraged), young Prince Chomunoda (you believed in me), Eva Mtukudzi (you encouraged me at tough moments), Kingston and Ruth Masakadza (you always wished I would do this. Thank you) Dr. Emmanuel Qaye (you led the pace), Maxine Geke (your prayers were a huge source of strength).

I also acknowledge the leadership, consultants and employees of the organisations and institutions that I worked with on this project. How I wish I could publicly name you all and tell the world how very engaging you were in our conversations.

To my children Thebogoh, Thandekah and Thandiswah, words alone cannot explain my gratitude to you for encouraging and praying for me as I walked this journey. I took away from you time and attention that I can never replace. I pray that the outcome of this project inspires you to do the same and more, but while you are still young so you do not feel my pain. I love you and thank you so much. I am grateful to your mother, Rutendo (God rest her soul eternally) for filling the void while I hid in the office or went away on endless journeys to complete this project.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AI – Artificial Intelligence

BPR – Business Process Reengineering

CEE – Central and Eastern Europe

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CoT – Contingency Theory

EXCO – Executive Management Committee

GM – General Manager

HQ – Headquarters / Head Office of the Business

HOD – Head of Department

IBV – Institution-Based View

ICT – Information Communication Technology

JPIM – Journal of Product Innovation and Management

KBV – Knowledge-Based View

MD – Managing Director

MNC – Multinational Corporation

NEC – National Employment Council

RBV – Resource-Based View

SAP – Strategy-As-Practice

SBU – Strategic Business Unit

SME – Small to Medium Enterprise

Snr Mgt – Senior Management

SOP – Standard Operating Procedure

VRIN - Valuable, Rare, Inimitable and Non-substitutable

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

> "In all the companies I am familiar with, strategy-making combines design and emergence – a process that I have referred to as 'planned emergence'." (Grant, 2016, p. 23)

This qualitative research study utilises the Strategy-As-Practice (SAP) approach in exploring the firm level and individual level of the practice of strategy formation. In this exploration, the SAP approach is used to investigate the dynamics of the interactions and praxis of the practitioners, as well as knowledge sharing and knowledge conversion between stakeholders in Zimbabwean organisations. SAP as a research approach is novel in its multi-layered nature that explores the macro and micro level of doing strategy – the activities and actions of those actors involved in the enactment, development and delivery of strategies (Johnson, Langley, Melin, and Whittington, 2007)

The importance of strategy in the management of businesses is indisputable. Some schools of thought emphasise the importance of complete corporate strategy, while others focus on the strategy of business units and others even on departmental strategies (Ott and Eisenhardt, 2018; Reitzig and Sorenson, 2013; Scholz, Huchzermeier, and Kühlmann, 2019). Regardless of their focus, studies have, for a long time, generally adopted the "economics view" of strategy, where strategy is viewed as a possession or an economic tool for organisations, as something that organisations have and use (Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). At a global level, some researchers have recently begun placing more attention on strategy as practice, as something that organisations actually do (Kohtamäki, Whittington, Vaara, and Rabetino, 2021; Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). Certain researchers consider it a micro approach to strategy formation (MacKay, Chia, and Nair, 2020; Scholz et al., 2019), while others consider it an emergent approach (Kopmann, Kock, Killen, and Gemünden, 2017; MacKay et al., 2020).

The core concepts of the practice perspective are the context, activity and actors of strategy, referred to as the "practices", "praxis", and "practitioners" (respectively) of strategy in existing and standard literature (Johnson et al., 2007; Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006). In past writings on organisation theory, strategy and decision-making, these concepts were considered the "decision tree" (Cyert and March, 1963; Cyert and Williams, 1993).

In Zimbabwe, research on strategy (making) processes has only recently surfaced and with the general conclusion that the terms "strategy formulation", "strategic planning", "strategy-making", and "strategy development" can be used interchangeably (Mashingaidze, 2020, p. 38; Mashingaidze, Phiri, and Bomani, 2021, p. 11). The researchers consider strategy a tool for the performance of Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Magaisa, Kanhai, and Matipira, 2013; Moyo and Moyo, 2017; Nyamwanza, 2013). These conclusions lack real depth concerning the practice nature of strategy-making processes and the complex dynamics of stakeholder (internal and external) and knowledge interactions, which this research pursues.

While there is some consensus on the definitions of strategy (or "strategic management" as it is often referred to), the question of **how** firms make strategies or should form strategies, the practices and dynamics of interactions within and between the internal and external environments in firms (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Mapara, 2009; Suddaby, Coraiola, Harvey, and Foster, 2020; Teece, 2018) and the issue of knowledge formation and conversion (Dayan, Heisig, and Matos, 2017; Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009; Sveiby, 2001); remains a topical debate amongst scholars and researchers of strategy (Barbuto Jr, 2016; Mazzucato, 2002; Ott and Eisenhardt, 2018; Reitzig and Sorenson, 2013). For instance, the Design school of thought suggests that strategies are a product of a deliberate and formal process (Magretta, 2011; Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Porter, 1983). In contrast, the Evolutionary and Process schools of thought argue that strategies are emergent phenomena formed over time from decisions made by management, which may include long-term plans and actions (Johnson, Scholes, and Whittington, 2008; Mintzberg, 1978).

The economics view maintains that strategy is a tool for operational excellence (Aldea, Iacob, and Quartel, 2018; Burton and Pennotti, 2003; Kaplan and Norton, 2000; Murray Jr, 1978; Oakland, 2014). At the turn of the 20th Century and more recently, a view has developed that strategy formation embraces both deliberate and emergent processes (Grant, 2016; Johnson, Whittington, Scholes, Angwin, and Regnér, 2013).

In general, the practice of strategy formation involves activities or praxis such as internal sharing, transfer, and conversion of knowledge among people of different individual competencies within the firm. The process also requires the ability of the firm and its management to integrate, build and reconfigure these internal competencies to address the rapidly changing external environment in which the firm operates (Teece, 2009). These dynamic capabilities are traditionally resident in the firm's tacit knowledge and organisational processes (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Garg and Eisenhardt, 2017; Teece, 2009), which, when harnessed, assist in better establishing the right strategic choices and preferred outcomes. The external environment can be defined as the context (regulation, competition, technology) in which the firm operates. This context includes practitioners, stakeholder institutions, customers, and communities that may have some influence on internal activities related to strategy formation (Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Stańczyk, 2016; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006; Zoogah et al., 2014).

This research uses four theoretical lenses to interrogate the strategy formation process. While the theories are broad and generally defined in contexts that are different from which this research was located, some principles are assumed to be applicable in the Zimbabwean context, and they informed the theoretical framework as well as contributions of the research:

1. Contingency Theory (CoT) (Freeman, 2015; Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984) – The theory is premised on a managerial approach and speaks broadly to firm heterogeneity (*a distinct feature of Zimbabwean organisations*), best practices approach and the importance of a fit between the internal and external environments.
2. Institution-Based View (IBV) (Peng, 2002; Peng, Sun, Pinkham, and Chen, 2009) – The recognition of formal and informal institutions within organisations as well as

the impact of those Institutions responsible for defining the socio-economic environment of a context.

3. Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney and Clark, 2007; Wernerfelt, 1984)- the idea that firms have capabilities and resource characteristics that are embedded in the organisation's culture rather than formalised routines that competitors can discern provokes discussion on whether then the resultant processes or systems of strategy formation are deliberate or emergent.
4. Knowledge-Based View (KBV) (Dayan et al., 2017; Grant, 1996; Sveiby, 2001) – The acknowledgement of tacit and implicit knowledge resources in organisations. The formation and conversion of these types of knowledge within organisations and towards the strategy-making processes are key to this study.

The study was conducted in Zimbabwe, a context generally defined as a developing economy where organisational effectiveness is determined in part by the institutional environment (formal and informal) and the level of resources and capabilities (tangible and intangible) (Brett, 2005; Zengeni, 2020; Zoogah et al., 2014). From the researcher's experience, it is observed that the general practice in strategy-making sessions in Zimbabwe is to do a PESTLE analysis to define the base for strategies. This contextual reality influenced the selection of some theoretical lenses for this study. In defining their strategies or strategic choices, organisations in Zimbabwe would certainly consider core to their processes; institutions, resources, capabilities and knowledge systems within and around them. Zimbabwe is defined as an emerging economy (Hoskisson, Eden, Lau, and Wright, 2000; Wright, Filatotchev, Hoskisson, and Peng, 2005), while from another perspective, the country can be defined as a frontier economy (Musacchio and Werker, 2016).

This view of more than a single observed definition of the context resonates with the increasing complexity in the definition of African contexts (Hoskisson et al., 2000; Zoogah et al., 2014). The volatility of most African countries' socioeconomic and political environments has made it difficult to classify the contexts. This, in turn, implies that the internal processes in organisations and their relationships with external processes or environments will likely differ from those in clearly classified contexts. In Zimbabwe, for example, the socio-economic environment is very volatile. Between 2017 and 2024, there have been four (4) reviews of the monetary policy by the central bank. As a result, the country has had four (4) different local currencies – the Zimbabwean dollar, RTGS, bond notes and now the ZiG (Zimbabwe Gold). It then makes it attractive to establish how the internal systems of organisations are configured, how they respond and how the knowledge systems are structured to convert the internal to external as well as the external to internal meanings of these changes. It also provokes exploration of the capabilities and resources within the firms, including how each builds competitiveness. Finally, this kind of volatility would test the process of establishing fit between the different stakeholders in the organisation. In fact, one would wish to test how the stakeholders relate in defining the organisations' strategic choices.

This research refers to and analyses existing theories and literature on these processes and relationships from various contexts. This knowledge, therefore, forms part of the basis of enquiry in the Zimbabwean context. The main focus of this study was to explore the practice of strategy-making in depth, including the processes and inter-relationships between the initiators and makers of strategy. The study adopted a multi-layered approach to the enquiry in order to improve the analysis of the complexities of the context; the processes of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring within the organisations in Zimbabwe. The research, therefore, adopted the Strategy-As-Practice research approach. SAP is concerned with the activities, actors and actions related to doing strategy (Johnson et al., 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 1996). Data was collected using semi-structured interview guides to attain detailed enquiries. When documents were eventually made available, they were analysed mainly for confirmation of practice and praxis.

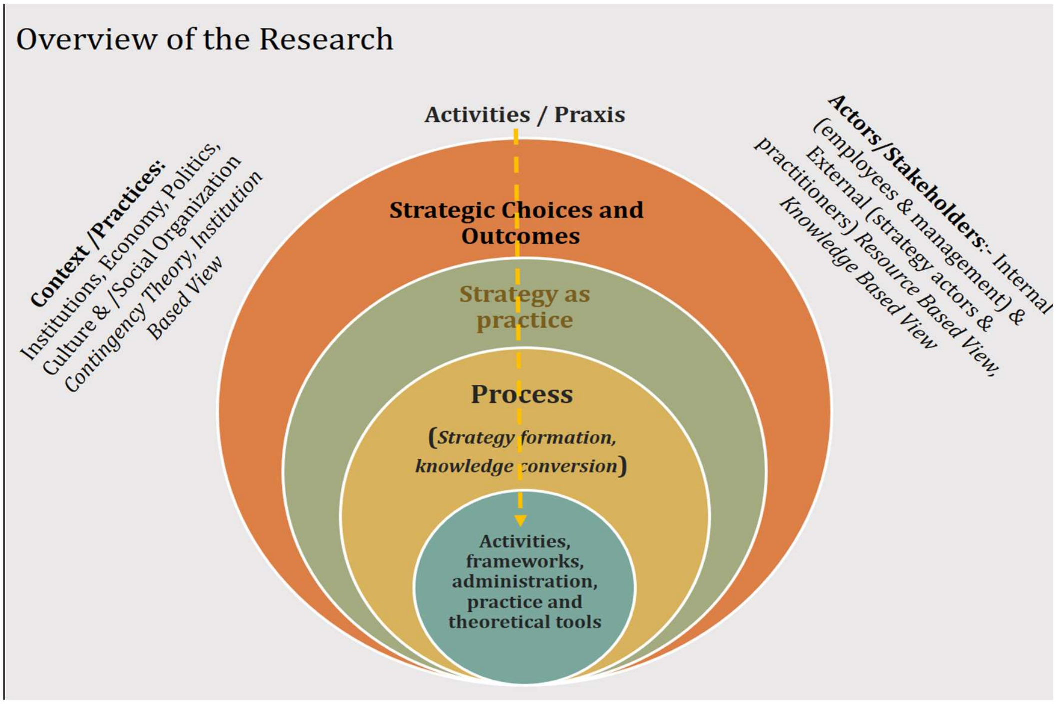


Figure 1.1–1: Overview of key concepts and theoretical lenses

1.2 Background of Study

Grant (2016) proposes that the strategy-making process combines design and emergence approaches and that the balance depends greatly upon the stability and predictability of the organisation's business environment (p. 23). This view is echoed by other scholars, who also believe that this approach is more appropriate in turbulent environments (Kopmann et al., 2017). Secondly, the reference to the "business environment" can be viewed from the perspective of the unit of analysis. Using this lens, the internal environment (structure, culture and resources) incorporates the managerial competencies and resource capabilities (Barney and Clark, 2007; Teece, 2009) of the organisation, which largely determines its ability to deliver a product or a service in line with its strategic goals. The external environment (industry, institutions, macro-economic or social) is the context (Meyer and Peng, 2005; Musacchio and Werker, 2016; Porter, 1983) within which the organisation operates.

The interaction of the two environments (internal and external) can be attributable to a set of contingency factors (Chemers, 2014; Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984) through which the performance of a business or organisation may be a consequence of the structural fit between its internal and external environment. The interaction can also be a function of the knowledge (gap or quality) between the two environments and of the ability of the organisation to convert the knowledge and establish a 'fit' between the two environments (Nonaka and von Krogh, 2009).

As organisations pursue their mandate, they embrace various activities and processes that are also located in these dynamics above. Specifically, organisations try to establish how to achieve their goals efficiently and effectively. This research focuses on this strategy formation process and, more importantly, the actions, actors and activities that confront these dynamics. The study does not seek to understand the models of strategies that the organisations pursue; neither is any attention directed to the relationship between the models and the performance of the organisations. Rather, this research study is about strategy as practice.

1.3 The Context of the Study – Zimbabwe

The study was conducted in Zimbabwe, a context that was purposefully selected for ease of access to information and the uniqueness of its socio-political and socio-economic systems. The Zimbabwean economy has gone (and continues to go) through various economic and socio-political phases and revolutions (Brett, 2005) since the country attained independence from the British in 1980. In some cases, the changes have mimicked developments at the global level, such as deregulation and economic liberalisation in the 1990s with the adoption of World-Bank-supported macroeconomic adjustment programmes (Meyer and Peng, 2005; Skalnes, 2016). Some scholars define Zimbabwe as a political economy (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2008; Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004) and emphatically criticise the impact political institutions and government have had on social structures and organisations. This context is reminiscent of the generalisations made about Africa as a whole, in which most scholars create a somewhat negative perception of the complexities of the interactions between the formal and informal institutions and the internal and external environments of organisations that prevail (Ndikumana, Ondiege, Plane, and Vencatachellum, 2009; Zoogah et al., 2014). The picture painted by these scholars provides little understanding of the effectiveness of the organisations.

The idiosyncrasies of this (Zimbabwean) context include a unique culture among its people (Mapara, 2009; Mguni and Muwati, 2015). This culture manifests in economic and political revolutions that have seen dispensations and transitions that, in many ways, depart from what is found in formal literature. Literature from some scholars (Bond, 2000; Jenkins and Knight, 2002; Nyoni, 2018; Sikwila, 2013; WorldBank, 2017) dismisses the context as unattractive for business due to high inflation, inconsistent socio-economic policies, inconsistent / multiple currencies, poor infrastructure and amenities and unstable political environment. However, organisations and the country seem to survive and even attract investors in this environment. In recent years, one of the world's superpowers, the United States of America (USA), has invested heavily in establishing its largest embassy complex in Africa in Zimbabwe's capital. This may suggest that the context is more strategic than others in the continent.

Zimbabwe's economic and institutional profile has traits of both an emerging and a frontier economy (Dashwood, 2000; Kararach and Otieno, 2016). Emerging economies are low-income, rapid-growth countries using economic liberalisation as their primary engine for growth (Hoskisson et al., 2000). They fall into two groups: developing countries, such as in Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, and transition economies, such as in the former Soviet Union and China (Hoskisson et al., 2000, p. 249). The key characteristics of emerging economies include rapid political changes, favouring free-market policies or governance systems, and poor legislation support for property rights. Such economies have poor institutions, resources and capabilities and exhibit lethargic economic development. The prevalence of a significant role of the State as a key institution in defining policies and governance structures is also evident in these economies (Meyer and Peng, 2005; Wright et al., 2005; Young, Tsai, Wang, Liu, and Ahlstrom, 2014), according to Musacchio and Werker (2016). Low-income, high-risk countries are characterised by politically manipulated markets, weak legal systems, and low per capita income, but they are profitable to investors. These are referred to as "frontier economies".

Beyond this generalised classification of the context, literature on Zimbabwe proposes that the idiosyncrasies of Zimbabwe as a context are rooted in its *people*, specifically their culture of relationality, resilience and social organisation (Mugumbate and Gray, 2017; Nhemachena, 2017). Further, the people have retained their indigenous knowledge systems and tactfully infused them with foreign (often referred to as "colonial" or "Western") systems, including biblical or religious faith-based systems (Chitando and Manyonganise, 2011; Mapira and Mazambara, 2013). This practice has allowed them to create a unique 'local' ethnography of knowledge that helps them navigate social, political and economic turbulence (Mudege, 2007). Zimbabweans thus tend to act, organise and react or pro-act with little reference to formal or 'known' code. For example, while the country's economic and socio-political environment has primarily been viewed as uncertain (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2008; Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004; WorldBank, 2017), the people have survived and re-organised themselves better in their social settings than some of Zimbabwe's neighbouring countries, such as Mozambique, South Africa and other economies (developing or developed) that have undergone such cycles of uncertainty and instability.

However, while the social and societal institutional framework has appealing idiosyncratic traits, the same cannot be said of formal institutions, which are mainly in the hands of specific individuals based on their political authority or financial power (WorldBank, 2017). This may result in a situation where the leader of the institution (for example, ministries and government institutions) is either the absolute authority on matters raised within the institution or a mere occupant of the leadership chair and presides over decisions made by another 'sub' institution that ably manoeuvres to the upper echelons of the institution. This social complexity possibly suggests and, in some cases, may explain why and how the processes within organisations or institutions in Zimbabwe do not necessarily conform to a specific standard or template.

In November 2017, Zimbabwe underwent another major revolution and entered a new era (Rosenberg and Attwell, 2017), a political dispensation employing a systematic but conspicuously "un-normal" socio-political process. The President stepped down in what appeared to be a hostile change of power and yet it was so peaceful. International commentators, civil society, renowned world journalists and political analysts have not agreed on this transition's definition (BBCNews, 2017; Mackintosh, 2017; TheWashingtonPost, 2017). Precisely, there is debate on whether the process should be classified as a military coup, a 'soft coup', a revolution or simply a decision by the citizenry to transcend the old regime (Beardsworth, Cheeseman, and Tinhu, 2019; Mackintosh, 2017; TheWashingtonPost, 2017).

While the legality of the change process is open to challenge for the locals and investors, these events of November 2017 may have begun a new and better chapter in the country's political and economic dispensation (Rosenberg and Attwell, 2017). Under President E.D. Mnangagwa, this 'new dispensation' ushered in a new culture with the priority of government being economics rather than politics (Beardsworth et al., 2019; Chronicle, 2017). The new mantra is "Zimbabwe is open for business". At the 48th World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2018, the (new) president pledged to observe The Zimbabwean Constitution and *create institutions that are* enablers for success.

Scholarly views have yet to be published on this transition, although this researcher's preliminary observation is that in known history, such a transition has thus far been unique to Zimbabwe. Since this socio-political transition, Zimbabwe has proceeded to institute economic reforms, including the much-debated (amongst economists) "de-dollarisation" of the economy (Chanakira, 2019; Pasara and Garidzirai, 2020). It is observable that the transition process has also been crafted through the use of new and old institutions, whether political or socio-political. Thus, the institutions' role is particularly relevant to this research study beyond the literature review.

To its credit, Zimbabwe has a considerably high literacy rate (Mguni and Muwati, 2015). This is a critical resource considering the view that competencies (Prahalad and Hamel, 2006) and knowledge creation and management (Blaikie, 2007; Dayan et al., 2017; Nonaka, Toyama, and Nagata, 2000) have become a significant source of superior performance (Barney and Clark, 2007; Molla and Cuthbert, 2016) for businesses. There is an opportunity to enquire about the dynamic capabilities of organisations operating in the country in converting existing or new knowledge into strategy formation. Perhaps as a matter for future research arising out of this contextual summary, there has been a consistent view that, in general, the country is good at producing excellent strategy blueprints but poor at implementation (Nyoni, 2018). This view prompts consideration about whether this applies to the country's governance institutions only or is a general view of the culture within the entire nation.

This research explores how organisations in Zimbabwe develop strategy processes that achieve the fit between the internal and external environment.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Literature on strategy and strategic management in Zimbabwe shows that research has been strongly inclined towards investigating the types, uses (with emphasis on their importance) and implementation of strategies in addition to the challenges faced in their implementation (Dlamini, 2016; Saurombe, du Plessis, and Swanepoel, 2018; Simba, Smith, and Dube, 2018; Viriri and Phiri, 2017). The prevalent context of these studies has also been SMEs (Mhizha, 2015; Moyo and Moyo, 2017; Nyamwanza and Mavhiki, 2014; Zindiye, Chiliya, and Masocha, 2012). Conclusions have centred on how strategy is or can be a tool for enhancing and sometimes assuring a firm's economic rents (Nyamwanza and Mavhiki, 2014; Rugedhla, Disele, Moalosi, and Fidzani, 2020; Viriri and Phiri, 2017).

There is a notable progression of the country's (the context) socio-economic systems in embracing globalisation (Mago, Musasa, and Matunhu, 2013; Mapira and Mazambara, 2013; Mpofu, 2013), which in turn manifests in organisations' adoption of global management systems and processes. The country hosts several multinational corporations that are head-officed in the first world. To that end, the language of Porter's models, McKinsey's frameworks, Business Process Reengineering (BPR), and the concept of strategy or strategic management are considered a "normal" part of organisations' interactions and local scholars' discourse, as referred to by Chikanda and Crush (2018); Mhizha (2015); Nyamwanza and Mavhiki (2014); Viriri and Phiri (2017). Organisations have closely linked their performance to the strategies that they follow or have adopted. For example, observation and work experience have shown that many organisations in Zimbabwe have re-structured and re-restructured, ironically, to arrive back at the same set-up they started with quickly. The restructuring has mostly been defined as a strategic move to remain competitive. Other organisations have re-branded or dropped certain product lines, only to come back to the same brands and products in not so long a period. However, even in all these experiences, references and observables, the focus is on strategy as an economic tool to attain proposed goals. There is notably very little pursuit of the question of the actual practice and praxis and knowledge interactions of strategy formation. While the scholars acknowledge that management teams take time away from the premises to craft strategy, they do not delve much into the real roles of management in making strategy.

This research, therefore, identifies the gap through questions such as: how do organisations and their leaders decide what strategy to follow at a given time; what is the actual process of forming this strategy; and, within that process, what is the *basis* or footing upon which the strategy process is anchored, and how do businesses actually form their strategies? Is strategy formation a deliberate and structured process? An extensive review of literature on strategy in Zimbabwe reveals that not much has been written on the process of strategy formation or formulation in organisations, particularly in the formal sector. Instead, scholars have insisted that the terms "strategy formulation", "strategic planning", "strategy-making", and "strategy development" all refer to the same thing and can be used interchangeably (Magaisa et al., 2013; Mashingaidze, 2020; Mashingaidze et al., 2021; Nyamwanza, 2013). These views and conclusions make generalised assumptions about the practices, praxis and practitioners of strategy-making. The conclusions lack an intimate assessment of the complexities of interactions among stakeholders within the internal environment and between the internal and external environments of the organisations. For example, it is unclear whether or how organisations develop dynamic capabilities to ensure knowledge sharing among the firm's employees and between the firm and its environment. These complexities and the dynamics of knowledge formation, conversion, exchange and preservation cannot be relegated to mere semantics and diction. There is certainly much more involved in strategy-making.

1.5 Research Questions

This research is about strategy practitioners' practices, praxis, and interrelationships in strategy formation processes in Zimbabwean organisations. It examines how knowledge sharing and conversion proceed among practitioners of strategy formation in organisations. The main research question for this qualitative research is:

1. **What are the practice, process, knowledge sharing and conversion dynamics of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations**?

The sub-questions are:

a) What theoretical tools inform the strategy formation processes in Zimbabwean organisations?
b) What are the practice tools and dynamic capabilities of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?
c) How is knowledge formed, shared and converted in strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?

1.6 The Research Approach

Social theories inform the research approach (Strategy-as-practice) and explain the relationship between strategy formation and societal practices within and around the organisation (Kohtamäki et al., 2021; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). From a methodological point of view, the approach requires the researcher to establish methods to adequately interrogate the dynamics of the social interactions in organisations and use adequate tools to analyse the findings.

From a theoretical perspective, the decision to adopt the SAP as a research approach for this study was also inspired by a theory-building model developed by Christensen (2006), who used the development of the theory of disruptive innovation to propose a theory-building process model. This model proposes an abductive (inductive and deductive) process of theory building (Christensen, 2006).

According to Christensen (2006), within the two stages (descriptive and normative) of theory building, researchers go through and iterate continuously (between) the three steps of observation (constructs), classification (into frameworks and typologies) and association (models).

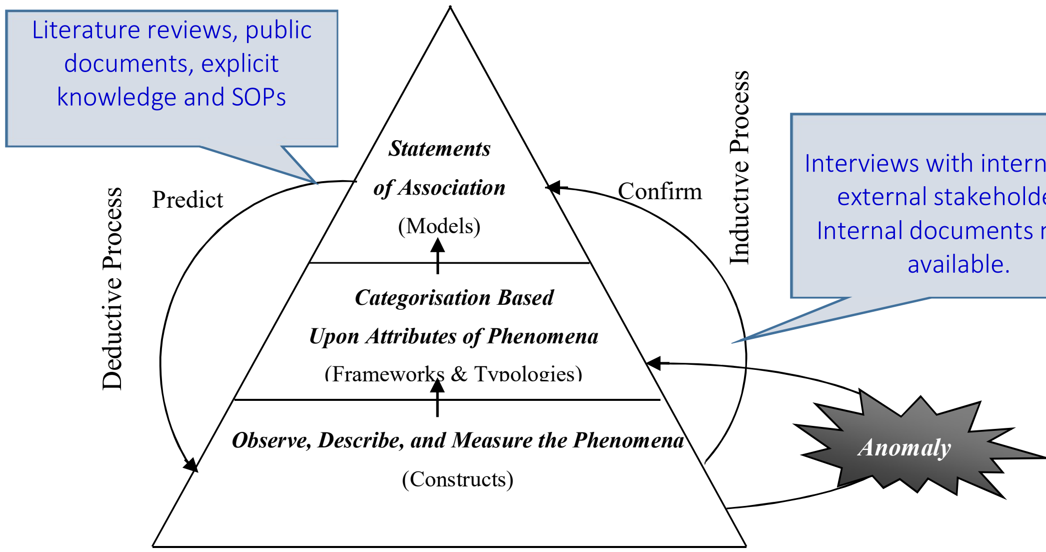


Figure 1.6–1: The process of building theory, adopted from Christensen (2006)

Figure 1.6–1 **Error! Reference source not found.** above shows the additions (in text boxes and comments in colour) used by this research study to demonstrate the link between this process and the research approach adopted for this study. This model assisted in guarding against merely presenting and justifying a priori concepts and assumptions under the guise of theory building or improvement.

The data collection process was initially planned to be sequential, beginning with document analysis and building on to discussions with respondents internal and external to the organisation. However, in practice, the sequence could not be as strict. Some of the focus areas included the frequency of the strategic plans, the review intervals, the structure of plans, the number of people involved in the process, assigned responsibilities, definitions of strategic choices and strategic outcomes, the relationship between the strategic choices and outcomes, the success rate of chosen strategic outcomes and the measure of outcomes. Conclusions were reached from the document analysis and fed into the interview guide for qualitative data collection.

Christensen (2006) asserts that researchers first build descriptive theory through the three steps of observation, classification and association before they proceed to normative theory. However, in this research study, no active phenomena were observed. Instead, a review of literature, publicly available documents, and explicit knowledge systems were used to establish constructs. Any available formalised or existing systems and procedures were also examined.

Christensen (2006) suggests that researchers develop constructs out of the process described above, which are abstractions that clearly present the phenomena and how they operate (Christensen, 2006). There are no strict rules regarding how and in what format the observation is carried out. In this study, for example, an attempt was made to establish possibly consequential relationships between strategy actors and the internal environment. The association stage involved an exploration of the extent of the relationship between what was obtainable in the public domain and what the respondents said and the evidential SAP records.

Christensen (2006) argues that in order to transcend the “confusion of competing categorisation that often accompanies descriptive theory” (p. 42), researchers need to “move beyond statements of correlation to define what causes the outcomes of interest”. This is the transition to normative theory, which has better predictive power and is more advanced. In explaining this transition, Christensen revisits the importance of mixed research methods. However, in the current research, the SAP approach, as explained in *Section 6.3*, and the elements of the research process, as described under *Section 6.4*, were considered adequate for enabling a deeper analysis of the associations between concepts. Using interviews as the primary data and documents and records as supplementary evidence also assisted in establishing consistencies and contradictions between processes and practices within organisations, across organisations and within the broader context compared to existing literature. This process responds to the process of theory building or improving.

1.7 Assumptions

While, in general, researchers are expected to put aside their experiences and preconceptions (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Partington, 2002), the following assumptions have been retained as guiding the study:

a) Strategy or strategic management is not a novel phenomenon in business management in Zimbabwe. The responsibility for strategy formation is placed mainly in the hands of the top management teams in organisations. This is evident in the submissions of the Zimbabwean scholars cited thus far.

b) The interviewed respondents responded objectively and contributed positively to the study.

c) Management teams in Zimbabwean organisations are rational people who make decisions in the best interest of the businesses and the owners they serve.

d) Zimbabwe's organisations desire to survive, be profitable, and achieve growth despite a challenging macroeconomic environment. They are aware of the need to develop appropriate strategies to achieve the goals.

In general, the research assumed that organisations in Zimbabwe engage in strategy-making. However, whether these processes are deliberate, emergent, or both is unknown. The study showed that there are similarities in the roles played by actors in strategy formation in Zimbabwe and they are as presented in literature. The research also challenged the notion that top management is ultimately responsible for strategy-making and whether they are the only actors in the process. Literature on strategy-making has generally shown that there are other actors in the process. However, it was also observed that there is a more pronounced role played by the owners of organisations in their strategy processes.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its contributions to the theory and practice of strategy-making. The focus of this research on the strategy-making process does not in any way suggest that no work has been undertaken on the concept in general. As early as 1978, studies were being conducted on the strategy-making process. Mintzberg (1978) defined strategy as "a pattern in a stream of decisions" (p. 934) and argued that the idea of strategy formulation is misleading as it presupposes that strategies are explicit and are only an outcome of a conscious and purposeful process.

More recently, Grant (2016) has developed the "planned emergence view". This view proposes that organisational strategy formation follows both the emergent and deliberate or planned process. This view ushers in a possible change in the configuration of dynamic capabilities in organisations for strategy formation. It also challenges the knowledge transfer and conversion processes in that where one organisation may have relied on emergent processes, there may now be a need to establish a deliberate process to accommodate this changing view. In Zimbabwe, this new view by Grant (2016) 'coincides' with a major revolution in the political and economic thrust brought about by the events of November 2017. This may require the research to go beyond interrogating existing systems only and delve into whether and how management teams in organisations adjust the internal structures and processes in response to these changing views. The significance of the research therefore may be summarised as follows:

a) From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to two perspectives:
   i. The debate on the issues of strategy as deliberate or emergent (Johnson et al., 2013; Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) or a combination of both processes (Grant, 2016).
   ii. The conversation is about Zimbabwean organisations' dynamic capabilities and how knowledge conversion processes proceed in organisations in a constantly changing context.
b) From a practical perspective, the research challenges the Zimbabwean organisations to reflect on their strategy-making processes and the dynamic capabilities that support the process. It challenges the interrelationships among internal strategy practitioners and between the internal environment and the external stakeholders. The research prompts organisations in Zimbabwe to evaluate the practical roles played by its strategy-formation resources.
c) Literature shows that organisations face the reality of the growth of e-commerce the world over. The knowledge-conversion processes are now challenged to include data analytics (Chen, Chiang, and Storey, 2012; Stubbs, 2013) supported by computerised systems. The models of sharing strategy information are visibly embedded in new technology, as the respondents of this study confirm. This suggests the importance of technology processes as included in the definition of dynamic capabilities by Eisenhardt and Martin (2000). In the process, the research provides, in part, an empirical test of some of the observations by McGrath (2013) on transient advantage and how to ensure that the business is ready to attain the edge at every turn of the environment.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

This research does not focus on forms or types of strategy nor explores the content of strategies. The study does not venture into the actual outcomes of strategy and other factors that affect strategic outcomes. The research explores strategy-formation processes in Zimbabwean organisations, including the knowledge transfer and conversion processes and the dynamic capabilities that connect the internal and external environments to enable or block these processes.

In general, strategy matters are surrounded by and refer to several theoretical views. While it may be argued that strategy involves decision processes born out of actor interaction, which is core in behavioural theories, this study uses behavioural theories as theoretical lenses. This study's theoretical framework is limited to four theories: The Contingency Theory, Resource-Based View, Institution-Based View and Knowledge-Based View.

The initial plan for data collection was to begin with a review of documentation and statistics and then build the interview questions on the data collected from the review. However, this was not achievable as most organisations were uncomfortable releasing documentation, citing the sensitive nature of strategy matters. The data collection, therefore, does not include intricate statistical information about the organisations. Where access to company documentation was eventually granted, the data collection was only limited to a paraphrased or deductive summary of the documented processes and activities of strategy formation, record keeping and selection of participants.

The study is also about practices (actors, activities and actions). Therefore, the study does not venture into the correctness, appropriateness, benefits or disadvantages of the strategy-formation process but focuses only on practice aspects.

Finally, the research was conducted on organisations selected from two specific industry categories with the reasoning that the nature of the 'tenure' of the impact of the decisions made in these sectors is similar despite the differences in the focus of activities. Further, the population of the respondents was limited to leadership (management and employees) because it is a generally agreed principle that strategy formation is the preserve of leadership in organisations.

1.10 Definition of Terms

The terms, constructs, concepts, and phrases used in this research may be multi-dimensional in meaning and may present different meanings in other contexts. Some terms tend to be used interchangeably to refer to the same phenomenon or aspect. For this research, the following are the working definitions of the key terms used in the thesis:

- **Competence or competency:** "Competence" refers to broader cognitive traits that are synonymous with intelligence or information-processing ability, skills and expertise, while "competency" refers to an underlying characteristic of an individual and can be used as a measure of one's superior performance (Blömeke, Gustafsson, and Shavelson, 2015). In this report, the terms are used interchangeably concerning individuals. The plurals are "competences" and "competencies", respectively. At the organisation level, the term "competencies" means an organisation's collective knowledge about coordinating diverse production skills and technologies (Prahalad and Hamel, 2003).
- **Contingency Theory:** This is a theory of the firm that assumes firm heterogeneity, embraces the concept of fit between strategy and technology, structure and internal context, and recognises the role played by the external context (Hofer, 1975; Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984). Contingency theory has evolved to consider situational leadership, where the leader adds cognitive and emotional resources to work effectively in different environments (Chemers, 2014).
- **Dynamic capabilities:** In this thesis, dynamic capabilities are those organisational and strategic routines (*deliberate or emergent*) of decision-making through which managers, stakeholders, customers and owners of the organisations sense (changes in external environments), seize (opportunities or situations) and reconfigure (their internal environments) to differentiate themselves from competitors and to keep ahead of challenges (Arndt and Pierce, 2017; Khan, Daddi, and Iraldo, 2021; Suddaby et al., 2020).
- **Institution-Based View:** This is a theory of the firm that asserts that individuals are rational actors but also make choices considering the institutional frameworks – formal and informal – within which they exist (Peng, 2002; Peng et al., 2009; Young et al., 2014).

- **Knowledge conversion:** This is the spiral process of transformation from tacit to explicit knowledge and subsequent re-transformation from explicit to tacit knowledge (De Carvalho and Ferreira, 2001; Nonaka and von Krogh, 2009; Tseng, 2010). The alternation occurs in four processes: socialisation, externalisation, combination and initialisation. In these processes, tacit and explicit knowledge mutually enhance each other to increase the capacity to act (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009)
- **Knowledge transfer:** This is the sharing, learning or continuous interaction of tacit and/or explicit knowledge between individuals in the organisation, between individuals and the external environment, and between the external and internal environment (Sveiby, 2001).
- **Knowledge-Based View:** This theoretical view considers knowledge the most critical resource for defining the "capacity to act" (Grant, 1996; Sveiby, 2001) and as an inimitable intangible resource. Tacit and explicit knowledge interaction constitutes knowledge conversion, a critical intangible asset that enhances the firm's competitiveness (Nonaka and von Krogh, 2009).
- **Organisation / Firm:** This thesis uses these terms interchangeably to refer to organisations, companies or institutions engaged in economic activities to earn economic rents.
- **Resource-Based View:** This view recognises the importance of firm resources and capabilities and their optimal deployment for value maximisation. It also considers firm superiority to reside mainly in its ability to respond to customer needs efficiently and effectively (Barney and Clark, 2007; Wernerfelt, 1984).
- **Strategy-As-Practice (SAP):** This is an emerging approach to strategy that focuses on strategy as a social practice – how practitioners of strategy act and interact (Whittington, 1996, 2006). It is about the doing of strategy: who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use and the implications for shaping strategy (Jarzabkowski and Paul Spee, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2013). In this research, SAP is both a perspective and a research approach.
- **Strategy formation:** "Strategy formation" refers to the process of strategy-making that emerges over time as part of the organisation's decision stream and is not necessarily based on a conscious process (Johnson et al., 2008; Mintzberg, 1978). This process is also called **emergent strategy** (Johnson et al., 2013; Mintzberg and

Waters, 1985). In this thesis, the term "strategy formation" is also used to refer to the general process of strategy-making in organisations.

Strategy formulation: This is the process of strategy formation that follows a consciously defined plan and well-considered intentions of top management. It is also called **deliberate** or **intended strategy** (Johnson et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2013; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985).

1.11 Structure of the Thesis

This report is structured as set out in *Table 1.11–1* below.

Table 1.11–1*: *Structure of the thesis

CHAPTER NUMBER AND TITLE	BRIEF SUMMARY AND KEY CONCEPTS OR FOCUS AREAS
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW – THE PRACTICE OF STRATEGY FORMATION	This is the first of four chapters of literature review in the report. The chapters are organised and titled in line with the research questions, and this first chapter focuses on the main research question. The chapter begins with a summary of the current conversations around the key issues in the study. It then tracks the evolution of strategy and strategic management to provide a context for the key concepts in this research. It delves into the practice of strategy formation following the SAP approach. The chapter also reviews the relationship between "deliberate" and "emergent" strategy formation. As this review proceeds, the chapter refers to the Zimbabwean context to indicate the level of research on strategy formation in Zimbabwe.
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW – THEORETICAL TOOLS THAT INFORM STRATEGY FORMULATION	This chapter discusses the four selected theoretical lenses of the Contingency Theory, Institution-Based View, Resource-Based View and Knowledge-Based View as they inform strategy practices. The chapter demonstrates the centrality of these theories in the practice and praxis of strategy formulation. It examines the dynamics of the interactions among the practitioners within the organisation and those between the organisation and its external environment, including the institutions that shape that environment.
CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW - THE TOOLS IN STRATEGY FORMULATION	At the organisation-level unit of analysis, the practice of strategy formation is supported by various initiatives and tools that ensure that the dynamic capabilities in the process are in balance. Organisations have referred to consultants, institutions, stakeholders, and management frameworks when considering practice tools and initiatives. This chapter refers to the general literature around these tools as they impact strategy formation.
CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE REVIEW - KNOWLEDGE	This chapter focuses on the knowledge-based view of the firm. The nine knowledge-transfer questions developed by Sveiby (2001) are central to the knowledge-sharing and conversion processes that harness the internal and external environments and lead to decisions about strategic choices.

CHAPTER NUMBER AND TITLE	BRIEF SUMMARY AND KEY CONCEPTS OR FOCUS AREAS
DYNAMICS IN STRATEGY FORMATION	The Knowledge-Based View is also explored concerning the tenets of the Contingency Theory, which embraces the concept of fit between strategy and technology, structure and internal context. This theory also recognises the role played by the external context.
CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	This chapter details the research approach, strategy, population, sampling and data-collection methods. The chapter outlines the SAP approach, which is key to the research. The population and sampling are described at the two units of analysis levels chosen for the study: firm level and individual level. The sub-categories of the populations are explained. The chapter also explains the population and sampling for the sources of data. The research used three interview guides, and this chapter outlines how this was achieved. The computer programs used as data recording and -analysis tools are described. The interviews were recorded using the Otter.ai software, which did preliminary transcribing before direct editing was undertaken. Analysis of data and findings was conducted using Atlas.ti software, along with direct review and commentary of interview transcripts. Finally, the chapter describes the key challenges in data collection, which included limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on holding physical meetings, the resultant challenges in virtual connections, the sparsity of appointments as respondents attended to work emergencies and the slight loss in detail owing to poor connectivity. As indicated in the chapter, these challenges, however, did not compromise the eventual quality of the research.
CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	This chapter presents the research findings and discusses them in line with the research questions and the propositions in the literature review.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	This chapter summarises the research and presents the conclusions reached. The conclusions form contributions to knowledge. The thesis concludes by establishing implications and recommendations for practice, praxis, theory, and future research. These arise out of the findings and observations made during the research journey.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW – THE PRACTICE OF STRATEGY FORMATION

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter introduces the research study and identifies the key focus areas and the research context. The literature review is divided into four chapters, each relating to one of the research questions drawn up for the study and set out in Chapter 1. This also enables an in-depth review of the key aspects of the research and improves the dependability of the literature as a reference point for analysis of the research findings. This chapter leads the review of literature by presenting a review of the literature related to the main research question:

What are the practice, process and, knowledge sharing and conversion dynamics of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?

The review begins with a brief summary of the current conversations around the topic. This provides a live connection to the study and opens up for discussions around the future of the research.

The chapter proceeds to explore the concept of strategy (also referred to as "strategic management"), followed by an analysis of the evolution of the concept. Together, these two sections lay the foundation for understanding the importance of strategy in organisations, the key activities and the various stages through which the concept of strategy has evolved, and what it has responded to in its development.

The chapter then discusses the revolution of strategy as a concept. This section is primarily informed and inspired by the writing of Prahalad and Hamel (1994) on the causal relationship between the dynamics of the actors in the strategy and the context in which the organisations operate. The review proceeds to the elements of the strategy-making process and reviews the key concepts of deliberate and emergent strategy-making. This section also explains the differences and similarities of the concepts of formation and formulation as they relate to strategy-making.

The chapter briefly maps the strategy research domain, setting the practice perspective and approach to the study.

A summary diagram of the relationship between the key concepts is presented in this chapter. This provides a take-off point for comparing the findings of the literature and the findings of this research.

2.2 Current conversations on dynamic capabilities, strategy making and knowledge management

It is acknowledged that, since the time of this research study, there have been further developments in literature around the key concepts. This section provides a brief overview of the current conversations.

As technology has progressed rapidly, there are extensive conversations around the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in organisational processes (Chowdhury, Dey, Joel-Edgar, Bhattacharya, Rodriguez-Espindola, Abadie, and Truong, 2023; Stahl, Antoniou, Bhalla, Brooks, Jansen, Lindqvist, Kirichenko, Marchal, Rodrigues, and Santiago, 2023). There are discussions about the relationship between dynamic capabilities and ordinary capabilities (Pitelis, 2022), as well as knowledge as a dynamic capability in organisational processes (De Bem Machado, Secinaro, Calandra, and Lanzalonga, 2022; Sheehan, Garavan, and Morley, 2023). Knowledge management discussions are around the role of technology in the creation, conversion and availability of the resource (De Bem Machado et al., 2022; Iaia, Nespoli, Vicentini, Pironti, and Genovino, 2024; Kopka and Fornahl, 2024). Tacit knowledge and complications around its sharing, particularly the (un)willingness of the holders to share (Connelly, Černe, Dysvik, and Škerlavaj, 2019; Issac, Bednall, Baral, Magliocca, and Dhir, 2023; Moin, Omar, Ali, Rasheed, and Abdelmotaleb, 2024) are topical. There are also suggestions that it may be *the use of existing knowledge* and *generation of new knowledge* (and not necessarily its tacitness) that is the real source of competitive advantage (Bibi, Padhi, and Dash, 2021). This departs slightly from the idea that its inimitability or tacitness is more important.

2.3 Strategy and Strategic Management

At a global level, the field of strategy is generally organised around a central research question, as with other social science disciplines (Barney and Clark, 2007; Rumelt, Schendel, and Teece, 1994). Barney and Clark (2007) assert that this question is: "Why do some firms persistently outperform others?" (p. 3), pointing out that as organisations pursue their mandate, they devise ways to out-compete each other and sustain superiority. However, scholars observe that this question has varied with the conceptual transitions in strategic management and as the analytical frameworks regarding the relationship between strategy and the firm have evolved (Grant, 2007). While in its naked form, the assertion assumes that there will always be persistent performance differences between firms, the reality is that sometimes this is not the case. Barney and Clark (2007) respond to the question of sustained superior performance questions by citing two explanations: "The first, and the older of the two, was originally articulated by Porter (1979, 1981) and draws heavily on the structure-conduct-performance (SCP) paradigm in industrial organisation economics" (p. 3). The primary focus of this explanation, as developed by Porter (1981), as cited in Barney and Clark (2007) is the firm's power in relation to its market and particularly the firm's ability to adjust its prices and still surpass the various barriers in the industry. In analysing this explanation, suggestion emerges that price superiority and market dominance are a measure or testimony of a firm's efficiency and, in turn, an explanation of superior performance.

The second explanation proposed by Barney and Clark (2007) may assist in broadening our understanding of how firms achieve superior performance. The authors assert, "The second explanation of why some firms persistently outperform other firms focuses less on industry structure and market power and more on the differential ability of some firms to more effectively and efficiently respond to customer needs" (p. 4). One could argue that this proposal depends on the level of development of the socio-economic status of the context. For example, the situation in Zimbabwe, where the proverbial *customer is king* can so easily be substituted by *price and availability is king*, it would not be prudent to accept the explanation quickly. Foss and Knudsen (2003), as cited in Barney and Clark (2007), contend that this explanation draws heavily on neoclassical price theory and focuses mainly on a firm's ability to be more effective and efficient as a passport to superior over less effective and less efficient firms.

Studies have also shown that the context and, more importantly, institutions and their role (Zindiye et al., 2012; Zoogah et al., 2014) are key factors in firms' (in)ability to be efficient. The second explanation cited by Barney and Clark (2007) above also does not explain the *nature and nurture* of efficiency and effectiveness. Perhaps the suggestion is that if customers perceive one firm's products to be preferable over another, this could assure the preferred firm of superiority in performance. This assumption would call into the discussion behavioural theories, which this study has already delimited in *Section 1.9*.

At firm-level units of analysis, scholars have generally agreed on two paradigms in the conceptual framework of strategic management. The first paradigm, the traditional view, was centred on the internal competencies and capabilities of the firm – the skills (technical and managerial), internal processes, knowledge and infrastructure (Barney, 1991; Barney, Wright, and Ketchen, 2001). The scholars argue that it is not the industry but the firm's internal environment that gives it the edge. The firm can utilise these resources to implement its strategies efficiently. The second paradigm centred on the firm and its external environment, to which Peng et al. (2009) add institutions. Grant (2007) chronicles the development of the 'actors' in strategic management, including the evolution of strategy models and frameworks that were used by management in pursuit of competitive and sustainable advantage. However, it appears that not much work has been conducted on the analysis of the measure of performance of these actors. Grant (2007) points to a dilemma regarding these performance measures. On the one hand, some scholars focus on measures such as shareholder value, profitability and market share, which have been established from the *best practices* model. On the other hand, and more so today, other scholars prefer to focus on issues such as corporate ethics and social responsibility.

Strategy, or strategic management, is therefore concerned with how a firm and its management utilise internal resources to navigate the external environment. It is about the relationship between the internal capabilities and the external context.

2.4 The Evolution of Strategy

According to Guerras-Martín, Madhok, and Montoro-Sánchez (2014), strategic management is primarily viewed as a youthful discipline that is still evolving. From the 1960s to about 1978, strategy was defined simply as best practices in administration, management and operations (Cyert and March, 1963; Hofer, 1975). The 1960s and early 1970s seminal publications by Chandler (1962), Ansoff (1965) and Andrews (1971) (Guerras-Martín et al., 2014) defined the concept of strategy from a managerialist view. The idea was that strategies were created by the leadership of the organisations, with the rest of the staff responsible only for implementation. These traditional management theories advocated "one best way" of organising and managing firms. Strategy was about having outstanding or better working management and operational practices. The theories assumed the homogeneity of firms, their environments, and their goals (Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984).

The notion of homogeneity of firms, environments and goals cannot be applied to today's world. The contexts and firms' goals and internal environments have evolved rapidly over the years. The availability of information on technology platforms has presented various options for efficiently producing a single product or service.

The evolution of strategy in the 1980s is primarily attributed to the views of Michael Porter, who, in 1980, introduced the competitive forces approach, also known as the industry-based view (Magretta, 2011; Porter, 1983). Porter (1980) emphasised the idea that firms could earn superior returns by positioning or creating a privileged market against competitive forces, in this way outwitting other firms. Later on, Porter (1996) emphasised that strategy is about doing things differently. It is also about those activities and actions that are difficult to imitate, differentiating an organisation from its competitors. Porter insisted that activities or operating methods that simply increase productivity do not constitute strategy but are merely operational efficiencies (Porter, 1996).

As we entered the 1990s, developed economies such as the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA and 'developing economies' such as India embraced deregulation and privatisation of critical infrastructure (Prahalad and Hamel, 1994) such as state enterprises. This brought fundamental changes in organisational structures, including vertical integration, centralised specialist firms, and fragmentation, as organisations sought to retain competitive advantage. Mergers and acquisitions were responses to excess capacity (Hamel, 1996; Hamel and Prahalad, 1993; Prahalad and Hamel, 1994).

This development was also evident in Zimbabwe and in adopting the Bretton Woods' motivated Economic Structural Adjustment Programs by the government, which led to the privatisation of various state-owned enterprises (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2008). Even the role of workers in organisations began to change, and the rise of women's leadership became topical, all of which indicated changes in the internal praxis and practices.

Management systems generally responded with a paradigm shift to focus on firm-level efficiencies and strategic resource allocation for superior performance (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993; Rumelt et al., 1994; Wernerfelt, 1984). This resource-based view would also evolve to incorporate concepts of dynamic capabilities (Barney, 2001; Teece, 2009; Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997), knowledge as a critical resource (Grant, 1996; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka et al., 2000; Sveiby, 2001); and sustained competitive advantage (Barney and Clark, 2007). Successful firms adapt quickly to changing environmental demands (Prahalad and Hamel, 1994). In this era, more focus was placed on the human resources aspects of the business.

Prahalad and Hamel (1994) focused on management structures, such as teamwork, empowerment and reengineering, while Rumelt et al. (1994) wrote of policy and "subjects of primary concern to management". Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) defined strategy as "not structure of products and markets, but dynamics of a company's behaviour". Whittington (1996) refers to the focus on the core competence of the manager and planning in general. This is consistent with the definition of the firm as an "institution for integrating knowledge and structural changes" (Grant, 1996, p. 109), all of which require reconfiguration of the cognitive aspects of the business – the human interactions and configurations.

The search for competitive advantage meant that firms had to explore beyond their initial contexts. Firms could be headquartered in one environment but would acquire or merge with organisations in other parts of the world. In Zimbabwe, multinational corporations (MNCs) became the organisations to work for and engage in business.

They were recognised as the panacea for the problems of the economy. A number of the indigenous top executives who were lucky enough to get jobs in these organisations also benefitted from secondments to the companies' headquarters in the West. However, a general review of the history of the nation's socio-economic activity and submissions by local scholars such as Magaisa et al. (2013) and Nyamwanza and Mavhiki (2014) suggest that the objective was to teach organisations and executives to implement the "global management systems" rather than how to develop local solutions.

This globalisation of firms and their management challenged the concept of sustained competitiveness (Mazzucato, 2002). The first challenge concerned the reality of the differences in cultures, preferences and institutional frameworks (Peng, 2002; Peng et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2005) across the contexts in which the businesses operate(ed). This would impact the organisation's efficiencies (Prahalad and Hamel, 2006) and effectiveness (Young et al., 2014; Zoogah et al., 2014). Considering this new reality, one might need to explore how knowledge can be shared and transferred effectively across geographical, socio-cultural, and language spaces (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Mudege, 2007). It might also be essential to understand how organisations unite the different tacit aspects of knowledge of their people in forming strategy.

The second challenge was the evolution of technology in both operations' infrastructure and systems (specifically information communication technologies (ICTs)). Christensen (2013) refers to this evolution as "disruptive innovation"(p. 15). The evolution generally disturbed the sanctity of information, which meant that more people could easily access information about their competition. This development challenged the concept of time in sustained competitive advantage (McGrath, 2013). a decade later, the discussion has transcended to include that the technological evolution may have challenged the tacitness of knowledge in organisations (De Bem Machado et al., 2022; Iaia et al., 2024).

Today, organisations have expanded beyond their local country boundaries to become MNCs. Some MNCs are rooted and headquartered in emerging economies (Meyer and Peng, 2016) and frontier economies (Musacchio and Werker, 2016). There is evidence of change in social systems to include agitation for gender considerations (Jeong and

Harrison, 2017) in leadership structures. There is also a need to navigate these ever-changing institutional environments, achieve contingency of internal structures and external environments, and retain some level of competitiveness. This need has possibly elevated the importance of knowledge creation and management and its interaction with organisation systems and processes (Dayan et al., 2017; Jasper, 2017).

The idea of sustained competitiveness (Barney and Clark, 2007; Porter, 2011) is now challenged by the view that competitiveness or competitive advantage is transient (McGrath, 2013). McGrath (2013) penned an article that, at face value, appears to counter the observations by Porter (1996). The article begins by stating:

> STRATEGY IS STUCK. For too long, the business world has been obsessed with the notion of building a sustainable competitive advantage.... But it is now rare for a company to maintain a truly lasting advantage (McGrath, 2013, p. 64).

McGrath (2013) then substantiates these opening remarks through four key arguments and their attendant assumptions.

First, the scholar advises that competitive advantage cannot last long as "competitors and customers have become too unpredictable, and industries too amorphous" (p. 64). She, therefore, challenges the "time" aspect of the sustainability of strategy, which other scholars such as Porter (1996) and Teece (2009) closely relate to in answering the question of superior performance. McGrath (2013) alludes to "the digital revolution, a 'flat' world, fewer barriers to entry, globalisation"(p. 64) as the emerging context in which firms exist. Through advanced ICT, competitors today can learn more about their rivals faster than before. Businesses now compete across geographical divides, and this globalisation has ensured that best practices are not peculiar to a single organisation or country.

Secondly, McGrath (2013) argues that competitive advantage "evaporates in less than a year" (p. 64). She proposes that organisations be ready to constantly adopt new strategic initiatives and build transient competitive advantages simultaneously. McGrath proposes a more dynamic implementation of multiple temporary strategic solutions to suit the moment rather than Porter's (1996) proposal for gradually adopting strategies more linearly.

Thirdly, McGrath (2013) advises organisations to abandon the assumption that stability is the norm. Organisations must work to "spark continuous change, avoiding dangerous rigidity" (p. 64). This advice is not necessarily different from Porter's (1996) idea of lean structures and teams that make decisions quicker. However, McGrath (2013) places more emphasis on the same.

Finally, McGrath (2013) advises that in today's world, businesses must "view strategy differently – as more fluid, more customer-centric, less industry-bound" (p. 64). She summarises the view of the transient competitive advantage by referring metaphorically to the "anatomy of a transient advantage", as summarised in *Table 2.4–1* below.

Table 2.4–1: Key elements for transient competitive advantage, adopted from *McGrath (2013)*

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE STAGE	SUMMARY OF KEY ACTIVITIES	SKILLS REQUIREMENT
• The Launch	• Identifying the opportunity • Mobilising resources to capitalise on it	• Think tanks • Technocrats • Less worried about titles • Goal-getters
• Ramp Up	• Idea is brought to scale • Preparing for implementation	• Performers • Mature leaders who can think outside boundaries • Administrators who can assemble resources
• Exploitation	• Capturing profits and share • Forcing competitors to react	• Analysts • Decision-makers • EXCO
• Reconfigure	• Review of current structures and systems • Confronting a new era • Business reengineering	• Change agents / managers • Radical thinkers
• Disengagement	• Extraction of resources from weak-performing units / areas • Mergers, acquisitions, mothballing of units	• Candid, tough-minded people • Leaders who subordinate emotions to survival / optimal strategy • Shareholders & Board chairpersons – entrepreneurs

McGrath (2013) concludes the article by first warning against what she refers to as "the seven dangerous misconceptions"(p. 66) of high-velocity environments. These are summarised and paraphrased as follows:

a) *First mover trap* – being first to market is no guarantee for advantage,

b) *Superiority trap* – the desire to see through the maturity of assets or ideas should not stifle innovation,
c) *Quality trap* – quality is good but may be too expensive, and customers leave,
d) *Hostage-resources trap* – profitability should not cause slow innovation,
e) *White-space trap* – structure and customer experience should not impede product development,
f) *Empire-building trap* – positions and power structures may sometimes inhibit experimentation and risk-taking, which chases away good skills,
g) *Sporadic innovation trap* - the organisation should not be vulnerable to individuals and their ambitions (McGrath, 2013, p. 66)

McGrath (2013b) implores organisations to be more flexible, encourage innovation and quick decision-making, and pursue opportunities that give them a transient competitive advantage. Her advice may prompt an enquiry into how organisations now develop strategies given this changing context, what strategy or strategic management means today, and how organisations relate to their external environment in the strategy process and practice.

2.5 The Revolution of Strategy – Locating the Zimbabwe Dynamic

Prahalad and Hamel (1994) explored the revolution of strategy as both practice and a field of study in the 1990s, an era that they defined as being riddled with "fundamental structural changes and dynamism" in both the national and industry contexts. These changes resulted from "deregulation, global competition, technological discontinuities, and changing customer expectations" (p. 5). James Muzondidya, in Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2008), describes the situation in Zimbabwe at that time:

> The gains made in the provision of social services were steadily eroded by the economic decline of the 1990s. A series of droughts lead to a decline in agricultural productivity ... large numbers of workers were retrenched as industries closed down ... deregulation of prices and removal of subsidies on basic consumer goods under ESAP [*Economic Structural Adjustment Programme*] resulted in severe hardships for workers.... (Raftopoulos and Mlambo, 2008), Loc. 4996, Kindle Books version)

Prahalad and Hamel (1994) observe that managers' focus changed as competition became a global phenomenon. The 'new' role of the manager was to focus more on the implementation aspect of the strategy process. The era saw the emergence of new managerial issues such as Total Quality Management (TQM), BPR downsizing, teamwork and employee empowerment. In the academic sphere, the traditional definition of managerial roles was even questioned. It would appear that even the measure of performance had evolved. Performance was no longer measured by the excellence of the strategic thought, but rather by the 'shortness' of the response time to the changing environment.

Prahalad and Hamel (1994) add, "To casual observers, metaphors of strategy as learning and evolutionary adaptation suggested that successful firms were simply those that adapted quickly to the changing environmental demands" (p. 6). Perhaps in the current era, which is also witnessing major structural and operational changes triggered by technological (equipment, information management and communication) revolution, these cease to be mere metaphors, but realities instead. It is arguable that indeed adaptation and innovation are huge keys to success.

The scholars also refer to works by Rumelt et al. (1994), who sounded early warnings and raised four basic questions that are at the centre of strategy practice and research: How do firms behave? Why are firms different? What is the function of, and the value added to, the headquarters unit in a multi-business firm? And What determines the success or failure of a firm in international competition? (p. 6).

The first two questions are also examined by Barney and Clark (2007) in their overview of the Resource-Based Theory as they analyse the potential of four organisational resources and capabilities to be sources of sustained competitive advantage (preface vi). The final question is, in greater part, at the centre of work by strategy scholars. Prahalad and Hamel (1994) write of a "changing competitive milieu" and argue that "the need for strategic thinking and behaviour among managers has never been more urgent" (p. 6). These authors assert that some of the forces that impact on the nature of competitiveness in industries, which managers must be wary of, are:

- **Deregulation -** One of the forces is the deregulation of privatisation and critical infrastructure industries. Examples given are the airline, telecoms and financial services industries in the USA and UK. The authors argue that this became a worldwide pattern. Muzondidya in Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2008) refers to economic liberalisation in Zimbabwe.

- **Structural Changes** - These changes were brought about by technology and customer expectations. New competition began to challenge the dominance of large players (p. 7),
- **Excess Capacity -** Prahalad and Hamel (1994) refer to work by Bower (1986) on the complex interplay between public and private policy as the chemical industry tried to negotiate a restructuring of excess capacity worldwide involving governments of the USA, Japan and Europe. The discussions included such strategic issues as cost benefits, competitive consequences and the social impacts of restructuring (p. 7).
- **Mergers and Acquisitions -** Including alliances, are a method of coping with excess capacity. Mergers and acquisitions are also scrutinised by Barney and Clark (2007), in Chapter 8 of their book *Resource-based theory: Creating and sustaining competitive advantage*, where they discuss firm boundary decisions and the Resource-Based Theory,
- **Environmental Concerns**- Concerns were raised over the impact of industrialisation on the environment with the upsurge of the "going green" concept. Guerras-Martín et al. (2014) refer to the changing evaluation of the performance of organisations to include the firm's relationship with its physical environment and social responsibility (p. 69).
- **Less Protectionism -** Countries are now progressively reviewing restrictions to global trade and other protectionism approaches, in this way ensuring that organisations do not hide their inefficiencies behind protectionist policies,
- **Changing Customer Expectations** - now involve brand attachment, concern for quality and improved price-performance as competition increases and choices increase,
- **Technological Discontinuities -** The evolution of the personal computer (PC) and software industry and the development of operational technologies and ICT are making more data about competition available to more people. McGrath (2013), in recognition of this force of technology and the changing customer expectations, challenges Porter (1996) sustainable competitive advantage

concept and, instead, develops the concept of "transient advantage", arguing that a competitive edge is only temporary and organisations must work to spark continuous change,

- **Emergence of Trading Blocks** - The emergence of regional trading blocs changed the basis and patterns of trade, creating logistics networks and influencing costs,
- **Global Competition -** This changed the boundaries of competition from the liberalisation of economies, as argued earlier. Young et al. (2014) argue that even the entry of MNCs into the emerging economies globalised competition and competitiveness (p. 331).)

Prahalad and Hamel (1994) assert that "the cumulative effect of these [and other] changes is so significant that it can be best described as a 'silent industrial revolution'" (p. 9). While there is close reference to mergers, acquisitions, and alliances, scholars also argue that one of the effects of the forces listed above is the disintegration of industries, which is the breakdown of vertically integrated structures. Managers are now increasingly participating in ownership structures, challenging the Agency theory (*Principal-agent relationship governed by interest, rationality and risk assumptions* (Eisenhardt, 1989) and leading to the reduction of transaction costs.

In essence, the traditional industry boundaries are being challenged, raising further interest in such issues as industry transformation, changing the firm's dominant logic and rethinking the unit of analysis for competitiveness. Managers are faced with the tasks of resource allocation, skill-mix management, and strategy execution. They must retain:

> foresight – an ability to synthesize the collective impact of a complex set of economic, political and regulatory and social changes, industry structure, increasingly, must be seen as a variable to be managed by firms and not accepted as a given."(Prahalad and Hamel, 1994, p. 9).

With increased competition and the entrance of new players, those managers that have traditionally enjoyed the cover of monopolistic and dominant entities have to review their skills and adapt to disintegration and new fusions or convergences of firms. The measure of competitiveness is no longer limited to what it was traditionally, but now moves between the product line, business unit, cluster of firms, and suppliers or collaborators. Competitive measures may even include home governments and the context of the parent firm. The key assumptions and recipes that underlie traditional strategy are now challenged. This is summed up in *Table 2.5–1* below.

Table 2.5–1: Challenging traditional assumptions and recipes in strategy, developed from Prahalad and Hamel (2006)

STRATEGY ASSUMPTION / RECIPE	ATTRIBUTABLE PROPONENTS	TRADITIONAL VIEW	NEW VIEW
1. Strategy is about positioning a business in a given industry structure.	Porter (1980, 1985)	Industry structures are stable and identifiable; hence, positioning is key.	Industry structures are far from stable and are undergoing transitions. Firms have to adapt.
2. The focus of strategy tools and analysis is existing industries.	Harrigan (1980)	Structural analysis must be concerned with existing and stable industries.	Industry foresight needs to be developed as opportunities are evolving, and resource allocation is no longer the same. Standards should be created that influence direction for emerging organisations.
3. The primary focus of strategic analysis is the business unit.	McKinsey, BCG, Hofer & Schendel (1978)	Industry analysis is based on focusing on the one business unit that is doing well.	The corporation is a more than a collection of business units. Competition extends beyond inter-corporate competition even to clusters of firms.
4. Strategic outcomes can be explained on the basis of economic analysis.	Traditional economists	Economic analysis is a critical component of strategic analysis.	Political and public policy analysis is equally important. The role of the host context and government cannot be ignored.
5. Strategy is the result of an analytical process. Execution of strategy is an organisational process.	Traditional strategy theorists	Strategy is a management responsibility, and the rest of the organisation must merely follow and execute it.	Process, resource allocation, creativity and innovation cannot be separated from the people in the organisation. The skill set is as important as the leadership in crafting and implementing strategy.

As the environment continues to change, with new revolutions, it is important to revisit and review the traditions and assumptions of strategic management. Prahalad and Hamel (1994) do not dwell much on methodology and use case analyses as sources of empirical evidence in their discussion. Given the unpredictability of the new environments, particularly in emerging economies, there is a need to look into the methodology of strategy research in the new environment.

An analysis of the authors' narrative of the definition of the strategy concept reveals little consideration of the strategy process. While the authors define strategy as entailing a relationship between the internal and external environment of the firm, that relationship is not, in itself and alone, the source of the firm's competitive advantage, and neither can it guarantee its sustainability. The primary context in which strategy as a concept proceeds is the internal culture (which also manifests in the language), the management systems, the capabilities, competencies, and the industry environment that may demand subsidiary cooperation. Developing the firm's strategy is a fundamental factor that cannot be left out in defining both the concept and context of strategy.

2.6 Strategy-Making Process

Scholars differ in their views regarding the development of the strategy-making process. Hofer (1975) observes that researchers prefer to refer to the corporate as the unit of analysis for strategy processes. Mintzberg (1978) argues that how the concept of strategy is defined determines the perspective adopted regarding how strategies are formed. Mintzberg (1978) further argues that the traditional definitions of strategy as "the determination of long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals" treat strategy as a deliberate plan (Mintzberg, 1978, p. 935). He proposes an alternative definition of strategy as "a pattern in a stream of decisions". This definition emphasises that some strategies merely result from a consistent sequence of decisions over time. The views above prompt a debate about whether all strategies are developed out of deliberate and conscious plans (deliberate strategy) or may evolve out of unintended but realised plans (emergent strategies).

Mintzberg and Lampel (1999) assert that:

> Strategy formulation is judgmental designing, intuitive visioning, and emergent learning; it is about transformation as well as perpetuation; it must involve individual cognition and social interaction, cooperative as well as conflictive; it has to include analyzing before and programming

after as well as negotiating during; and all this must be in response to what may be a demanding environment. (p. 26)

Johnson et al. (2008) adopt the design view of strategy development. They add that deliberate strategy development is initiated intentionally by top management, whereas with emergent strategy development, there is no grand plan. Instead, the strategy simply develops over time (Johnson et al., 2008). In the 7th edition of their book *Exploring strategy text & cases*, Johnson et al. (2013) review the term *deliberate strategy* and suggest using the alternative term *intended strategy*. They argue that the strategy arises out of desired and *intended* plans by management (Johnson et al., 2013). However, they explain that the extent of the realisation of deliberate or intended strategy and of emergent strategy is not always straightforward.

These authors paint a picture (see *Figure 2.6–1* below) of the strategy-development routes, where they demonstrate that, in fact, most intended strategy is not necessarily realised, while emergent strategy is generally realised better (Johnson et al., 2013).

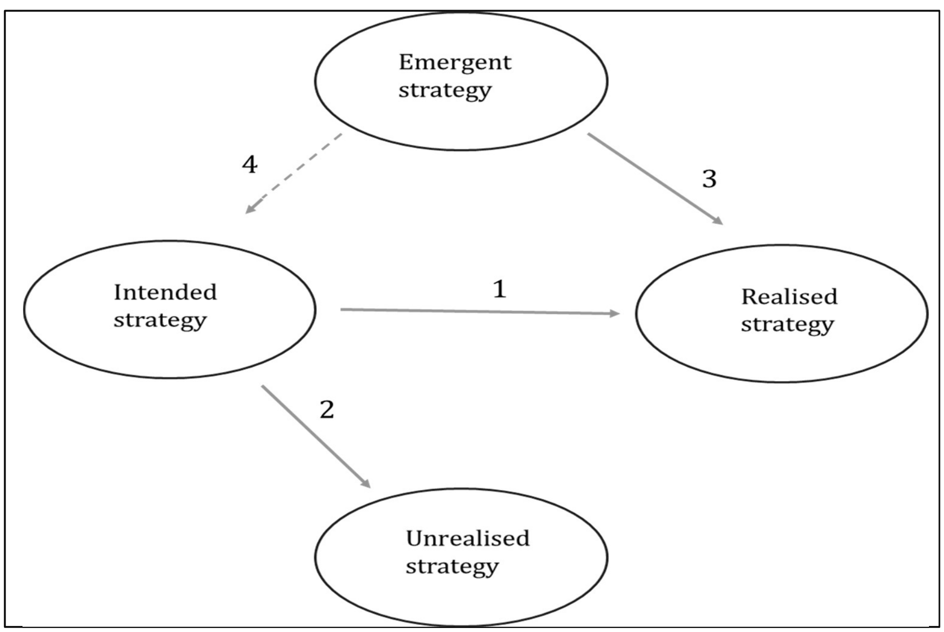


Figure 2.6–1: Strategy development routes, adopted from Johnson et al. (2013)

Within the organisations are people who are strategically positioned and usually in leadership positions, and they champion the deliberate strategy-development process (Johnson et al., 2008). These people vary from founder members or owners of the organisation to CEOs or people of good reputations who may have earned respect because of their knowledge of or influence over internal or external processes (Johnson et al., 2013). Perhaps this is where strategy consultants are also considered because they have assumed expertise in these matters. Strategy leaders could also include those good at attaining power within groups or gatherings. One is persuaded here to ask whether this leads to the 'relinquishing' of all thinking to this 'strategy leader' by the rest of the team, which in itself may be the reason that the realisation of the strategy is problematic as its formulation was biased.

Scholars in Zimbabwe have referred chiefly to founders and owners (Moyo and Moyo, 2017; Nyamwanza, 2013) as the beginning and the end of strategy formulation in SMEs. These SMEs have often been criticised for their inability to sustain the strategy-formulation processes beyond the founders, resulting in their eventual folding. In some cases, deliberate strategies may develop as an imposition from external powers, especially shareholders or government legislation (Johnson et al., 2013). It is also observable from experience that the influence of shareholders is not limited to those of SMEs alone. Shareholder influence is also seen in large corporates, where foreign shareholders, and especially those who hold super majority shareholding, tend to assume superiority over business running even where full management teams exist. The outcome of such situations is normally unfavourable, as the poor separation of power and decisions relegates accountability for poor strategic outcomes only to management even where the shareholder's voice had originally prevailed.

Emergent strategy develops as a pattern or stream of decisions that build up or become clear over time (Johnson et al., 2013). The strategies resulting from these processes normally reveal a build-up of an existing approach instead of a new pathway or system. Not much attention is given to historical data or trends. Instead, management elects to scan the environment continuously and experiment, usually with side ventures, while being general rather than specific about the organisation's goals. Emergent strategies may also develop due to political processes between interest groups. This could be between shareholders or the Board on the one side and management on the other, or between coalitions within the management team (Johnson et al., 2008). Emergent strategy could also be a function of routine resource-allocation decisions and a common culture within the organisation (Johnson et al., 2008). In this case, the internal systems are set. Decisions are adopted rather than using planned foresight or anticipation to reach decisions because they are "the way to do things" within the organisation. What people actually do, the activities within the organisation is the bedrock of both organisational processes and organisational strategies (Johnson et al., 2007). Formal and informal processes and activities exist within organisations. The relationship between these formal and informal processes may show how poorly technological or market forces may be communicated upwards within structures and how initiatives may be championed by front-line or middle managers as they compete for scarce resources and top management attention (Johnson et al., 2007)

Today, in the era of knowledge economies (Molla and Cuthbert, 2016), strategy-making, however defined, is in itself a knowledge-creating process. Grant (2016) suggests that strategy-making combines design and emergence processes, referring to this process as "planned emergence" (p. 23).

Scholars have also argued that the strategies firms adopt differ according to the firms' contexts (Grant, 1996; Peng, 2002; Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984). Therefore, in understanding strategy-making as what people do, it is also important to consider their organisational and institutional contexts (Johnson et al., 2007).

Knowledge transfer and conversion occur both as a build-up to the strategy-making process and within the strategy process (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009). It is important to explore how the strategy-making process takes place and how organisations create processes for transferring and converting knowledge.

This research does not assume that no work has been undertaken on strategy formulation in Zimbabwe. In fact, Magaisa et al. (2013); Mashingaidze (2020); Nyamwanza (2013) are some of the leading scholars on the subject. However, there are some key observable differences (alternatively viewed as weaknesses in this research) between their work and other existing literature.

- These scholars clearly group *strategic planning*, *strategy-making* and *strategy formulation* in the same category and proceed to use the concepts interchangeably. In doing so, they gravely trivialise the philosophical differences between the concepts, which this research aims to reveal.

- The scholars relegate the 'process' of strategy formulation to a mere event, a two- to three-day sequence of presentations and management activities;
- The scholars conclude that strategy formulation is "formal but not utilized" (Magaisa et al., 2013, p. 602). The conclusion regarding the formality of strategy formulation appears to be based on the simplistic observation that the managers in the companies attend a formal gathering for the strategic planning event. This again ignores the fundamental philosophical issues involved in deliberate and emergent strategy-formulation processes.
- The scholars do not explore the dynamics of the social interactions amongst actors in the organisation nor between the actors and the external environment.
- Finally, there is no discussion of the knowledge dynamics – conversion and sharing – in the strategy process. Instead, there is mere reference to use of tools such as SWOT analysis as a demonstration of the intelligence gathering in strategy formulation. The strategy formulation process includes in-depth knowledge-exchange dynamics that combine tacit and explicit knowledge resources.

Using the SAP research approach, this study explores the philosophical and practical arguments of emergent and deliberate strategy formation processes as put forward by Johnson et al. (2013) and Mintzberg and Waters (1985).

2.7 The Strategy Research Domain

Mainstream research has for long focused on the contribution of strategy to the question of organisational performance and competitiveness (Barney, 1991; Barney and Clark, 2007; Makadok, Burton, and Barney, 2018; Porter, 1996; Porter, 2011; Rumelt et al., 1994). From the late 90's, the practice perspective began to build up as scholars sought to delve deeper into the process of strategy formation itself (Johnson et al., 2007; Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 1996).

This practice perspective itself has also grown into many directions. Some focus on the process aspect (Burgelman, Floyd, Laamanen, Mantere, Vaara, and Whittington, 2018), others with the language (Mantere, 2013) and social interactions approach to strategy practice (Vaara and Fritsch, 2021; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). There has also been focus on the making of strategy, internal practices and praxis (Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2013; Seidl and Whittington, 2014).

The SAP approach concerns the interaction between the internal organisational systems / processes, cultures and the activities of the practitioners or people within. Johnson et al. (2007) provided a base mapping for the infusion of the content and process aspects of strategy (*Figure 2.7–1* below)

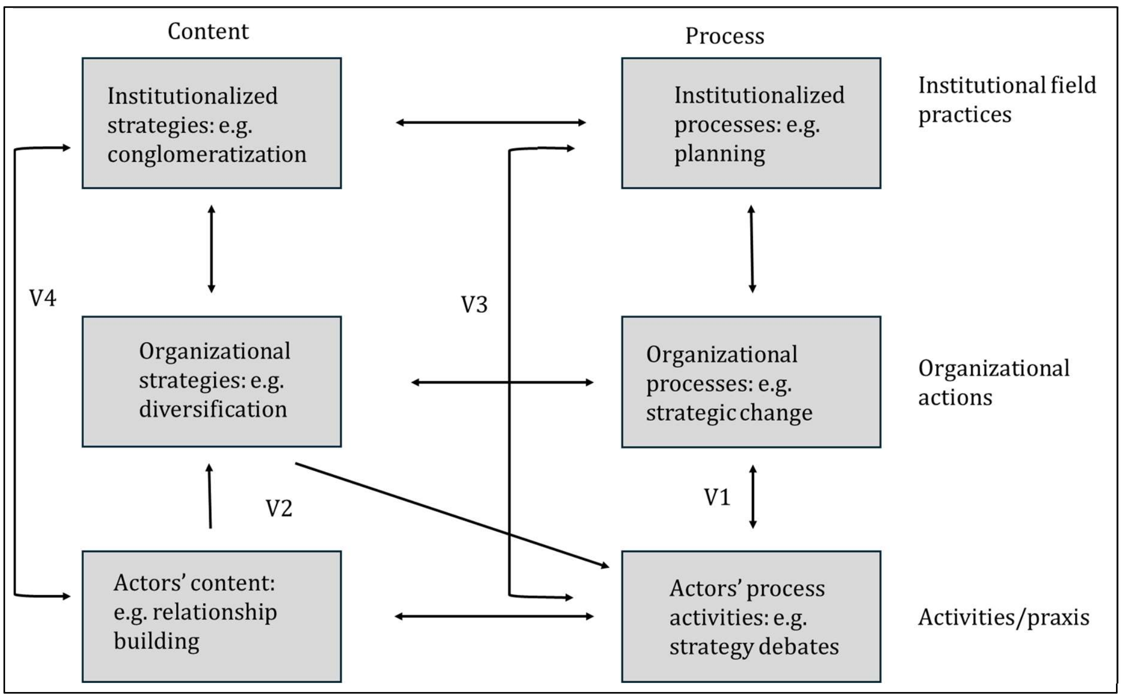


Figure 2.7–1 : Strategic management map, adopted from Johnson et al. (2007)

The map synthesizes the institutionalised practices, organisational actions and the activities/praxis of the people within. In the diagram, V1 links the people activities to the organisational processes. In mainstream strategy, this would relate to the discussion on competencies and capabilities and their impact on strategic outcomes (Teece and Pisano, 2003; Teece, 2009). The focus would also be on the formal relationships between the formalized processes and the people in the organisation (Burgelman, 2002). However, there are those activities of the individuals in organisations that are not formalized, yet they are key to establishing the internal processes. Examples include the informal mentorship processes, company performance discussions that happen at the lower levels of the organisation's hierarchy. There also informal experimentation processes and questions are raised around how the informal aspects of behaviour modify standard operating procedures and enable organisations' more formal systems to outperform those of other organisations (Johnson et al., 2007)

V2 on the diagram relates to the link between people's activities and organisation strategies. Strategy is also concerned with the activities and capabilities of the people and their link to the organisation's actual strategies. Scholars of the Resource-Based-View argue that organisation resources are the ultimate key to competitive advantage (Barney, 2001; Barney and Clark, 2007). Added to these resources is knowledge (Dayan et al., 2017; Sveiby, 2001). Zimbabweans have been known to have good literacy and knowledge systems (Mguni and Muwati, 2015; WorldBank, 2017). Therefore, Strategy research would be short if it did not establish the relationship between the tacit knowledge, the activities, internal cultures and the strategies.

V3 focuses on the relationship between institutionalised management processes and people's organisational activities (Johnson et al., 2007). Authors of strategy in Zimbabwe refer closely to strategic planning seminars/meetings, engagement of strategy consultants and standard sensing frameworks such as SWOT analysis (Magaisa et al., 2013; Mashingaidze, 2020; Mashingaidze et al., 2021). Therefore, research must investigate these strategy processes, including how the consultants are selected and their role. This also acknowledges the role of the external environment and stakeholders in setting the systems.

Finally, the authors look at institutionalised strategies. In the analogy, they suggest that strategies such as processes and activities can also be standardised within an organisation. It is essential to look into the macro and micro level of the institutionalisation of strategies and how they are pursued within the organisations (Johnson et al., 2007). The traditional organisational level of strategy research generalizes the process of strategy-making. SAP allows for a multi-layered approach to explore micro-activities of those who enact, develop and deliver strategy and in turn, the interrelationships between people's activities and organisational processes (Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2013).

3 LITERATURE REVIEW – THE THEORETICAL TOOLS

3.1 Introduction

This study's primary unit of analysis is the organisation or firm in which the strategy process takes place. The organisation exists in a broader environment in which other organisations such as institutions and experts, also exist and influence the activities of this primary unit of analysis. The secondary unit of analysis is the individuals within and surrounding the organisation. To explore these units of analysis, the literature review set out in this chapter presents selected theoretical views of the firm. The theoretical lenses are used to put into perspective the focus of this study and the existing theoretical views on the strategy formation process.

At the end of the chapter, the key points extracted from the theories reviewed are used to form a theoretical framework for the study. The framework is summarised in a diagrammatic presentation of the relationship between the theories, common assumptions and consistent views.

3.2 Strategy and the Theory of the Firm

The review of the definition and evolution of strategy as a concept and the summary of academic views on the strategy process, as presented in Chapter 2, bring to the fore the following assumptions that can be considered as key elements of strategy and the strategy process in firms:

a) Firms desire to attain success, be it competitiveness, operational efficiencies or mere attainment of the target mission.
b) Firms exist in an environment or context (industry or nation) whose elements (stakeholder, socio-economic, technological, regulatory and geographical, among others) impact their ability to pursue these goals.
c) Firms rely on their internal environments (e.g. resources, skills, processes, systems, capabilities, infrastructure, assets and knowledge) to pursue their goals.
d) The harnessing of the external and internal environments is a dynamic process at the centre of which is knowledge creation, conversion and exchange.

Definitions of the firm span a range of views and interpretations of factors of production and the process of attaining as well as the meaning of *value*. Barney and Clark (2007) include various definitions that go back to Ricardo's (1817) analysis of land rents and land fertility as key production factors that define the firm and its competitive advantage. At the other end of the range, these authors cite Penrose's (1959) view of the firm, first, as an administrative framework that links and coordinates activities of numerous individuals and groups, and, second, as a bundle of productive resources (Barney and Clark, 2007).

Different theories define the firm according to their particular focus. For example, while the neoclassical view of the firm focuses on factors external to the firm such as industry structure, the RBV concentrates on internal factors such as the acquisition, development and deployment of heterogeneous resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991). Closely related to the RBV is the idea of the core competency – a strategic capability that is valuable, rare, costly to imitate and not substitutable (Barney, 1991; Young et al., 2014, p. 339).

It is critical to assess whether management teams have been able to distinguish the firm's theoretical classification in crafting and implementing strategy. In other words, what process do management teams use to assess the firm's weaknesses or challenges? How do management teams determine whether internal or external environmental factors are causing the challenges? Is the response always correctly linked to the observed challenges or is there a mix?

In answering these questions, in general, this research study adopted the following working assumptions:

a) Organisations and attendant stakeholders generally desire to succeed. Success may include earning economic rents, service delivery or accomplishment of mission;
b) Organisations are formal entities in a heterogeneous environment (Barney and Clark, 2007; Grant, 1996);
c) They are led by rational actors who are bona fide agents of the owners and utilise resources and capabilities of the internal environment to deliver the desired outcomes of the firms (Barney and Clark, 2007); and

d) Strategy formation is a practice guided by strategy's processual and systemic perspective. This stems from the view that strategies exist within a specific context, with ongoing interactions between internal and external environments (Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2002).

Based on these working assumptions, while there are various theoretical views of the firm, this research adopts four theoretical lenses to conceptualise the structure and behaviour of firms in the context of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations. These theories are the Contingency Theory (CoT), Institution-Based View (IBV), Resource-Based View (RBV) and Knowledge-Based View (KBV). The following sections detail the theories, their key principles, evolution and relevance to strategy formation.

3.3 Contingency Theory of the Firm

As discussed in *Section 2.4*, scholars argue that, in the period prior to 1990, strategy was defined as "best practices in administration and operations", and the concept (of strategy) is said to have been viewed from a managerial perspective (Cyert and March, 1963; Hofer, 1975). Strategy theorists also assumed a homogeneity of firm goals and environments (including the context). The evolution within that era is defined as transcending to firms' pursuit of superior returns through positioning. In the same era, Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr (1984), in reviewing the Contingency Theory (CoT), classified organisations into four types:

- Defenders
- Prospectors
- Analysers
- Reactors

These views suggest strictly autocratic internal processes, culture, and decision-making systems in the organisation, with little room to venture outside those practices that are deemed *best* and set by management.

Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr (1984) explain that the above classification is premised on how the organisations solve three types of problems:

- Entrepreneurial
- Engineering
- Administrative

In order to solve these problems, organisations must adopt a contingency approach based on the fit between their structure, people, technology, strategy, and culture.

At conception, the CoT proposes three key concepts: effectiveness, environment and congruency. Effectiveness is attained when an organisation comes to terms with its environment and survives through adaptation. This view is attributed to Aldrich et al. (1984), a team of systems theorists (*cited in* Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr (1984). Another view of effectiveness is that it "is generally the degree to which an organisation obtains a minimal number of highly desirable outcomes" (Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984, p. 12). Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr (1984) further argue that the evaluation or judgement of effectiveness depends greatly on the values of the organisation's stakeholders. These authors emphasise that there has to be some trade-off between what shareholders, managers and employees value and, therefore, define effectiveness. Congruency or fit is the relationship between two or more variables within the organisation that leads to its effectiveness (Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984). The theory received much criticism for the lack of specificity in the relationships between the concepts (Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984).

In terms of environment, the CoT theory evolved to recognise the conspicuous reality of the heterogeneity of the firm's internal and external environments and, in response, the urge by management teams to attain better control of the internal environment (Donaldson, 1996; Fisher, 1998). Turbulence in the environment presents a further dilemma in that long-term moves are difficult to plan, so the systems must be very flexible. The reality is also that no single internal management structure or system is best; all depend upon the prevailing contingent factors (Donaldson, 1996).

While management retains the prerogative to define the future, other stakeholders, including employees, the Board and shareholders, are now often called upon to 'weigh in' (voluntarily or involuntarily) on steering the organisation forward. In this way, change becomes critical but challenging (Battilana and Casciaro, 2012; Jokipii, 2010). Increased management control, however, has begun to be viewed as improving the ability to harness the organisation's strategy, assets, resources and culture and improve its ability to operate effectively within the environment in which it is established (Jokipii, 2010; McAdam, Miller, and McSorley, 2019).

The differences in the context and, in turn, the cultural variations of organisations influence the structures, values, definition and sometimes constitution of organisational effectiveness (Zoogah et al., 2014). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that the differences in the views on innovation and competitiveness between Japanese and Western firms are embedded mainly in their cultures and approaches to knowledge creation. Cultural differences may manifest themselves in management's roles, influence, and goals compared to individuals in the firm (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). In the CoT, organisations can be viewed as a configuration of different characteristics where the individual is only a part of the sum – the organisation.

Further research has focused on the sociology of the business environment, both internal and external. Watson (2017) argues that the definition of work has evolved from the task-related aspect of work to include the way people make a living. Watson (2017) challenges organisations to deal with the economic, social and cultural aspects of people's lives. The sociology of work has thus become a critical resource (Watson, 2017) along with the competencies, capabilities and knowledge identified by traditional theorists.

This recent observation is an essential point of reference for research on the social environment in Zimbabwe. The economic turbulence will likely alter the social view of work within the formal Zimbabwean work environment, prompting organisations to adjust their systems and processes in response. There are no significant differences between what shareholders (mostly from different cultures), managers (transitioning from a culture of entitlement or benefits under previous investors) and employees (disgruntled at the failure of governance, institutions and the economy) value or define as effectiveness. How do organisations eventually define or formulate a successful strategy in the face of the massive rift between the environments? The effectiveness (of both organisations and their strategies) is therefore tested because of the uniqueness of the Zimbabwean context.

3.4 The Institution-Based View of the Firm

Peng (2002) argues that strategies are about choices. Given the inherent influence that institutional frameworks have on firm behaviour, he writes that any strategic choices an organisation makes are inherently affected by the formal and informal constraints of the institutional frameworks within which the organisation exists (Peng, 2002). Peng et al. (2009) suggest that the Institution-Based View (IBV) is rooted in the views of both economists, such as North (1990) and Williamson (1975), and social scientists, such as Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Scott (1987). Peng (2002)Peng (2002) argues that the question of the diversity of strategies and performance of organisations across different countries may be answered given the influence of factors that are internal or external to the organisations. This is defined as the context. This context is made up of institutions, which are formal (laws, regulations and rules) and informal (norms, cultures and ethics) structures in society. Institutions can also be defined as the "rules of the game", or "humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction" (Peng et al., 2009, p. 64). The IBV breaks the ideal of the heterogeneity of firms and environments that traditional scholars of the industry view propose.

The first key assumption of the IBV is that individuals are rational actors whose choices are driven by cost-benefit analysis for utility maximisation (Peng et al., 2009). This assumption suggests that individuals always have the choice to be rational. However, Watson (2017)'s views on the emerging reality of patterns of social systems and their influence on internal organisational processes suggest the need to revisit the notion of the choice of rationality.

The second assumption is that the rational actor seeks to maximise power using unique resources (Peng, 2002): internal firm capabilities, structures and competencies. In this research, this view on firm behaviour or heterogeneity is tested in relation to specific institutional phenomena in the Zimbabwean context.

Thirdly, norms are not static, and may change at any point depending on the power distribution within the society. Power distribution also changes with the volatility of the contexts. The events of November 2017 in Zimbabwe (Rosenberg and Attwell, 2017) bear testimony to this observation. This also means that in seeking to understand the sustainability or measure of strategic outcomes, one may need to consider whether time as a measure remains important, and, by extension, to which 'stakeholder', in view of the arguments in the CoT.

McGrath (2013) contends that executives must embrace short-lived opportunities in place of sustainable competitive advantage. As Zimbabwe goes through its current economic transitions, the role of institutions has been continuously defined as critical by businesses, consultants and socio-economic advisors (Brett, 2005; Zindiye et al., 2012). There certainly may be a challenge in establishing any fit between the external and internal environments of the organisations.

3.5 The Resource-Based View of the Firm

Penrose (1959), as cited in Barney and Clark (2007)), in her work on *the growth of the firm*, argues that the firm is more than a social entity that observes supply and demand conditions in the market for profit opportunities as has been proposed by traditional economics models. Penrose (1959) argues that firms are a) an administrative framework for the coordination of human activity and functions (competencies); and b) a bundle of productive resources (capabilities) (Barney and Clark, 2007). The literature review presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis aligns with this view in recognising the evolution of views on strategy and practices in management to include the importance of an organisation's internal resources and capabilities.

With the globalisation of business platforms through technology innovation, caution must be raised that the market is no longer simply a physical environment where physical barriers can inhibit one firm to the advantage of another. Today, virtual platforms such as social media (Jasper, 2017) have broken the seal of access to, availability, and trade of resources such as knowledge and products or product development. In essence, those firms that have established processes that embrace the revised definition of work (Watson, 2017) are likely to attain a competitive advantage. This research tests such dynamism in decision-making and processes in Zimbabwe.

Traditional scholars such as Wernerfelt (1984) developed a theory of competitive advantage based on the resources a firm can acquire or develop. Since then, and with developments in stages of industrialisation and global effects, other scholars have added that the firm can only achieve sustainable competitive advantage by retaining resources that are VRIN (valuable, rare and inimitable and non-substitutable) (Barney and Clark, 2007; Teece, 2009). In considering the high volatility of emerging and frontier economies (Zimbabwe included), ordinary capabilities become necessary but insufficient (Teece, 2009).

RBV focused on the organisation's possession of the resource and not much on its actual utilisation or the dynamism of its utilisation. Today, organisations may have the resources but lack the knowledge to utilise them to best advantage (Lavalle, Lesser, Shockley, Hopkins, and Kruschwitz, 2011). For example, while two firms may have an equal amount of data, one may prevail over the other based on its data-analytic prowess (Lavalle et al., 2011). Perhaps this speaks to the internal actors and resources and how they interact.

RBV focuses on those capabilities and resource characteristics that are embedded in the organisation's culture, rather than formalised routines that competitors can discern (Johnson et al., 2007). This research studies formal organisations and therefore tests the dynamics in the Zimbabwean context. However, the research also concerns itself with the role of those informal or non-formalized organisational routines underpinning organisational competitive strategies. Mintzberg and Waters (1985) referred to these strategies as emergent; which Johnson et al. (2008) acknowledged and later on defined as unintended strategies (Johnson et al., 2013). Now, to effectively explore the processes and interrelationships of the organisational strategies and the activities and actions of the organisation that account for the strategy formation, the study utilizes the SAP approach. SAP enables deeper exploration of the micro activities at the people level unit of analysis, thereby exploring the gaps left by RBV.

3.6 The Knowledge-Based View of the Firm

The Knowledge-Based View (KBV) of the firm is an evolving perspective in which the firm is viewed as a knowledge-creating and knowledge-managing entity. The capability and capacity to retain, transfer and utilise this (knowledge) resource are the main sources of the company's competitive advantage (Grant, 1996; Heiman and Nickerson, 2002; Kogut and Zander, 1992; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka et al., 2000).

According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), there are two types of knowledge. The first type is explicit knowledge, which is formal language that is written and passable easily from one person or generation to another. Examples include policies, operating systems, and procedures or manuals. The second type is tacit knowledge, which is knowledge that is embedded in individual experience and embodies personal beliefs such as a value system or experiential skills (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Tacit knowledge is intrinsic and very difficult to pass from one person or generation to another.

Referring to the CoT, discussed in *Section 3.3* above, one might ask how much room is given for tacit knowledge, which is personal to an individual but may be good for the organisation, when the organisation is pursuing a defensive approach where its leaders alone define the *best practices* or *best fit* for the organisation and its external environment. To take this example further, if the owners of the business declare their expected outcomes, then there will also be questions around how this knowledge is shared with those charged with pursuing these interests on their behalf in addition to the interaction between their knowledge and the knowledge (tacit and explicit) of these internal resources.

The embracing of knowledge as a strategic resource is often accredited to the Japanese people and is embedded closely in their culture and the way they conduct business (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Philosophically, the Japanese have maintained that there is no separation between the knower and that which is known (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Further, there is a belief in the value of shared knowledge to the extent that sometimes knowledge sharing crosses firm boundaries. This challenges the idea that the strength of knowledge as a resource is in its inimitability (Nonaka et al., 2000). It also challenges applying these unique values in other societies, such as the Zimbabwean society, where the indigenous knowledge systems (Mapira and Mazambara, 2013) are also different and an individual's intelligence capability may be a source of pride and power.

In the review of the RBV in *Section 3.5* above, the inimitability and rarity of resources (keeping in mind that knowledge is also defined as a significant resource) are emphasised. The assumption is that this view cuts across contexts, yet here we have the same view challenged by Japanese culture. One may therefore ask "why do firms exist in Japan, if not to out-perform others?" However, in this study, the question is posed to Zimbabwean organisations and, in answering it, the dynamics of knowledge creation, sharing and conversion are explored to establish how the internal systems of organisations utilise these knowledge dynamics in strategy formation. In more recent conversations, questions are raised around the extent to which knowledge is indeed *tacit* (Iaia et al., 2024; Serenko, 2022).

Scholars suggest that knowledge used in firms has particular characteristics. Grant Grant (1996) argues that the key characteristics of knowledge as a critical firm resource are: transferability, capacity for aggregation, appropriability, and specialisation in knowledge acquisition and the knowledge requirements of production (p. 109). Sveiby (2001) proposes a knowledge-based theory of the firm that is based on the autopoietic epistemology approach (which is essentially creational learning and understanding of the role of knowledge in the firm). Sveiby (2001) argues that knowledge is the capacity to act; it is dynamic, personal and distinct from data.

The value of knowledge as a resource lies in the firm or individual's ability to effectively apply (manipulate, store and distribute) the existing knowledge and create new knowledge (Alavi and Leidner, 2001). Perhaps this is what Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr (1984) may have referred to in arguing about the significance of stakeholders' values; or perhaps this same view may be read closely with the arguments by Peng et al. (2009) about the rational man.

The interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge is referred to as knowledge conversion (Nonaka and von Krogh, 2009, p. 635). In theory, this interaction, along a continuum, refers to two elements. The first element is personal subjective knowledge, which can be socially justified and brought together with other's knowledge so that knowledge keeps expanding. In this case, the coming together of individuals in a single setting such as the workplace creates a platform for the interaction of the tacit knowledge that they possess. However, there is the reality that the individuals may not always be willing to share their tacit knowledge (Connelly, Zweig, Webster, and Trougakos, 2012), contrary to the assumption made by the Japanese scholars above.

For the second element, because knowledge is the capacity to act based on explicit and tacit elements, enhancing the capacity means using existing and new tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka and von Krogh, 2009). It has been argued that an organisation's capability for continuous learning, development and renewal has become a key driver for competitiveness (Kianto and Hong, 2009). With rapid advances in technology, this capability may no longer be resident in the social structures of the organisation (Iaia et al., 2024; Kopka and Fornahl, 2024)

3.7 Summary of the Theoretical Framework

Below is a summary of the theoretical framework developed from the review of the four theories, as presented above, and adopted for this research study. The framework proposes four key lenses for firm practices in strategy process:

a) Adaptation, congruence (*practices*) – that the firm implements to bring together the internal structure (resources, capabilities, technology) and external environment (culture of stakeholders and context in general) in determining strategic choices that help with solving complex problems in line with the Contingency Theory;
b) Choices (*strategic*) – how actors and external resources utilise or are affected by formal and informal institutions in making strategic choices for effectiveness of organisations as presented by the Institution-Based View of the firm;
c) Administration frameworks – for harnessing the firm's tangible and/or intangible resources, competencies and capabilities in pursuit of sustained competitive advantage as the Resource-Based View presents; and
d) Knowledge conversion (*systems*) – bringing together the firm's internal tacit, explicit knowledge and external knowledge resources and transferring that knowledge between the internal and external environments to make and decisions for competitive advantage as expounded by the Knowledge-Based View.

The study explores the use of these key lenses in the practice of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations.

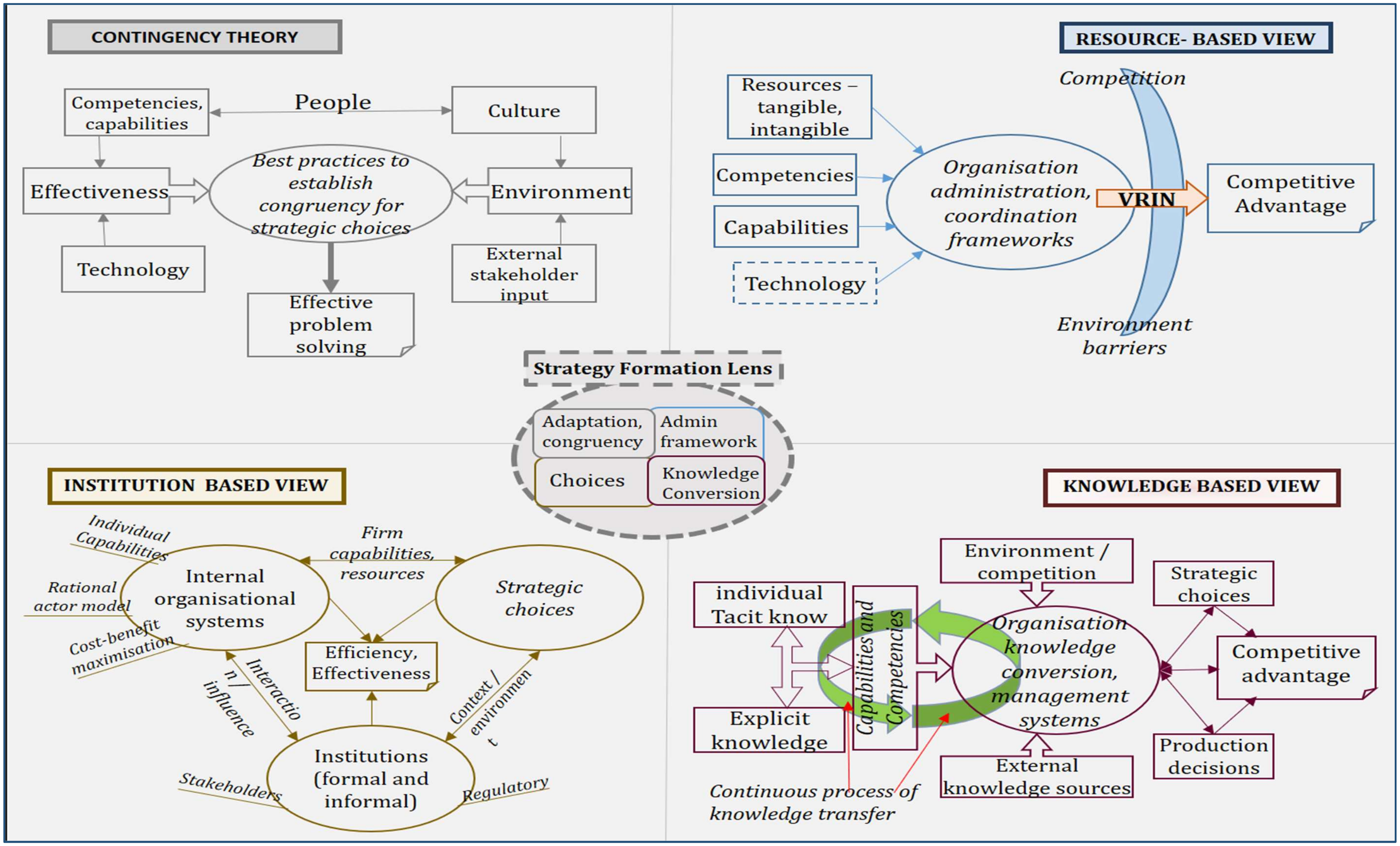


Figure 3.7–1: Summary of theoretical framework

4 LITERATURE REVIEW – THE TOOLS IN STRATEGY FORMULATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the tools utilised by and surrounding Zimbabwean organisations in strategy formulation. These tools manifest in both the external and internal environments of the organisations. The external environment encapsulates stakeholders (including shareholders, customers and consultants), industry (including associations and business management organisations), national (including institutions – formal and informal), and global participants. The external stakeholder bodies impact organisations' operations and effectiveness. The internal environment consists of the firm-level and individual-level resources, capabilities, actors, processes, communication, knowledge, assets and infrastructure that the organisations utilise in their mission and strategy formulation.

The review explores the interaction of these two environments as it informs strategy formulation in organisations through the lens of dynamic capabilities and, specifically, the concepts of sensing, seizing and reconfiguring. The review touches on the dynamics of this interaction in the Zimbabwean context. These dynamics are tested against the findings from the research conducted on selected organisations in Zimbabwe, and similarities, differences and new findings are discussed, as set out in Chapter 7.

4.2 Strategy and Context

Over the years, research on strategy in organisations has observed the importance of the context in which organisations operate. "Context" in strategy research refers to the different external socio-political, economic and natural environments (Meyer and Peng, 2005, 2016; Wright et al., 2005). There is a view that this context and its variations in developing nations are at the centre of explanations of business phenomena and the competitiveness of organisations (Peng, 2002; Wright et al., 2005; Young et al., 2014).

In contrast to this view, some authors have argued that there is yet to be a conclusive view on the exact nature of the relationship between organisations' effectiveness or competitiveness and the impact of the context (Young et al., 2014). For example, Peng et al. (2009) quote Boisot and Child (1996, p. 607), who argue that economic growth can hardly occur in poorly regulated economies. At the same time, Peng et al. (2009) consider China's strong economic growth despite its underdeveloped formal institutional structures (such as ineffective courts). They ask: How can China rapidly grow while retaining such an institutional order? (Peng et al., 2009, p. 69). However, to the credit of China, and much critique of the views of Peng et al. (2009), the country's government has consistently built on its strategy to open its industries to foreign investments and allow government-supported joint ventures limited to 50% ownership (Teece, 2019). Zimbabwe adopted a similar institutional approach under the 'indigenisation' banner (Andreasson, 2010; Kondo and Moyo, 2012), albeit with no more than political intent. Referring to the African context, Zoogah et al. (2014) quote Chironga et al. (2011) and Mbaku (1994) and also assert that this context is complex, uncertain and ambiguous. In studying strategy and strategy processes, context must go beyond the macro environment to enquire about the dynamics of the industry level and, ultimately, the organisation. At each of the levels of analysis, questions must be drawn on the interrelationships thereof, such as whether one level's dynamics impact the other and in which direction.

4.2.1 Emerging Economies, Developing Economies

Meyer and Peng (2016) analyse the evolution of business research in emerging economies and the attendant theoretical foundations in a retrospective of an earlier (2005) article, *Probing Theoretically into Central and Eastern Europe: Transactions, Resources and Institutions*. In the article, the authors outline research contributions in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to theoretical debates in business research (Meyer and Peng, 2016, p. 3). The authors redefine CEE states as *emerging economies*. Meyer and Peng (2016) argue that the key defining trait that suggests that these states are emerging economies is the continuous changes in the role, composition and performance of institutions in these states. Hoskisson et al. (2000) define emerging economies as low-income, rapid-growth countries that use economic liberalisation as their primary engine for growth. This definition is also put forward by Young et al. (2014), who add that emerging economies are often in transition from traditional agriculture-based economies or formerly centrally planned economies.

Along with other scholars, Meyer and Peng (2005, 2016) provide a sad narrative of emerging economies that, for example, seems to suggest that institutions in emerging economies have very little positive influence on businesses. These authors assert that it is only in developed economies that the function of institutions is positively commensurate with progress and good business performance. Perhaps the disintegration of the CEE, an area where the authors developed a research framework, could have influenced their views in this last analysis.

4.2.2 Organisational Effectiveness in Emerging Economies

Hoskisson et al. (2000), in their in-depth discussion of the Institutional theory and strategy in emerging economies, propose the need for a more comprehensive examination of the societal and firm-level effects on managerial responses as a way of establishing a better understanding of the institutional effects on individual managerial behaviour and top management team orientations (Hoskisson et al., 2000, p. 254). This view is consistent with the observation by Young et al. (2014) regarding the difficulty of establishing a conclusive relationship between firms' performance and their context.

Hoskisson et al.'s (2000) view also raises the idea that each context must be closely evaluated in its individuality, regardless of the general characteristics defined as "typical" of the macro context by scholars, as discussed above. For example, while South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Ghana may, by deduction, be referred to as emerging economies under the macro context of Africa, the reality is that they are all at different stages of economic, political and institutional development. Further, the countries have different volumes and qualities of resources and capabilities.

Zoogah et al. (2014) propose a dynamic framework that recognises two drivers of organisational effectiveness in Africa: the institutional environment, resources, and capabilities.

The model, as adopted from Zoogah et al. (2014), is presented mathematically as:

$$OE = f[AC_n \times (IE_{nd} + RC_{do})]$$

Where OE refers to organisational effectiveness;

AC refers to the African context;

IE refers to the institutional environment;

RC refers to resources and capabilities;

n refers to national;

d refers to industry and

o refers to organisation (Zoogah et al., 2014, p. 9).

The scholars further improve the model by presenting a diagrammatic view of the interactive process of formal and informal institutions and resources and capabilities at national-, industry- and firm levels and the influence on organisations' outcomes. This diagram is illustrated in *Figure 4.2–1*.

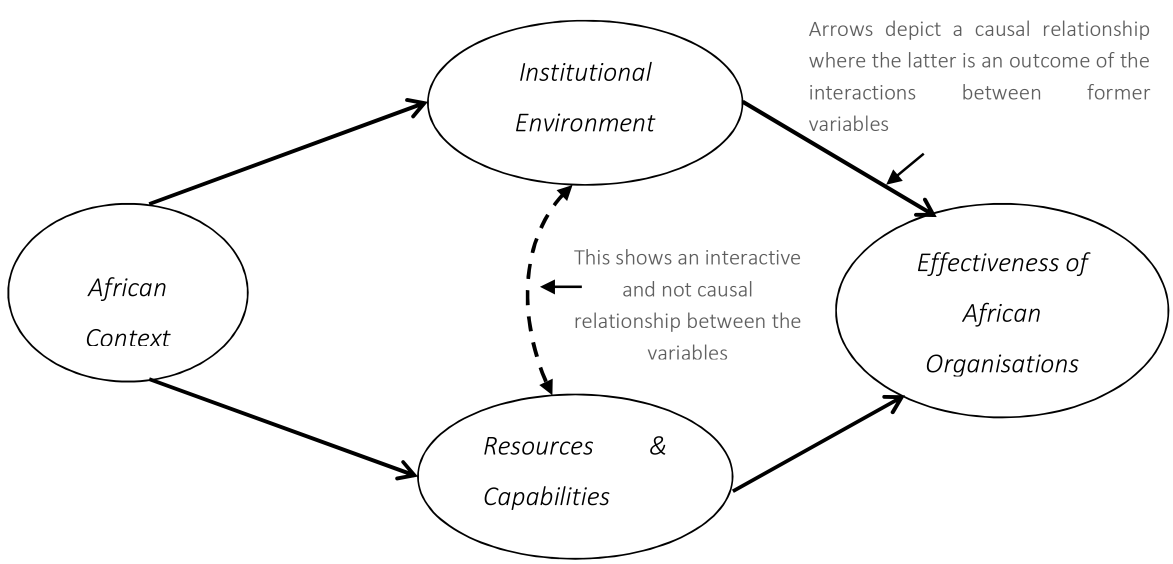


Figure 4.2–1: Conceptual model of institutional and resource dynamics behind organisational effectiveness in Africa, adopted from Zoogah, Peng, and Woldu (2014)

It is also observable that, as with Meyer and Peng (2005, 2016) conclusions, there tends to be some over-generalisation of the negative effects and characteristics of institutions in emerging economies. For example, scholars argue that the African rural contexts are different from Western contexts because ethnic and tribal-backed institutions characterise them (the African). However, the same can be said of some Western contexts, which revere the role of dynasties and thrones modelled on feudal and traditional lines. Perhaps the difference largely rests in the levels of development and political descriptions, which ensure the African context is demeaned based on lack of development.

Formal institutions exist at the macro level, where set guidelines influence the environments of the industry and the nation. Formal institutions dominate the modern context and influence industrial activities in urban centres (e.g. Accra, Cairo, Johannesburg, Lagos, Nairobi) through their regulatory function (Zoogah et al., 2014, p. 14).

4.2.3 Challenges for Research in the Emerging Economies' Context

Hoskisson et al. (2000) analyse the methodological challenges of conducting strategic research in emerging markets. Their first observation is that most theories have been promulgated for developed markets and are difficult to replicate in emerging economies. Perhaps then, the gap is still larger if one considers that even the management systems in most firms in emerging or developing countries are 'borrowed' from developed countries with different contexts and institutions.

Secondly, firms that have merged into MNCs have sought to learn from their parent headquarters with little success. Theory development in emerging economies typically fails to replicate tests of hypotheses and research instruments as these are established in developed economies. Data is not always available for collection due to poor technology and weak information management and archiving systems in emerging economies. Management structures and competencies (or lack thereof) also affect the reliability of the data collected (Hoskisson et al., 2000).

In some cases, it is difficult for researchers to obtain data as it may be available but restricted to the firm's executives, who may not readily respond to research questions.

Further, the evaluation of the performance of organisations is not as consistent, considering the various other factors that affect the performance of firms in emerging economies. These factors may include the value placed on the country's currency. In the local analysis, the currency's value may show that a firm is performing well. However, compared to the parent company in the developed country, the firm's performance may be considered pathetic based on the currency valuation disparities. This also challenges views on the measure of strategic outcomes. The definition of emerging economies itself is not standard yet, with various countries being at various levels of development within the exact general definition of emerging economies. Even in the same geographic region, emerging markets are not homogeneous, making generalisation difficult.

Scholars agree that the African context is complex, uncertain and ambiguous. The continent's context has also primarily been defined as emerging, developing and, in some cases, frontier, with the acknowledgement that some countries fall between the definitions. In contrast, others, such as South Africa, are slightly ahead of these categories. Therefore, as Zoogah et al. (2014) conclude, it is impossible to classify the entire continent under a single context definition.

While there is a view that it is difficult to establish a conclusive relationship between organisational effectiveness in Africa and the context of Africa (Hoskisson et al., 2000), there is also an observation that context remains at the centre of explanations of business phenomena and competitiveness of organisations (Wright et al., 2005; Young et al., 2014). The key considerations in defining the context include institutions (formal and informal), institutional environment, resources, capabilities, management competencies, culture and the economic environment. In this research, the context of Zimbabwe is defined as the institutions (formal and informal), resources, capabilities, culture, and socio-political and economic environment. These variables affect the internal and external processes of organisations and are an important consideration in the analysis.

4.3 What are These Dynamic Capabilities?

There are various (and sometimes competing) views and schools of thought on the concept of dynamic capabilities (Suddaby et al., 2020), and the concept has evolved over the years (Schilke, Hu, and Helfat, 2018; Teece, 2009). Teece et al. (1997) emphasise the path-dependency nature of the dynamic capabilities framework and its role in wealth creation. These scholars define dynamic capabilities as "the firm's ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environment" (Teece et al., 1997, p. 516). In their analysis, Teece et al. (1997) argue that the "dynamic capabilities framework analyses sources and methods of wealth creation and capture by private enterprise firms operating in environments of rapid technological change"(p. 509).

Scholars insist that for an organisation to retain a competitive advantage, there has to be a deliberate honing of the internal technological, organisational, and managerial processes inside the firm (Teece et al., 1997). Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) further this view and define dynamic capabilities as "the antecedent organisational and strategic routines by which managers alter their resource base – acquire and shed resources, integrate them, and recombine them – to generate value-creating strategies" (p. 1107). These authors intensely analyse the relationship between these dynamic capabilities and the environment within which the organisation exists. Context differentiation between *moderately dynamic markets* and *high-velocity markets* in turn determines the nature of these capabilities (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000).

Other scholars, Arndt and Pierce (2017), track the framework back to the writings of Cyert and March (1963) (the economics theorist and politics theorist, respectively), who, together, explored the Behavioral Theory of the Firm. In their analogy, Cyert and March (1963) argue that a firm is a coalition of managers, stakeholders, customers and owners who together form a partnership. They assert that the competitiveness or success of the firm is a function of the process of decision-making and the (complementarity of) roles of the members of this coalition. By deduction, each actor has a role, and these dynamic capabilities lie in the exercise of this role.

Key concepts form a common thread in these views of dynamic capabilities. These concepts are the environment or context (defined by the level of technology and activity of markets), management capabilities, resources, and reconfiguration, which is the extent of the ability of the firm (the processes) to hone these aspects of the organisation.

This research recognises these various definitions and descriptions of dynamic capabilities. However, in analysing the role of these dynamic capabilities in strategy formation and knowledge conversion in Zimbabwean organisations, the research leans towards the views and definitions provided by Teece et al. (1997), Teece (2007, 2009, 2019), Eisenhardt and Martin (2000), Arndt and Pierce (2017), especially their infusion of the historical works of Cyert and March (1963). The analysis of the role of dynamic capabilities in this study is complemented by arguments by Zoogah et al. (2014), who speak to institutions as an important dynamic in the effectiveness of organisations.

4.3.1 Dynamic Capabilities – The Concept

In the preface to the paperback edition of his book *Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management: Organizing for Innovation and Growth*, Teece (2009) reviews the objectives and evolution of the dynamic capabilities framework, arguing that "the objective of the dynamic capabilities framework is to help explain (and guide) understanding of the growth and profitability, over the long run, of business enterprises in highly competitive market environments" (Teece, 2009, p. vii).

The reference to the evolutionary aspect of the framework over time is essential. First, it invokes the original path-dependency argument concerning the nature (Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997) of dynamic capabilities that Teece made in earlier writings. Secondly, an assumption is made here that growth and profitability are achieved over a long-run within highly competitive market environments. This possibly implies that there is a process (as opposed to an event) that businesses have to go through in order to achieve growth and profitability. Teece (2009) likens the objective of achieving growth and profitability (which he refers to as "a goal") to Adam Smith's (1776) objective in his book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Teece (2009) asserts that the book "endeavours to explain the wealth of firms over time" (p. viii). The comparative or relatively convergent point in the explanation is the process-and-time variable, and the difference is merely the unit of analysis, where one is a firm-level analysis and the other a national-level analysis. In between these levels of analysis might fall the role of institutions, both formal and informal, as explained by Zoogah et al. (2014).

Dynamic capabilities are also defined as those specific and identifiable processes that enhance the organisation's ability to integrate its internal and external environments to its advantage (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Teece, 2009). The reference to specificity suggests that dynamic capabilities are not random or accidental but deliberate processes within an organisation. Within this view lies a proposal that, given the volatility of contexts and environments in which organisations exist, particularly in today's global and technological world, an organisation cannot rely on any 'instinct' or unstructured processes to sustain itself. This view suggests that the organisation has to go through a deliberate process of scanning its environments (internal and external) to identify its capabilities and resource gap and, where it does identify a match, seize the opportunities that will help it to sustain itself. Where there is a considerable gap between its capabilities and the existing environment, the organisation must prepare to reconfigure itself deliberately and pursue sustainability. Li and Liu (2014) add a process perspective and argue that dynamic capabilities are a firm's potential to *systematically* solve problems by invoking its ability to sense opportunities, make strategic decisions and make changes to reconfigure it to attain its goals (p. 2793). These are deliberate processes.

Teece (2009) acknowledges and refers to other authors and reviews the terminology and framework of dynamic capabilities used by these authors. In his review, Teece refers to dynamic capabilities as a *framework*, but also utilizes the phrase as *general terminology* or *practical inference* (Teece, 2009). Teece (2009) asserts that "The original definition [(Teece et al., 1997)] referred to the ability of an organisation and its management to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments" (p. 516). Teece (2009) adds that "Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) extended this also to embrace what one would refer to as 'shaping the environment" (p. ix).

In addition to the time variable, the context variable, which emphasises the environment and its dynamic nature, needs to be considered. A third variable is the role of management in this entire process, to which Teece (2009) adds that:

> Dynamic capabilities scholars further agree [see Helfat et al., 2007] that the essence of a firm's dynamic capabilities is resident in its tacit knowledge and its organisational processes [Teece, Pisano and Shuen 1997; 524] and in the leadership skills of its top management. (p. ix)

This explanation draws one's attention to an earlier exploration by Grant (1996) of how firms integrate individuals' expertise, internal organisational design and leadership in pursuit of competitiveness. It may also be essential to recognise the plurality of leadership that possesses these dynamic capabilities based on the views expressed by the authors cited above. This is contrary to the views of traditional scholars on "distinctive competencies", who, as quoted by Barney and Clark (2007) in their review of the Resource-Based Theory, instead recognise and emphasise "the general manager(s) as distinctive competencies" (p. 5). Teece (2009) suggests that individual biographies, which Barney and Clark (2007) emphasise, are not enough to achieve growth and profitability in a dynamic and competitive environment over time or in the long run.

Teece (2009) distinguishes dynamic capabilities from ordinary or mere technical capabilities. He asserts that "ordinary capabilities allow an enterprise to get tasks done with some degree of proficiency.... One can think of ordinary (technical) capabilities as undergirding how an organisation can do things well" (p. ix). Teece (2009) insists, therefore, that "ordinary capabilities are necessary but not sufficient for the long-term survival and growth and for superior performance" (p. x).

Similarly, Barney and Clark (2007), who sought to answer why some firms persistently outperform others, identify competencies as one of the answers. These scholars define distinctive competencies as "those attributes of a firm that enable it to pursue a strategy more efficiently and effectively than others" (p. 5). Teece (2009) challenges the idea of ordinary capabilities (or even distinctive competencies) as leading to superior performance and argues that: "A firm with ordinary capabilities, but lacking dynamic capabilities may prosper in the short term" (p. x). He asserts, "Dynamic capabilities ... are about doing the right things, at the right time, based on a proper assessment of the environment and technological opportunities" (p. ix).

In defining dynamic capabilities, various scholars prefer different sub-concepts and emphases. In their contribution to organisations' pursuit or implementation of opportunities in the circular economy, Khan et al. (2021) closely observe a process view of the nature of dynamic capabilities. These scholars acknowledge the definition by Teece (2007) that "dynamic capabilities are *processes*[1] and/or activities through which a firm reconfigures its strategy and resources" (Khan et al., 2021, p. 1). The capabilities must assist the organisation in sensing, which involves scanning the environment and identifying opportunities to enhance the organisation's sustainability or navigating through the environment (Arndt and Pierce, 2017; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Suddaby et al., 2020). The resources are not limited to the organisation's physical aspects, skills, or competencies; they can also include its online or virtual capabilities (Wagner, Wenzel, Wagner, and Koch, 2017). These communities or assets are within the virtual space and assist organisations. In practice, many organisations do environmental scans and, in today's world, defer to online platforms that contain public information on the environments in different contexts. Some organisations also carry out virtual surveys by targeting close stakeholders, such as their customers (for example, customer feedback sessions at seminars or in-store) or other random respondents that are approached through tools such as survey monkeys.

In essence, the focus of the dynamic capabilities is on how organisations can extend or modify their resources and specific assets as they sense and create, seize and accept opportunities while simultaneously managing competitive threats and effectuating necessary transformations (Teece, 2009).

While recognised as a growing view in explaining firm competitiveness in volatile environments, the dynamic capabilities view has also been criticised considerably. From a broad theoretical perspective, the view was developed in markets characterised by rapid technological change (Williamson, 2016). The principle implied an assumption that organisational management was modelled around fixed, repeatable

[1] *My emphasis for purposes of persuading a preferred view in line with my bias towards the process aspect of strategy formation in the fuller argument in this entire research.*

routines. Studies on the Chinese context and companies have shown that organisations embraced accelerated innovation supported by flexible and dynamic processes (Williamson, 2016).

Some authors view dynamic capabilities as a mere extension of RBV (Arend and Bromiley, 2009; Schilke et al., 2018; Teece, 2007); others argue that it lacks theoretical depth in defining a single environmental context (Barreto, 2010; Schilke et al., 2018); and some insist it lacks specificity on how the capabilities, are empirically established (Barreto, 2010; Suddaby et al., 2020). Johnson et al. (2007) argue that although acknowledged as necessary, there has not been much research on how the more informal interaction between people and their experimentation and improvisation are essential constituents of dynamic capabilities. The authors argue that, instead, dynamic capabilities have focused on formal systems' role in organisational learning and strategy (Johnson et al., 2007). Using the SAP approach, the study delves deeper into the micro-level dynamics of the actors and activities in the organisation.

5 LITERATURE REVIEW – KNOWLEDGE DYNAMICS IN STRATEGY FORMATION

5.1 Introduction

The review presented in this chapter furthers the discussion of the knowledge theory of the firm with a closer look at the dynamics of knowledge in organisational processes. The review explores the interactions of the different knowledge sources and how the knowledge is eventually converted from intelligence sources to become part of the internal organisational processes. Thus far, the literature on strategy has insisted on the existence of two environments (internal and external) for the firm and the idea that organisational processes only proceed due to the interaction of these two environments. At the centre of this interaction is knowledge. This review refers closely to the works of Sveiby (2001).

5.2 Knowledge Conversion and Transfer

In general, there is some level of convergence among scholars regarding the idea that explicit knowledge is available for all and, indeed, a resource that organisations can utilise (Dayan et al., 2017; Nonaka et al., 2000; Nonaka and von Krogh, 2009; Sveiby, 2001; Tseng, 2010). However, there are arguments about whether tacit knowledge can be an organisational resource. This notion would challenge the Japanese theory that suggests the oneness of the knower and the known. Literature has shown that knowledge is private and that tacit knowledge is an individual resource attributable to the knower. This suggests that perhaps what is explicit is only information.

The opening statement in the abstract of a paper by Grant (1996) reads:

> Given assumptions about the characteristics of knowledge and the knowledge requirements of production, the firm is conceptualized as an institution for integrating knowledge. (p. 109) -

It may be helpful to explore the reference to *characteristics of knowledge* and relate Grant (1996) paper to Prahalad and Hamel (1994) comment on the changes in focus of strategy in the 1990s. Grant (1996) examines the role of knowledge, and one may want to understand further the motivation at the time for looking at a firm as an integration of the knowledge requirements of production. The opening statement above suggests the focus is on production-related knowledge (creation or management of knowledge). However, perhaps the view from Prahalad and Hamel (1994) that management in the 1990s was expected to think fast and that successful firms adapted quickly to the changing environment is relevant here. Adaptation means (possibly) acquiring up-to-date knowledge about the environment and creating the necessary knowledge to adapt to the new environment.

Sveiby (2001) seeks to "explore the practical implications of an epistemological approach to strategy formulation" (p. 344). He lays the foundation for developing a (new) theory of the firm grounded in the resource-based perspective and autopoietic epistemology to guide strategy formulation (p. 344). For him, the theory development is based on the following assumptions:

> People use their capacity to act to create value in two main directions: by transferring and converting knowledge externally and internally to the organisation.
>
> The value grows each time a knowledge transfer or conversion takes place.
>
> The strategy formulation issues are concerned with utilising the leverage and avoiding the blockages that prevent sharing and conversion. (p. 344)

Sveiby (2001) also concludes that: "Activities that form the backbone of a knowledge-based strategy are to be aimed at improving the capacity-to-act both inside and outside the organisation" (p. 344).

These assumptions appear to define knowledge as a resource peculiar to specific individuals within the organisation, suggesting that the organisation's fate lies in the competencies or capabilities of the individuals to transfer or convert this resource to create value. The assumptions are reminiscent of the dynamic capabilities perspective that Teece et al. (1997) put forward and the distinctive competencies perspective adopted by Barney and Clark (2007). The basic argument in these perspectives is that the capabilities or competencies of the individuals or the firm at large determine the firm's fate in the face of competition or the pursuit of strategic goals. However, it is important to note that Sveiby (2001) distinguishes the individual from the firm and sees the firm's task as harnessing the individual's knowledge and capacity to act and create value for the firm. Value is created when this conversion or transference is not blocked or prevented. Perhaps it is also important to interrogate Sveiby's (2001) definition or view of knowledge itself – that of epistemology (in this case, the autopoietic epistemology, which Sveiby favours).

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) refer to epistemology as the philosophical enquiry of knowledge. These scholars distinguish between the Western approach to epistemology (which, they argue, separates the subject – the knower – from the object – the known) and the Japanese approach (which recognises the oneness of the subject and the object). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), however, insist that these two approaches do not necessarily represent the best but are mutually complementary. These definitions are broad and rooted in Western and Japanese philosophies, representing the two primary cultures from which management concepts and systems are generally derived.

Sveiby (2001), on the other hand, recognises three epistemologies, but in the context of the RBV: "the cognitivist (represented by Simon, 1982), the connectionist (represented by Zander and Kogut, 1995) and the autopoietic (introduced by Maturana and Varela, 1980)" (p. 344). According to Sveiby (2001), the cognitivist perspective "assumes organisations to be open systems, which develop knowledge by formulating increasingly accurate 'representations' of the world" (p. 344). The cognitivist and the connectionist epistemology perspectives (whose difference lies only in the representation of reality) equate knowledge with information and data. Following the ideas of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), these perspectives would perhaps fall under the rationalism tradition of Western epistemology, where knowledge can be obtained deductively by reasoning (aligned with Sveiby's (2001, p. 344) idea of formulating increasingly accurate representations of the world). By deduction, therefore, the definition of "knowledge" under these perspectives is also comparable to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) definition of "explicit knowledge", which is formal language that is written and can be passed on quickly.

According to Sveiby (2001), the autopoietic epistemology:

> … provides a fundamentally different understanding of the input into any system. Input is regarded as data only. Knowledge is private, which comes close to Polanyi's (1958) "personal" knowledge concept. Autopoietic systems are self-referring, and the world is thus not seen as fixed and objective; the world is constructed within the system and, therefore, is impossible to "represent" reality (p. 345).

This view can be matched to the *Empiricism* view presented by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and attributable to the Greek philosopher Plato. Sveiby (2001) acknowledges the views of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and extends their definition to suggest that "knowledge is dynamic, personal and distinctly different from data (discrete, unstructured symbols) and information (a medium of explicit communication)" (p. 345). This definition of knowledge conforms to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) explanation of "tacit knowledge", which is personal knowledge embedded in individual experience and embodies personal beliefs.

Sveiby (2001) closes this argument on the Knowledge-Based Theory of the firm by asserting that "Since the dynamic properties of knowledge are most important for managers, the notion of individual competence can be used as a fair synonym to a capacity-to-act" (p. 345). This suggests that "…strategy formulation should start with the competence of people" (p. 345). Sveiby (2001) argues that people are at the core of the firm's existence, and they create internal and external structures in order to express themselves. The firm's tangible (craft, houses, gardens and cars) or intangible (ideas, corporations and other people) aspects are contingent upon the people's initiatives or desire to express the same. Competencies are used to create internal value in operational efficiencies and product creation or innovation. In contrast, the external value is apparent in such intangible structures as customer relationships, stakeholder relationships and, more recently (according to Guerras-Martín et al. (2014), corporate social responsibility.

5.2.1 Knowledge Transfer in Organisations

Sveiby (2001) proposes that nine knowledge transfers exist in organisations. As *Figure 5.2–1* illustrates, knowledge transfer ordinarily occurs between three nodes – the individual, the internal environment and the external environment. One could observe that this 'fit' analogy closely relates to the theoretical views of contingency theorists. The diagram demonstrates an iterative transfer or sharing of knowledge, which, when coordinated and combined well, creates immense value for the organisation (Sveiby, 2001).

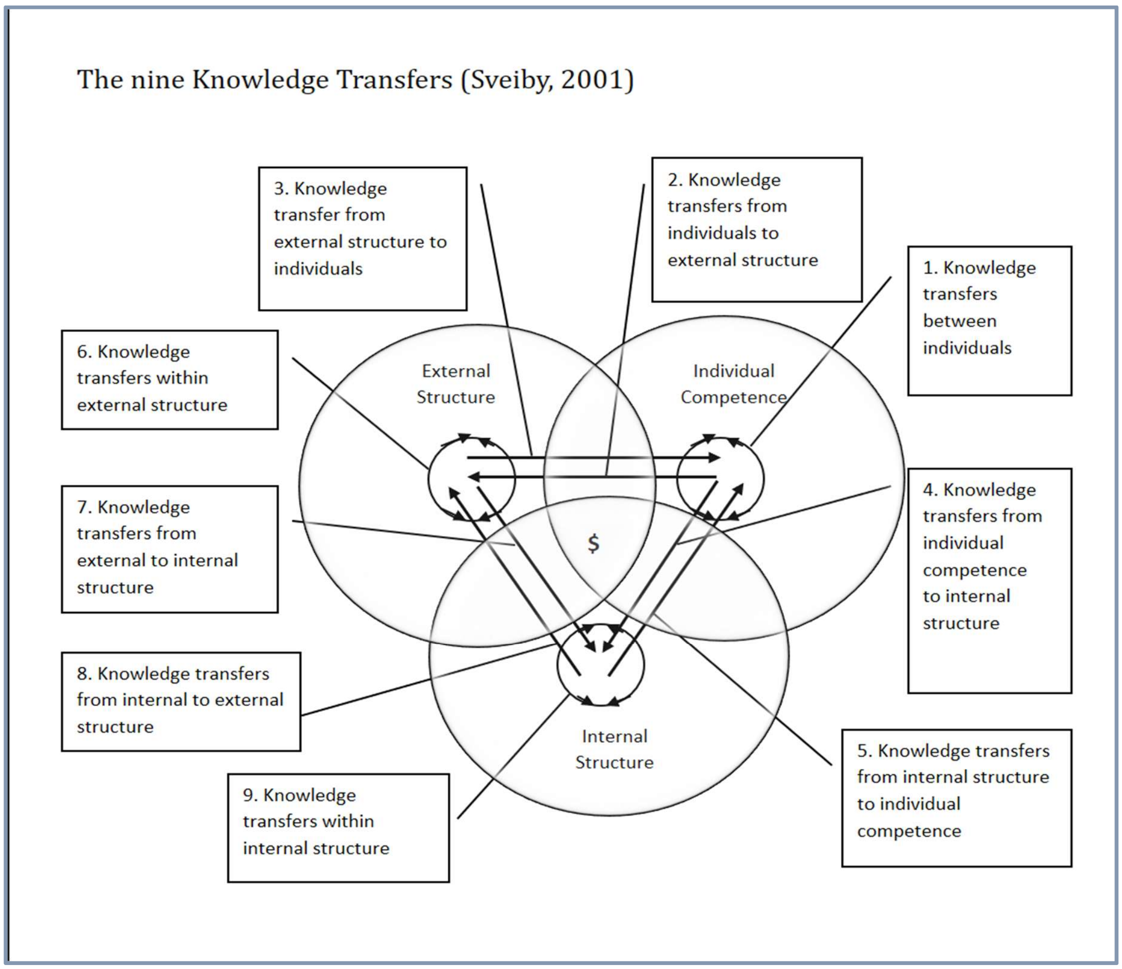


Figure 5.2–1: The nine knowledge transfers (Sveiby, 2001)

Sveiby (2001) acknowledges that these knowledge transfers do not occur in a particular sequence or coherent way (p. 348). He argues that management lacks the entire perspective that the knowledge theory may give it (Sveiby, 2001, p. 348).

Perhaps future research could probe further into this observation, with questions around whether there should be any coherence in the first place and, if so, what the value of this coherence would be to the organisation.

This knowledge transfer framework can be helpful in analysing firms' internal processes and assessing how dynamic the systems are in preventing any knowledge sharing and conversion blockages. Questions around the nine knowledge transfers were used as part of the guide in the interview process during the qualitative data gathering for this research. However, while it is a useful framework, scholars have now challenged that the transfer of knowledge is, in the first place, hindered by the fact that those who hold the expert knowledge may elect to hide and not share it (Issac et al., 2023; Moin et al., 2024).

5.3 The Conceptual Framework

Key concepts were drawn from the literature review and the research objectives to form the conceptual framework. These concepts are summarised in *Figure 5.3–1*. The framework is based on the view that the strategy formation process is generally interactive regardless of whether it is viewed as an emergent or deliberate process. The key concepts in this process are knowledge (tacit or explicit), strategic choices and strategic outcomes.

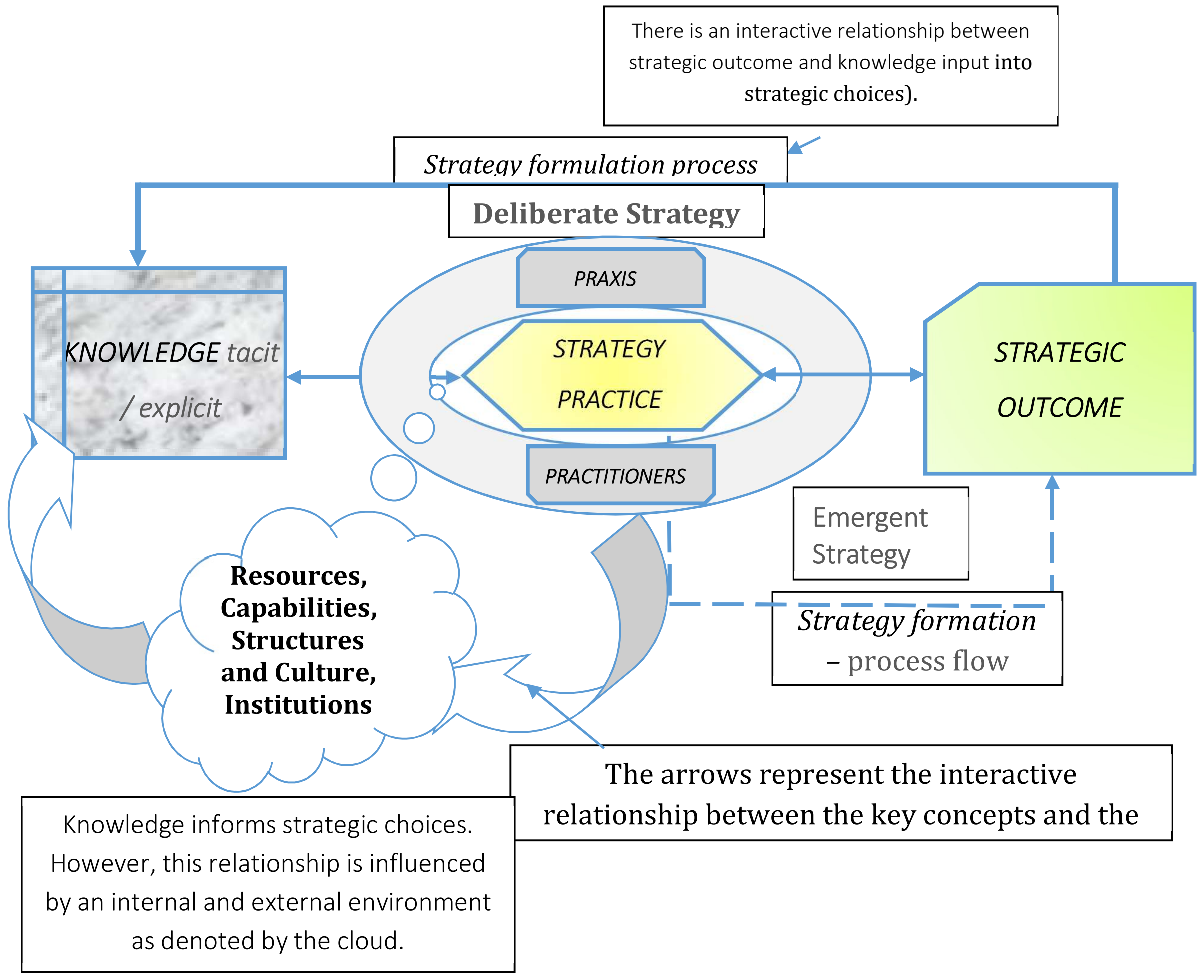


Figure 5.3–1: The conceptual framework for the study

This framework summarises the practice of strategy-making. The first principle in this framework is that the practice is process-oriented. Secondly, it is an interactive process that involves deliberate and emergent interrelationships between various concepts. The interaction takes place at two levels or units of analysis. The first is the macro level, the relationship between the organisation and its external environment. The second is the micro level between actors (practitioners) within the organisation. The interactions are premised on praxis and practices defined as part of the organisation systems (deliberate strategy) and on the unintended or undefined outcomes of the informal systems (emergent strategy). At the core of the practice and interactions is knowledge. This knowledge is created, converted and shared at the micro and macro levels and between the two levels. The *product* of these interactions is the strategic outcomes. These outcomes are sources of knowledge that may also prompt the re-establishment of the practice process. This conceptual framework was therefore used to guide and focus the research project.

5.4 Summary of the Literature Review

While strategic management has evolved, various views on strategy formation have remained constant. In addition, the theory of the firm has emerged to focus today on the critical role of knowledge and dynamic capabilities given changing environments.

This literature review has shown that there are evolving views on strategy-formation processes, with current views suggesting a combination of emergent and deliberate processes. There is an opportunity to interrogate current processes and perhaps establish possible future changes in these processes. While these concepts have been primarily developed in 'stable' socio-political and economic environments, there is an opportunity to interrogate the underlying provisions and principles in Zimbabwe's emerging or frontier economy. This research explores the dynamic capabilities, knowledge-conversion and strategy processes in organisations in Zimbabwe, guided by the contingency, institution-based, resource-based and knowledge-based views as theoretical lenses for the study.

Table 5.4–1 - Consistency table for research questions and propositions from the literature

RESEARCH QUESTION	PROPOSITION FROM LITERATURE AND SECTION REFERENCE	KEY CONCEPTS AND SELECTED SCHOLARS
a) What are the practice, process, and knowledge sharing and conversion dynamics of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?	• Strategic planning event – *Section 2.6* • It is a planned and deliberate process – *Section 2.6* • It is an emergent process that is a natural part of the organisation's culture – *Section 2.6* • It is formal but not utilised – *Section 2.6* • It involves the iterative interaction of the internal and external environments – *Section 2.5* ○ using tacit and explicit knowledge – *Section 5.2*	○ Strategy-As-Practice (Vaara and Fritsch, 2021; Whittington, 1996) ○ Deliberate, emergent processes (Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) ○ Formal but not utilised event (Magaisa et al., 2013; Mashingaidze et al., 2021) ○ Strategic choices (Young et al., 2014)

b) What theoretical tools inform the strategy-formation processes in Zimbabwean organisations?	• The theoretical framework is made up of:
	  ○ Contingency Theory – *Section 3.3*
	  ○ Institution-Based View – *Section 3.4*
	  ○ Resource-Based View – *Section 3.5*
	  ○ Knowledge-Based View – *Section 3.6*
		○ Institutional effectiveness (Ntuli and Muchapondwa, 2018; Zindiye et al., 2012)
		○ Theory of the Firm (Barney et al., 2001; Fisher, 1998; Sveiby, 2001; Teece and Pisano, 2003)

c) What are the practice tools and dynamic capabilities of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?	• Use of environment sensing, seizing and reconfiguration frameworks – *Section 4.3* • Adoption of best-practice administrative systems for operational efficiencies – *Section 2.4* • Employees play a role in strategy formulation – *Section 3.3*	○ Managerial practices (Mashingaidze et al., 2021; Moyo and Moyo, 2017) ○ Dynamic capabilities (Arndt and Pierce, 2017; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Khan et al., 2021; Suddaby et al., 2020; Teece and Pisano, 2003) ○ Praxis, practice and practitioners (Johnson et al., 2013; Vaara and Whittington, 2012)
d) How is knowledge formed, shared and converted in strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?	• Tacit and explicit knowledge conversion and sharing is central to organisation processes and systems – *Chapter 5* • High literacy as a key attribute of the context and culture – *Section 1.3*	○ Indigenous knowledge (Mapara, 2009) ○ Tacit and explicit knowledge (Kogut and Zander, 1992; Nonaka et al., 2000; Sveiby, 2001) ○ Knowledge conversion (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009; Tseng, 2010)

6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Introduction

The thesis has thus far presented the background to this research study, the research questions, the context of the study, the literature review – including key concepts and definitions, and the theoretical lenses. This chapter presents and justifies the methodology process that the research study adopted. The first section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the SAP research approach to contextualise the research methodology. The chapter then presents the

The following sections cover the research process's elements, including the purpose, research design, population, sampling, data-collection procedure, development of the research instruments from literature and research questions, and data analysis. The final sections outline the steps taken to ensure the study's reliability and validity and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a summary consistency table that links the methodology to the literature review and research questions.

6.2 Strategy-As-Practice

Traditional research on strategy has focused on organisations and their strategies (Prahalad and Hamel, 1994; Whittington, 1996). Emphasis was also on strategies as tools for organisational success and attaining competitive advantage (Cyert and Williams, 1993; Hansen and Wernerfelt, 1989; Mintzberg, 1987; Porter, 1996). In 1996, Whittington acknowledged the increasing complexity and diversity of the research and practice of strategic management, pointing to the emergence of an approach to strategy that regarded strategy as a social practice and explored the actual actions and interactions of the practitioners of strategy (Whittington, 1996). Wenger and Snyder (2000) add to this view the increasing importance of *communities of practice*. These communities are defined as the coming together of people bound by shared passion and practice and include people engaged in joint enterprises such as deep-water drilling for a team of engineers or marketing consultants coming together (Wenger and Snyder, 2000; Whittington, 1996). The basic idea of interaction and action towards a particular practice is common in both views. SAP interest lies mainly in what people do and the interrelationships between organisational systems, processes and people activities (Johnson et al., 2007; Vaara and Whittington, 2012)

The practice direction in the approach to strategy departs from the view of Prahalad and Hamel (1994), who argue that one of the *traditional assumptions* of strategy analysis is the *economics analysis*. Since the emerging (Whittington, 1996) view, there have been several studies on this approach, and the SAP has become a recognised approach to the understanding of strategy research (Burgelman et al., 2018; Johnson et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2008; Kohtamäki et al., 2021; Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006).

One of the initial questions posed by Whittington (1996) was, "What does it take to be an effective strategy practitioner?" (p. 731). Subsequent writings have gone further to look at the details of how strategy is conducted (practices), what it is that people do (praxis), and who is involved in strategy (Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). In addition to the activities, actors and actions, scholars have added a process perspective to the SAP approach (Burgelman et al., 2018; Kohtamäki et al., 2021).

According to Whittington (1996), "the practice perspective of strategy shifts attention from the core competence of the corporation to the practical competence of the manager as the strategist" (p. 732). The craft skill of the manager and his or her distinct competence in formulating and leading strategy implementation is critical. This view is referred to as the "traditional study of distinctive competencies" by Barney and Clark (2007) in their overview of the RBV. The competencies aspect remains crucial in the current strategy studies, although not singularly distinctive. Instead, it is seen as part of a more extensive theoretical strategy framework. This framework also includes context, governance, institutional view, agency, contract and economic analyses, to mention a few of its components. Given the volatility of the Zimbabwean context, as discussed in Section 1.3, the managerial competence perspective becomes a point of interest in the study. However, it also explores the role of managerial effort amongst that of other stakeholders (which CoT defines) in the strategy-making process.

Notably, strategy-making is presented exclusively as a managerial prerogative and the employee is not mentioned, even in the capacity of an implementation tool. This confirms the cited theoretical lens of RBV and CoT. However, it can be challenged under the KBV, especially considering the acknowledgement by recent research of the reduced sanctity of knowledge availability. Employees possess the tacit knowledge of physical work execution and the explicit understanding of implementing defined processes and procedures, which are considered most important in assessing whether the desired strategic outcomes have been achieved.

Rumelt et al. (1994) argue that:

> Indeed, it is now understood that under conditions of ambiguity, uncertainty, complexity, opportunism and change, it is to be expected that much knowledge will be tacit, that decisions will not be based on deductive logic but will instead derive from hard-won rules of thumb and skilled routines, and that excellence will resist analysis and imitation. (Preface xii)

This same argument is made by Whittington (1996), who states that:

> The ways of doing strategy in each firm harden into distinct and regular patterns, so that knowing the 'done thing' locally is essential to be able to get things done. Often, therefore, practical competence requires a readiness to work within existing structures and routines rather than knowledge of some textbook ideal. (p. 732)

These authors seem to suggest that in conditions of uncertainty, success is achieved by being less innovative, inflexible, and following an established system. This argument would reject the idea that what may get a business into a position where it needs to change is that its existing systems are no longer functional and that the way they have been crafted to date needs to be reviewed. Perhaps that is why Rumelt et al. (1994) add to their observation that: "However, these same conditions also encourage superstitious learning, the acceptance of fads, and resistance to change" (Preface xii). Whittington (1996) asserts that the various roles of the different strategy practitioners in the organisation need to be recognised and understood, as they each have a distinct mix of capabilities that satisfy a distinct mix of activities in strategizing. Prahalad and Hamel

(2003) argue that the rest of the teams in the organisation are as important as the leadership in crafting and implementing strategy.

Whittington (1996) concludes the discussion by reviewing the implications of this practice perspective for practitioners, teachers and researchers. The key points that he makes are:

- Practitioners – the competence of managers as strategists and the knowledge transference to existing managers for succession is important. While other consultants may argue that retaining the same teams creates a myopic system, Whittington (1996) suggests that insiders know how things work.
- Teachers – while certain technical aspects can be taught in a formal learning environment, a lot can be learnt from carrying out strategy effectively. Leaders must now embrace counselling and coaching techniques with their junior teams, who must also "understand the distinct skills, responsibilities and predicaments of the various participants involved in the strategy-making process" (p. 733).
- Researchers – there has been a progression from learning about different strategies to learning about strategizing. Scholars prefer the case study methodology and acknowledge a focus on the fate of the entire organisation. However, they also propose the inclusion of the rest of the teams within the organisation.

6.3 Elements of the Research Process

This section provides a build-up of the research process. It presents the key considerations in developing the research methods and the literature around the research process and design. The section also explains why the research methods were preferred and how they align with the SAP research approach. The theoretical perspective in section 6.5 supports the elements.

6.3.1 Complexities of Strategy Research in Zimbabwe

Research on strategy or strategic management in Zimbabwe is not new and dates back to the 1990s. A seminal paper by Wilson (1996) directly challenged the systems and processes organisations use to interrogate their technological capability. The paper promoted the ability to adopt a systematic approach to assessing context's impact in improving technological choices (Wilson, 1996). Wilson (1996) directly explored the internal processes in several SMEs. Subsequent research undertaken by researchers and scholars such as Bond (2000), Goriwondo and Maunga (2012); Mashingaidze (2020); Moyo and Moyo (2017); Nyamwanza (2013); Nyamwanza and Mavhiki (2014) has widened the exploration to more prominent organisations from both the public and private sectors. However, despite this expanding coverage, there are still conspicuous complexities in the practice of strategy research in Zimbabwe.

The primary source of the challenges concerns sensitivities around the subject matter of strategy. For the current research study, obtaining permission to conduct research in companies, institutions and sometimes with targeted individuals took longer than expected, as the requests went through protocols and bureaucracy for approval. While this did not affect the quality of the research, it made planning difficult. At the same time, this provoked a question: “How far does this confidentiality actually go, and how confident can one be then that the entirety of the internal social system is aware of the organisation’s strategic intent and choices?”

Based on this sensitivity, obtaining internal documents and strategic records was not always easy. This prompted a change in the research strategy and data-collection methods. Where documents were available, they were viewed and analysed, mainly aiming to study the practice aspect of the strategy-making process.

The volatility of Zimbabwe's socioeconomic system also added complexity to the research process. Some participants would confirm their attendance “in theory” but would not make it to the final discussion. The main reason cited was “busy schedules” as organisation leaders battled to keep the wagons on the rails in a rapidly changing economy.

Finally, while it would have been preferable to have had the respondents physically attend the discussions, the requirements of social distancing brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic presented an added complexity. The alternative was using virtual platforms, which, apart from being unstable, meant that time constraints limited some conversations. Some respondents, therefore, failed to participate.

Perhaps the positive lesson learnt from these complexities is that they, too, present a fundamental confirmation of the existing theoretical views and general literature on the role of context, practices and systems in strategy formation. While they are presented here as methodological complexities, they are a test of the practice nature of strategy formation.

6.3.2 The Research Process

This research was developed using a framework developed by Partington (2002). The framework, although developed for the grounded theory approach to research (Partington, 2002), was favoured for its emphasis on an extensive iterative research process that ensures rigorous data collection and analysis, considering that this research study considers both the firm-level and individual-level units of analysis, the framework was considered appropriate in its emphasis on the iterative approach to the enquiry of issues.

The key points of emphasis in this framework are that a researcher must identify closely with and have knowledge of the intended area of research. The current research study demonstrated this through a comprehensive literature review of the key concepts of dynamic capabilities, knowledge, knowledge conversion and the strategy-formation processes.

Figure 6.3–1, below, is adapted from a diagram by Partington (2002) and improved for this study. The scholar adds that research should be guided by a theoretical perspective and a conceptual framework that illustrates the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions (Partington, 2002). This was considered in the current study and is presented in detail in Chapter 3 of the literature review, where the four theoretical lenses of the CoT, IBV, RBV and KBV are presented. A set of assumptions was developed that guided the research and maintained focus on the key concepts, presented in a conceptual framework created as a summary presentation of the literature and theory reviews.

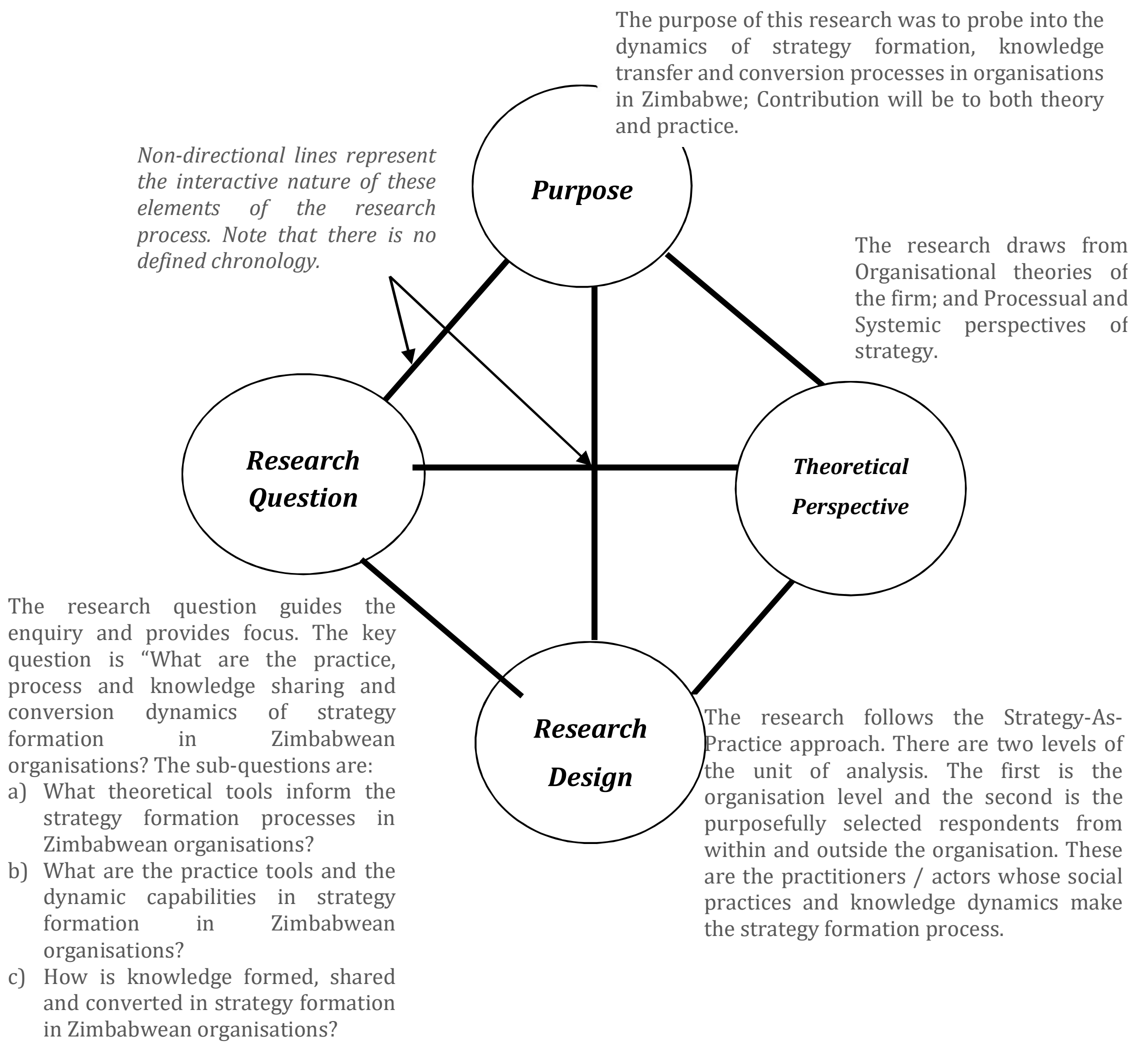


Figure 6.3–1: The research process – the four elements in alignment.

6.3.3 Figure 6.3–1: The research process – the four elements in alignment.The Research Design

The preceding sections have introduced the research process, the preferred research approach, its key principles and how the choice was made to follow this approach. This section now links the research approach to the research design, partly influenced by the observed complexities of strategy research in Zimbabwe (*Section 6.3.1*).

Sampling in qualitative research is non-random, as respondents must be fit for purpose and knowledgeable to contribute to and enrich the understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Boddy, 2016; Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017). This study could be considered a qualitative research study as it explored the social interactions within an organisation, albeit specifically in the strategy-making process. The phenomenon to be studied was defined; therefore, the research methods adopted a specific design, and the population and sample were selected purposively. Two levels of unit of analysis were chosen for this research:

- The firm or organisation-level unit of analysis; and
- The individual-level unit of analysis.

At the firm-level unit of analysis, the study adopted two population categories. The first category was the organisations under study and within which the strategy processes were happening. The population in this category was two industries that had been relatively stable through the various economic phases. The differences in the impact of and response to decisions and changes in internal systems were also considered, with one industry responding more immediately than the other. The idea was to obtain a comparative view of whether these similarities and differences could account for the nature of systems within the organisations and the dynamics of the social and knowledge interactions. The two industries are the agriculture sector and the tourism sector. The considered distinguishing aspects between the two industries are that; In the agriculture sector, decisions made today affect and present themselves in the future as the products grow and mature over time. In the tourism sector, decisions made today have an immediate impact. For example, a dent in the reputation of any entity, has an immediate and observable impact on its performance. This distinction contributed to the depth of comparison and understanding of the research issues at hand.

The study's theoretical framework also acknowledges the role of the external environment and actors within the broader context (at the industry and national level). This second category at the firm-level unit of analysis was selected using the IBV as a theoretical lens, and the importance of institutions in developing countries such as Zimbabwe was considered. The population comprised institutions directly related to industry sectors such as industry associations, regulatory authorities or employment councils.

At the individual-level unit of analysis, two categories of population were selected. The first category was inspired by the consistent view that management leads strategy-making processes (Barney, 1991; Barney et al., 2001; Makadok et al., 2018; Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984). The role of employees (and organised labour) in Zimbabwe has also transformed, starting at the national level, where labour unions took a stand in influencing national policy and moving to organisations in the workplace in Zimbabwe from about 1994 (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004). In addition, with the opening up of the information space today, knowledge is now available to anyone regardless of their level in the hierarchy. Considering all of these factors, the population was purposefully drawn from management and employee representatives of organisations.

As the research progressed, there emerged an observable reality of a third-level unit of analysis that may not have been a point of reference at the beginning of the research process. This is the global context, the socio-economic environment that incorporates situations such as pandemics that cut across geopolitical space. This environment also includes the high-speed revolution of technology, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), a major dynamic that challenges the commonly known social interactions in organisations and strategy formation. This third level is referred to in this research, but not in detail. The study proposes that it be considered in future research as a primary context.

6.4 Population and Sample

Section 6.3.3 briefly introduces the process to arrive at the population and sample for this research and justifies the decisions reached from a conceptual and theoretical perspective. This section details the practical considerations and processes used to choose the population and sample for this research. In general, and in line with the tenets of the practice perspective of this study, the research adopted a purposive sampling approach. Purposive sampling is essential in selecting participants that best answer the research questions and respond effectively to the study's objectives (Boddy, 2016; Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017; Saunders, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2011). The sample size was also maintained within a range of 15 to 60 participants to allow for in-depth enquiry and to uncover meaningful data (Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017; Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Figure 6.4–1 below presents a pictorial view of the population and sample at the different levels of the unit of analysis. The Global level unit of analysis merely represents an emerging dynamic in the research context, Artificial Intelligence(AI), which is an opportunity for future research. The sub-sections below explain the populations according to each unit of analysis and the samples chosen.

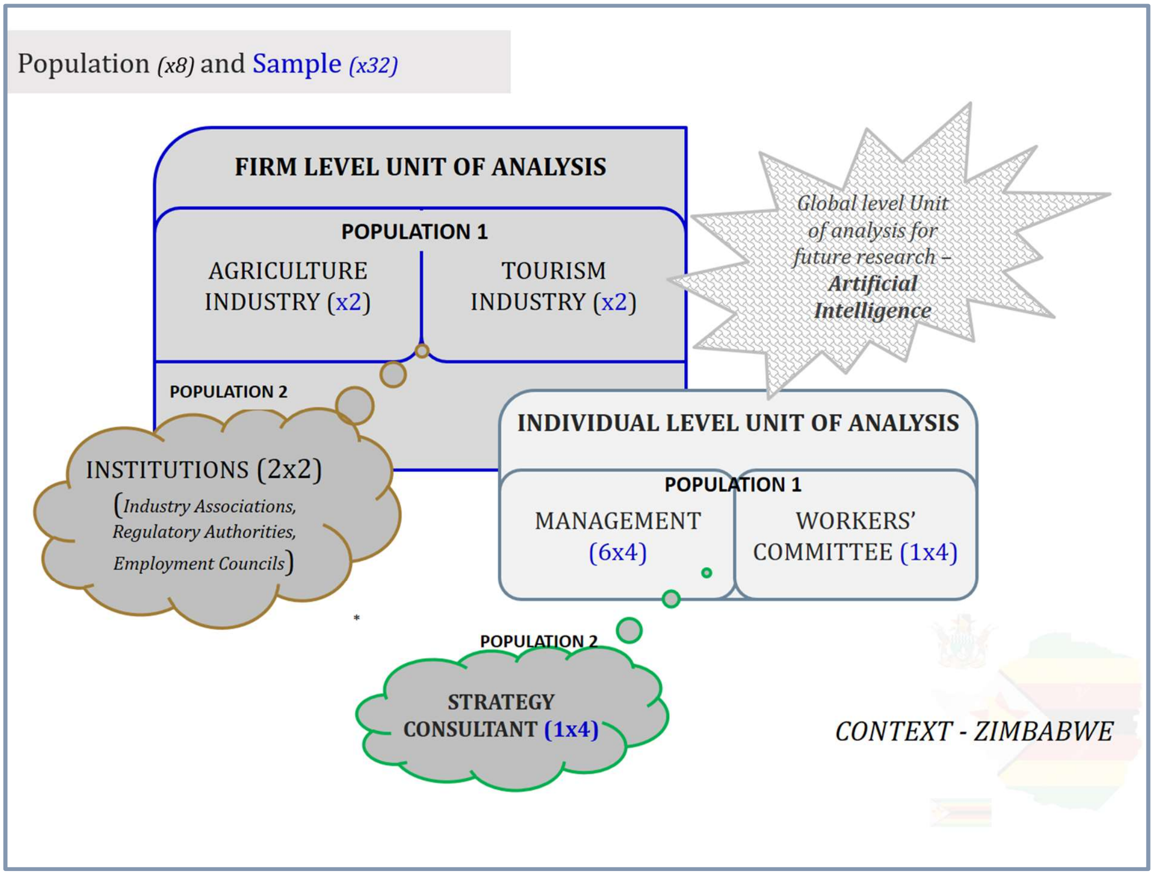


Figure 6.4–1: Population and sampling for the research

6.4.1 The Firm-Level Unit of Analysis

As indicated in *Section 6.3.3* and *Figure 6.4–1*, the population for the firm-level unit of analysis was selected from two categories. The first category was the organisation within which the strategy process was happening, and the second was the institutions associated with the industry in which the organisation resided and the nation at large. For the first category, two industrial sectors in Zimbabwe were considered:

- The agriculture sector and

- The tourism sector.

In selecting these two sectors, the following considerations were taken:

a) The common characteristic of the sectors was that the organisations were supported by long-term infrastructure. However, the responses to changes in context or decisions were different. The agriculture sector responded a season or seasons later as the crop grew or through the quality of offspring in the case of husbandry. In contrast, the tourism sector response was immediate and could be visible through such statistics as occupancy or booking rates. The idea was to establish whether these contrasts would also manifest in the systems and, in this way, establish a comparative analysis.
b) Generally, both sectors tended to have their infrastructure dispersed across prominent geographical locations. This provided a point of analysis on the consistency of systems and processes and their management.
c) Both sectors were highly regulated industries in Zimbabwe (WorldBank, 2017) and viewed as key contributors to the country's GDP; therefore, they were constantly on the government's radar (Chronicle, 2017).
d) These sectors were also sensitive to well-functioning formal institutions (legal, financial, governance) and informal institutions (culture, communities, social framework). Items *c)* and *d)* speak to the theoretical lenses of the IBV and CoT and the literature on context and its impact on organisation processes.
e) At the time of the research, the sectors were highly labour-intensive as the country's technology generation lagged behind world trends (Mupangwa, Mutenje, Thierfelder, Mwila, Malumo, Mujeyi, and Setimela, 2017; Viriri and Phiri, 2017). This provoked thoughts regarding social interactions and knowledge processes within organisations.

The sample chosen at this firm-level unit was four organisations (two from each sector). Using purposive sampling, those formal organisations with open shareholding structures published their activity and results to the public were selected and requested to participate in the research. This was expected to assist in easing the organisations' willingness to participate in the research and to facilitate access to the respondents and information. Eventually, two organisations consented to the research, and one of the two consented to access strategy documents, records, and communications.

As shown in Figure 6.5–1, the second category was institutions, the formal structures that set guidelines for industry and the nation (Zoogah et al., 2014). The population consisted of those institutions directly associated with the selected industry sectors that provided regulation or guidance in advocacy, labour and employment conditions, and policy formation or amendment. The selected institutions were:

a) The regulatory authority of the industry;
b) The industrial association under which the organisation was classified and represented on policy and regulation matters at the national level and
c) The National Employment Council (NEC) under which the organisation fell and where conditions of service for its employees were regulated.

The proposed sample was any two of these institutions for each selected industry sector. Two institutions gave consent for the research. However, only one institution confirmed the times for the interviews and successfully scheduled the interviews as requested. The other could not finally commit, possibly because the head of the institution had been appointed in an acting capacity and the institution was going through major reviews of its governance practices by the parent ministry. This, in itself, is an important point for future research as it tests the agency role of general managers (GMs) in public institutions – whether they make decisions themselves or possibly defer to the parent body, the ministry in which the institution resides.

6.4.2 The Individual-Level Unit of Analysis

At the individual-level unit of analysis, the sample was chosen from the population of practitioners, the actors from within the organisations, and the surrounding environment and context (Seidl and Whittington, 2014; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). These practitioners were interviewed to understand the knowledge transfer and conversion processes discussed by Sveiby (2001). The two categories of population (internal and external individuals) provided the connection between micro-praxis and macro-institutional foci (Kohtamäki et al., 2021) for the research by exploring the individuals' roles and activities in the organisation's strategy processes.

The first population considered, as shown in *Figure 6.4–1*, was the top management within the organisation. Literature shows that management is generally responsible for strategising or strategy-making, as explained in *Section 6.3.3*. The total sample consisted of six top management people in each organisation. For this research, an added leader – the Workers' Committee chairperson – was included in the sample to make a total of seven. This was following the observation of the growing role of employees in organisations in Zimbabwe, as explained in *Section 6.3.3*.

Within the sample from each organisation, the respondents held the following positions in the organisation:

a) CEO / MD or GM, or simply head of the organisation
b) Head of the human resources department
c) Head of the technical department core to the nature of the organisation
d) Head of finance or accounting department of the organisation
e) Head of product or business development/ marketing and sales / new markets or innovation department
f) Head of quality, safety, health and environment management
g) Chairperson of the Workers' Committee of the organisation or, in the absence of the chairperson, the general secretary or any member of the leadership

The leaders of the Workers' Committee were interviewed regardless of whether they participated in the strategy process or not, as it was expected that this would assist in understanding the knowledge-transfer processes within organisations from the perspective of the employees on the ground. It could also assist in bringing formal and informal systems to the forefront of knowledge-management processes.

The second category, as shown in *Figure 6.4–1*, consisted of practitioners with external skills who worked closely with organisations in Zimbabwe as strategy consultants. The sample was one consultant for each of the organisations. The total sample chosen for the study was, therefore, 32 participants. The participants were purposefully selected to enable in-depth exploration of the issues in discussion.

6.5 The Research Instruments

Qualitative data was gathered using semi-structured interview guides (attached as Appendices 6, 7, 8 and 9). Appendix 6 was the interview guide for selected individuals within the organisation. Appendix 7 was administered to institution participants. Appendix 8 interview guide was administered to consultants and practitioners of strategy. Appendix 9 relates to the documents, company documents, and records and was therefore administered to custodians.

As a tactical approach, each interview or conversation began with confirmation of the general information of the respondent, which included the participant code, the type of participant, the industry or sector, and establishing authority (in the case of organisations or institutions). This is contained in Section A of Appendices 6,7, 8 and 9 which were the research instruments. Question 1 recorded the participant code that would be used in the data analysis phase and categorisation of participants. The information in Section A also assisted in understanding the context within which the respondents made their submissions. The respondents were deliberately selected, making it easier to establish rapport with them and delve deeper into discussions on the subject matters.

In order to ensure consistency of enquiry, the same interview guides were administered to each respondent in the same category of participants. This would also assist in establishing patterns and trends at analysis of data.

6.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were used to obtain an in-depth exploration of phenomena and allow for consistency in the discussions across individuals and organisations as recommended by Harrison (2002). The first interview guides for individual participants (organisation) and for stakeholders (institution and consultant) were derived from the research questions, literature and theoretical reviews. After the interviews, a follow-up discussion with the head of one of the organisations informed the development of another interview guide. This guide was used for the meeting with the documents and records holder and was concerned with the documents and records review in pursuit of a closer understanding of the praxis of strategy formation.

6.5.2 Documents and Company Records

Strategy-planning documents, strategy-evaluation or -review records, minutes of strategy formulation and review meetings, presentations at strategy sessions, published annual reports and strategy documents were viewed, and some excerpts were obtained. Some documents were obtained at the source, and others were e-mailed by the respondent with a note emphasising confidentiality. As the documents were obtained from source, the information may be adjudged to be authentic. However, to maintain strict confidentiality of these records, the information obtained was only referred to and paraphrased extensively in critical situations. Where there was need to refer closely to the information, the sources of the information were redacted to maintain anonymity of the source and in turn confidentiality of the information.

6.6 Data Collection Processes

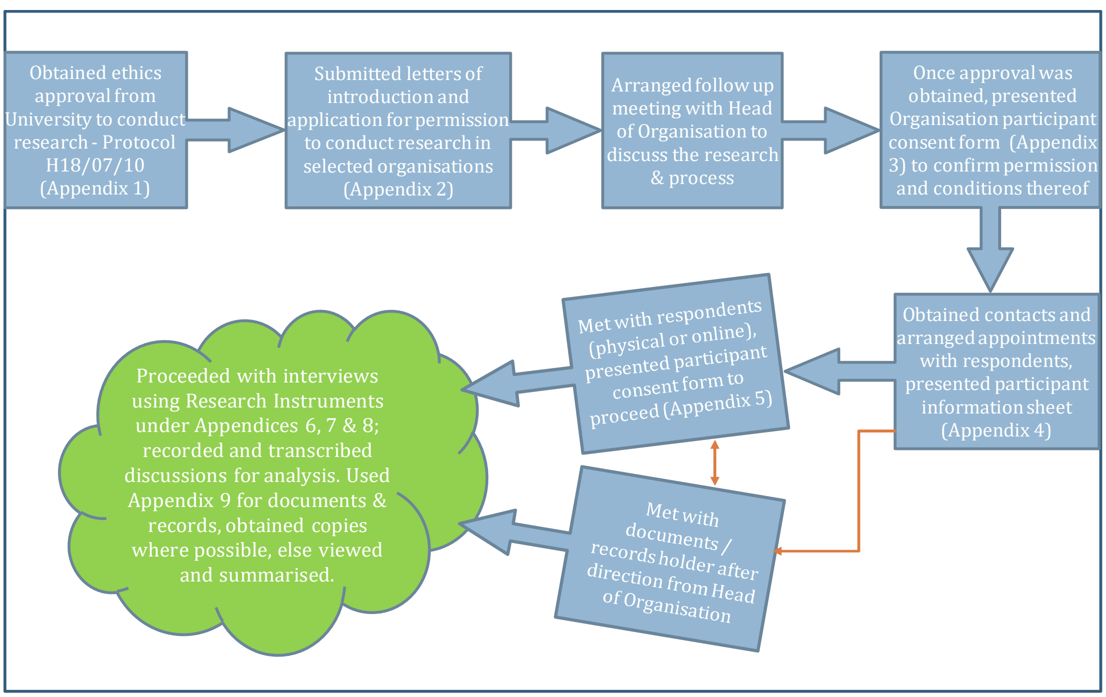


Figure 6.6–1: Procedure for data collection

Figure 6.6–1 above presents a pictorial summary of the process that was adopted for data collection.

Two data sources were used for this research: individuals (employees and stakeholders) who worked within and with the organisations, as well as company documents, records, and communications. Two data-collection methods were used to investigate these data sources: semi-structured interviews and reviewing documents and records.

Fourteen interviews were conducted. Of the 14 interviews, 13 were held with different respondents, while the 14^{th} interview was a second discussion with the first respondent to be interviewed in the data-collection process. This second interview was conducted 30 months after the first interview. The second interview focused on the practice aspect of the strategy process. The discussion also aimed to establish the organisation's responses to the changing environment and to the initial plans that had been made, as observed in the first interview.

6.7 The Interview Process

Interviews with the participants across all four categories were conducted using interview guides (Appendices 6, 7, 8 and 9). *Figure 6.7–1* below demonstrates the flow of the interview process.

The interview questions were premised on the research questions and key focus areas from the literature and theoretical reviews. The interviews opened and concluded with general discussions on organisation processes. The opening remarks and general discussions, combined with the question and answer segment at the end of the interviews, also provided more intimate views and perspectives of the internal dynamics of the organisations.

The diagram shows that the entire enquiry is rooted in the main research question (RQ1), which branches off into sub-questions RQ1a, RQ1b and RQ1c, as shown by the lower arm. These research questions dig into key areas shown in corresponding boxes in the uppermost arm. As explained in *Section 6.4*, the respondents were divided into four categories: organisation participant (OP), institution participant (IP), consultant participant (CP) and records participant (RP).

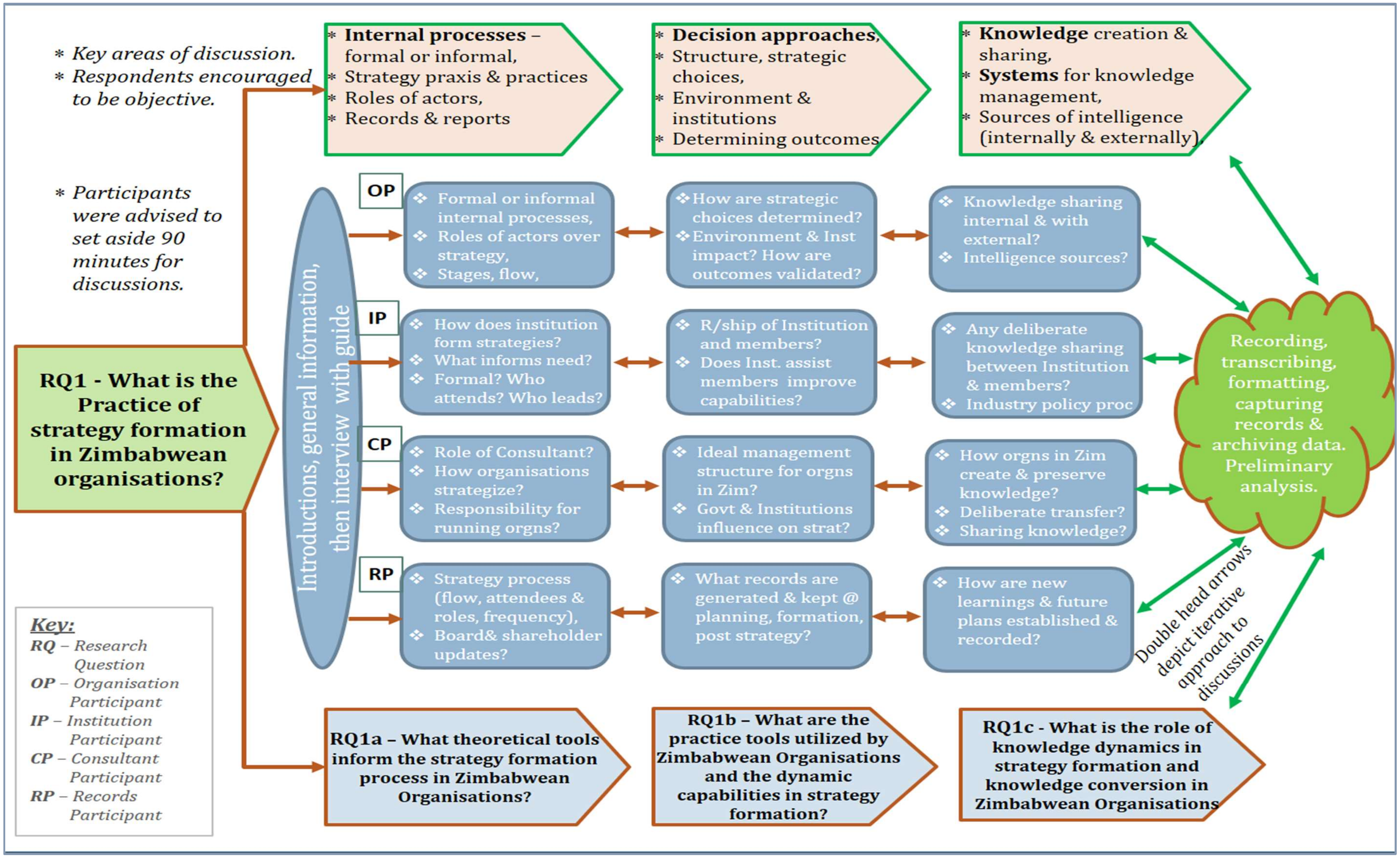


Figure 6.7–1: The interview process with research questions, interview guidelines

The blue oval boxes summarise the points of enquiry for each type of participant, which aligns with the research questions and the focus areas. The single-directional arrows from RQ1 and those carrying the initials of the participant type demonstrate the general direction or flow of enquiry. Interviews began with an introductory segment where the respondents were informed of the purpose of the discussion and the study. At that stage, final consent was established.

The two-directional arrows throughout the diagram demonstrate the iterative approach between questions. This approach was adopted so that matters raised in one question could be verified by obtaining clarity on later or a previous question. This assisted in clarifying matters and obtaining in-depth discussion of the subject.

The cloud represents the final stage of the enquiry: recording and analysis. However, two-directional green arrows between the cloud and the other elements demonstrate the iteration between the record and the discussions. There were cases where respondents were contacted after the main discussion to clarify or expand on certain aspects noted during the transcription or analysis of the discussion.

The interviews were semi-structured, with the guides serving only as a tool for consistency and ensuring all areas of study were adequately covered. Some interviews were conducted online while others were conducted in physical, face-to-face interactions. The data was recorded, transcribed and formatted, and, as mentioned above, where some aspects required further clarity, respondents were contacted again. In some cases, a follow-up interview was conducted, where new insights emerged.

6.8 Recording, Transcribing and Formatting Data

Table 6.8–1 sets out the steps taken in recording, transcribing and formatting data to attain a high efficiency in quantity, quality and preservation of data.

Table 6.8–1: Recording, transcribing, formatting and archiving of data

	ACTION	PROCESS DETAIL AND JUSTIFICATION	TOOLS USED
a)	Classification of respondents	∗ A set of codes was developed for the identification of respondents at both firm and individual unit of analysis. The codes were password-protected and saved.	∗ Microsoft Excel
b)	Recording of discussions	∗ Two recording devices were set up simultaneously to record all discussions with the consent of the respondents. A recording App, Otter.ai, was used to capture the audios and preliminary transcription. ∗ The App was registered under a different email for each device to create a back-up in case either failed during or after recording. ∗ Notes were also taken both on the interview guides and in a notebook, depending on points of emphasis.	∗ Laptop ∗ Cellphone ∗ Otter.ai App
c)	Transcribing of recorded audio data	∗ Audio and text transcripts were downloaded from Otter.ai and exported to special folders created for "data collection" both on the hard drive and in Dropbox. ∗ The text transcripts were edited in comparison with the audio transcripts, as some words would not have been correctly captured owing to noise interference and use of a different language that the App did not recognise.	∗ Otter.ai ∗ Microsoft Word
d)	Formatting of data	∗ Once edited, all transcripts adopted a single format where: o each transcript had the identity of the researcher (student reg. number), ethics protocol, respondent code, and date and time of the interview; o each line or paragraph was assigned the relevant speaker between the interviewer and the respondent. ∗ Respondents were identified by their code names, as indicated under point a) above.	∗ Microsoft Word ∗ Microsoft Excel
e)	Capturing of company documents and records	∗ Most of the company records and documents were viewed on site and notes taken on their format, uses, frequency of capture and targeted recipients. ∗ Those documents, questionnaire instruments or records that were emailed by the respondent were viewed on email and NOT downloaded for archiving. They were reviewed online and kept there for safety and confidentiality. The email was password-protected.	∗ Shorthand notes ∗ Private email
f)	Archiving and preparation for analysis	∗ Completed and cleaned transcripts were saved in another special folder called "ready for analysis". ∗ The folder was saved on both the hard drive and in Dropbox. ∗ All 14 transcripts were uploaded to Atlas.ti for analysis and coding.	∗ Dropbox ∗ Atlas.ti App

6.9 Data Analysis

Most of the data was collected through interviews with selected respondents from the studied organisations. Some data was also collected from documents and records of the organisations. The researcher transcribed all the data and, in the process, made preliminary observations in the form of concepts, arguments, themes, and trends, which were noted down as comments. The data was then uploaded onto Atlas.ti, which was analysed using thematic analysis. The data was coded following the gerund coding proposed by Saldaña (2015) as expounded in Carmichael and Cunningham (2017). This produced the output presented under *Figure 6.9–1* below.

The next stage involved a closer analysis of the codes to establish patterns, trends, and perhaps some interpretation of the respondents' views. In this process, it was observed that some codes spoke to similar conceptual issues and therefore could be grouped to form categories. From these categories, themes will be drawn for a more detailed discussion with reference to existing literature.

The codes were categorised into identified themes (Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017; Saldaña, 2015). This data assisted in establishing the extent to which the internal processes of the sampled organisations are formalised and recorded, and referred to for decision-making. In the process, any existing system trends and performance results were analysed. Several memos were also created in Atlas.ti to keep track of the observed themes, trends and new insights from the data, which were later compared to literature as a recommended iterative analysis process (Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017).

Data coding was a continuous process that proceeded during and after data collection, which Saldaña (2015) calls "coding as a heuristic". The prevalence of similar codes across organisations or respondents was noted for similarities and variances, which formed part of the analysis and discussion. The prevalence of certain concepts or themes was useful in identifying relationships between established phenomena.

During the entire study period, memos were generated in Atlas.ti to capture observations from emerging literature, discussions or peer reviews, new thoughts or views on phenomena under study, and ideas about alternative ways to proceed with the study or explore phenomena. These memos were also crucial in noting trending views and idiosyncrasies in the interview responses. The memos are a key point of reference in this thesis's findings and discussion section (Chapter 7).

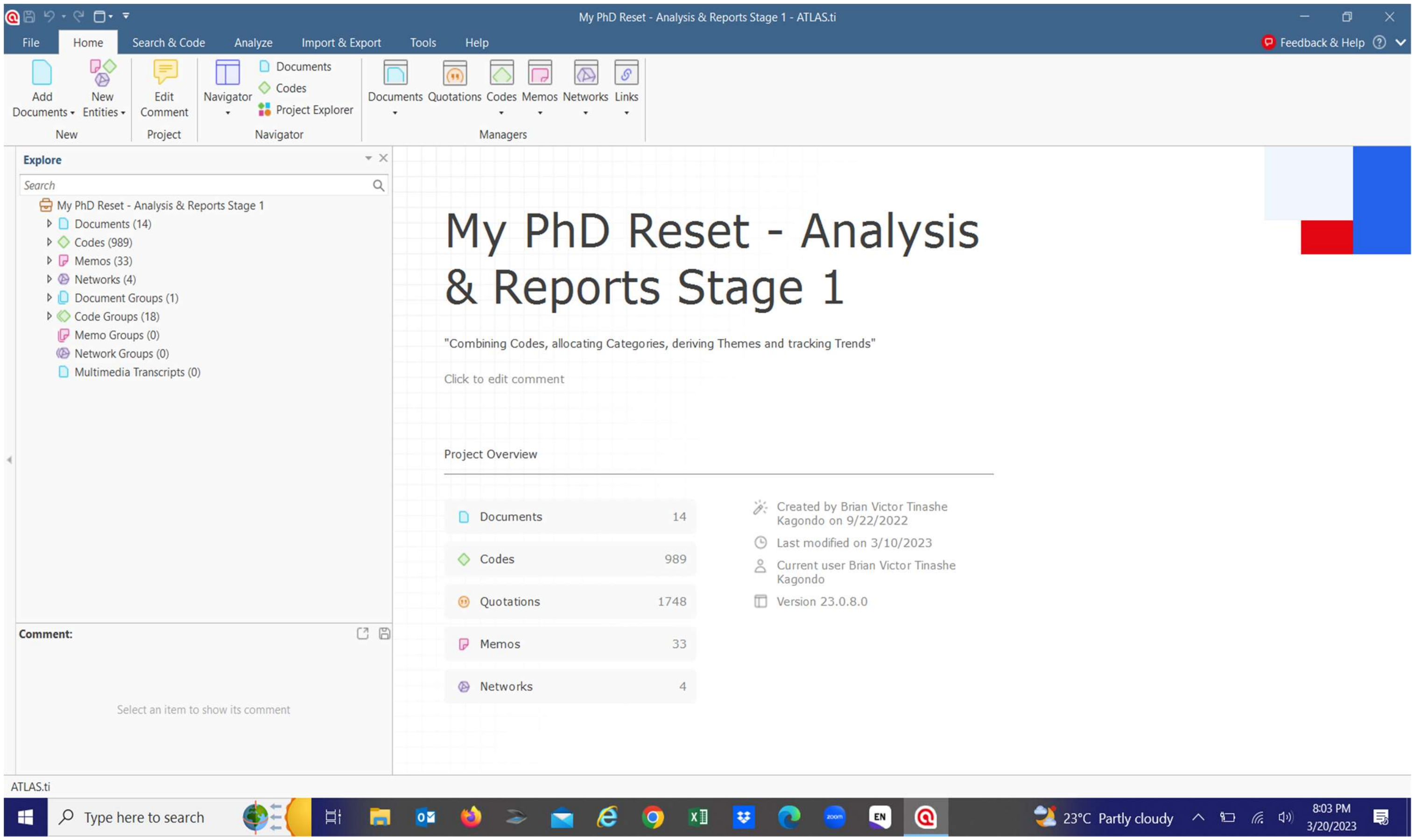


Figure 6.9–1: Summary page for the output of coding

6.10 Methodological Limitations

The data-collection period was longer than had initially been envisaged. It coincided with the eruption of the global pandemic, Covid-19. This meant that some conversations had to be conducted virtually, online, while only a few could be held physically. Securing appointments for the discussions was a tedious process, given this challenge, and, in some cases, it took more than a single session to conclude the discussion. Where discussions were held virtually, numerous disruptions and interruptions arose due to power surges, connectivity challenges, and attempts by respondents to multi-task by attending to work requirements during the discussions. These interruptions were noted on the interview transcripts, and, in one case, part of the conversation had to restart as the thought process had been disrupted. However, the fact that the respondents were senior employees made reconnecting and proceeding with the discussions easier.

It was also observable that responses to a single enquiry were not always consistent across all 13 respondents, as each drew from their own experiences and knowledge base. Perhaps this reflects the reality of qualitative research in that the findings cannot be generalised. There is typically an element of subjectivity to the responses.

The study was also conducted in a single (broad) context, Zimbabwe, which invariably has its own peculiar contextual aspects. The findings thus cannot be imposed on another context, no matter the proximity, such as within the southern African region. The cultures, practices and norms are diverse and cannot be generalised. Therefore, the research findings add to theory building in this context.

6.11 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are traditionally typical in quantitative research but have also been reconsidered in the qualitative research paradigm to refer to the “dependability”, “trustworthiness”, “quality” and “rigour” of the research (Golafshani, 2003). In qualitative research, “validity” also refers to the appropriateness of the tools, processes and data throughout the enquiry (Leung, 2015). The reliability of qualitative research is seen in the consistency and congruence of data from the methodological and epistemological logistics (Leung, 2015).

In this research project, the combination of purposive sampling and interviews improved the reliability and validity of the data collected. Purposive sampling meant that the respondents were familiar with the phenomena under discussion (Carmichael and Cunningham, 2017; Saunders et al., 2011) and could respond with greater conviction. The subject under discussion was also a part of their overall responsibility in the organisation; therefore, they could speak with greater authority. The respondents occupied higher levels of authority in their organisations and, therefore, had the appropriate knowledge levels and stature to respond to the subject of the strategy process. Some of the data was also collected from records within the organisation; therefore, the information could be validated directly. Where necessary, responses from the managers could be compared to the existing records to confirm that the information they had provided was correct.

Some of the discussion points required the direct opinion of the respondents. Responding to a single matter could reflect different views according to each respondent's experiences and knowledge. This must be considered in interpreting the findings of this research. However, it is expected that the differences do not necessarily compromise the validity or reliability of the information but instead improve the analysis of the practice of the phenomena under study and contribute to academic rigour. After all, the respondents were executives at strategic levels of the organisations and therefore policy definers rather than task takers.

6.12 Ethical Considerations

This research dealt with highly confidential information that could compromise organisations' competitive edge if mishandled. Therefore, It was considered particularly important to give proper consideration to ethical conduct in the research (Cooper, Schindler, and Sun, 2006; Yin, 2016). Ethics clearance and certification were obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand per standing rules and regulations.

As part of the observance of ethical considerations, a signed letter of introduction, which the University had confirmed, was presented to the participants. The letter included a clause of commitment to ethical conduct and observance of strict privacy and confidentiality. A letter of research confirmation was also sought from the University to advise the respondents and targeted organisations of the authenticity of the research project.

During the research process, documents were sourced from organisations willing to release their records. Names of the custodians of the records and people that issued the documents were kept in a secure file for future reference. Permission to record the discussions for future reference was sought and respondents signed a specific consent form (Appendix 5, Section 5) to confirm their consent.

6.13 Summary of Research Methodology

This chapter has explained and discussed the methodology chosen for the study. The key consideration was that the study adopted a qualitative research approach to investigating the phenomena under study, and the nature of the enquiry required direct sourcing of information from purposefully selected participants. In order to attain an acceptable level of consistency in the enquiry, the data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The discussions were recorded and transcribed using an app, Otter.ai, and transcripts were physically edited. The data was gathered in vast text volumes, and therefore, it was considered prudent to analyse it using gerund coding and an established app, Atlas.ti, as a tool. It was also important to establish evidence of the practices explained or presented by the organisation participants. This was achieved by viewing existing documents and records of strategy processes.

In order to align the research methodology with the research questions and literature propositions, a consistency table (**Error! Reference source not found.**) is presented below. Section A of the Appendices was used mainly to establish identity, coding and general introduction. For the consistency table, the question numbers referred to are from Section B of the Appendices.

Table 6.13–1 : Consistency table for research questions, propositions from literature, data collection and analysis

RESEARCH QUESTION	PROPOSITION FROM LITERATURE	DATA-COLLECTION PROCESS **Section B of Appendices*	DATA ANALYSIS AND TOOLS
a) What are the practice, process and knowledge sharing and conversion dynamics of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations??	• Strategic planning event • It is a planned and deliberate process. • It is an emergent process that is a natural part of the organisation's culture. • It is formal but not utilised. • It involves the iterative interaction of the internal and external environments: o using tacit and explicit knowledge	• Appendix 6, Questions 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 • Appendix 6: Questions 15, 16 • Appendix 7: Question 9 • Appendix 8: Questions 5, 7, 9, 10, 11 • Appendix 9: Question 1	• Coding using gerund coding • Categorisation of data for analysis • Use of Atlas.ti software
b) What theoretical tools inform the strategy-formation processes in Zimbabwean organisations?	• The theoretical framework is made up of: o Contingency Theory o Institution-Based View o Resource-Based View o Knowledge-Based View	• Appendix 6: Questions 13, 20, 22 • Appendix 7: Questions 8, 11 • Appendix 8: Questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 15 • Appendix 9: Question 3	• Coding using Atlas.ti • Drawing of theory diagrams, comparing with literature and findings
c) What are the practice tools and dynamic capabilities of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?	• Use of environment sensing, seizing and reconfiguration frameworks • Adoption of best-practice administrative systems for operational efficiencies • Employees have a role in strategy formulation	• Appendix 6: Questions 14, 17, 18, 19, 21 • Appendix 7: Question 12 • Appendix 8: Questions 12, 16 • Appendix 9: Question 2	• Coding using Atlas.ti • Extract of participant responses in interviews for analysis
d) How is knowledge formed, shared and converted in strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?	• Tacit and explicit knowledge conversion and sharing is central to organisation processes and systems • High literacy as a key attribute of the context and culture	• Appendix 6: Questions 5, 6, 8, 10, 20 • Appendix 7: Question 10, 12b., 16 • Appendix 8: Questions 7,10,13, 17 • Appendix 9: Questions 3a., 4	• Coding using Atlas.ti, • Documents review, • Extract of direct quotes and use of diagrams

7 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the fieldwork conducted as part of the research study. The findings are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed. Data was collected through an interview process with the four categories of participants, as demonstrated in *Figure 6.7–1: The interview process with research questions, interview guidelines*. The findings and discussions presented in this chapter generally follow the literature review format, where the main sections are based on the research questions. The sub-sections, however, are slightly different as they follow key observations made from the data. The discussions iterate between the findings and knowledge obtained from the literature review. The chapter concludes with a consistency table summarising how the findings respond to the research questions, compare with the literature propositions, and contribute to understanding the key concepts under study.

7.2 Strategy and Strategic Management – Zimbabwean Perspective

It is important to begin this discussion by establishing how organisations or management in Zimbabwe define, describe and view strategy and strategic management. This sets the discussion by contextualizing strategy as a concept and a discipline in Zimbabwe.

A quick recap of the literature reviewed reminds us that scholars argue that strategy is organised around why some firms persistently outperform others (Barney and Clark, 2007; Rumelt et al., 1994). These scholars later point to resources, capabilities and competencies as key aspects or elements of strategy. Other scholars argue strategy is about best practices (Cyert and March, 1963; Cyert and Williams, 1993). Other scholars add industry structure, efficiencies and impact of institutions as key elements of strategy organisations adopt to sustain effectiveness (Porter, 1996; Porter, 1983; Zindiye et al., 2012; Zoogah et al., 2014). Local (Zimbabwean) scholars generally view strategy as a tool for economic survival, navigating through volatile environments, and as a model for best practices (Magaisa et al., 2013; Mashingaidze et al., 2021; Nyamwanza, 2013).

The respondents had this to say about strategy in general:

"*So you then find that the motive behind strategy formulation is either it is being demanded somewhere and you are doing it for compliance purposes.*" 1:222 ¶ 53 in ConG – Interview

The consultant argued that organisations generally strategise as part of what is 'expected' of the organisation and as part of its activities to comply with. This puts into question the nature of the internal culture and systems. The consultant makes this observation as an external stakeholder of the organisation, which may suggest an objective view. As a resource available to many organisations, the consultant possibly has a closer-to-reality view of organisational cultures. The consultant's view was also echoed by the institution respondent, who stated that:

"*So what makes an organisation do a strategy is not to really like you need to do it, because some other companies are doing it, so let's do it also but the circumstances, the environment that we are in it is that what makes you to do a strategy.*" 2:159 ¶ 92 in EmpA Interview

In this case, strategy becomes a mere means to an end, a borrowed culture that the organisations borrow. The submission is consistent with Cyert and March (1963) views on 'best practices' . The institution makes strategy part of its internal processes, but premised on a borrowed culture or practice. The internal organisation respondents had a different view of strategy and its intention, as shown in the responses below.

"*In strategy, there are key operational or key strategic intents. You can actually decide to have a strategy of operational excellence; you can have the strategy of customer intimacy; you can have a strategy of product innovation or Leadership.*" 6:137 ¶ 68 in RueAz 03 Interview

"*So strategy has also to look at that. What is it that we can do to extract that? You know, I can use it to my competitive advantage and knowledge.*" 8:130 ¶ 192 in RueAz 06 Interview

"Strategy is your Long-term objectives, incorporated into your operational plan Right." 9:25 ¶ 24 in SwaTz 01 – SAP Interview

The submissions suggest structured and well-defined systems of operation within the organisation. One could use the language in the submissions to define a particular organisational practice or culture (Burgelman et al., 2018; Vaara and Fritsch, 2021). While the research study focuses on the practice, this language aspect of the strategy practice is noted for its contribution to setting an understanding of the general practice of strategy in Zimbabwe. Within the submissions is a tone that exudes the desire to present excellence in systems and processes in the organisations.

"It's not about, you know, the approaches its about how to think because I think a lot of management and leadership and strategy is about thinking and not being not being limited by models." 9:123 ¶ 76 in SwaTz 01 – SAP Interview

"At a certain point in time you look at the environment, you look at your business competencies, you look at your infrastructure, you look at everything else, and you come up with a strategy and a strategy is that how you're going to get somewhere?" 10:183 ¶ 54 in SwaTz 01 Interview

"For us I think the difference is we are not stuck to document because I can tell you when anything changes we are quick to get it and change and re-strategize." 11:66 ¶ 134 in SwaTz 04 Interview

If the language view of strategy practice referred to earlier on is to be considered again here, the three submissions above also speak to a unique practice of strategising. The respondents appear to argue for the existence of deliberate strategy processes that are outside set norms. The respondents define strategy in ways that suggest extensive effort is placed on sensing activities and that the organisations also expend effort in searching for options and alternatives. They appear to contradict the consultant and the institution leader. Their views therefore suggest that strategy in Zimbabwe goes beyond just compliance or mimicking best practices. The respondents claim ownership of the strategic intents.

The differences in the definitions of strategy shown by the organisation respondents and the 'external' stakeholders bring to the fore the complexity of strategy here. As more evidence is presented, it becomes increasingly clear that these external stakeholders are a critical part and/or partner in the organisation's internal processes from a practice perspective. The idea that they have a different interpretation of these processes and their existence in Zimbabwean organisations should not be trivialised. The internal respondents that they differ with clearly identify with these stakeholders and value their roles.

The findings suggest that the consultants (also sometimes referred to as "facilitators") are permanent participants in the strategy processes in organisations and, therefore, play more than just a facilitatory role, as suggested in the literature (Johnson et al., 2008; Vaara and Whittington, 2012). As external stakeholders, the consultants are expected to present more practical views on the actual practices within the organisations and why specific approaches are preferred by the internal respondents, who appear to give a theoretical view of the approaches. However, the study challenges such a notion because there appears to be a close link or relationship between these consultants and the business owners or, in some cases, the powerful authorities in the business. This would further question whether they are actually as 'independent' as they are expected to be.

The respondents refer to institutions as important partners in the sensing and eventual navigation of the environment in which organisations operate and strategise in. This view challenges the tenets of the IBV in general and the ideas of scholars such as Zoogah et al. (2014), who generally view the relationship between organisations and institutions as less complementary.

Figure 7.2–1 ***: Elements of strategy from respondents' perspective*** below is an extract from Atlas.ti which presents the different elements of strategy as they were obtained from discussions with respondents that were interviewed. There are also comments on how these views relate to the literature that was reviewed. It appears that, from the respondents' views, strategy is a dynamic *activity* that is not be static. However, there are also elements of strategy that may be cast in stone. An example is the scheduling of the activities. This is carried under the analysis code "set calendar" in the Atlas.ti analysis.

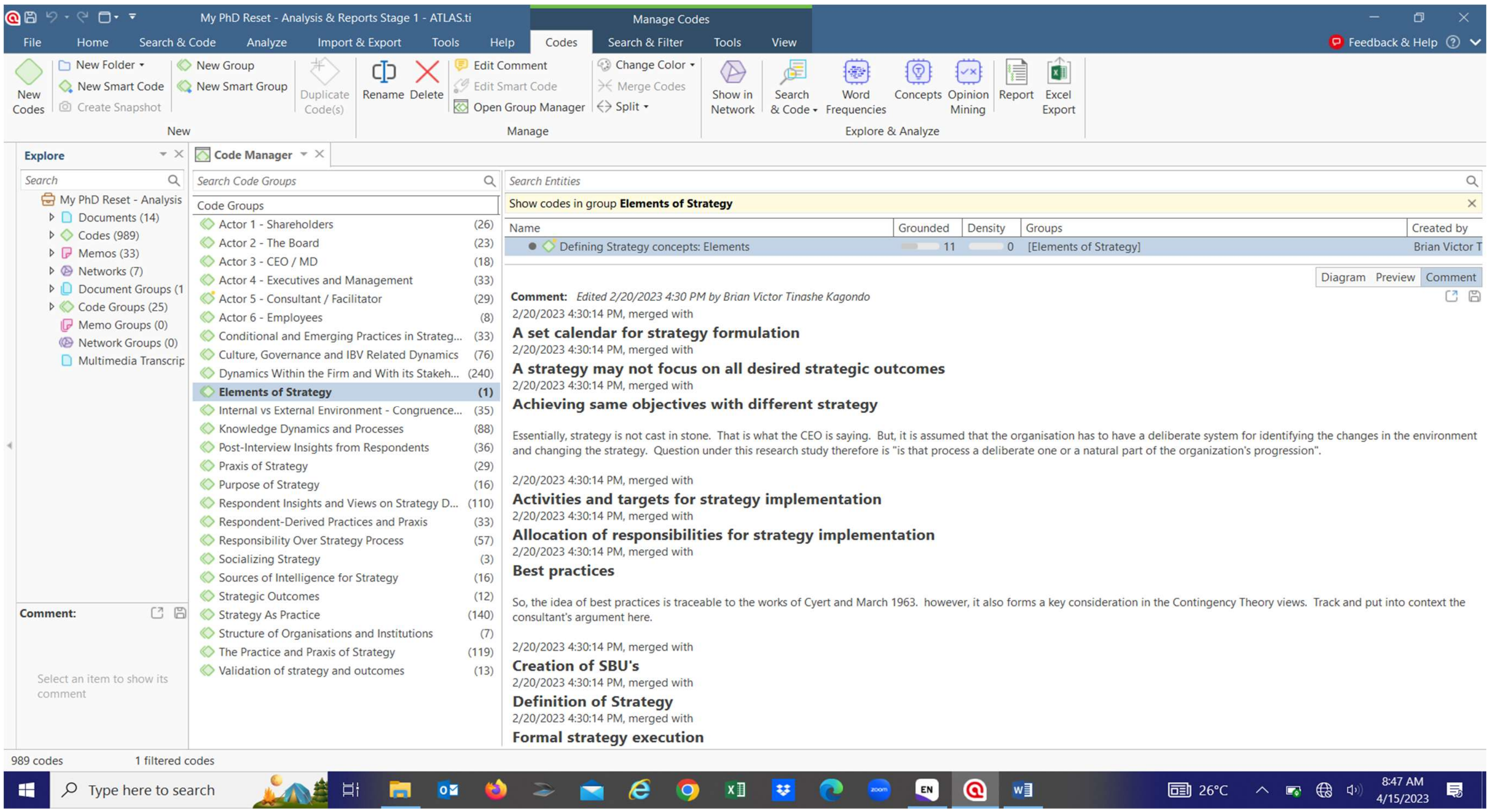


Figure 7.2–1 : Elements of strategy from respondents' perspective

A respondent added that:

"It's a custom in practice where because they are formal and the strategic formulation and execution is already been understood and embedded in their processes that it's a useful tool." 1:206 ¶ 51 in ConG – Interview

The "set calendar" code above may well imply that strategy is a regular aspect of an organisation's activities. However, the same may suggest that it is scheduled merely for 'compliance' with 'best practices' (which is another code in the elements). The findings speak to both the tenets of deliberate and intended strategy and invoke thoughts into the idea of realised, unintended strategy (Johnson et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2013).

These findings raise questions about the definition of strategy from the perspective of Zimbabwean organisations. The existence of various and sometimes divergent views may well be testimony of the complexities of the context, as detailed in *Section 1.3* above, which discusses Zimbabwe as the context of the study. Nevertheless, it may also be the reality of the nature of social science and the true impact of context in the study of strategy and its dynamism, as expounded in Chapter 4.

The following sections delve deeper into the findings on the practice dynamics, praxis, practitioners, and knowledge of strategy formation in Zimbabwe.

7.3 What are the practice, process and knowledge sharing and conversion dynamics of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?

This being the main research question, the idea of practice generally filtered through all sections of the interview guides across all four categories of respondents. While there were specific questions on aspects of strategy practice, such as knowledge management and dynamics, institutional practices and systems, strategy processes and others, the idea of activity, actors and actions was an overriding aspect of the enquiries. Some questions related directly to 'the way strategy or strategising is done'.

In general, all respondents from the organisations *claimed* that the strategy-making processes in Zimbabwean organisations were formal and (*most added*) structured. However, the consultant distinguished between formal and informal organisations and suggested that the processes depended on the class of the organisation or institution.

The respondents generally preferred to refer to the "formulation" of strategy, while some added that the process was formal and structured.

One of the respondents went further to assert that:

"So it is a strategy formulation and it's been very deliberate. But, obviously, it is has also capitalized on emergent opportunities happening on a global scale. Like the growth of e commerce. So that's the summary of it." 12:14 ¶ 50 in SwaTz 05 Interview

These responses appeared definitive and were presented by the respondents with conviction. Notably, sometimes the respondents used the words "formation" and "formulation" interchangeably. In some instances, the respondents referred to "strategic planning" as having the same meaning as formation and formulation:

"As a consultant, I can tell you lots of organisations that we have engaged through and they'll tell you that aah ***strategic planning***[2] *No, we don't do that here. And they don't do it. And some of them succeed. The reason why they are succeeding is not because they have* ***formulated a strategy***[3]*."* 1:342 ¶ 53 in ConG – Interview

This 'loose' interchange of the terminology initially suggests that perhaps in the context of the study, the philosophical separation of the terminology is subordinate to the practice indicated by the terminology. The organisations that engage in strategising are less concerned with the deeper meaning of the words and more with the field of practice they refer to. However, respondent ConG then added that:

"The scenario that you find in Zimbabwe is based on our experience. You have got two sets of institutions, the two sets of institutions that you get." 1:1 ¶ 10 in ConG – Interview

[2] *Enhanced for ease of note.*
[3] *Enhanced for ease of note.*

"you have got those who have a formal process for strategy formulation and execution." 1:2 ¶ 10 in ConG – Interview

"Then you have another set that does not have a formal process to strategy formulation and strategy execution." 1:6 ¶ 10 in ConG – Interview

This differentiation sets the base for the definition and differentiation of strategy formation and formulation processes. Respondent ConG continued:

"So you will find that those who do not have a formal process they may fall into a category which we call strategy formation." 1:8 ¶ 10 in ConG – Interview

"They don't formulate the strategy, it just forms as they go." 1:9 ¶ 10 in ConG – Interview

The implication here is that strategy is just part of the daily or routine activities that the organisation engages in, and there is no structured or sequential process for actually making the strategy.

"The other set these are the guys now who sit down and do proper strategy formulation." 1:16 ¶ 11 in ConG – Interview

"They have a deliberate vision that they would like to attain or achieve after a certain period, they've got specific action strategies that they put in place for them to be able to achieve." 1:17 ¶ 11 in ConG – Interview

In a separate e-mail conversation, and as a follow-up to this discussion, the respondent was then asked to distinguish between strategy formation and strategy formulation. The extract presented in Figure 7.3–1 below gives the full response. The respondent argues that formulation is a *proactive*[4] process initiated by the organisation's leadership as it tries to close the gap between the *vision* of the entity and the *current realities*. The plan is *quantified* and executed over a *period* of usually *five years*. On the other hand, formation is a *reactive* process that *emerges* as the leadership *responds to internal and external dynamics*. These definitions add the words "proactive" and "reactive" to the definitions by scholars Mintzberg and Waters (1985), Johnson et al. (2008) and Johnson et al. (2013) provided in the literature review, under Section 2.6 of this thesis.

[4] *Keywords in the e-mail extract are italicised in this paragraph.*

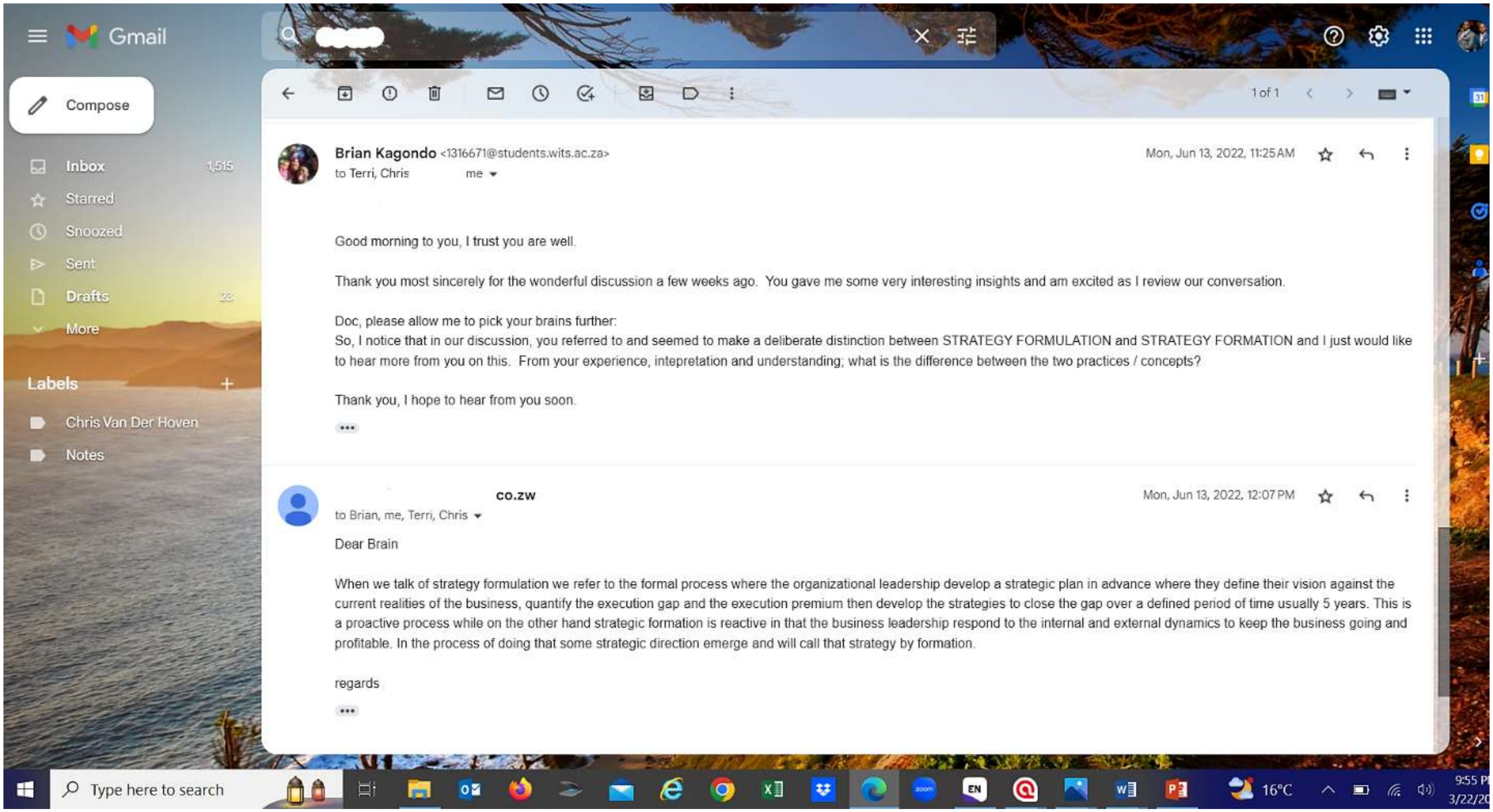


Figure 7.3–1: Extract of e-mail conversation with respondent on definitions of strategy formation and strategy formulation

The improvement is in adding intent to the formulation process and appropriateness to the formation process. This possibly distinguishes the activities and actors in the two forms of the strategy-making process.

Another respondent, a leader in an organisation, said:

"so in other words, strategy must be a living process, it mustn't be something that is static in time. And it mustn't even be formed at a point in time. If it is, then it must be like a balance sheet of a company that fine whenever you want to see the position of the company, you know, financial health, you can say, let me see the balance sheet, but it must always be underpinned and driven by a profit and loss account." 10:181 ¶ 14 – 16 in SwaTz 01 Interview

The same respondent later explained that:

"It goes back to the question, at what point is strategy formed? And I talked about the balance sheet. At a certain point in time you look at the environment, you look at your business competencies, you look at your infrastructure, you look at everything else, and you come up with a strategy and a strategy is that how you're going to get somewhere?" 10:65 ¶ 54 in SwaTz 01 Interview

The respondent seemed to suggest that strategy-making is a process that sits somewhere between a proactive approach and a reactive approach, defining it as an ongoing approach but one that is structured and systematic. In literature, this may be aligned to views by Grant (2016) who argues that strategy formation is both planned and emergence. The reference by respondent SwaTz01 above to a balance sheet and income statement may give the impression that strategy is as much a routine and "a daily activity" as drawing up an income statement or balance sheet. However, these processes' actual activities, actions, and actors are structured and systematic. An income statement is a build-up of attendant "accounts and principles" and the balance sheet. Therefore, the respondent also appeared to embrace the same formulation principles as those presented by ConG.

The consultant (respondent ConG) added another variable to this practice aspect by explaining that the nature of the firm or organisation is an important consideration, with a deliberate distinction between institutions and practices according to class of entity.

"Right, what I'll probably, I'll probably say split our organisations into two, or the scenario that you find in Zimbabwe from our experience. You have got two sets of institutions, the two sets of institutions that you get, you have got those ones who have got a formal process for strategy formulation and strategy execution. Then you have another set that does not have a formal process to strategy formulation and strategy execution." 1:342 ¶ 10 in ConG – Interview

The respondent argued that corporate institutions and a few SMEs normally have formal systems, including strategic planning (note that the term is used loosely again to imply strategy formation).

"the Pick 'n' Pays', the Oks', those really big corporates; they believe in strategic planning, they believe in strategy execution. So they have a formal process of running their businesses. And some of these smaller entities, they're not yet there ... not all of them." 1:25 ¶ 12 in ConG – Interview

"You find some, particularly those who would have been formulated by guys who have been either CEOs in these larger corporates or they were occupying a senior managerial post and they believe in those processes; they start using them in their smaller organisations in a small way." 1:343 ¶ 12 in ConG – Interview

It appears an argument is made that formal businesses have formal strategy processes at face value, while SMEs or informal businesses do not. However, there is also a subtle distinction between formal and informal businesses, corporates and SMEs. The respondent added that:

"the upcoming SMEs, the majority of them don't really define the strategy so the guy picks up a tender, he has got so much money in his pocket, he's in the business of doing roads and no strategy, no advice and that's it and he's making money." 1:20 ¶ 12 in ConG – Interview

In essence, therefore, the respondents argued that, in Zimbabwe, an organisation's nature, structure and leadership determine its systems' culture. The background and root culture of the owner or head of the business cannot be divorced from his or her methods or the culture that he or she prefers in the organisation. This resonates with the views of Barney and Clark (2007) on the role of the GM in an organisation's systems.

"The other gap is also obviously the competency issue. If somebody was somebody who doesn't have competency in formulation or in development or even knowing what it was, and they were not exposed in the corporate world when they then get into their own companies, they don't notice things and they don't believe in them they just … as long as they're making a bit of some money then they're fine. That's how I would look at it." 1:27 ¶ 12 in ConG – Interview

The capabilities and competencies (and experiences – an addition) of the leader or significant stakeholder of the organisation thus play an important role in the way the entity operates and the systems that it follows.

Some respondents also argued that the strategy processes were not only formal but rather a combination of formal and informal. One respondent stated that:

"For us, it's a combination. What we do is we use both formal and sort of informal when something emerges." 11:2 ¶ 20 in SwaTz 04 Interview

Another respondent from a different organisation said that:

"This sort of our process, how we deliver it, the process it's a formalised process which is done in a very informal way." 4:14 ¶ 36 in RueAz 02 Interview

These submissions are contrary to those made by the leaders of the organisations and other managers, who insisted that the process is entirely formal.

These responses challenge the general understanding of the organisation's leadership regarding internal processes. In the end, questions may arise regarding which of the formal or informal processes is actually responsible for the final strategy outcome. The use of informal processes as internal processes also challenges the knowledge generation and preservation ability of these 'processes as they are likely not to be recorded at all. In looking closely at the submission by SwaTz 04 above, the "formal" systems may be perhaps carried out in fulfilment of existing requirements or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) within the organisation. The "informal" processes, then are the true response to the issues that strategies are set to address.

SwaTz 04's submission also refers to "when something emerges". This suggests a reactive approach to strategy, as argued by ConG earlier. This could prompt a revisit of the arguments by Porter (1996)in differentiating between “operational efficiencies” and “strategy”. The managers appear to refer to strategy even when an action could be a tactical approach to something emerging, as SwaTz 04 describes it. Perhaps ConG has a point in suggesting that:

"One of the reasons why strategy fails, they discovered that organisations don't have one common way to describe strategy." 1:127 ¶ 36 in ConG – Interview

2 explores what motivates organisations to strategise. In the literature reviewed, scholars summarise that strategy or strategising is centred on why some organisations persistently outperform others (Barney and Clark, 2007; Rumelt et al., 1994). In the different phases of the evolution of strategy, scholars are consistent in noting that organisations or firms use strategy as a means to enhance their ability to outperform others and, especially in pursuit of economic rents or in fighting an (external or internal) environment that might threaten their ability to do so. In responding to the same question, the respondents in this study also allude to enhancing competitiveness as a purpose. This is confirmed through codes shown under *Figure 7.3–2* below:

- Strategy as a tool against competitor advantage
- Strategy as a solution to organisational challenges
- Strategy as a response to a crisis

These responses confirm the view in literature that organisations deliberately reconfigure to respond to environmental changes (Freeman, 2015; Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984) as they aim to enhance their competitiveness. However, some respondents also appear to confirm that the purpose is not always deliberate or does not always follow the path of sensing and seizing suggested by Eisenhardt and Martin (2000); Teece (2009). This is shown in the following codes:

- Strategy as the modern thing to have
- Strategy as a compliance activity
- Strategy as a requirement for funding
- Strategy as a governance requirement
- Strategy as a requirement for fulfilment of business plan

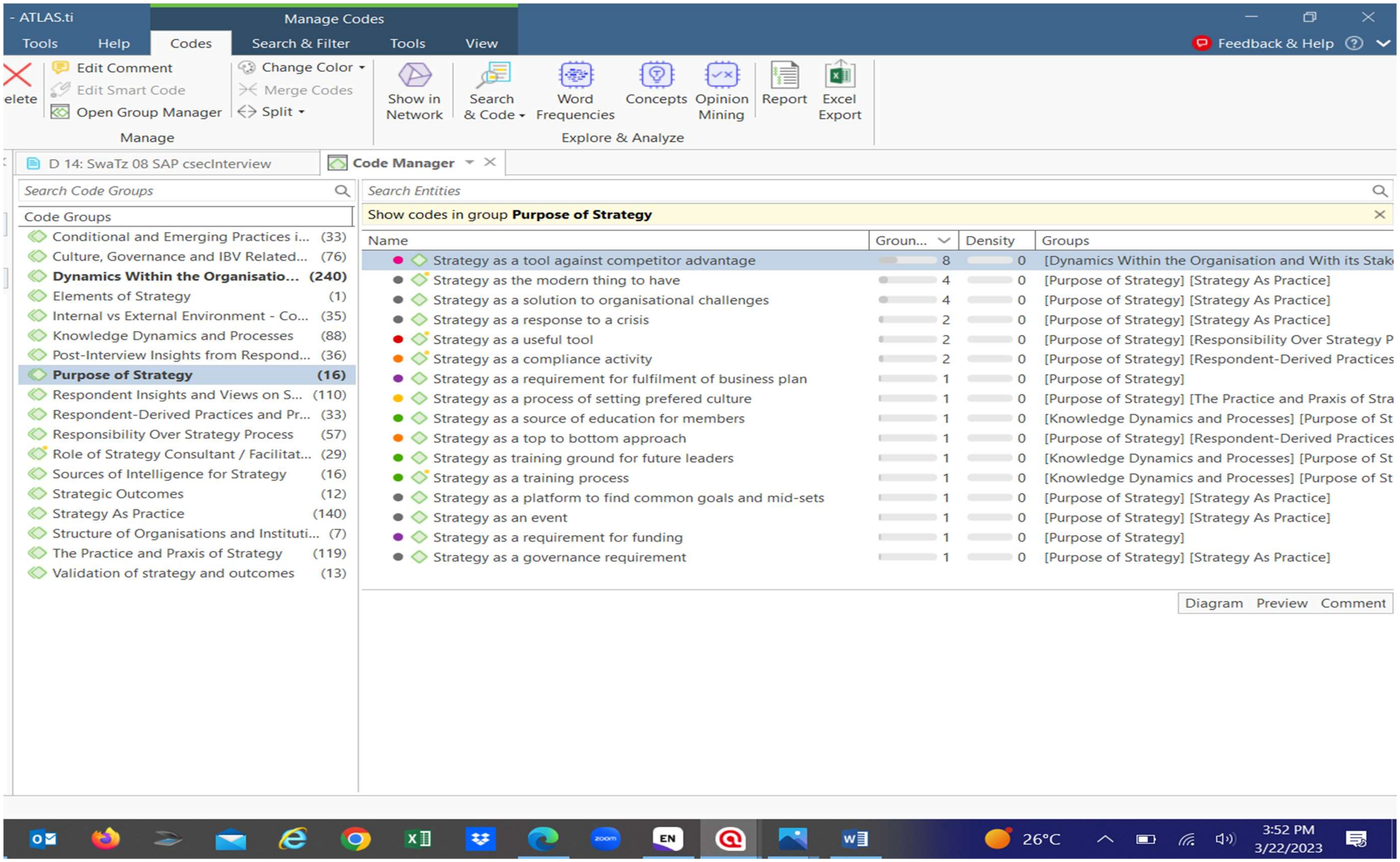


Figure 7.3–2: Extract from Atlas.ti - purpose of strategy

When one looks at the two sets of views as explained above it suggests that the practice of strategy formation in organisations in Zimbabwe is, *deliberate* in terms of the purpose but is *emergent* in terms of process and sequence of activity. Sensing and seizing happens as a consequence of these emergent systems and situations. The practice is formally initiated because (as a respondent says):

"So you then find that the motive behind strategy formulation is either it's being demanded somewhere and you're doing it for compliance purposes." 1:222 ¶ 53 in ConG – Interview

The formation process then follows a routine that is now well-established in the organisation.

"Because there is a piece of legislation or a requirement for funding or a requirement for a particular certificate to come that you must have a Strategy and a Business Plan, then they do it for compliance purposes." 1:210 ¶ 51 in ConG – Interview

The strategy is established as part of the things to do within the organisation. However, because it is a routine activity, the strategy is not always utilised:

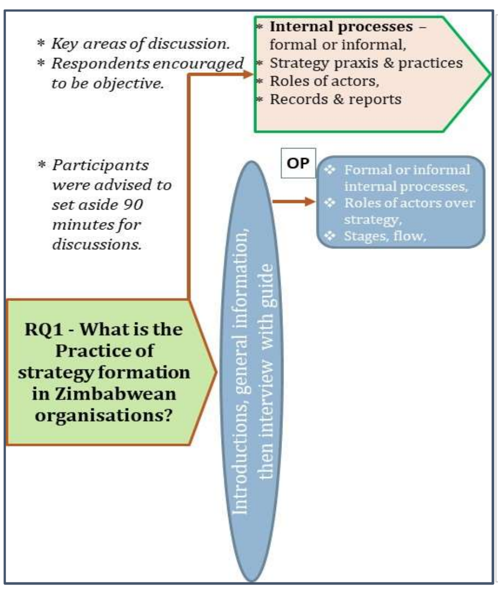
"Not much significance, but because it's the latest thing, so I want also to have it. But do you have utilisation for it? You are not really utilizing it." 1:232 ¶ 53 in ConG – Interview

In conclusion, from the discussions presented above, there is evidence that the practice of strategy formation in Zimbabwe comprises institutionalised processes and standardised activities. The actors within the organisations are aware of and do understand strategy concepts which are found in literature. However, there is a disparity in the organisation's interpretation and actual practice of strategy. The respondents often presented ideal processes and activities, but differed in interpretation amongst themselves. It is, therefore, appropriate to deduce that the practice of strategy-making in Zimbabwe is theoretically formal and structured but not so in practice.

The discussions proceeded into the detail of the dynamics of the practice and nature of the practices in this strategy formation. Various views were expressed about the periodicity aspect of strategy formation, the participants, roles of the participants, venues and structures of the process, sequence of activities, and the dynamics of the relations within the processes. These aspects are better explored by looking at the responses by category of respondent.

7.3.1 Firm-Level Practice of Strategy – Organisation Participant Findings

As established under *Section 7.3*, respondents generally stated that their organisations had formal and deliberate strategy formulation processes. There were several views about how these processes proceeded and the activities that they involved. This section discusses the findings regarding practices, praxis, and practitioners derived from the responses of the organisation's participants. The section uses extracts from Atlas.ti and tables to present evidence.



This extract is presented to guide the discussion on findings from organisation participants on the practice of strategy at firm level. Each stage of the discussion was focused on the key areas and concepts of: practices, praxis, roles of practitioners and dynamics of their relations in strategy processes. This category of respondents is part of the actual internal organisation processes and activities and how they relate with external environments and stakeholders.

Figure 7.3–3: Extract from *Figure 6.7–1* ***– interview process; research question 1, organisation participant***

7.3.1.1 Practices of Firm-Level Strategy Process – Organisational Participant Findings

Table 7.3–1 presents responses on practices of strategy processes within organisations with supporting quotations from the perspective of the organisation participants.

Table 7.3–1: Findings on the firm-level practices of strategy formation

CONCEPT	TARGET PHENOMENON	EXAMPLES OF QUOTATIONS FROM ORGANISATION PARTICIPANTS
Practices – *How strategy formation is done in the organisation*	...initiating strategy formation...	*"There is that pre-strategy session that happens between the executives and the board for monitoring."* 5:11 ¶ 18 in RueAz 02b Interview *"Actually a month or so before we start telling people we want this information, research on this etc."* 7:24 ¶ 130 in RueAz 04 Interview *"It starts with the Board's expectations. What does, what is that the board requires and then you have to sit down and plan around it."* 8:3 ¶ 12 in RueAz 06 Interview *"And it's structured, where we actually get into the formulation process annually."* 13:3 ¶ 24 in SwaTz 06 Interview
	...key stages and activities...	*"as they develop their strategies, then it would be proposed to the Board for approval."* 3:25 ¶ 26 in RueAz 01 Interview *"It's a formal process when we start on it, we are saying let's all gather, we are going to do a strategy but the way it then takes its course is different"* 4:15 ¶ 38 in RueAz 02 Interview. *"We start from the end then start coming back in an informal way and we start to build"* 4:23 ¶ 38 in RueAz 02 Interview. *"So normally we start with what we call the Group Strategy, which brings in certain staff members from the different strategic business units like xxxx[5] where they are discussing, I mean it's the bigger vision of the whole Group."* 6:4 ¶ 5 in RueAz 03 Interview
	...duration of formation...	*"our strategy is not a one day thing."* 4:55 ¶ 52 in RueAz 02 Interview *"So normally it takes something like a minimum of two days to a maximum of three days "* 6:9 ¶ 8 in RueAz 03 Interview *"So at the end of the day, you cannot honestly come up with a strategy that you say we have a strategy, and there it is. No, it's there. Yes. But on a very much ongoing basis, it needs to be."* 10:77 ¶ 57 in SwaTz 01 Interview
	...horizon of the strategy...	*"So in our strategy season starts in the last quarter of the year into the first quarter of the following year. So we start planning for it like this year, for instance, we had it in January, yes."* 13:5 ¶ 24 in SwaTz 06 Interview *"and when we're crafting our strategy yearly."* 5:4 ¶ 11 in RueAz 02b Interview

[5] *Names redacted to retain confidentiality of identity.*

CONCEPT	TARGET PHENOMENON	EXAMPLES OF QUOTATIONS FROM ORGANISATION PARTICIPANTS
		"So on an annual basis, we conduct formal and very structured strategic sessions." 6:2 ¶ 5 in RueAz 03 Interview *"It's a combination of annual and five years. So we do focus on the short term, but there is also long-term goals."* 7:17 ¶ 108 in RueAz 04 Interview

Variances were found in the submissions by the different respondents to similar matters in the discussions above. In some cases, respondents from the same organisation expressed different views.

The initiation of strategy as a process was viewed from different perspectives. For example, RueAz02b and RueAz04 were from the same organisation, but one suggested that the process began a month before the seminar, while the other believed it began with a pre-board strategy attended by senior executives and the Board. In another organisation, one respondent viewed the process as one that followed a defined calendar, while the other insisted there was a deliberate meeting to discuss shareholder expectations, which then led to a strategy planning session. One of the leaders argued:

"It goes back to the question, at what point is strategy formed? And I talked about the balance sheet. At a certain point in time you look at the environment, you look at your business competencies, you look at your infrastructure, you look at everything else, and you come up with a strategy and a strategy is that how you're going to get somewhere?" 10:65 ¶ 54 in SwaTz 01 Interview

This view suggests that there is no defined schedule to strategy formation but that there are 'triggers' to the process, mainly in the environment within and surrounding the organisation. This view can also be immediately pitted against the view of the consultant (ConG), an external resource, who stated that:

"Formulating a strategy we're saying that it must be something that should take you for the larger organisation somewhere between three to four or five months" 1:169 ¶ 47 in ConG – Interview

Perhaps this 'disagreement' about the duration of the formulation of strategy is the reason that the global-level scholars on strategy processes cited in this thesis, including Grant (2016); Johnson et al. (2007); Johnson et al. (2013); Mintzberg and Waters (1985), appear to shy away from positing a definitive duration of strategy formation. Perhaps again, this 'disagreement' is a result of the loose use of the terms "strategy", "strategic planning", "strategy formulation" and "strategy formation" to refer to the same process. The scholars who have written on strategy formulation in Zimbabwe, such as Nyamwanza (2013), Magaisa et al. (2013), Mashingaidze (2020); Mashingaidze et al. (2021), have defined a two- to three-day average duration for formation. The challenge is that formation or formulation is a fuller process, and a two- to three-day planning session is only a part or phase.

Respondents also presented varying views on the horizon of the strategy, the period that a single strategy or strategic plan covers.

"You know, when we've always standardized strategy formulation. But at times halfway through something documented, you need to come in." 8:120 ¶ 190 in RueAz 06 Interview

Some argued for an annual horizon within the same organisation, while most spoke of a three to five-year horizon. Other respondents defined horizons as "medium term" (three years) and "long term" (five years). In some cases, the respondents may have taken "reviews" to refer to formation.

7.3.1.2 Praxis of Firm-Level Strategy Process – Organisation Participant Findings

This section presents and discusses the findings regarding what people do in the strategy-formation process from the perspective of the organisation participants. *Figure 7.3–4* below presents an extract of the codes from Atlas.ti that show the various activities that make up the process of strategy making. There aspects that need noting here:

a) There are numerous and different activities undertaken (*presented in yellow boxes*),
b) The activities take place at different levels - department, SBU, Corporate, (*shown in the layering of the activities, depicting the levels in structure*),
c) The activities are performed by individuals who occupy different positions of authority, right up to Board level (*presented in red boxes*).

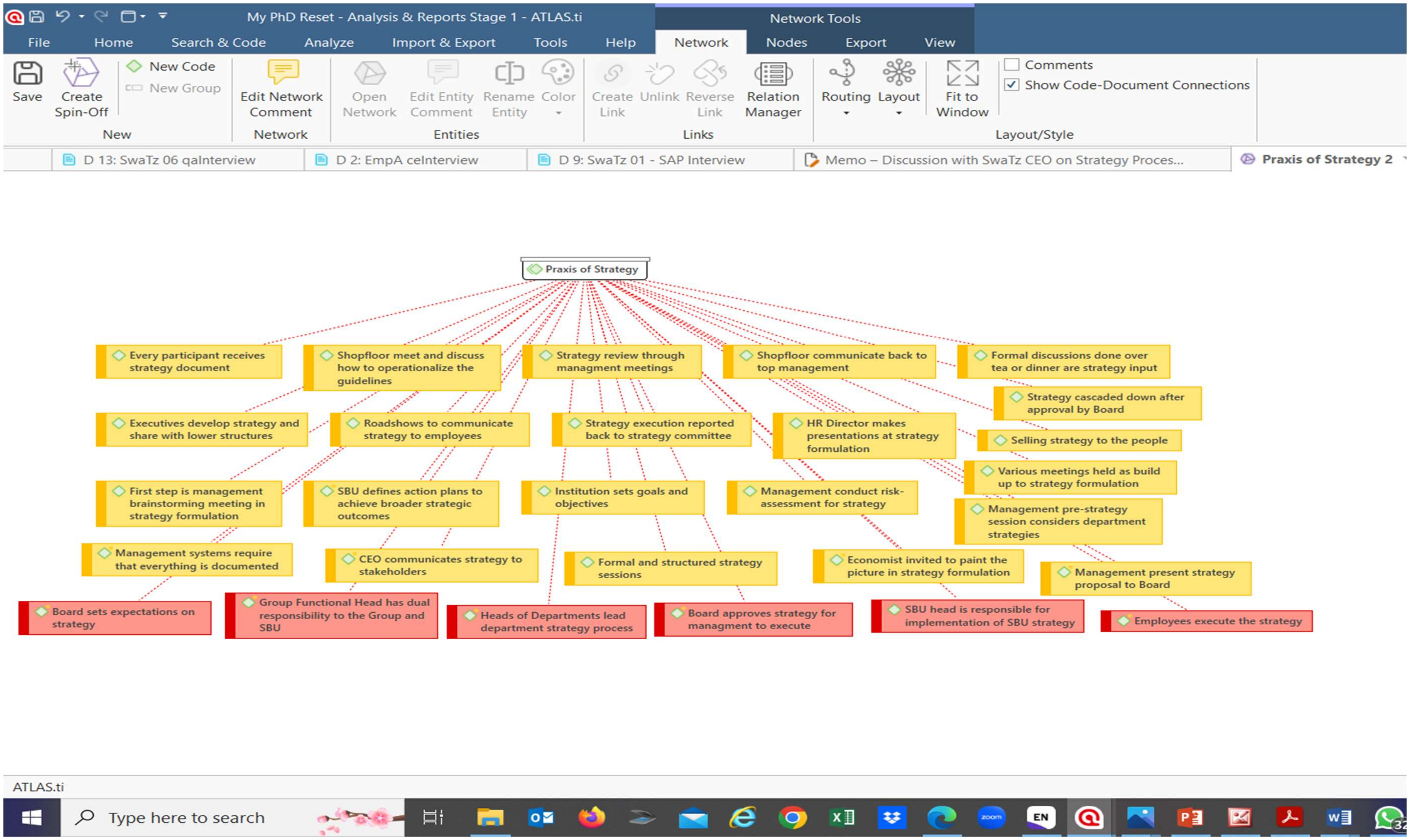


Figure 7.3–4: Atlas.ti network extract – praxis of strategy processes

The diagram shows great dynamism in the practice and praxis of strategy – making. During the discussions, it also emerged that there were different views on the sequence or occasion of these activities. There is actually no defined pattern.

The activities above are note presented in any particular order or sequence. The codes demonstrate the various interactions between individuals in organisations as they go through the strategy-making process. The levels shown in the layering of the activities depicts the different levels of unit of analysis of the strategy making activity. There are individual tasks and organisation level tasks. At organisation level, there is department level, SBU and eventually Corporate level. Some respondents explain a chronological order of the occurrence of the activities and that they occur in a very formalised sequence. However, the order of the sequence is not always uniform.

The activities show the involvement of the Board, management and employees at different levels of the hierarchy in the strategy-making process. *Table 7.3–2* below highlights some key phenomena from Figure 7.3–4 above and provides supporting quotations describing the activities.

Table 7.3–2: Findings on the firm-level praxis of strategy formation

CONCEPT	**TARGET PHENOMENON**	**EXAMPLES OF QUOTATIONS FROM ORGANISATION PARTICIPANTS**
Praxis – *what people actually do in strategy formation in the organisation*	...strategy activities (participants, selecting focus areas, planning, doing strategy)...	*"So the first thing is the brainstorming, where, as management we sit down, and we look at, okay, so what strategy do we want to pursue?"* 13:7 ¶ 28 in SwaTz 06 Interview *"It starts with the Board's expectations. What does, what is that the board requires and then you have to sit down and plan around it."* 8:3 ¶ 12 in RueAz 06 Interview *"I think that strategy must be created by management, presented to the Board for scrutiny."* 10:57 ¶ 48 in SwaTz 01 Interview *"So, the CEO of presents the strategy to the Board, the Board must interrogate."* 9:33 ¶ 24 in SwaTz 01 – SAP Interview *"And this is usually it's senior managers, executives and representatives from the head office, which is the group office from group office."* 5:71 ¶ 136 in RueAz 02b Interview *"By the way elements of strategies OGSM, that's what we use, (others use different things): Objectives, Goals, Strategies and Measures (OGSM). It's a*

CONCEPT	TARGET PHENOMENON	EXAMPLES OF QUOTATIONS FROM ORGANISATION PARTICIPANTS
	…making strategic choices (frameworks, tools)…	*thing that you can even just Google, it's a technique that was developed in the 50s which I learned at…."* 9:36 ¶ 24 in [redacted]
		"second day after sleeping on it, then during tea break, the boss will be discussing, maybe one on one, team being asked what are the vibes or what is really coming out." 4:19 ¶ 38 in RueAz 02 Interview
		"I'd say it's Executive Management that makes that strategic choice, I wouldn't pin it down to an individual, I'd say it's a team effort where the team comes together, thrashes it out and agrees on the way forward." 13:58 ¶ 131 in SwaTz 06 Interview
	…strategy communication and sharing…	*"I can assure you I have worked with a number of organisations and most of them, those who actually make an effort if they do, they will probably put the strategy either on the intranet or they will just share it with employees by way of maybe the CEO and the Executives going round talking to staff and saying yah our vision is this, our mission is that, our values are this, these are the strategic objectives that we need to achieve and they go around and just explain that and they hope they have done a good job."* 1:142 ¶ 41 in ConG – Interview

The examples of activities presented in *Figure 7.3–4* and supported by the quotations in *Table 7.3–2* suggest a clear and well-structured system and process of strategy formation. In some cases, there is a defined sequence of activities and a segregation of responsibilities amongst various actors involved in different ways in contributing towards an outcome, the strategy. The strategy is presented in the codes as taking the form of a document. In some cases, the document is said to be shared with all organisation members and on different platforms.

The responses show a general pattern in the process of strategy formation in the organisations. The pattern is summarised in *Figure 7.3–5*.

[6] *Name of respondent redacted to protect identity of the participant and organisation.*

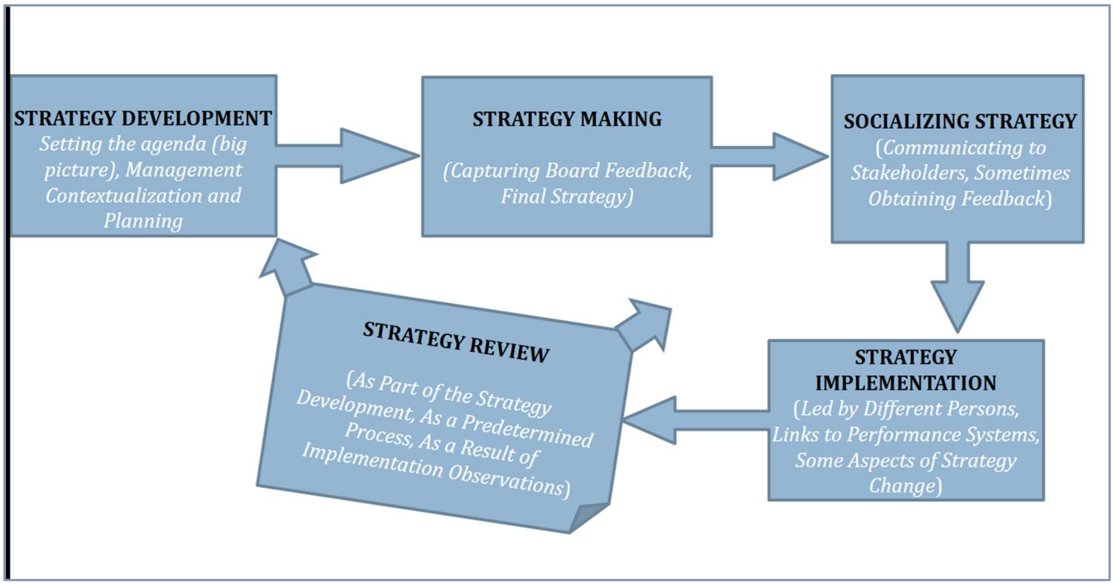


Figure 7.3–5: Strategy process in organisations

In many instances described in the interviews, the process is presented as continuous and follows a defined pattern. The notable differences arise in the sequence of events, duration of each stage and the participants involved at each stage. The respondents also asserted that the process includes the engagement of external experts. These experts vary from strategy facilitators, consultants, economists, business analysts and bankers to people from within the industry or affiliated associations. Some even stated that shareholders or their representatives are invited as experts to assist.

"So we'll be having business analysts that will come in ask questions and even shareholders, they will be seated there they will be asking questions to say, but you told us that you are going to do this. We read in the papers that you are going to do this facility, how far have you gone?" 6:162 ¶ 80 in RueAz 03 Interview

The respondents (sometimes from the same organisation) presented different views about which experts are engaged and the extent of their involvement in the process.

The first stage can be called *Strategy Development – Setting the Agenda and Planning*. At this stage, the organisation defines the general direction, the bigger picture to pursue, and, therefore the strategic focus. This stage also involves the process management goes through to contextualise the agenda and plan the strategy seminars. This activity generally involves the interaction of three actors: the shareholders, the Board and the executive. While respondents presented the process as somewhat interactive, the practice appears one-directional and perhaps the question is actually "which direction?". One respondent submitted that:

"I think that strategy must be created by management, presented to the Board for scrutiny." 10:57 ¶ 48 in SwaTz 01 Interview

"Yes, the Board is just there. vanofanira kungouyaka [they must just come through / appear] their role is really just to hear you and endorse." 9:6 ¶ 12 in SwaTz 01 – SAP Interview

This suggests that management tells the Board which direction to follow. However, the same respondent also argued that:

"first of all understand who the stakeholders are ..., key among the stakeholders is the shareholders, but you understand the stakeholder interests, then once you understand those; understand the board expectations." 9:2 ¶ 10 in SwaTz 01 – SAP Interview

Other respondents submitted the following:

"You always sing the tune you want the shareholders to hear." 4:75 ¶ 68 in RueAz 02 Interview.
"Okay. I would say obviously whatever the board is for the shareholders interest." 5:3 ¶ 11 in RueAz 02b Interview

"My understanding Brian is the board is obviously appointed by the shareholder and my belief is at the point of appointment, I'm sure the shareholder also has their own ideas or their own strategy or vision that they hope to achieve." 13:18 ¶ 39 – 40 in SwaTz 06 Interview

"As much as the Chief Executive may want to diversify he will be shot down to say the Shareholders are saying No, don't diversify. AS much as the Corporate may want to diversify to increase the income stream, the Board will just stop him and say No, the strategic direction for the business is this, you'll continue doing these things." 8:129 ¶ 132 in RueAz 06 Interview

The shareholders (directly or through the Board) define the direction they wish the organisation to take, and the executive contextualises the idea. In some cases, secret interactions between the Board and 'selected' managers occur.

"they will probably share with the certain managers in leadership, different views and so on." 1:113 ¶ 35 in ConG – Interview

The next stage is referred to here as the *Strategy-Making Process*.

Once the agenda is set, as discussed above, the teams begin assembling the strategy. This process involves planning and logistics of the seminar or associated events, selecting participants and venues, and allocating responsibilities to participants (internal or external). It then involves making decisions about frameworks and formats the strategy should take and, eventually, forming the strategy.

At the heart of the activities and responsibilities is the question of who leads the organisation's strategy process. Below is a full extract of a memo from Atlas.ti on this topic. (The font has been resized to fit on the page, and some words have been redacted to ensure confidentiality.)

8 February 2022 : 1326hrs

Dear Doc KBT

After reading through the responses by [redacted] and submissions on the strategy formation process (comment 13 in script) I sought to get clarity from the CEO on what role the Board plays in the strategy formation / formulation process. I was beginning to think it is merely a "fixture fulfilment" process wherein the strategy formulation process has become so emergent that the Board's role is merely to "meet under the guise of reviewing" and all they do is endorse: The CEO explained:

Telephone cconversation with CEO @ 1326hrs; I called from using my SA number.

***KBT**: Hie XXX, do you have a second. Just want to ask a simple question. Has the Board ever said NO to your strategy?*

***CEO**: NO, I suppose next question is are you that good as management or the Board trusts you so much?*

***KBT**: No, actually am gonna ask the question a little differently to say, "Does the Board really assess your strategy proposals OR the strategy formulation process in your organisation has become so emergent that the Board merely fulfills a fixture in assessing the strategy?"*

***CEO** : No, they actually do full review and assessment. Lemme take you back to our strategy seminar in [redacted]. You will remember I indicated we took the Board with us to try and move away from any disturbances. The best chain was [redacted] across the country and the world. But [redacted] was showing that their [redacted] and we had seen the opportunity there. We were proposing in our strategy that we would [redacted], but would make the decision to actually go [redacted] and ride on [redacted] amongst competition and use our brand and technology to [redacted] for clients wherever they were. We put together and gave the Board detailed background information and statistics to compliment the 5-year strategy. As a result, the board approved the strategy and since then all we do is review the progress with them.,,,Strategy formulation is the responsibility of management and approval is the Board. We presented a package that was well researched such that any intelligent person evaluates the efficacy of the conclusions.*

***KBT**: But, having worked that closely with the Board; if the strategy fails, how can the Board still turn back to you when they were a significant part of it.*

***CEO**: Brian, the Board is not there to implement the strategy. At this point we went with the Board to simply move away from distraction and took them through the detailed process and justification of what we have gone through and what we were proposing. They still retain the mandate and obligation to fire me if the strategy does not work or does not give the anticipated returns. Board meetings are essentially to review and where there should be decisions to suspend, change or revoke certain commitments, it is for Management to actually present that. We were discussing a 5-year strategy and had to convince the Board hence the decision [redacted].*

But, remember people always confuse between strategy, tactical action, implementation and management. So, even if they came with us, their role was to assess the strategy and approve or disapprove, BUT the action and implementation is management responsibility.

Conclusion here is in the statement that: Strategy formulation / formation is the responsibility of the CEO / Management (the order is deliberate) and the role of the Board is to review, approve or disapprove.

***watch the tone in the CEO about the role of Managment who he defines as CEO.....*

Brian

Figure 7.3–7: Extract from Atlas.ti – memo on organisation processes

This memo (*Figure 7.3–7*) discusses role clarity in strategy processes. The root comment (highlighted in yellow) reads:

"And then we consolidate. Once we've consolidated that then normally it goes through the normal board review process." 13:13 ¶ 31 in [redacted] Interview

[7] *Participant identity redacted for confidentiality.*

The discussion prior to and post this comment was centred on the participation of the Board in strategy processes. The discussion had revealed that the Board seemed to participate in the strategy processes directly. The question was how the Board would be separated from the failure of the strategy it had presided over at formulating and evaluating implementation. Further, the leader of the same organisation insisted earlier that the Board should *not* be involved in strategy processes except at the point of evaluation of implementation. The same leader also argued in a different conversation that the appointment of the Board was influenced in greater part by the head of the organisation over whom the same Board presided.

These views call into question the praxis of strategy and actors' roles in organisations. Where a system is formal, as respondents assert, one would expect greater clarity of roles. Perhaps there is also an emerging reality here from a behavioural theory's view, where sometimes it isn't easy to separate the emotions and personal valuation of an organisation's participant from their perspective of both their own role and the roles of others. It is possible that SwaTz01 has a specific preferred view of these roles and therefore over- and under-estimates the importance of the roles, depending on where they prefer to place themselves.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings challenge the scholars of IBV (Peng, 2002; Peng et al., 2009) on the non-inclusion of owners of the business or the Board as definite institutions in strategy processes.

The respondents also submitted that during strategy-making, external experts may be invited to 'assist' in various ways. Some of the submissions were:

"Actually, when we're doing our strategy, for example of late, we had an economist who came to do a presentation to us, just painting the whole picture to us." 5:22 ¶ 29 in RueAz 02b Interview

"If from industry you can have economists, you can have bankers, you can have [redacted] *you can have even people from the* [redacted] *world, they'll come and just a pre-strategy and they say this is our expectation from you on the way you're operating*

and they give you the basis of going to formulate your strategies to plan and formulate your strategies." [redacted][8] Interview

"We normally do quite a bit of desk research and also just engaging research consultants to also come in and help in terms of just ensuring that we are clear." 13:53 ¶ 125 in SwaTz 06 Interview

"The external consultant will just be there to provide guidance in most cases," 2:48 ¶ 46 in EmpA Interview

The detailed roles of these external stakeholders are discussed in detail in *Section 0* below. The findings were that the expert is invited to speak to either a topical issue for the organisation *or* a general topical issue within the industry in which the organisation is operating. The idea is to present the opportunities, steer discussion and provoke thought amongst strategists on how to navigate the matter or embrace it and ensure the organisation is correctly placed to benefit from it. The role of the stakeholder could be to guide the strategic choices, which may be an extension of the discussions already underway *or* an outright diversion from what the team has already been discussing. The expert becomes a party to the strategy-formulation process.

Once the strategy has been formed, the next stage is *Socialising Strategy or Communicating the Strategy* to the internal environment, as presented in the following response:

"Now, we are now socializing to them to say this is what we come about in terms of this strategic formulation." 2:96 ¶ 63 in EmpA Interview

Respondents had various views on the subject, as presented in the extract below, which indicates the identification of several codes (see *Figure 7.3–8* below).

[8] *redacted to protect identity of organisation.*

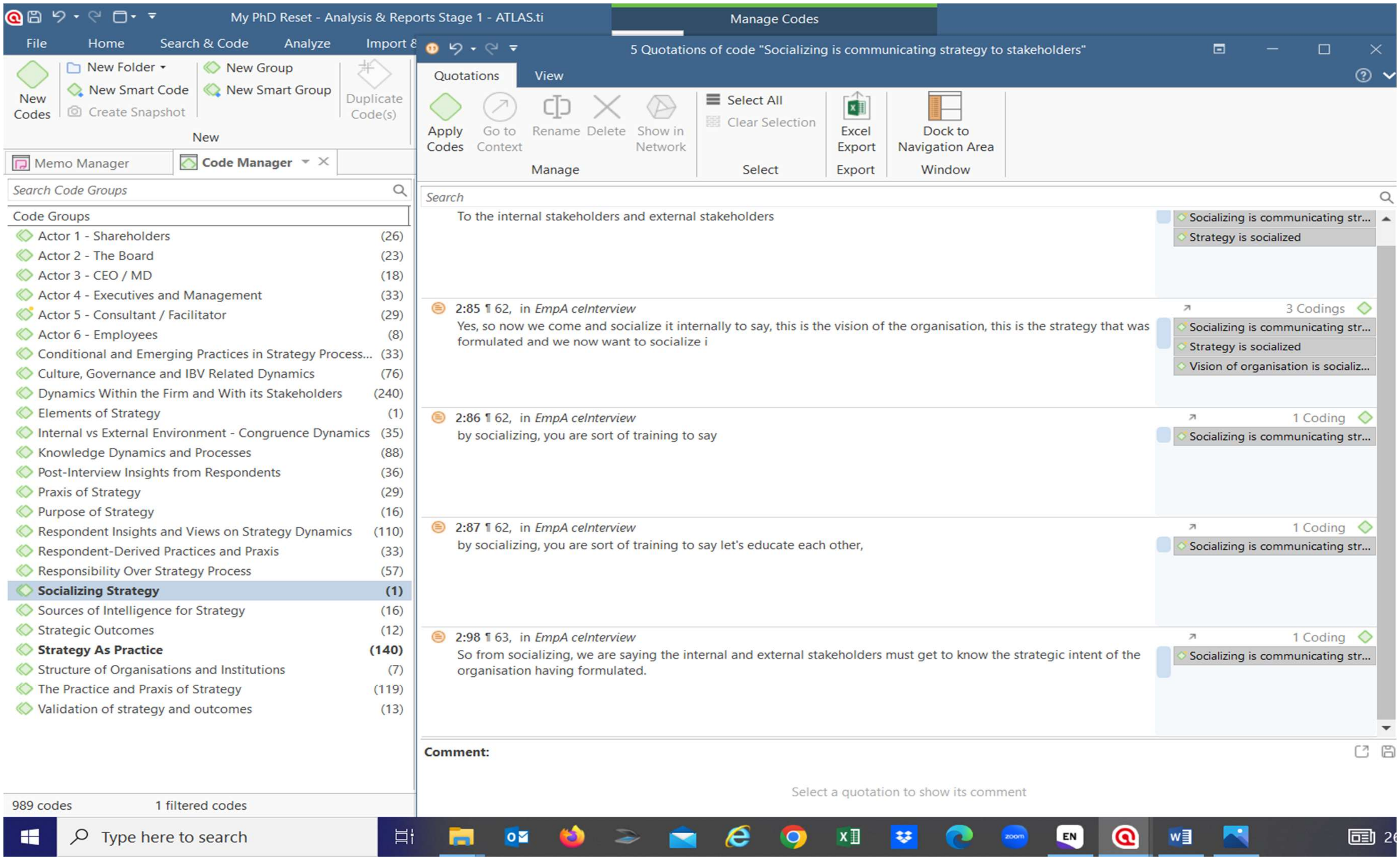


Figure 7.3–8: Atlas.ti Extract – socialising strategy

In a way, the activity is also a process of knowledge conversion (breaking down strategy into actions and plans) *or* knowledge sharing (the actual education of the internal environment about the strategy)(Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009; Tseng, 2010). It can also be considered knowledge creation (as the internal environment embraces the new vision and how to pursue it through actions and plans). Respondents from within the organisations did refer to the need to share strategy with stakeholders, amongst them employees. However, from the codes and quotations shown in *Figure 7.3–8*, the conversation on socialising strategy with employees appears to have been championed more by the external stakeholders – the consultant and the institution leader. From their perspective, employees are as critical stakeholders in the strategy process as the main participants, the managers. This view adds to the 'ownership' of strategy initiatives discussed above.

Unravelling this praxis is perhaps similar to the "ontological building block" referred to by Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) in Kohtamäki et al. (2021). In this project, however, there is the addition that this is an internal process of breaking down the strategy and allocating responsibility for it. Responsibility for the execution and implementation of the strategy is allocated to an environment and teams that view it as "not very known". However, they were said to have "actively participated" in its making. In an earlier conversation, a statement was made that:

"*So in in other words, what we are essentially saying is that most people, i.e. your employees, your stakeholders, Boards and everything else; they have got very little appreciation or understanding of strategy.*" 1:129 ¶ 36 in ConG – Interview

Views were also expressed that:

"*They should also come and air their views, what the organisation should actually do. Because these are the people that are actually on the ground.*" 6:20 ¶ 12 in RueAz 03 Interview

"*these people who are at shop-floor level, they need also to be involved in the strategy because they are the people who will then operationalize that strategy or implement that strategy.*" 2:61 ¶ 49 in EmpA Interview

From these conversations, one might question the claim made by executives and the Board that they take ultimate responsibility for strategy formation, suggesting that it is an absolute privilege of the elite. Yet, by their own admission, the internal environment comprises people who are more knowledgeable about the organisation's operations, processes, challenges, matters and issues. (These are the words used by the respondent executives in defining what is known to the internal teams and what the teams are allowed to express or share in the overall strategy-formulation process.)

"They should also come and air their views, what the organisation should actually do. Because these are the people that are actually on the ground." 6:20 ¶ 12 in RueAz 03 Interview

"But you will see that team players who are the employees of this particular NEC Agriculture will get involved because they are the ones at operational level." 2:17 ¶ 22 in EmpA Interview

"... employees are able to know exactly what is happening because they're the ones who are executing anyway." 1:154 ¶ 43 in ConG – Interview

This is contrary to the claim by the senior managers in the organisations, who take the view that the formation of strategy is entirely their responsibility and all they do is to cascade the 'finished product' to lower levels for implementation:

"For us, what we do is we then do cascade the strategy, wherein we now, make sure that we do like a for us we have [redacted][9] which are our divisions. We make sure that all the general managers, are informed, all the senior managers and HOD's are aware and we do presentations to get buy-in of everyone in terms of what we need to do and the actions that we need to take." [redacted] Interview

"Yes, so now we come and socialize it internally to say, this is the vision of the organisation, this is the strategy that was formulated and we now want to socialize it." 2:85 ¶ 62 in EmpA Interview

Given these divergent views, further scrutiny must focus on the strategy formulation process. In this scrutiny, questions arise over the (real) ownership of the responsibility for strategy formulation between the executives and Board (the privileged elite) and the

[9] *Name of organisation deliberately redacted to maintain confidentiality.*

internal environment. The internal environment consists of the lower-level managers and shop floor employees, who are the actual implementers of the strategy and, therefore, know what is appropriate or inappropriate in the pursuit of excellence or what is necessary to eliminate the internal challenges and issues.

One may be persuaded to imagine that there is perhaps an "ideal" process that involves specific participants and actors in strategy-making. This ideal process is perhaps what some would view as "best practice", as CoT theorists (Feldman, 1976; Tosi Jr and Slocum Jr, 1984) envisage. These scholars emphasise the superior role of management in decision-making and coordinating internal processes. Perhaps then, this organisational culture or approach sits at the back of the management teams' minds, as demonstrated in the tone of their submissions presented above about their role in internal processes. However, as the world has continued to change, internal systems may have consequently changed in response to the rising voice of lower-level organisation participants. In this case, those in management levels accept the new reality while others are set in the old ways. The two cultures may then grudgingly co-exist but are not formalised. Revelations of this reality are made during such projects as this research study and become part of the views expressed by the respondents, as alluded to in *Section 7.3*, paragraph 2.

This same dynamic may challenge whether the internal systems, which respondents claim are "formal and structured", result from a deliberate and conscious approach or are consequent to some 'standard practice'. It is also possible to assume that even the definitions or classifications of firms that the Contingency theorists adopt may be only a function of chance or emergent processes.

Once socialised, the strategy is ready for i*mplementation*.

"*So, from socialisation point, we go to the implementation.*" 2:99 ¶ 64 in EmpA Interview

Findings suggest that the implementation process is generally tied to the organisation's performance-management systems. The performance management system is therefore used as a tool for sensing the need for organisations to begin the strategy process. It is a deliberate approach to the practice of strategy making.

The codes presented in *Figure 7.3–8* also show that the responsibility for implementation is not allocated to a single common individual or rank in the organisation but rather to different people. In some interviews, the same respondent made more than one observation concerning the implementation process.

"If it is operational, it is the functional heads. Yeah, I mean taking / giving an example, I mean, making sure that the customer is satisfied whether with product or service, it has to be the head of marketing." 8:27 ¶ 53 in RueAz 06 Interview

"It's the executive because at the end of the day the executive is answerable and also the head of the SBU [strategic business unit] is answerable to the implantation of the strategy." 8:26 ¶ 50 in RueAz 06 Interview

In some cases, the external stakeholder or expert might lead the implementation process.

"Role number two is where the consultant is going to assist you with the execution process." 1:297 ¶ 68 in ConG – Interview

The findings also show that the implementation process responds to changes in the external environment (see *Figure 7.3–8*), which may lead to a review of the entire strategy. From this, one might conclude that there is a close relationship between the implementation and review stages in the strategy process.

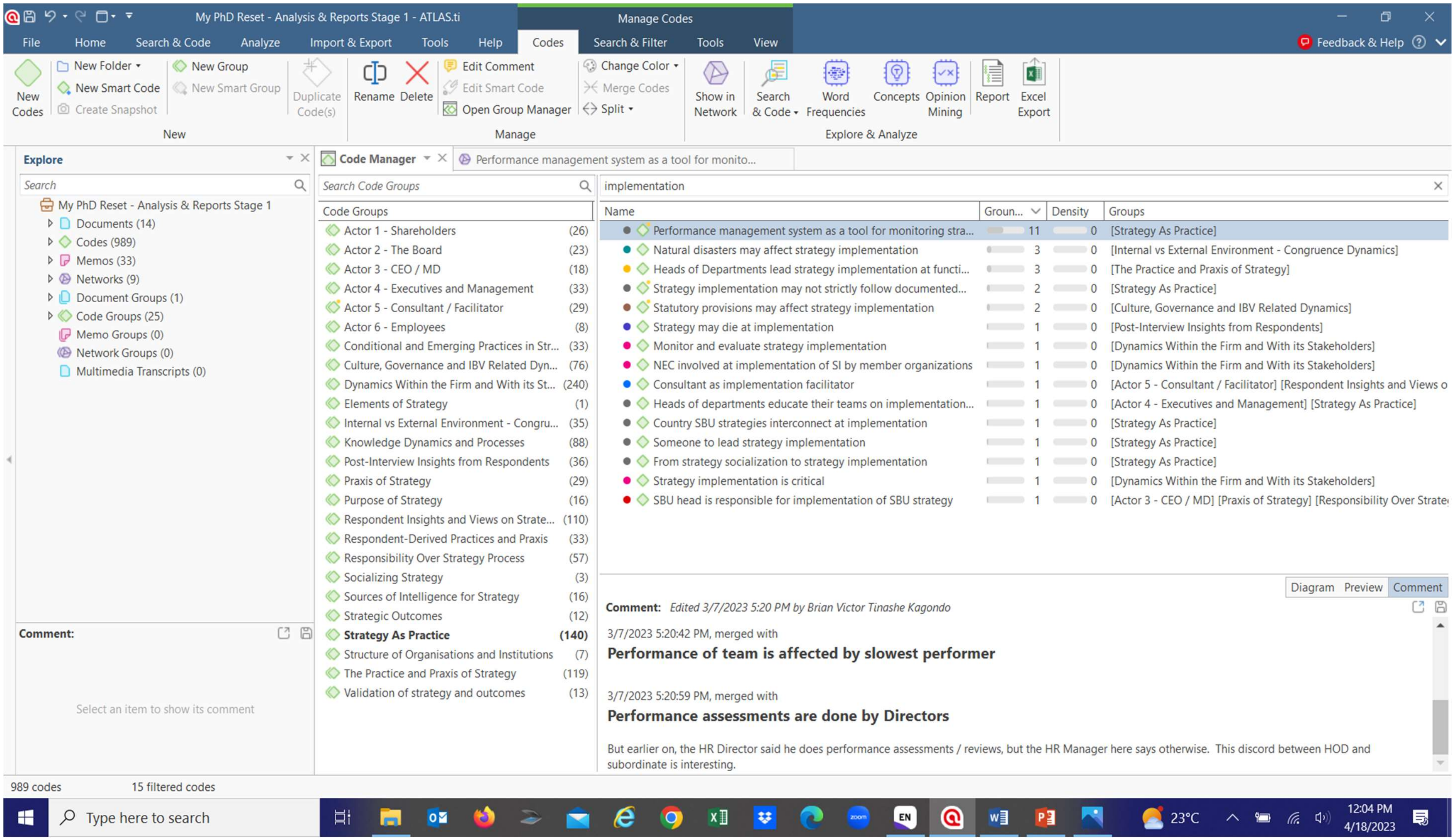


Figure 7.3–9: Extract from Atlas.ti – strategy implementation

The findings also revealed that organisations go through a process of *Reviewing Strategy*. The review is conducted from two perspectives. The first is during the strategy-making process, where, as one respondent explained:

"But before even that document is also even shared, I mean, there is a draft document that is also sent to say here is a draft document, please I mean, you are being given another chance to have a relook again as an individual person in your own space." 6:27 ¶ 13 in RueAz 03 Interview.

At this stage, between those making the strategy (such as management or the executive) and the authority presiding it (usually the Board), a review process is set up to establish whether the strategy speaks to the intended goals or bigger picture painted in the beginning. The second stage takes the perspective of reviewing the entire strategy and strategic direction. Various reasons prompt this review, as the respondents explained.

"So, I formulated what we call the Annual Business Plan to review the strategy. So we have then resorted to say, I think on an annual basis, we need to review the strategy with our internal and external stakeholders together." 2:145 ¶ 89 in EmpA Interview

"But it's also important that may be once a year, you have a strategy meeting with your Board." 10:140 ¶ 87 in SwaTz 01 Interview

"And then we review whether we've met our timelines, etc. So we review it normally annually as well." 13:4 ¶ 24 in SwaTz 06 Interview

"And usually for us every two years you'll find that we'll have again a Board strategy review session, which is a special meeting on its own just to look at where we are in terms of our strategy." 11:58 ¶ 115 in SwaTz 04 Interview

These responses show that the review is a predetermined process, which suggests that it is a standard practice and is carried out whether or not there is any change to the internal or external environment. The practice would, therefore, suggest a deliberate process that exists in the organisation as a planned process. The review seems to be an annual event as three of the four responses cited above stated that the reviews are conducted annually. However, in some organisations, it may occur every two years, as confirmed by the fourth response. In terms of the agenda of the review, from this random selection of responses, one respondent suggested that the agenda is to check whether timelines have been met. Considering the broad range of aspects a strategy covers, it seems unusual that timelines are mentioned as the only concern. The third response listed above adds a general agenda for the review: "to look at where we are”. At this stage, the parties to this review are management and the Board.

Figure 7.3–10 presents an extract of the codes that show the frequency of the strategy reviews and the reasons for or agenda of the reviews. There is no standard period or reason for the reviews. The attendees also appear to vary from organisation to organisation. In most instances, the review process is a reaction to some phenomenon, whether internal or external to the organisation.

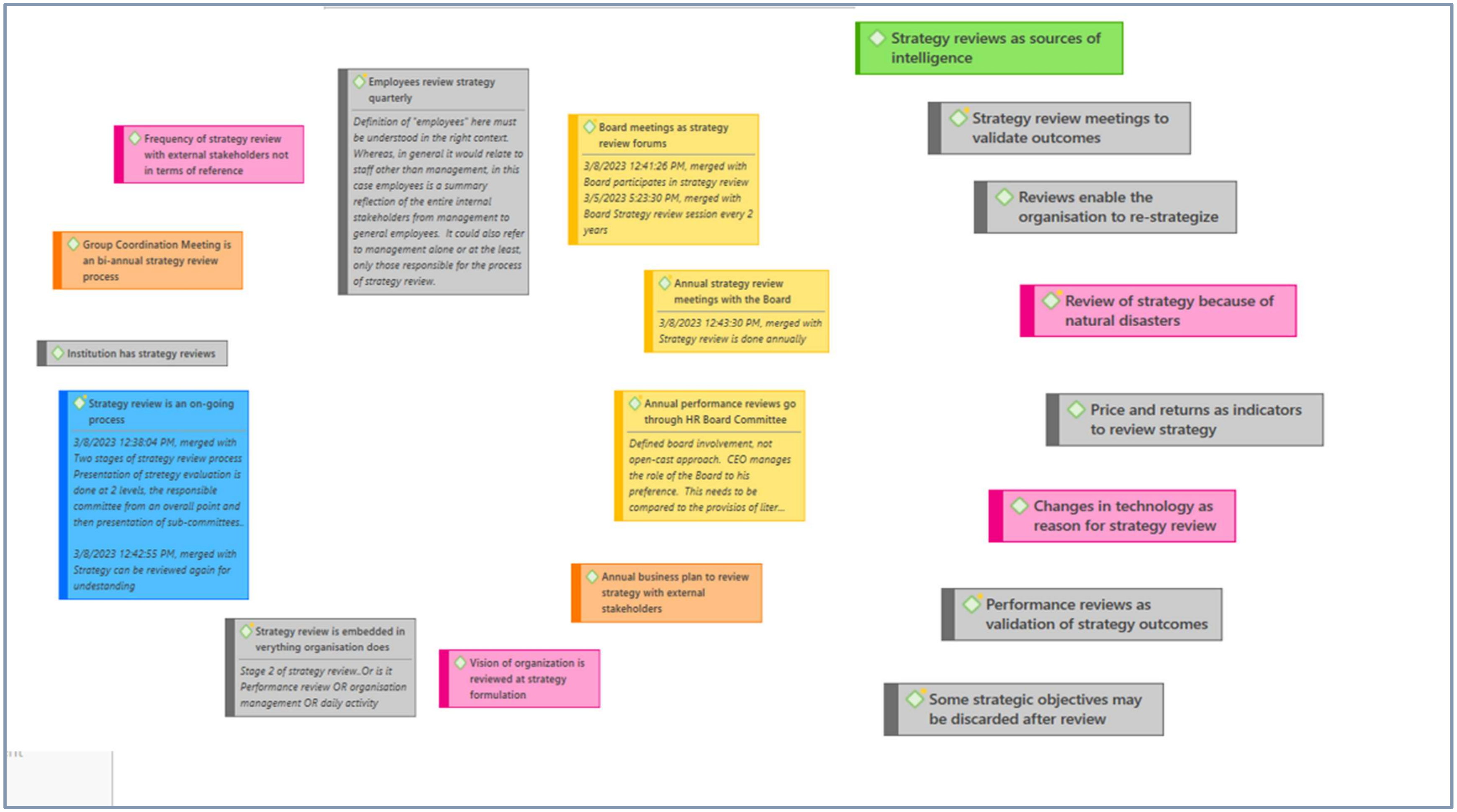


Figure 7.3–10: Combined Atlas.ti extract of strategy-review period and reasons

7.3.1.3 The Practitioners of Strategy Formation – Organisation Participant Findings

The previous two sub-sections have presented and discussed the findings on the practices and praxis of strategy-making in Zimbabwean organisations from the perspective of the organisation participants. Within the discussions have been the unavoidable mention and analysis of the actors, the practitioners of strategy-making. This section discusses the practitioners of strategy processes from the perspective of the internal practitioners and participants of strategy themselves. There are different views on selecting and assigning responsibilities to the actors for the various activities. There are also debates on including or excluding some actors in the process, as noted in *Sections 7.3.1.1* and *7.3.1.2* above.

Figure 7.3–11 below presents the actors and accompanying codes that define the roles and various relationship dynamics among these actors.

Findings show that the main actors involved in the strategy process are the Board, executives, heads of departments (HODs), consultants or strategy facilitators, and experts from various professions occasionally called in. The consultants and experts, ordinarily considered external stakeholders (Vaara and Whittington, 2012), were well recognised by the respondents as necessary. The respondents also recognised the vital role of the Board and shareholders but did not seem to agree on whether these should be considered strictly external or partially internal actors. It appears that both the Board and shareholders are active determinants of the strategic choices made by the organisations.

From the very beginning of the strategy process, as explained in *Section 7.3.1.2*, there is direct involvement of the Board, and, in many cases, the Board acts as the take-off point for the strategy process. The Board is also closely linked to the shareholder, and, in some cases, there is no absolute clarity about which of these two stakeholders is or should be directly involved in the strategy process. Some leaders within the organisation also argued that these actors should only be involved at arm's length.

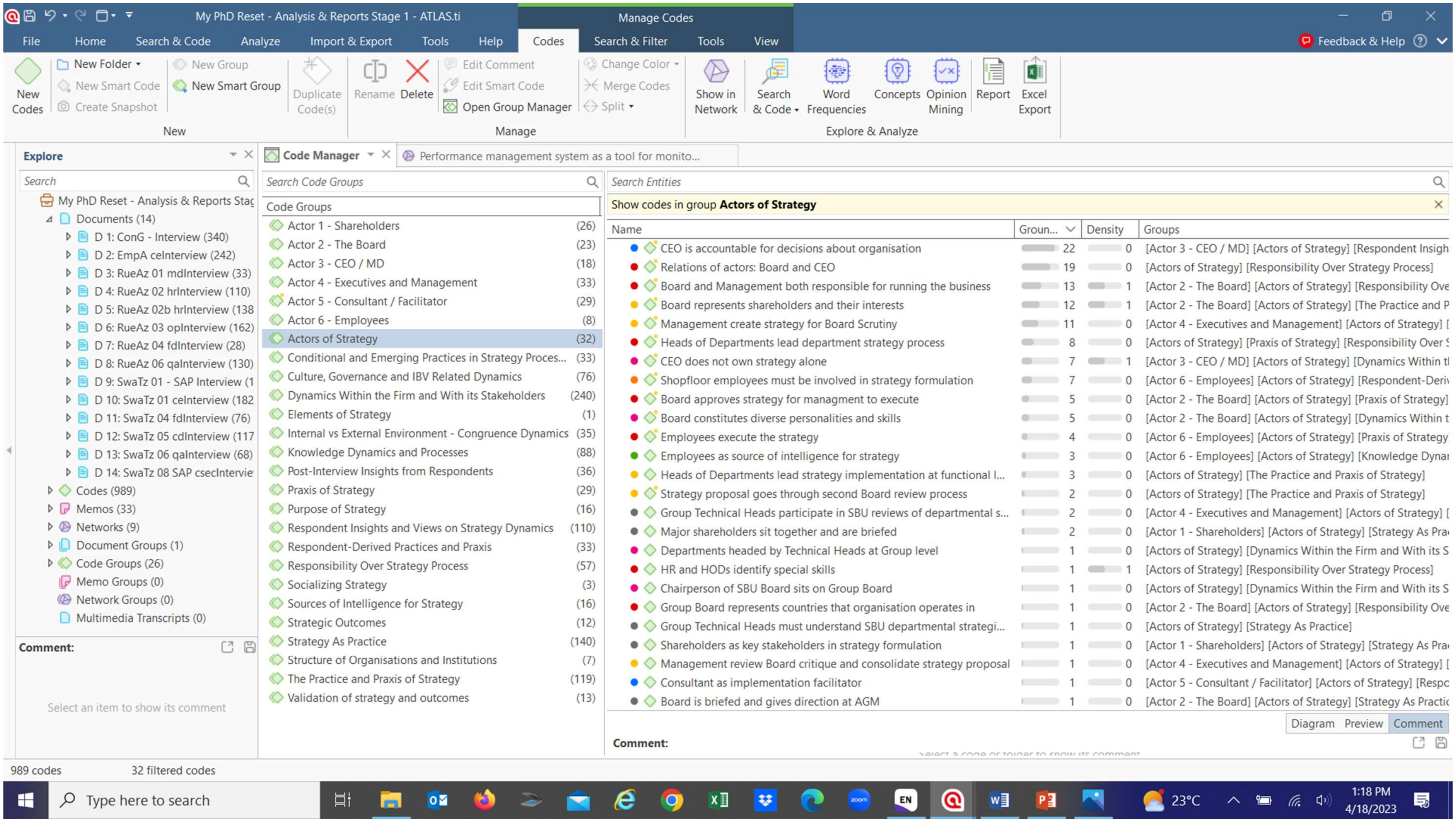


Figure 7.3–11: Atlas.ti extract – actors of strategy processes

The findings also show that these practitioners and actors possess different levels of influence or authority over the organisation's strategy processes. The discussions show that the actor with the highest authority over the strategy process is the **CEO or the MD.** *Figure 7.3–12* below shows the prevalence of the views affirming the role and authority of the CEO over strategy and general decision-making in the organisation. The graphs highlighted by a gold marker show the spread of these views (also in grey highlight) across respondents. While this is not quantitative research, it is logical to interpret from this high spread across respondents that it is a generally held view that the CEO or MD wields very high authority and power over the strategy processes. The codes show that the CEO's role cuts across the entire strategy-making process: appointing key skills, leading the strategy process, being a source of intelligence and validating strategy outcomes. The following responses support this view:

"*And that's the theoretical framework, but in practice, we have seen CEOs who yield more power than the boards that lead them.*" 1:260 ¶ 57 in ConG – Interview

"*The Chief executive must be one that owns and drives strategy.*" 10:37 ¶ 45 in SwaTz 01 Interview

"*So it is the CEO's responsibility to do develop strategy.*" 9:26 ¶ 24 in SwaTz 01 – SAP Interview

"*The group one is initiated by the Group's Chief Executive.*" 7:23 ¶ 130 in RueAz 04 Interview

"*So, Chief Executive drives it.*" 8:69 ¶ 123 in RueAz 06 Interview

"*and then at SBU level, equally the MD will do the same.*" 7:25 ¶ 130 in RueAz 04 Interview

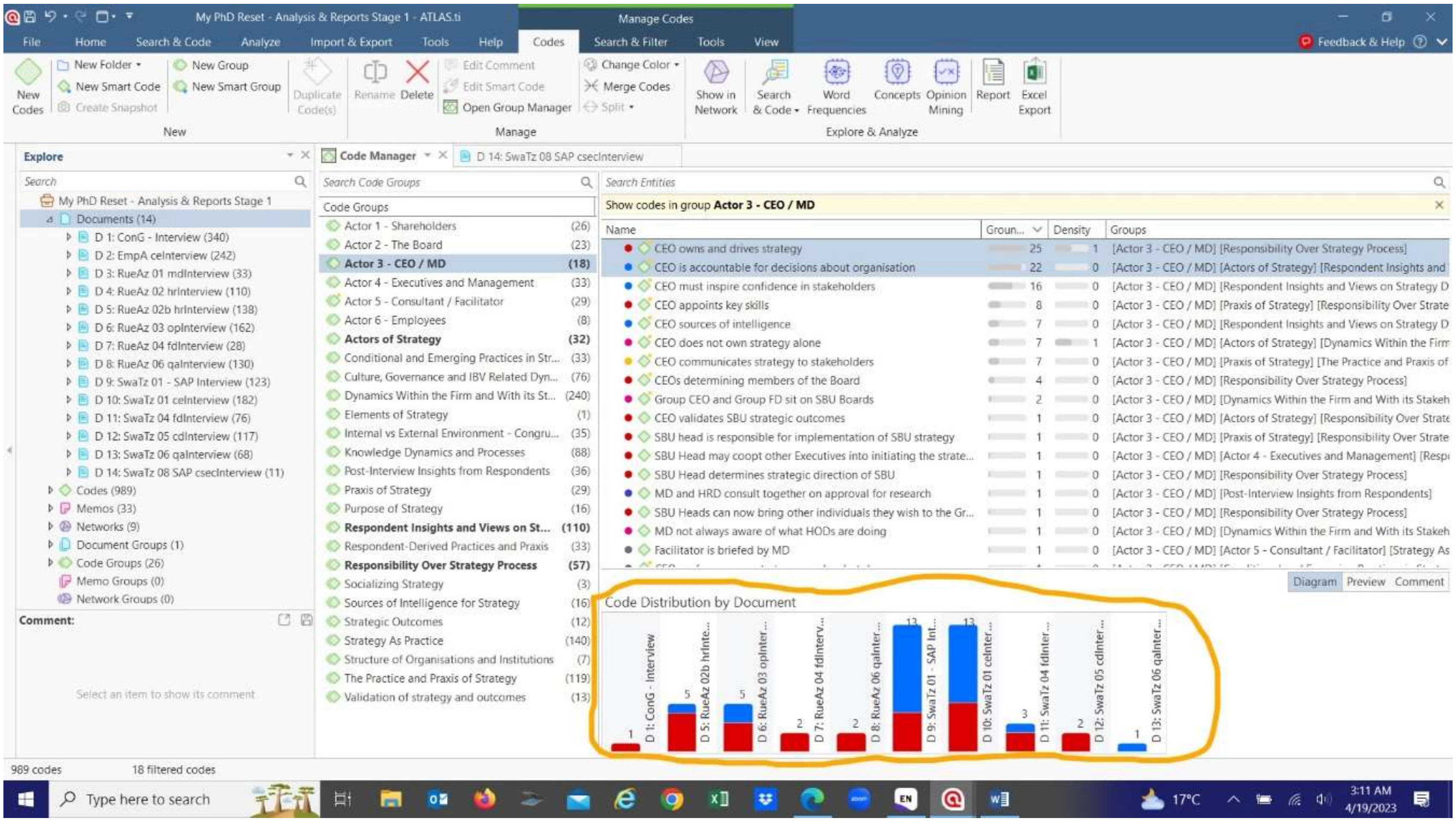


Figure 7.3–12: The CEO as an influential and powerful strategy practitioner

While this outcome appears to support the views of Barney and Clark (2007) on the role of the GM in organisation processes, these scholars refer more to the GM's "distinctive competencies". This raises the question of whether the authority displayed by the CEOs and MDs and also amplified by other participants and actors in these findings is rooted in their competencies or elsewhere. Perhaps the answer lies in part in the following submissions:

"*one of my major revenue drivers in this organisation of placing Board Members. And all of them am not given by the Board Chair, I get them from the CEO. He is the one who tells me, look we want a board member of this nature.*" 1:345 ¶ 57 in ConG – Interview

"*But a CEO who is generating profit and who is producing good business, that CEO can literally run the Board.*" 1:269 ¶ 59 in ConG – Interview

Teece (2009) argues that individual biographies are not enough. This idea may be reflected in the responses of some respondents, who argued, albeit with a weaker voice, that:

"*you see because the issue was then that if the strategy is only driven by the vision of an individual (I'm talking about what was happening in [redacted]), the whole action, the whole strategic drive sort of became the mantra, but it was more of a vision of the, of the CEO. And it always resulted in trying to chew what we could not swallow.*" [redacted][10] Interview

"*So, he can't be also a lone ranger you know like the Wild Wild West.*" 9:17 ¶ 19 in SwaTz 01 – SAP Interview

"*He might also be having one or two advisors.*" 6:131 ¶ 59 in RueAz 03 Interview

The code "CEO sources of intelligence" is conspicuously backed by several quotations, which would suggest that it is a view that is quite well supported. However, on further inspection, six out of the seven quotations are from a single individual who happens to be part of the organisation's senior leadership. This may speak to what Johnson et al. (2008) and Johnson et al. (2013) call individuals who can position themselves correctly

[10] *information redacted to protect confidentiality of the respondent and organisation.*

and use their power sources in the organisation. Respondent ConG also explained that where organisations are performing well (and, indeed, those organisations studied in the research were performing well), the CEOs or MDs of those entities will hold authority, sometimes even over the Board. The finding here is that leaders utilise more than just the power of their education and experience; they also use the power of their authority over the business owners (or their representatives, the Board) in determining the path that the organisation must take.

In some interviews, the claims (of power and authority) above were countered by other views in the same organisation:

"It's the CEOs responsibility to make sure that he complies with the board's terms of reference which, among other things includes the strategy review." 11:60 ¶ 117 in SwaTz 04 Interview

"So 1. It is the strategy formulation? Right. So our broad understanding, Brian is that strategy is owned by the board." 14:11 ¶ 153 in SwaTz 08 – SAP Interview

This brings to the fore a perspective raised before regarding the inconsistencies of the views of the internal stakeholders. How do they all have different views about the roles performed by different stakeholders in the same institution, especially regarding processes? This may suggest a need for further studies to explore what "ownership" of strategy means. If the Board is involved in building the strategy, they could claim ownership based on their authority as owners' representatives. However, the CEO and his or her executive are the people who determine the day-to-day decisions of the organisation. This means that, in their own right, they are also agents and representatives of the organisation's owners and mandated to determine its future. In that case, they can also claim ownership of the strategy as they initiate it. Finally, the employees carry the primary information from executing the business plan and strategy implementation. This suggests they have a significant stake in the ownership of the organisation's future. They, too, may choose to lay claim to the strategy process as, although they are not as closely involved in its formation, they are dependent on the implementation of it.

While the findings present perceived conflict between executives (especially the CEO) and the Board regarding responsibilities over strategy, there appears to be a generally agreed view that the Board should oversee the organisation.

Scholars refer to the critical role of experts (external or internal resources and capabilities) in the sensing, seizing and reconfiguration of organisations to enhance their sustainability in the environments in which they operate (Arndt and Pierce, 2017; Khan et al., 2021; Teece, 2009). The findings refer to these experts both internally as technical heads or people with specialised skills and externally as professionals and consultants on specific areas of the business or environment:

"But within that team I mean it's I've also ended up building, bringing in people who've got a financial background people who've got a Quality background, people that are coming from the risk department so that I mean the financial people they will tell us that I mean these guys they're telling us it will cost us so much to put this what is the payback period? The risk the people are now saying guys I mean be very careful, have you checked this regulation, what does this mean? So, I mean, it's a team effort at the end of the day at the end of the day, okay." 6:111 ¶ 44 in RueAz 03 Interview

Perhaps the discord in the views on roles does not necessarily reflect a lack of knowledge of what each practitioner must do. Instead, it may be evidence that uncoordinated people will remind each other of the social practice nature of strategy (Whittington, 1996). Some respondents (*such as RueAz 03 above*) appear to understand and wish for communities of practice, per Wenger and Snyder (2000), as a more workable approach towards strategy-making efforts. This sentiment is reflected in the submission below:

"Same as well for the guy in Operations and same as the guy in Finance who will realise that oh, I will need to reach a capital expenditure of so much for me to deliver on the vision. The Ops guy will say I will need these operational efficiencies. How do I measure them? Maybe the speed of service delivery, maybe it is the whole order process. You know, these things they work together, they dove-tail into each other. You know the IT guy will say okay I'll need to make sure that I've got a 100% functionality of systems and processes." 12:101 ¶ 162 in SwaTz 05 Interview

Findings also suggest that the upper-level executives in the organisation (the CEO and, in many cases, the Board and shareholders) define 'the bigger picture' or 'the vision' for the organisation. These top executives base their contribution on their intrinsic capabilities – their skills, experiences and business acumen – and their investment plans and wishes in the case of shareholders.

"I mean, the whole essence why a CEO is paid what he and the executive is paid or they're paid is because they have the experience." 14:12 ¶ 346 in SwaTz 08 SAP Interview

"there are certain specific individuals that are known that if they sit on your board so and so and so and so, either they have got competencies experience and an appetite for mergers, acquisitions and alliances and growth." 1:278 ¶ 63 in ConG – Interview

"You find some, particularly those who would have been formulated by guys who have been either CEOs in these larger corporates or they were occupying a senior managerial post and they believe in those processes; they start using them in their smaller organisations in a small way." 1:343 ¶ 12 in ConG – Interview

The next level of practitioners would then be department heads, usually people with high technical knowledge. These are the practitioners who usually lead an environmental scan to gain a sense of the organisation's capabilities and available opportunities that can be seized, as pointed out by the respondents:

"We also try and do a bit of research around whatever it is that we'll be looking at." 13:9 ¶ 28 in SwaTz 06 Interview

"It does help in terms of informing the choices that we make, but like I said, strategy is dynamic and sometimes you then decide to invest in a certain strategy on the basis of a long term transformation that you believe can happen and that it will succeed, but it may need a longer runway compared to a shorter runway." 13:57 ¶ 129 in SwaTz 06 Interview

"And we do the risk assessment." 13:8 ¶ 28 in SwaTz 06 Interview

"Then internally we will also do research like for instance for [redacted] for instance, we will request their quarterly reports and annual reports for input into our strategy." 11:34 ¶ 59 in SwaTz 04 Interview

Respondents also explained that, as technical leaders, HODs are not limited in their role to sensing alone. The HOD of a particular technical area supervises strategy formulation, guiding strategic thrust in line with the SBU or Group (in the case of larger corporates) bigger picture and shareholder interests. At the same time, the HOD takes cognisance of and aligns with the SBU context and challenges. Respondents explained that the responsibility is further complicated in corporations that span geographical contexts where environments are different from the environment where the organisation is headquartered or where the bulk of its shareholders reside.

"So as a functional head at Group level you have a dual responsibility to the Group and to the Strategic Business Unit? opsRue: Yes" 6:88 ¶ 33 – 34 in RueAz 03 Interview

"I mean you have also to discuss with the local people, and how do they see it. This is how I see things, how would you see and how do we move forward?" 6:92 ¶ 38 in RueAz 03 Interview

"Now because you've got this corporate strategy and this one has spoken to you, then you go and do your own strategy at SBU level." 8:19 ¶ 36 in RueAz 06 Interview

A point of concern arises where the Group or Head Office thrust or strategic choice is not in sync with or does not speak to the SBU challenges. This is a potential challenge considering the heterogeneity of the environments in which the SBUs operate versus the wishes of the shareholders, who may not always have converging interests individually. It is the responsibility of the technical expert to align the interests in this tripod, as illustrated in *Figure 7.3–13.* The figure presents the divergence of interests. These are depicted by the arrows pointing away from the central take-off point, which is the technical department headed by the technical expert, the functional head or HOD. These arrows point to:

a) The shareholder interests (S.i – *where the stars reflect different shareholders, each having different interests*);
b) The Group or business strategic thrust then (the various strategic choices or thrust – S.c);
c) The SBU-level strategic thrust or at least the preferred strategic aspects that are born out of the prevailing contexts in which they are officed and
d) The different environments (depicted as "Enviro") that prevail or that influence the three phenomena above – a to c.

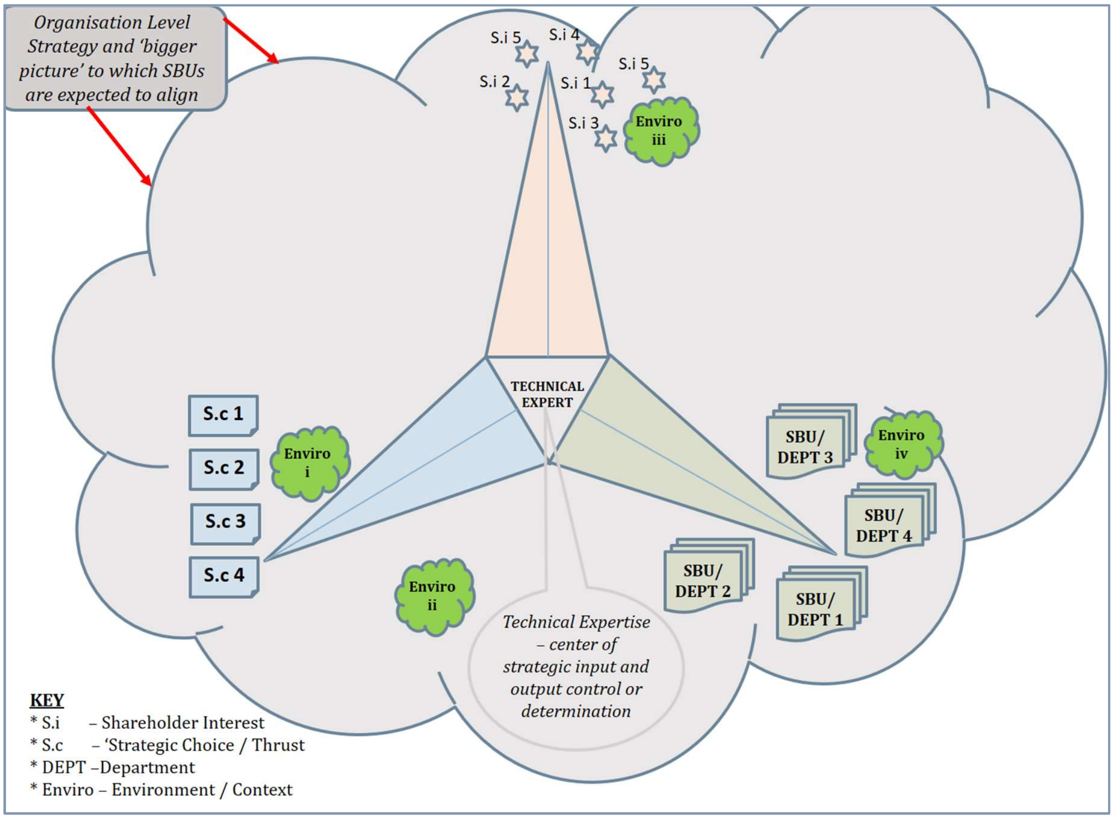


Figure 7.3–13: Dynamics of coordination of the actor–environment–interests in defining strategic choices across contexts

Even the other practitioners defined as experts (such as consultants or industry association representatives) have their own interests that the HOD must incorporate. However, this entire organisation is expected to be a single focused Group, but with the dynamics as shown. The actor works this complex process of ensuring the alignment of the different interests. However, from the respondents' views, it appears that the upper-level actors take over the privilege when it comes to the overall organisation response or configuration of the organisation to navigate the challenges or new opportunities. Sometimes, their decision comes as an instruction to these next-level actors and in complete disregard for the outcomes of this scanning effort:

"The Board has the responsibility to define. Like what our chairman always says, he says I was employed to make sure that whatever is agreed by the board is implemented." 8:25 ¶ 43 in RueAz 06 Interview

Findings also showed that employees played a part in the strategy-formation process in organisations, albeit this point was quite debated. Employees were not definitively defined as 'practitioners' of strategy-making but were often recognised as parties to the process in some way or another. Examples of the respondents' views are presented in *Table 7.3–3* below**Error! Reference source not found.**.

The employees are generally presented here more as a mere point of reference than as actual practitioners. The tone in the submissions by those respondents that advocated the employees' involvement suggests that the reason for involvement is more as an ideal practice than as practitioners of strategy:

"these people who are at shop-floor level, they need also to be involved in the strategy because they are the people who will then operationalize that strategy or implement that strategy." 2:61 ¶ 49 in EmpA Interview

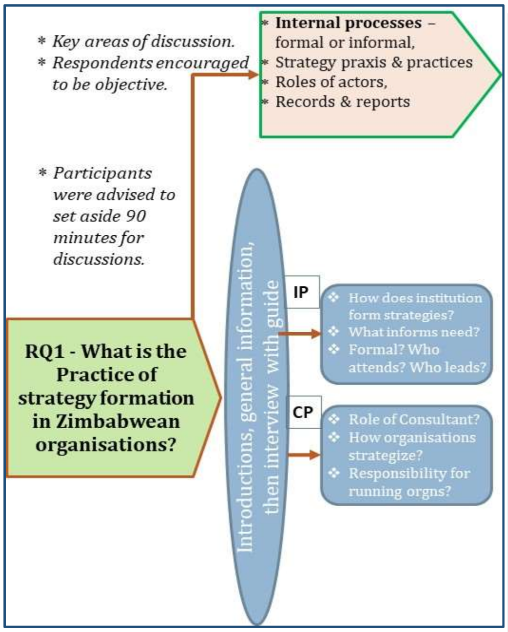
The specific role consistently defined for the employees was the implementation or operationalisation of the strategy. As argued by the consultant,

"But you need to now have a mechanism that then allows you to make sure that it becomes a continuous process and employees are able to know exactly what is happening because they're the ones who are executing anyway." 1:346 ¶ 43 in ConG – Interview

Table 7.3–3: Import from Atlas.ti – employee role in strategy

Title:	ATLAS.ti - Quotation Report				
Project:	My PhD Reset - Analysis & Reports Stage 1				
User:	Brian Victor Tinashe Kagondo				
Date:	4/21/2023 - 9:07:51 AM				
ID	**Document**	**Codes**	**Quotation Content**	**Reference**	**Density**
1:159	ConG - Interview	Shopfloor employees must be involved in strategy formulation Strategy formulation	Doc, are you suggesting then that whereas history, standard, general practice suggests strategy formulation or formation, is the privy of the general manager and his executives; are you suggesting then that perhaps it ought to include more than just that upper echelon and include the guys that are also on the ground? conG: Definitely. Definitely.	44 - 45	2
2:17	EmpA Interview	Shopfloor employees must be involved in strategy formulation	But you will see that team players who are the employees of this particular NEC Agriculture will get involved because they are the ones at operational level.	22 - 22	1
2:61	EmpA Interview	Employees execute the strategy Shopfloor employees must be involved in strategy formulation	these people who are at shop-floor level, they need also to be involved in the strategy because they are the people who will then operationalize that strategy or implemente that strategy,	49 - 49	2
5:107	RueAz 02b Interview	Shopfloor employees must be involved in strategy formulation	We want to make sure staff is involved.	194 - 194	1
6:20	RueAz 03 Interview	Shopfloor employees must be involved in strategy formulation	They should also come and air their views, what the organization should actually do. Because these are the people that are actually on the ground.	12 - 12	1
12:93	SwaTz 05 Interview	Shopfloor employees must be involved in strategy formulation	And when we go into these meetings that I am talking about, you have got middle level to low level management staff attending and hearing themselves from the CEO so they are able to also contribute,	152 - 152	1
13:25	SwaTz 06 Interview	Shopfloor employees must be involved in strategy formulation	And we also through the xxx department, have a facility where staff can actually send in the ideas.	59 - 59	1

7.3.2 Firm-Level Practice of Strategy – External Stakeholder Findings



This extract summarises the line of enquiry into the role of the key stakeholders in the practice of strategy at firm level.

The key stakeholders in this study are institutions and consultants, whose views are presented below.

While not directly mentioned in this extract, it became clear that shareholders of the organisations are also key stakeholders and findings regarding these stakeholders are also discussed below.

Figure 7.3–14: Extract from** Figure 6.7–1* ***– Interview process; research question 1, stakeholder participants' findings

This section focuses on the external participants and stakeholders of organisations. The section presents and discusses the findings on the views of these stakeholders regarding their role in organisation processes and mainly strategy-making. The study included two key participant stakeholders: institutions and consultants. According to the literature reviewed, these stakeholders have a vested interest in the organisation's processes, whether directly or indirectly (Barney and Clark, 2007; Peng, 2002; Zoogah et al., 2014).

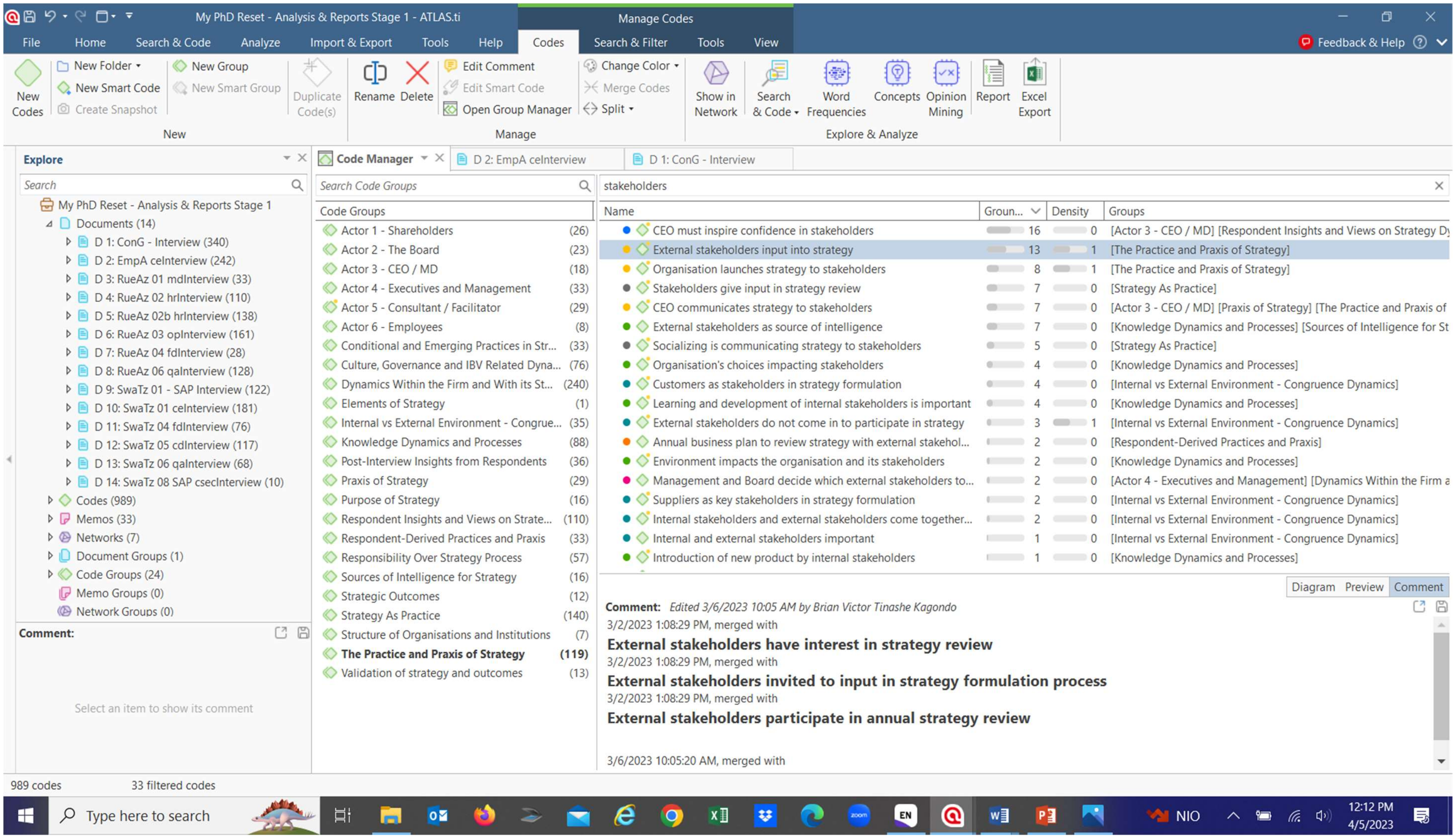


Figure 7.3–15: Extract from Atlas.ti – codes for stakeholders

Figure 7.3–15 (above) presents a screenshot from Atlas.ti of the codes related to stakeholders. The term “stakeholder” refers to those within or outside the organisation who may have a direct or indirect interest in the organisation's operations, affairs or future. The codes show that these stakeholders may include customers, suppliers, industry associations, shareholders, technical experts and institutions. The relationship between the stakeholder and the organisation is premised on shared interests, either in terms of participation in a value chain, industry or sector or investment in each other’s operations. Findings show that sometimes the interests are commonised by a statute of law or government declaration.

During the discussions, a general question would be posed to organisation participants about whether or not external stakeholders such as institutions and consultants were involved or ought to be involved in the organisation’s strategy-making. Responses include the following:

"*They don’t come in, no they don't come in to participate ....*" 6:77 ¶ 28 in RueAz 03 Interview

"*This was now a strategy. I remember there was another year when we launched digital marketing. We called some gurus in digital marketing to come and present strategy as well. That’s when we wanted to launch our digital marketing ....*" 5:28 ¶ 35 in RueAz 02b Interview

"*No, definitely not it has nothing to do with them. Because, again, you know, it's an association composed of other industry players.*" 10:182 ¶ 80 in SwaTz 01 Interview

While the first two respondents were from the same organisation, they expressed different views. The view of the third respondent concurred with the first, but this respondent immediately explained what might be a protective approach to the view. The third respondent suggested that external stakeholders might be kept at bay to protect the strategy's secrecy from competition. This view was confirmed by the consultant, who also stated that organisations believe that the success of an organisation is premised on formulating a better strategy than the competition. The consultant explained:

"That's the thinking that people have got. And because they got that thinking and particularly in the developing world, they will then formulate a strategy and hide it from competition." 1:101 ¶ 35 in ConG – Interview

The response of the second respondent (*RueAz 02b*) cited in the quotations above confirms the invitation and participation of external stakeholders but qualifies them as experts. The response suggests that the participation of these experts would assist the organisation in its new plan. The institution representative also stated that:

"Yes. So in most cases, we need to also to involve the stakeholders, you cannot come up with a strategy without the involvement of the stakeholders in the industry, what (do) they say?" 2:33 ¶ 28 in EmpA Interview

The different perspectives revealed in the respondents' views as expressed in the quotations above may result from their different backgrounds. However, perhaps one may wish to consider the background of the respondents. Respondent *EmpA* was from an institution that (as explained in later conversations) had been established by a combination of statute and voluntary association by members in the same industry. Therefore, this stakeholder's response might be premised on the desire to fulfil the mandate for which the institution was established. Further discussions revealed that the "stakeholders" the respondent referred to include the very members that make up the institution and, therefore, have vested interests in the operations. To them, the mandate to serve a whole industry warrants the inclusion and participation of the member organisations that comprise the industry and the institution's inclusion in the members' affairs or operations.

At the other end, the organisation participant dismissed the inclusion of the external stakeholders in the organisation's systems to 'safeguard' the organisation from the intrusion by other industry players into the affairs, systems and operations of the organisation. The reference by the second respondent (RueAz 02b) to experts as necessary stakeholders and, therefore, invited to the process is likely more tactical than necessary. The response indicates that the experts are only invited to 'make a presentation' to strategy; therefore, they are considered a source of information rather than a necessary participant.

The institution participant further added:

"yes, the stakeholders because they know more than than us because they are the people who are on the ground." 2:37 ¶ 30 in EmpA Interview

The other stakeholder, the consultant, added that:

"And these guys are accountable to the to the funders, they are accountable to the communities they are accountable to a number for stakeholders who have an interest in whatever that is happening." 1:64 ¶ 24 in ConG – Interview

It is also important to consider the definition of "stakeholders" by the different respondents. For the institution respondent, EmpA, the stakeholders include industry members who work in the organisations within the sector and, therefore, must contribute to the strategy-formulation process. This respondent made the following key observations:

a) Stakeholders are defined by the statute;
b) They include 'organised' and 'unorganised' members, i.e. those that subscribe to associations or unions and those that do not, and
c) Some are stakeholders by being part of the industry.

These observations suggest that stakeholders' input into strategy is made by people whose interests are only commonised by a combination of the statute and the industry requirement. It begs the question of how much of the input reflects the stakeholders' preferences rather than those considered legally correct or industrially appropriate. How does the institution discover the stakeholders' actual wishes beyond those circumstantial to the conditions above? Do these stakeholders offer the knowledge a reflection of their real wishes and intent for the institution, or is it reflective of the desire to retain membership? This may be an area that requires further exploration. The literature appears to limit the view of stakeholders to those interested in the organisation but from an external or support position. This means these stakeholders voluntarily have a relationship with the organisation or institution. In this case, the findings define stakeholders as people with a direct and mandatory relationship with the organisation or institution. They, therefore, have a more intimate relationship with the organisation, the kind that a shareholder would have.

Toward the end of one discussion, a CEO respondent also lamented the difficulties that the institution had in accessing the internal systems of the member associations. Given that the institution is established by (in part) a government decree and therefore carries a level of implied authority over the member organisations, it appears that the institution has the right to insist that it be allowed to participate in the member organisations' internal processes. The respondent confirmed this by listing several compliance matters that the NEC was "supposed to monitor and ensure" but failed to do so. The concerned organisations only recognise the institutions in so far as they can represent the organisations' wishes to relevant authorities.

"We have members. We have individual employees that are members of those institutions or associations. And that way at those levels, you've got that contribution and taking in but not in a direct contribution to strategy." 10:184 ¶ 83 in SwaTz 01 Interview

This brings to the fore the complexity of establishing the institution and its ability to function effectively concerning its member associations and, in turn, their member organisations. The NEC has delegated authority over associations and their members. The question then is: how far does the authority go? If, for example, the government regulates the establishment of the associations by awarding compliance certification that enables them to operate, then surely it should be possible for the government (through the NEC, which assumes delegated authority) to insist on monitoring the association's internal environment. This does not appear to be the case.

Findings also indicated a dynamic view on the part of an external stakeholder – the consultant. All respondents and leaders from within the interviewed organisations claimed that their organisations engage in strategy formulation and strategise. However, this view was challenged by ConG, the consultant, who appeared to argue that what the internal respondents expressed was a mere wish and not necessarily what prevails practically. The consultant challenged respondents' and researchers' views on what can be defined as strategising. In this case, a formal and prominent organisation was cited as giving the impression (to the public) that it has a strategy and that it strategizes.

As recorded in paragraph 51 of the interview, the consultant stated:

"But I have seen circumstances and environments where I have assisted customers who do not really care about what strategy has achieved for them, but who are doing it for compliance purposes" 1:209 ¶ 51 in ConG – Interview. *"I would tell you of course this is the I believe this is in confidence* [redacted] *does not strategize, does not believe in strategy. Do you know that?"* 1:347 ¶ 51 in ConG – Interview

The consultant discussed assisting an organisation where some internal processes and systems are referred to when formulating a strategy. However, these were all just smoke and mirrors. In this case, the business owner (*or majority shareholder in this case, as it was a huge listed corporate*) dictated what must happen, what decisions must be made and what business course must be followed. The executive presented this to the rest of the employees as a strategy. This begs the critical question of whether big, formal organisations actually strategise or merely put to paper a wish while putting into practice the decisions of the organisation's owners.

As shown in the sections above, respondents went to pains to define the strategy formulation process, some even emotionally. In their submissions, the very active role of the Board and shareholders is conspicuous, although the respondents limited it to setting the bigger picture. The revelation by the consultant, as discussed above, suggests a new view of the process of strategising. The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 presents an elaborate process of strategising, which is supported by the findings above in many instances. However, what is not elaborated on to a large extent is the role of the organisation's owner in determining what must be done. Perhaps the term “bigger picture” is a polite and more salient expression of the business owner's absolute authority. This authority could be the difference in the practical reality of strategy-making in Zimbabwe.

7.4 What Theoretical Tools Inform the Strategy-Formulation Process in Organisations?

Chapter 3 of this thesis discusses selected theories of the firm and organisation and proposes four theoretical lenses in strategy formation. The lenses were tested against the practice and processes of strategy formation in Zimbabwe to establish whether they applied to the organisations and the context. The assumption was that organisations have a deliberate system of establishing or understanding their firm behaviour and how internal and external environments interact in the strategy processes. This section presents and discusses the findings on the theoretical framework of strategy-making in Zimbabwean organisations. The discussion also refers to the literature review and *Figure 3.7–1: Summary of theoretical framework*.

Respondents acknowledged the impact of the broader context in which organisations operate in Zimbabwe on how they are managed. The discussions above (*Section 7.3*) confirm the desire of the majority of respondents to build and implement systems or practices that deliberately establish the correct responses to the environment. In many cases, as observed, the respondents spoke of ideal systems and structures but did not present adequate evidence to suggest that the systems exist in practice. The findings also point to efforts to use various tools, such as external stakeholders (consultants and experts), in the sensing, seizing and reconfiguring efforts. However, it also appears that the respondents are not necessarily in control of the final strategy or decisions that they wish to pursue. Through various submissions, the respondents confirmed the close role played by representatives of the owners of the organisations (the Board of Directors) in influencing strategy. The submissions suggest that the business's owners, through their agents – the Board - actually define the firms' choices.

7.4.1 Adaptation and Congruence of the Firm

The study explored the relationship between the organisation's internal systems, structures and practices, external stakeholders (shareholders, customers, suppliers, competition), context and cultures. It also looked at how the firms adapted to changes in both the internal and external environments. Findings showed that organisations perform routine activities to establish their progress towards a set vision and mission. One of the everyday activities is an assessment of the company's growth phase. The outcome of the assessment usually leads to an adjustment of the internal structures, as discussed by a respondent below:

"Yeah. So, my personal view is that as the corporates grow bigger they need leaner structures. They do not need hierarchical structures." 11:39 ¶ 77 in SwaTz 04 Interview

"So for quicker decision-making, I believe in leaner structures." 11:42 ¶ 78 in SwaTz 04 Interview

"But I think as companies are in a growth phase, you need some hierarchical structure, why? it helps with checks and balances continuously so that if A misses something B is on it and C is on it." 11:43 ¶ 79 in SwaTz 04 Interview

The submissions above, however, suggest that the 'idea' of adjusting and aligning structures is a 'common or best practice' that is known and an expected action within management but may not be fully understood. The respondent above recommends two different structures for the same growth phase. Another respondent from the same organisation had a different view, suggesting that:

"I think I'll tell you something very important or strategic that I see. I think at the moment, the reporting structure is okay. But I feel that it has to be ... I think the most ideal structure is more of a matrix approach. I do think that we need to avoid too many tall processes." 12:45 ¶ 91 in SwaTz 05 Interview

The following question is whether the sensing practices are useful to the extent that they fulfil the practice for which they were designed or are merely a part of the organisation's accepted routines.

In their pursuit of excellence, organisations also expose their internal skills to environments with ideal and globally acceptable operations. This may be undertaken as part of the strategy process, where the organisation chooses an example of excellence as a strategy venue or a place to tour during strategy formulation:

"And what inspires that is our ability to think outside the box, to think beyond the challenges in this country and say, You know what, there is no box actually. Yeah. And so what greater inspiration than looking at things outside Zimbabwe." 14:15 ¶ 117 in SwaTz 08 – SAP Interview

And, you know, these companies have done so well because they've understood international structure and they understand that I can have the company in Dubai, in Mauritius ..., you know, I can do this. So, we needed that sort of grounding and inspiration to be able to actually think beyond this country because that's what you need to become a blue chip." 14:13 ¶ 132 in SwaTz 08 – SAP Interview

Sometimes, organisations have secondment programmes that send people with skills to global destinations to learn and propose internal adjustments to cope with the rising competition.

Respondents also explained that the use of improved technology assisted in the adaptation process, and, in some cases, they did not have to change their standing plans drastically.

"But like I say in hindsight we are excited because that same strategy is what has taken us through Covid and nothing has to change because it was Tech-driven and it was driven by an asset-light business mode." 9:54 ¶ 42 in SwaTz 01 – SAP Interview

Respondents were also asked about the impact of the external environments on the organisations' strategic choices.

"So, if you want to grow obviously you look at external factors that rather than the internal ones." 11:74 ¶ 162 in SwaTz 04 Interview

"However, the one thing for me is that a strategy must not be static, especially in environments of today." 10:68 ¶ 55 in SwaTz 01 Interview. *"Or at least they need to be nimble enough to adapt."* 10:187 ¶ 57 in SwaTz 01 Interview

From the discussions above, it appears that organisations have standard practices that are part of their routines. The practices have assisted them in adapting to a changing context, but perhaps the sustainability of the practices is not set.

"You know, when we've always standardized strategy formulation. But at times halfway through something documented, you need to come in. You know, the

environment is always changing. If you don't fit into the environment, you die halfway through your strategy implementation." 8:132 ¶ 190 in RueAz 06 Interview

7.4.2 Strategic Choices

Literature suggests that any strategic choices an organisation makes are inherently affected by the formal and informal constraints of the institutional frameworks within the organisation (Peng, 2002). Findings from the study showed mixed views on the impact of these institutions. In some cases, respondents argued that governments and institutions are not always a cause of disruption, as depicted in most discussions about developing countries; instead, they are sometimes helpful partners in navigating the context:

"*So it also depends with the way you interface with them. Your relationships and relationships management is very critical. The different arms of Government that are involved in your day-to-day business, very, very, very critical.*" 8:133 ¶ 140 in RueAz 06 Interview

Findings showed that strategic choices are also a product of the views and requirements of other stakeholders – internal and external, with the Board having greater authority over the determination of these strategic choices. As discussed with respondents, the processes followed in making strategic choices are summarised in *Figure 7.4–1* below. The different colors are merely for distinguishing the different aspects in determining strategic choices.

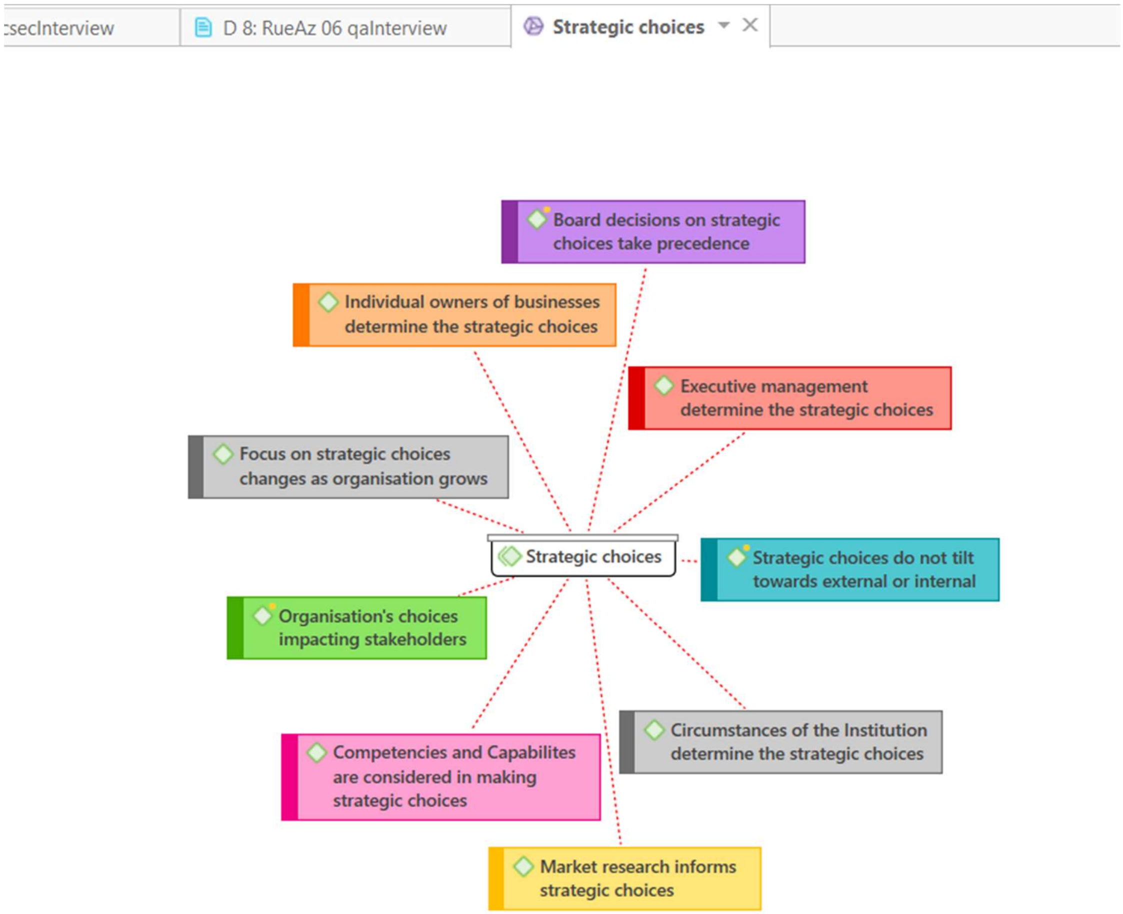


Figure 7.4–1: Extract from Atlas.ti – network of codes for processes of strategic choices

7.4.3 Administration Frameworks

Findings from the discussions confirmed that organisations in Zimbabwe have, over time, been able to adopt or develop various frameworks to operationalise the different systems internally. Some of the frameworks are a mere accumulation or replication of learnings from literature and traditional models that have been developed by scholars such as Porter (1980), Norton and Kaplan (in the 1990s), and Mintzberg (in the 1970s). These frameworks are used in the day-to-day administration of internal processes but are also helpful in the strategy processes. In some cases, it is notable that institutions, including the government, have set an example of using good frameworks to attain specific objectives. In referring to the adoption of a particular framework, the consultant had this to say about government:

"*So it's just an issue of compliance but from a thinking and a framework point of view, spot on.*" 1:253 ¶ 55 in ConG – Interview

Organisations have also been able to develop bespoke frameworks that they initially use as sensing (of the prevailing environment) tools or to assess the organisations' progress towards attaining their strategic objectives and developing appropriate solutions.

For confidentiality purposes, the frameworks and models are not named or presented here but are available for the examiner.

Some frameworks combine elements from known scholars or traditional models and innovative designs from the organisations themselves. Others originate from the executives, who combine their career experience with the outcome of the sensing processes and target outcomes.

These findings, therefore, align with what is demonstrated in the literature, in the theoretical framework, with the addition that the local organisations have utilised a combination of individual tacit knowledge, experiences and learnings from external environments to develop bespoke frameworks. Further, the frameworks are not merely administrative models but also management tools used in decision-making and planning processes.

7.4.4 Knowledge Conversion Systems

Section 7.6 below thoroughly discusses the dynamics of knowledge systems in organisations. Organisations acknowledge the importance of acquiring and transferring this knowledge and converting it into information used in making strategic choices. However, the processes and systems used by the organisations may not necessarily align with the models proposed by the literature. Within the focused desire to develop functional knowledge acquisition, transference, and conversion systems lies the somewhat incidental or emergent process of creating these systems. Respondents confirmed that organisations understand the importance of knowledge as a resource. In some cases, they have gone to great lengths to second skills to global entities and, in other cases, the executives have located strategy meeting venues in places of exemplary excellence to acquire the knowledge, presumably for purposes of converting it to usable plans and strategic choices. However, internal resources do not always view plans and systems similarly.

7.5 What are the Practice Tools Utilised by Zimbabwean Organisations in Strategy Formulation?

This section presents and discusses the practical tools that inform Zimbabwean organisations' sensing, seizing and reconfiguration processes as they strategise for and against the environment (internal and external). The literature reviewed in Chapter 4 discusses the institutional environment and resources and capabilities as the key drivers of organisational effectiveness in developing countries (Hoskisson et al., 2000; Zoogah et al., 2014). The developing country context is also viewed as having poor technological infrastructure and being unable to navigate well in the global environments and markets (Meyer and Peng, 2016; Wright et al., 2005). However, the study findings suggested that while organisations in Zimbabwe can be said to exist in a context classified as a developing economy (Sikwila, 2013; Zindiye et al., 2012), they have been able to utilise their internal and external resources and capabilities well enough to navigate the global space.

The first observation was that the respondents were aware of and acknowledged the importance of outstanding resources and capabilities:

"*That's the level we want to go because what happens if you look at the new trends especially when you analyse the psychology, or the mechanics of competition, you will realise organisations are not now about who has got more reasoning or who has got more competency because organisations are now inclined to put strong competencies and strong resources to support their businesses.*" 12:52 ¶ 95 in SwaTz 05 Interview *"today organisations' successes, is also determined, not only by adaptability to the environment, but also by out-executes another. That's why you'll find that when Apple are about to bring out a version of a new product, they'll tell you nine months before to pre-empty competition. So out-execution. But, the out-execution is to do with the speed of the organisation, for example, if I come to, to Ariston If I want to analyse the speed of your organisation I will look at how long we take in your meetings. Okay."* 12:53 ¶ 95 in SwaTz 05 Interview

Scholars of the RBV approach and dynamic capabilities framework in the literature review speak to the importance of competencies and abilities. The findings added to this frame 'speed of execution', which the respondents called "out-execute" others. The respondent cited above provides a simple example of the duration of meetings, meaning that the longer a management team spends in meetings, the more likely it is that the team will not be able to execute the strategy in time to beat the competition.

"Once you have strength and everything, you need speed." 12:54 ¶ 96 in SwaTz 05 Interview

This adds time and is a valuable resource in the practice of strategy.

The context was also affected by the global pandemic of Covid-19, as referred to in Chapter 6. This meant the data collection method had to change from physical to virtual, as discussed in the same chapter. Respondents also presented the changes that must be made in the internal organisation processes to embrace this new environment. Whereas literature generally suggests that organisations in a context such as Zimbabwe would struggle to navigate this kind of environment, findings from the study indicated that the organisations developed new tools and reconfigured their internal systems and processes to navigate the environment. Findings indicate that:

a) SwaTz swiftly moved in to secure virtual platforms and partnerships during the pandemic:

"And I'll give you an example. We pioneered what we call the [redacted] virtual model." 10:185 ¶ 124 in SwaTz 01 Interview. *"What we then did is we came up with partners all over the country."* 10:186 ¶ 125 in SwaTz 01 Interview

b) SwaTz executed its "asset light" strategy during the Covid-19 era ahead of competition and ended up securing markets from abroad:

"That's the future. We know that most companies are going asset light. They are moving from ownership of assets to ownership of markets, and it is clear because you look at big companies like your Uber who doesn't own a single car, but it's worth over 50 billion as a company." 12:79 ¶ 134 in SwaTz 05 Interview

c) RueAz remained ahead of its competition by adopting technology and research centres as a quick score.

d) RueAz seconded skills to global organisations to learn new systems and implement them back in the organisation:

"So it was then my responsibility we need(ed) to go out, travelled across the world, Thailand, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Denmark, trying to look at other people that have actually done this. So sometimes the technology's there, it's now a mind to go and identify the technology that is out there." 6:108 ¶ 42 in RueAz 03 Interview

These 'new' tools or approaches to strategy would certainly change internal processes within organisations. For example, traditionally, strategy was formulated against a standing or defined asset base that the organisation had absolute control over. However, now, strategy is formulated based on an asset controlled by an external partner that may not necessarily be structured in the same way as the primary organisation and may even have an entirely different culture or way of doing things. One might wish to explore further the impact of the change on the dynamic of confidence in the strategy. There has long been a salient view that there must be a limit to the number of "uncontrollable variables" an organisation considers in drawing up its strategy. The new approach to strategy challenges the traditional assurances that the organisation has now in planning against the background of more variables it cannot control. This certainly challenges the real role of the VRIN model proposed by RBV proponents, considering that the organisation is not in the control of the organisation in the first place.

As explained in *Section 0* above, the study also focused on two key external participants in organisational processes and strategies: consultants and institutions. However, in the discussions and as also reported in the same section, respondents referred to numerous other external stakeholders, such as technical experts, bankers and economists. These external stakeholders were invited to sense the prevailing environment or establish what opportunities to seize and how to reconfigure by strategising to navigate the environment. The findings of the two key stakeholders showed that the *consultant* is a prevalent participant in organisations' strategy processes. Even the institution, which is also an external stakeholder, confirmed the role of the consultant, with the institution respondent stating that:

"*And the as I said, the consultant is there to provide a clear roadmap for the strategy.*"
2:64 ¶ 53 in EmpA Interview

In the discussions, a question was asked about the role of the consultant.
As shown in *Figure 7.5–1* (*below*), the consultant role was presented in various forms in the discussions; perhaps that is the nature of the role. In this case, it may be logical to conclude that the consultant is actually not a participant in the strategy-formation processes but is one of the tools used in strategy formation.

It appears that there is no single defined assignment for the consultant. Instead, the consultant is allocated a responsibility or role determined by the requesting organisation or department and at whatever point, the skill or tool is deemed valid. It is almost as if the consultant is there to fill a gap that a department or organisation believes exists or has popped up in its processes. One could argue that this is because the consultant has a wide range of experience and can, therefore, come into a situation and assist in whatever is required. In that case, the consultant merely becomes a 'tool' that can be used for multiple tasks. In analysing this role against literature on knowledge management, the consultant also plays the role of enabler (Lee and Choi, 2003) who is trusted to guide the knowledge creation and conversion process in the organisation. The consultant is, therefore part of the community of experts who assist in the sensing, seizing and configuration in the organisation. Today, with the rapid advancement in knowledge, this role must be assessed against the modern communication expert (Iaia et al., 2024) artificial intelligence. Perhaps the question to then follow for future discussion whether organisations can place the same trust on this *new* expert as they have done on the traditional (consultant) considering the level of open availability of the former, AI.

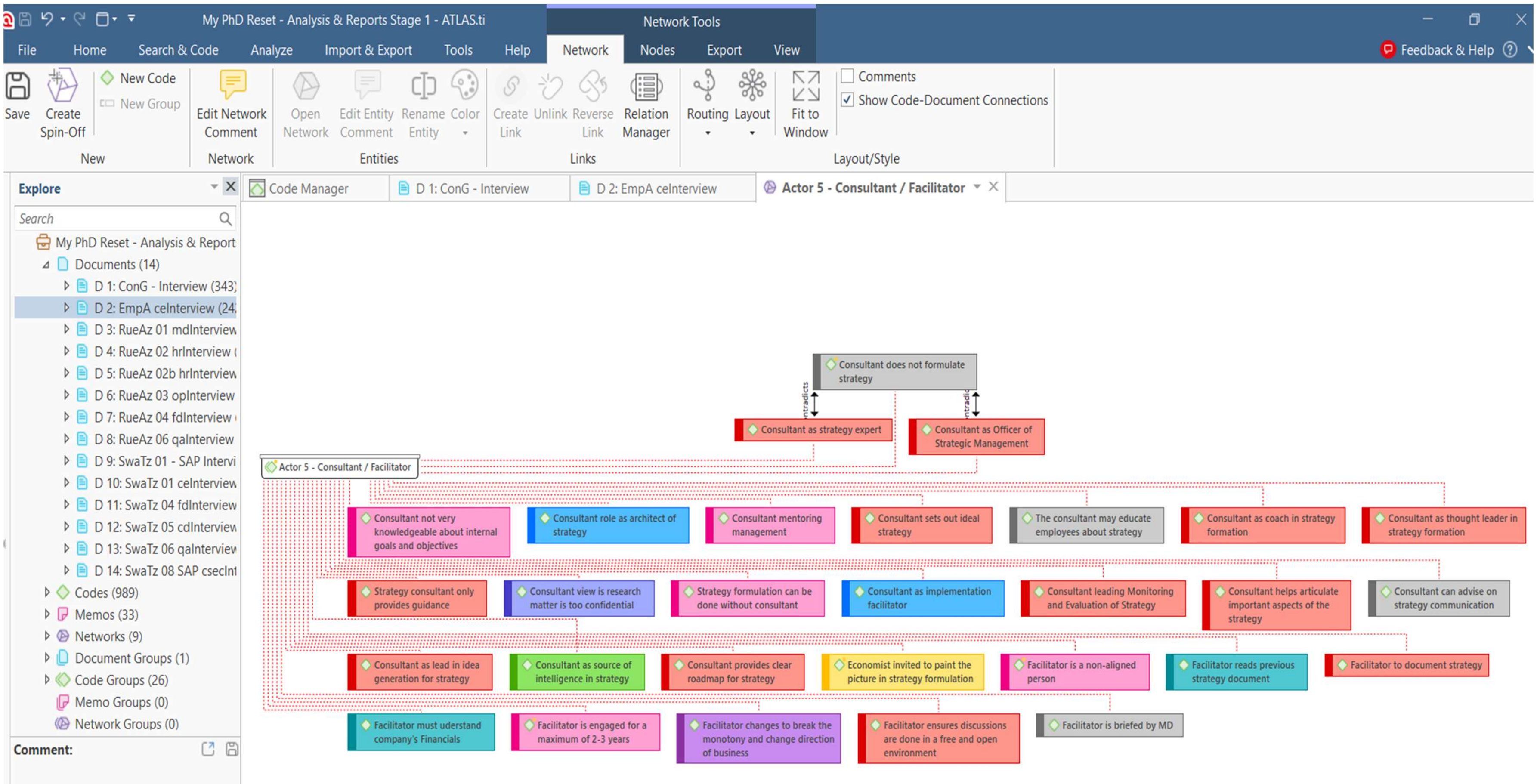


Figure 7.5–1: The role of the consultant in strategy-making

7.6 What is the Role of Knowledge Dynamics in Strategy Formulation in Zimbabwean Organisations?

Knowledge is at the centre of decision processes in organisations. This section presents the dynamics of knowledge creation, preservation, conversion and sharing within and between the organisations and their external environments in Zimbabwe. The section begins by presenting an extract of the principal codes related to knowledge dynamics within the organisation. Eighty-eight codes spoke to the concept of knowledge. For demonstration purposes, an extract contained codes grounding “2” and above, meaning that the code had more than one point of reference in the documents. These codes were chosen to overview better the ‘language’ of knowledge in Zimbabwean organisations. They, therefore, lay the foundation for discussion of the dynamics of knowledge management in strategy processes.

The codes indicate active knowledge transfer, sharing and creation within the organisations. The findings showed that the organisation's knowledge sources are internal and external. However, the discussions revealed that while organisations have systems for knowledge transfer amongst internal participants, they do not always create deliberate processes for sharing knowledge with the external environment.

"*Yeah, knowledge transfer is most critical, because that's what creates what we call learning organisations, for the organisation to be able to be a learning organisation is because it's acquiring new information.*" 10:116 ¶ 73 in SwaTz 01 Interview

"*So for example, we have what we call teams of excellence. And what it is, is that we select top top guys from across the group, and they form into a team that goes and shares knowledge.*" 10:188 ¶ 75 in SwaTz 01 Interview

"*Enquire and document. But you have to be very careful. Knowledge is not given easily.*" 8:52 ¶ 100 in RueAz 06 Interview

The respondents recognised the importance of knowledge sharing and explained that organisations have systems for it. The systems include defined programs such as the “teams of excellence” shared by SwaTz 01.

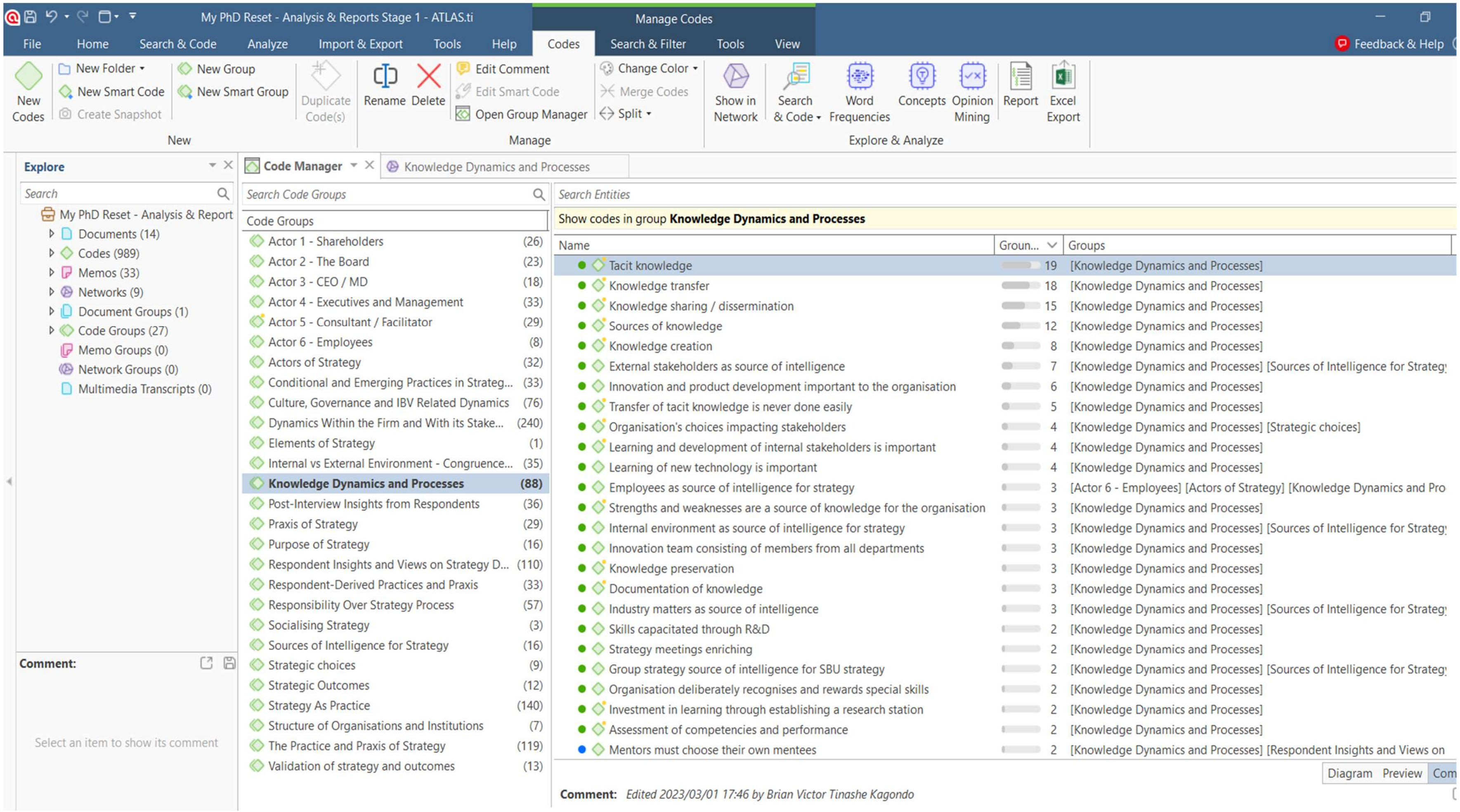


Figure 7.6–1: Extract from Atlas.ti – Knowledge codes

Organisations also utilise succession planning programs. However, the respondents cautioned that individuals tend to hold back and generally do not share knowledge easily. This idea of *hiding* knowledge is a key issue in today's conversations on knowledge management (Connelly et al., 2019; Connelly et al., 2012; Issac et al., 2023). In the discussions, there was no clear answer as to how organisations actually stop this hiding of knowledge. There were submissions on various approaches to capture the tacit knowledge through persuasion and incentivising the sharing of the knowledge.

SwaTz 01 confessed that there is no formal system or structure for knowledge sharing between the organisation and the external environment.

"Can I be honest, I don't think we've got that. Where you got a formalized sharing of knowledge between ourselves and foreign bodies? I guess, because there isn't that structure here." 10:127 ¶ 78 in SwaTz 01 Interview

In this submission, perhaps there lies a hard truth about the secrecy and sanctity of internal organisational resources (knowledge being key) that some practitioners may not readily accept. This respondent further submitted that there is some "cross-pollination" with external stakeholders through platforms such as the NEC and industry associations, on which it is important to participate as an organisation and discuss industry issues.

This is somewhat contrary to the views of the RueAz respondents and those of EmpA (cited in *Section 0* above), who argued that there is knowledge sharing with the external environment. Perhaps a question arises about what is referred to as "knowledge" and to what extent it is 'sharable'. It appears that SwaTz 01 believed that the discussions among parties to the industry association or NEC are held on 'surface' or 'general' sector-level topics, which do not contain detailed knowledge content. The knowledge discussed at this level is set by precedence or some statute. Therefore, parties proceed based on compliance with a standing programme of 'sharing' instead of detailed discussions and knowledge sharing.

What Sveiby (2001) refers to as knowledge sharing with the external environment may not necessarily be a two-way or reciprocal process. It may instead be a combination of general discussion and a situation where one party decides to draw knowledge from another's circumstances or activities for its internal and own benefit. Knowledge transfer is a one-way process where one party is established (deliberately or involuntarily) as a source of intelligence for another to draw on. For example, if a statute that affects a particular industry is promulgated, the industry association must publish and make this new knowledge available to its members. In this way, the association becomes a source of intelligence as it 'shares' (by its mandate) this knowledge with its membership. It does not always follow then that the membership will choose to reciprocate and provide feedback on the impact of this new knowledge *or* share experiences for further improvement or growth of this knowledge.

In one discussion, a respondent explained that:

"we used to have a brilliant youngster [redacted], prominent on TV, prominent on social media. After we discovered that, no, this was a rare skill in him…. we gave him reasonable responsibilities so that we could keep him in, but he got attracted to 'the main man' and he took him away." 8:131 ¶ 91 in RueAz 06 Interview

The submission implies that a greater institution or authority can summon a skill with excellent tacit knowledge to join its operations and deliver to the nation. Inherent in this submission is the apparent power of the state as an institution. A skill nurtured by a private organisation whose activities positively impact national interests, including its political future, can be taken away by the state, and the private organisation may have little or no power to claim any form of compensation. This goes deep into the argument that institutions and government, as significant institutions, have ultimate authority over even the private sector.

This also raises questions about the real power of tacit knowledge and the organisation's practical ability (or lack thereof) to harvest the knowledge, let alone retain it. The transfer of tacit knowledge is in the hands of the bearer of the knowledge (the skill) and their ambition, but a higher authority can also determine it. Where a higher authority, in this case, the state as an institution, calls the knowledge bearer (the skill) to perform its national duty, the power of this authority, and the skill's ambition, is more able to persuade the skill to share the tacit knowledge than is the private organisation that enabled the skill to nurture this knowledge. Whatever the level of fairness allocated to it, this reality speaks to the difficulty of any organisation in making absolute plans for harnessing its capabilities and resources for its own future plans without leaving room for the threat of authoritative institutions. While most literature may have conceded the threat of private organisations as an apparent dynamic in the fight for skills, they are unlikely to have granted as much respect or thought to the role of institutions and, in this case, the state in the fight for knowledge management and transfer.

The next question is whether these institutions have a different process or ability to harvest this tacit knowledge better than private organisations would. The submissions in the research do not specify this. However, one is persuaded to consider the idea that the process of sharing this knowledge under the institutions is down to a combination of the ambition of the skill and the attractiveness of the authority carried by the institution (the state), including the likelihood of the transfer of the same authority to the skill. It becomes a more attractive win-win situation between the skill and the institution, considering the power that institutions have and are likely to (with no obvious intention) pass on to the people who represent them. Zoogah et al. (2014) and Peng et al. (2009) speak closely to the power and authority dynamics surrounding the functionality and operations of institutions, along with society's knowledge and recognition of this power. In conclusion, one could argue that the transfer of tacit knowledge is indeed subordinate to the ambition and will of the skill plus the authority of the recipient or benefactor of the knowledge.

Findings also showed that organisations sometimes had defined systems for knowledge sharing; for example, a programme supported by another series of programmes for sharing knowledge. It appears that there is a belief that tacit knowledge can be made explicit and converted into SOPs or manuals for onward transmission to the next person:

"*Yeah, that's very interesting. What we have done is interesting. We have come up with a very interesting model called a 'best operating procedures', we call them BOPs. They are like SOPs in doing business.*" 12:59 ¶ 113 in SwaTz 05 Interview

"So, I do believe that the process of incorporating that knowledge into Best Operating Procedures, obviously there are certain things where someone like Kagondo will realise that this is my skill and these guys are gonna document how I do these things, you know and then it becomes proprietary to this company." 12:67 ¶ 116 in SwaTz 05 Interview

The submissions above contribute to the theories of knowledge management, especially the sharing of tacit knowledge. The submission above makes it fair to conclude that tacit knowledge is not shared on request but may be transferred only voluntarily. within the response above lies an implication that knowledge can be viewed as a source of power and therefore the holder may elect to hold onto it. This is in tandem with recent views that suggest that the experts may elect to hide knowledge in order to retain their power whether against peers or the organisation itself (Issac et al., 2023).

Organisations try to induce the sharing, but do not appear to get the desired result. One respondent lamented that:

"Transfer of that tacit knowledge is never done easily, you need to understand that. If I come here today Brian and say you know what? Here is a young man we want you to transfer your skills into him. Chances are, you begin to take that with a 'pinch of salt'." 4:78 ¶ 72 in RueAz 02 Interview

In the discussions on this matter, it appears that, in the final analysis, there is no eventual sharing of any tacit knowledge. There is some belief, however, that knowledge is drawn from the skill through various possible methods, including probing, informal discussions, observation, and incentivisation of different forms. Perhaps the reality is that tacit knowledge is not shareable and cannot be transferred, mainly as demanded by the organisation or its representatives. Nonaka and Von Krogh (2009) refer to various studies and conclude that within the very definition of tacit knowledge is the idea that it "indwells in a comprehensive cognizance of the human mind and body" (Nonaka and Von Krogh, 2009, p. 637). By deduction, and concerning the discussion above, this renders tacit knowledge untransferable because it is not tangible. Hence, it cannot assume a form that can transition from one bearer to another. It is internal talent and personal capability, unique and a part of one's genetic structure, and therefore, unique to the person in the same way as a fingerprint. A respondent even added that:

"so sometimes, you know, people will be free to give you the information or knowledge they have, but we must also remember that there are certain things which are specific or peculiar to individuals. So, for example if Brian Kagondo were to leave Ariston, they can try and get a replacement possible, but they cannot find another Brian Kagondo." 12:68 ¶ 116 in SwaTz 05 Interview

The same respondent explained:

"Yes, I can make the right decision and I will know it is the decision but I can't give you the empirical evidence. You will only know it was the right decision. How do I impart that that feeling that tells me that this is the right decision in someone else? It is very difficult. And I think if you ask my team, they will tell you that that's one unique aspect, that I have.Yeah, I don't know if it is practiced by someone else." 12:72 ¶ 125 – 126 in SwaTz 05 Interview.

Literature refers to the Japanese belief of the oneness between the knower and the knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Perhaps in practice, however, the key to knowledge transfer or sharing, is the *knower's* willingness to share the knowledge (Connelly et al., 2019; Moin et al., 2024).

7.7 Strategy as Practice – Findings from Records and Documents

The preceding discussions have been premised on evidence gathered mainly from the interview discussions and the views and perspectives of the actors within and external to the organisations. The literature presented in Chapter 2 refers mainly to the importance of the practical aspects of the strategy-formation processes. This section summarises the findings from the visual evidence: the records and documents that were viewed, with reports from the accompanying discussions held with the custodian of these accounts and other respondents.

It is essential to set out from the onset that findings from the research revealed that not all organisations document or record knowledge or strategy processes. As the consultant explained:

"on the SMEs, the smaller entities definitely there is no documentation of that particular knowledge. But if you then speak to the owner, or the founder he will tell you the formula, or what knowledge or what he believes or knows that works, so it sits in the head of one or two privileged individuals." 1:348 ¶ 16 in ConG – Interview

Further, it was also established in an earlier discussion that strategy processes are very confidential:

"Well, I've noticed for some organisations that book is too sacred." 5:123 ¶ 233 Interview

"what I can tell you is that there is still a certain degree of confidentiality that is attached to strategy formulation and the strategic direction of the institution and therefore it is not widely shared as it should be at every level." 1:111 ¶ 35 in ConG – Interview

This suggests that the records of strategy are not always available, and this view was confirmed by the leaders or managers of the organisations, as well as the custodians of strategy documents. Most documents were only viewed for the research study, with a strict request to preserve confidentiality. They were not physically obtained.

Findings from the study revealed that some organisations, especially corporates and big, formal organisations, have a system for developing, archiving and preserving records for strategy processes.

"It will be good to say at some convenient point you can come in and then I will make sure for example my PA When can sit with you, you can go through all strategy documents that we got approved, you can see minutes of our Board minutes." 9:86 ¶ 56 in

"I was actually thinking about it. This would have been such a good meeting to have physically, because what that would help is I'll then be able to sort of show you whatever documentation which I think we have said that we can show you the documentation then, but we'll deal with what's there, we'll discuss as we go." 14:2 ¶ 29 – 30 Interview

However, the findings also revealed that the reason for documenting the processes was actually just for compliance purposes:

"we've got the Quality Management System (QMS) which says everything has to be documented." 8:49 ¶ 94 [redacted] Interview

The need for compliance means that these management systems become the basis for specific processes in the organisation. This is not necessarily because the internal stakeholders believe in the processes or appreciate them, but rather that the processes must be undertaken to meet the management system's compliance requirements. Essentially, the presence of formalised processes of doing business is not down to a deliberate design but a consequence of some compliance requirement for the organisation.

The strategy discussions and proceedings are sometimes documented and filed for future reference. The participants develop presentations of their strategy proposals, which are collated for distribution to and discussion with the Board or other committees set for strategy purposes. Findings also revealed that other than representatives of the owners of the business, the only other external stakeholder that tends to have access to these records is the strategy consultant or facilitator. In some cases, it is the consultant who documents the strategy process, activities and information:

"And at the end of each strategy, we actually the facilitator has to bring in a document." 6:25 ¶ 12 Interview

The findings also revealed that the main reason for documenting the strategy is to have a point of reference in terms of implementation and for tracking progress on the implementation of the strategy. The owners of the organisations or their directors use the record to track the performance of the strategy for which they set the 'big picture'.

"He is coming there obviously would have gone through you will read all the financial annual books for [redacted], he will have been briefed by the managing director by the Group CEO, he would have requested for the previous strategy document." 6:49 ¶ 16 Interview

The record is, therefore, used to assess the organisation's performance against its plans. However, other respondents also revealed that the document is not always a strict rule book that must be followed:

"For us I think the difference is we are not stuck to document because I can tell you when anything changes we are quick to get it and change and re-strategize." 11:66 ¶ 134 Interview

"So whilst this document is there, the direction at times may never be as intended, which may alter basing on the changes in the political institutions, so it's an everyday thing." 4:69 ¶ 62 Interview

This suggests a good level of flexibility and awareness in the organisations in that they retain their sensing activities and adapt or reconfigure their organisations in response to the changes instead of being bound to what is documented. Others also believed that the document should be a mere guide, with the strategy itself residing in the management team:

"And you don't even have to refer back to the document, a good team, with a good management and board, they know the strategy, once it's adopted, you must live strategy must be in you." 10:78 ¶ 57 Interview

7.8 Summary of Research Findings and Discussions

This chapter presented the findings of the research process and discussed them with reference to the literature review in the preceding chapters. The findings have implications for practice, praxis, theory building and future research.

Table 7.8–1 presents a consistency table that summarises the research findings in relation to the literature review and the research questions. The table seeks to present the relationship between the assumptions in the literature about strategy-making practice and the practice of the same in Zimbabwe. This analysis draws conclusions and recommendations and is presented in *Chapter 8.*

Table 7.8–1: Consistency table for comparison of literature review and findings from study

RESEARCH QUESTION	PROPOSITION FROM LITERATURE	FINDINGS FROM OWN STUDY
a) What are the practice, process and knowledge sharing and conversion dynamics of strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations??	• *Strategic planning event* • *It is a planned and deliberate process.* • *It is an emergent process that is a natural part of the organisation's culture.* • *It is formal but not utilised.* • *It involves the iterative interaction of the internal and external environments:* ○ *using tacit and explicit knowledge*	• Strategy formation is a formal set of activities sometimes carried out informally. • Practitioners of strategy have various views on the processes of strategy. • The owners of the organisations determine the strategic choices through their representatives, the Board. • External participants are determined by the Board.

b) What theoretical tools inform the strategy-formation processes in Zimbabwean organisations?	• *The theoretical framework is made up of:*
	  ○ *Contingency Theory*
	  ○ *Institution-Based View*
	  ○ *Resource-Based View*
	  ○ *Knowledge-Based View*
		• Institution-Based View with a variation on the role of external stakeholders (the owners of the organisation) in the making of strategic choices
		• Theories of chaos and incoordination
		• AI is an emerging actor in strategy processes.

c) What are the practice tools and the dynamic capabilities in strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?	• *Use of environment sensing, seizing and reconfiguration frameworks* • *Adoption of best-practice administrative systems for operational efficiencies* • *Employees play a role in strategy formulation*	• There are theoretical frameworks adopted from global best practices. • Compliance is at the centre of why organisations strategise. The owner of the organisation owns strategy • Current technology is used in sensing activities.
d) How is knowledge formed, shared and converted in strategy formation in Zimbabwean organisations?	• *Tacit and explicit knowledge conversion and sharing is central to organisation processes and systems* • *High literacy as a key attribute of the context and culture*	• Tacit knowledge is not shared and cannot be shared. • Informal centres of excellence are a key source knowledge and knowledge conversion • Knowledge sharing systems are selective based on level in hierarchy – employees are a rarely tapped knowledge source.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The research sought to investigate organisational and strategic routines (*deliberate or emergent*) of decision-making, practices, praxis, and practitioners of strategy-formation processes in Zimbabwean organisations and knowledge conversion dynamics in the processes. The accompanying literature on these dynamic capabilities acknowledged the existence of many actors in the processes. Nevertheless, scholars on strategy-making in Zimbabwe generally focused on top management as the full custodian of strategy-making processes. The findings from the research were discussed in comparison to the literature reviewed. This chapter presents the conclusions established from the study and makes recommendations to organisations in Zimbabwe and strategy practitioners. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

8.2 Conclusions from the Findings

The findings established that organisations and institutions in Zimbabwe have structured and well-recorded strategy-making practices. The practices are standardised and part of the organisations' internal practices. Structured frameworks and systems are in place to sense the dynamics of the external environment and determine the appropriate responses. These systems include tactics for obtaining knowledge from places with excellent models and systems. The findings also established that there is more than one actor in strategy processes in Zimbabwean organisations. In many instances, external experts are invited to assist with strategising and compiling the necessary knowledge to make strategic choices. External experts and consultants insist that formal organisational processes are structured and formalised. According to the consultant, the role of the owners or their representatives is not limited to presenting the big picture, their vision, and their wishes. They sometimes dictate the strategic direction that the organisation must take. This implies that while traditional scholars of the theory of the firm may have suggested a balance of the responsibilities amongst the stakeholders or the partners, the owners have the ultimate authority.

A review of the responses from the respondents shows that the execution of these practices and the implementation of the frameworks are not consistent, and the practitioners have different views of the systems, as well as why and how they are implemented. The findings suggest that organisations have ideal systems that theoretically comply with their owners' best practices or requirements. The systems seem to have been established more in compliance with the dictates of 'ideal or acceptable management' practices. In making known the existence of the practices, the organisations present a public image of embracing the appropriate level of standards as required by their strategic partners or stakeholders. The finding that the practitioners tend to have different views on the final implementation of the systems suggests that compliance is placed ahead of practice.

Just as the Dynamic Capabilities framework proposes, organisations have developed frameworks and processes for sensing the internal and external environments and establishing ways of attaining fit between the environments. The systems pass the test and tenets of the CoT as they are well set to provide the correct practices for establishing functional organisational processes. There is evidence that some individuals either occupy positions of power and/or authority or possess exceptional capabilities that determine the best approach or alternatives for the systems. These individuals use their sources of power to act, with minimum consultation with other practitioners. These individuals appear to also draw their authority from the owners of the business, who have greater control of the organisation's systems either directly or through their representatives, the Board. Respondents confirmed that the Board practically determines the strategic direction, choices and sometimes the external resources that assist in the process. The conclusion drawn is that management does not determine strategy. The Board does. The role of management is merely to put together the strategic wishes of the owners of organisations in a formal and acceptable form.

The elected (by the Board) consultants usually are strong allies of the business owners and have participated closely in the recruitment of the leadership teams within the organisation. Therefore, the choices made by these practitioners generally represent the wishes of the owners who seconded them there. Respondents confirmed that there are instances where the owners of the organisations opt to second their own people to lead the sensing of the organisation's internal and external environments and report to them.

After that, the owners or their representatives define the ‘bigger picture’ for the organisation to align to in its strategic plan. This picture is painted not from the outcomes of the internal resources’ sensing process but from the owner’s resources. The resources are an intricate part of the formation process, whether locally or outside the organisation’s geo-space; they review the proposals from the work of the resources and management and approve the final direction. The result is either a strategy wholly divorced from the realities of the organisation and is therefore not helpful or the establishment of a strategic plan that satisfies the compliance requirements of either a tender award or investment opportunity. In essence, the role of management in strategy formation in formal organisations is not too different from that of the ‘management’ in SMEs or entrepreneurship, which the Consultant ridicules as administrative. In formal organisations, the same praxis in SMEs prevails albeit masked as ‘formal, explicit systems and structures’.

Respondents generally agreed that shop-floor employees implement the organisation’s strategies and are in the correct position to understand the organisation's challenges and success factors. They have tactical, practical information and intelligence about the organisation. This intelligence is poorly tapped, as management often prefers to make the strategy formation process an elite one, including sourcing intelligence for the strategy formation. The shop-floor employees sometimes possess high levels of tacit knowledge that could benefit the organisation if well tapped into. However, the internal management relegates the harvesting of this intelligence to ‘respectable’ incentivised knowledge-sharing programmes. Given their precarious financial positions, the employees’ desire for financial rewards motivates them to abide by these programmes and share part of their tacit knowledge. However, this is not to the absolute level of use that could benefit the organisation if employees were considered a party to the team of strategy practitioners.

The study concluded that, although the strategy-formation and knowledge-conversion processes appear to be formal and well-structured in the southern African country, the reality is that, owing to an overriding desire for perceived political and procedural correctness, there is fractured and inconsistent understanding of the process and its strategic outcome. Taking cognisance of the internal social dynamics and the tacit knowledge within them and tapping into a broader range of stakeholders, including those at lower ranks within the organisation, may enable a more realistic and consistently understood strategic outcome to be realised.

8.3 Implications for Practice

The findings and conclusions have established that organisations have well-set systems but are not practised with the same degree of excellence. To remedy this situation, the study recommends the following:

a) The findings suggest that most management teams in Zimbabwean organisations do not *own* the strategy-making process. Instead, their actual role is to ensure the 'compliance levels' of the strategy. They finally present measures well against the desired benchmark or requirement, which the shareholders mainly establish. If at all the organisations are to attain the tenets of the dynamic capabilities framework and the best practice principles of CoT, then the owners of the organisations must extend authentic and practical responsibility to the internal actors to lead the sensing and seizing of opportunities and the practical reconfiguration of the organisations in pursuit of the mission.
b) The business owners need to assist, rather than completely dominate, the internal participants' definition of the bigger picture. Alternatively, the owners may present their desired endgame and then accord the internal systems real authority to determine the best approach with constant feedback on their progress. This may make the internal system more proactive and better respond to the rapidly changing environment ahead of potential threats.
c) Organisations must incorporate the informalised practices and systems into the internal formalised processes. Individuals and teams develop preferred and valuable practices parallel to the formal systems. Organisations' desire to pursue best practices or known, formalised practices must not musk the traditions that form over time. Embracing informal systems may assist the organisation in achieving a better competitive advantage out of the ingenuity of individuals and informal structures.
d) As the broader context becomes increasingly dynamic, so should the internal systems and processes. Literature, under *Section 4.2, refers to China's responses* to the fast-paced evolution of the global context. The responses include flexibility

of systems and processes. This does not imply a careless and unorganised approach to decision-making but instead implies embracing the available tacit knowledge that the broader Zimbabwean context is known to possess through the literacy levels of its citizenry.

These recommendations may bring better clarity to the definition of organisations' processes. The study has clearly shown that the processes are deliberate by definition but mostly emergent in practice.

8.4 Implications for Praxis

The study has shown that in many instances, actors' roles are limited to what is actually defined by the explicit systems that exist in the organisation. This tends to exclude some sources of knowledge and innovation that may eventually be important to the organisation in its pursuit of strategic goals. The following recommendations are drawn for the praxis of strategy-making:

a) Internal praxis is drawn from learnings of ‘best practices’ locally and abroad. They are not absolute copies but are improved and contextualised to the local environment. They are, therefore, more likely to be helpful and more practical if implemented. It is therefore recommended that organisations implement the systems practically to align the views of all internal practitioners and, in this way, possibly achieve better outcomes from the strategy processes.
b) Determining the actors and their roles in strategy formation must not be determined by rank and file but by each actor's capabilities and contributions. Some communities of excellence are not always formal but are important in strategy-making.
c) Employees must not be mere implementers of the strategy. There is value in engaging them to input from the point of practical knowledge of ‘the real culture’ within the organisation and its actual operational challenges and successes. The employees directly interact with the practicalities of the organisation's environment. They are, therefore, a competent source of intelligence whose tacit and explicit knowledge must be converted to the best use in determining the organisation’s strategic choices.

The study's findings challenge managers' role as strategy practitioners. The definition of management excludes the traditional elite responsibilities of decision-making, planning, organising and controlling. The respondents suggest that the role of managers is limited to the administration of the views and preferences of the owners of the organisations.

8.5 Implications for Theory Building

Findings from this research challenge some key aspects of the Knowledge Based View and the Institution Based View. *Figure 8.5–1* below presents a summary picture of the contribution of this study to these two theories (KBV and IBV). Chapter 3 reviewed the theoretical tools that informed this research study. The review was summarised in *Figure 3.7–1* at the end of the same chapter. *Figure 8.5–1* shows the contribution of the study to two theories reviewed above. The focus areas are highlighted in green and red font.

a. The green font represents the ‘current’ general theoretical view and assumption.
b. The red font is the suggested remodel / review of the theoretical assumptions, which is explained below and after the diagram.

In exploring the KBV, literature and findings present the key role for tacit knowledge as a source of competitive advantage for organisations. In general, tacit knowledge is viewed by many scholars as an intrinsic capability that is unique to an individual. However, the scholars also appear to suggest that this intrinsic, unique attribute is as *simply* transferable as explicit knowledge. The study has shown that while organisations have put in place several measures, schemes or models to facilitate and encourage the transfer of tacit knowledge, there is no actual confirmation that this has happened. Some respondents confirmed that tacit knowledge is so intrinsic that it is actually not transferable. The findings, therefore, show that the generalised assumption that the knowledge transfer process includes explicit knowledge is limited. The findings actually show that only the *selected, volunteered skills* drawn (by the knower) from tacit knowledge can be transferred. This is an addition to the existing views on tacit knowledge and ultimately, to the theory itself.

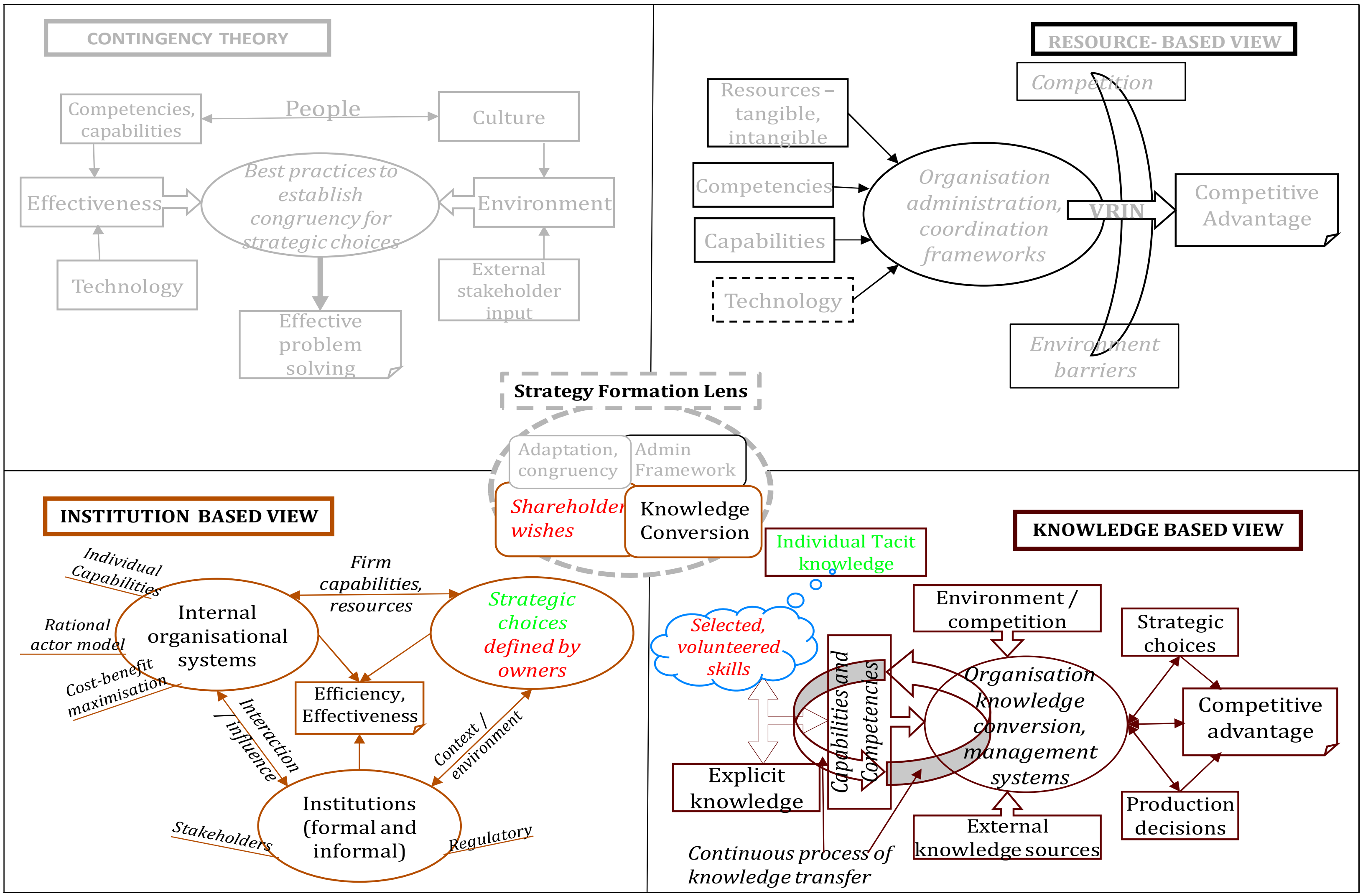


Figure 8.5–1: Theoretical contribution

The IBV, as part of its broad view, argues that strategies are about choices. These strategic choices of the organisation are inherently affected by the formal and informal constraints of the institutional frameworks within which the organisation exists. The theory implies that these strategic choices are a product of management's responses to an *equal* influence of the interactions of these institutions and stakeholders. The study, however, reveals a predominant institution that appears to define these strategic choices instead of participating or contributing towards them. This *institution* is in the form of the owners of the organisation, the shareholders. The respondents generally submit that the owners determine 'the bigger picture', which appears to develop into strategic choices. The study also shows that even when managemenent and other actors in the praxis and practice of strategy making have gone through the entire process of sensing and making strategies, theirs are mere proposals. The actors always have to refer back to the owners of the organisations for validation of the strategy. Literature generally places the responsibility of strategy making to the internal actors (management and employees) and suggests that the external actors, who include owners *assist* or offer guidance on strategy. However, submissions show that the shareholders, the owners of organisations are the owners of strategy. They direct strategic outcomes and validate the same. The study, therefore, makes the contribution that; under the IBV, owners of organisations must be defined as a distinct institutions that determine the organisation's strategic choices. The Institution-Based-View must extend its definition of the institutions to include these owners of the organisations not as stakeholders only but as a whole institution that has a direct bearing on the determination of the organisation's strategic choices.

8.6 Implications for Future Research

The study focused on the inter-relationships among strategy practitioners and their interactions with the organisation's systems, stakeholders and external environment. The external environment includes the context in which the organisation operates. Context is central to research, theory building, testing or confirmation. The study defined the context at micro (firm-level systems and culture), macro (national level institutional and socio-economic) and global (emerging economies, technology).

Perhaps, the weakness in the study is the emphasis on social interactions as praxis. *Section 6.3* introduces and briefly speaks to the global context, including technology as the unavoidable third level unit of analysis.

Technology has grown so dynamic that it cannot be taken as simply another variable of the context. Global innovations have led to the development of a 'sub-human' in the form of AI. Today's reality suggests the need to embrace this technology, the AI in the praxis of strategy formation. Knowledge creation, conversion and sharing is now actually done by machines more than humans. The study referred to strategy practitioners using specific technology platforms in sensing, analysis, or communication activities. However, a growing reality remains that AI will substitute some once 'human only' praxis. The medical field already has AI participants in intricate processes, while Applications such as Chat GPT have replaced human analysis and interpretation of phenomena or events. It follows, therefore, that there will soon be (or already is) a role for AI in strategy processes, thereby interrogating the commonly known social interactions of strategy processes. Future research must explore and ideally establish the role of AI in strategy processes, including whether it remains a general context variable or a distinct participant in the practice and praxis of strategy-making.

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APPENDIX 1: ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER – PROTOCOL H18/07/10

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Kagondo

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H18/07/10**
PROJECT TITLE	Dynamic capabilities in strategy formation and knowledge conversion in Zimbabwean organisations
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr B Kagondo
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Wits Business School/
DATE CONSIDERED	20 July 2018
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Two year extension
EXPIRY DATE	19 March 2024

DATE 10 February 2023 **CHAIRPERSON** ____________________
(Professor J Watermeyer)

cc: Supervisor : Prof C Van Der Hoven and Prof T Carmichael

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **A SIGNED COPY** returned to the Secretary electronically. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. **I/we agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low Risk studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.**

____________________ 14 / 02 / 2023
Signature Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

(Wits Business School Letterhead)
Date

Wits Business School
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg,
Private Bag 4, Wits, 2050
SOUTH AFRICA

The Chief Executive Officer
(Company address)
ZIMBABWE

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Brian Kagondo and I am studying for a PhD with the Wits Business School at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. My research is on: **Dynamic capabilities in strategy formation and knowledge conversion in Zimbabwean organisations.** The aim of the research is to interrogate the strategy formation processes in organisations and how the internal processes or systems facilitate knowledge transference amongst employees as well as the translation of the various forms of knowledge from different sources of intelligence into strategic decisions, strategic choices and intended strategic outcomes. The research will also seek to establish how organisations prevent the blockage of knowledge sharing amongst the firm employees and between the firm and its external environment.

I am kindly requesting permission to conduct this research in your organisation.

I will humbly request access to three sources of data for this research process and would like to assure you of full confidentiality in relation to this data. The first source is company records which are: strategy documents, strategy review documents and annual reports. The second data source will be the management team and the leadership of the employees (the workers' committee), who will be interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews will take approximately 90 to 120 minutes at a time. With your permission, I wish to retain some of the documents and record the interviews for further analysis. All records will be kept in a secure password-protected folders. The third source shall be three business stakeholders: the industrial association, the national employment council and your main employee development consultant. I shall humbly request contact details of the representatives of these stakeholders

As a researcher, I pledge my commitment to good ethical conduct and observance of strict privacy and confidentiality in handling the organisation's information. The name of the organisation as well as the identities of the participants in this research will be kept strictly confidential and will not be inferred in any way. If you have any concerns about any ethical considerations while I am conducting this research in your business, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisors or the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) on:

- Telephone: + 27(0)11 717 1408,
- Email: hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za/Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Upon conclusion of the research, a full thesis will be published on the University's website. If you wish to have a copy of the thesis, please do not hesitate to advise me and I shall gladly furnish you with an official copy. Should you have any further questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisors on the contact details below.

Yours sincerely,

BRIAN V. T. KAGONDO

Mail:1316671@students.wits.ac.za/bkagondo@gmail.com Phone:+263(0)772142018

Supervisors:

Prof. Teresa Carmichael	or	Prof. Chris van der Hoven
Terri.Carmichael@wits.ac.za		Chris.vanderHoven@usb-ed.com
+27(0) 82 458 9583		+27(0) 21 918 4351

APPENDIX 3: ORGANISATION PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

(Company Letterhead)

Topic: **Dynamic capabilities in strategy formation and knowledge conversion in Zimbabwean organisations**

Researcher: Brian V. T. Kagondo

I..., on behalf of .... and in my capacity as.. confirm that I have received, read and understood the request to conduct research in the organisation. The aims, objectives and intentions of the researcher and the organisation's requests have been explained to me.

CONSENT	**Please tick response**	
	YES	**NO**
1. I understand that the organisation has no obligation to participate in the research		
2. I confirm that the researcher is permitted to access the organisation's physical and on-line records only for purposes of this research and in accordance to the organisation's rules on information management		
3. I confirm that the researcher is permitted to make copies of selected documents (which shall bear my signature as confirmation) for further analysis and reference,		
4. I understand that the researcher shall interview selected members of management and employees for the purpose of this research only		
5. I understand that the interviews shall be audio recorded and kept secure for further analysis.		

Name of Authorising person:...

Designation of authorising person:..

Phone and E-mail:...

Signature and Date:...

APPENDIX 4: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

(Wits Business School Letterhead)

Date

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

My name is Brian Kagondo and I am studying for a PhD with the Wits Business School at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. My research is on: **Dynamic capabilities in strategy formation and knowledge conversion in Zimbabwean organisations.** The research aims to investigate the strategy formation processes in organisations, how the internal processes or systems facilitate knowledge transference amongst employees, and how organisations prevent the blockage of knowledge sharing amongst the firm employees and between the firm and its external environment.

I humbly invite you to participate in the research through an interview that will take approximately 90 to 120 minutes. With your permission, I would also like to record the interview using a digital device for my own notes. You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this research and there will be no penalties or disadvantages for not participating. If at any point you wish to withdraw from participating or responding to any question in the interview, you are free to do so. Your participation will be confidential and I will not request your name or identity. I will only request your preferred contact number for use if I require further discussion.

As a researcher, I pledge my commitment to good ethical conduct and observance of strict privacy and confidentiality. If you have any concerns about any ethical considerations while I am conducting this research in your business, please do not hesitate to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) or my supervisors on details below.

Yours sincerely,

BRIAN V. T. KAGONDO
1316671@students.wits.ac.za / bkagondo@gmail.com
+263(0) 772 142 018 / +27(0) 84 730 8130

Wits Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) *+ 27(0)11 717 1408* *hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za* *Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za*	*Prof. Teresa Carmichael* *Terri.Carmichael@wits.ac.za* *+27(0) 82 458 9583*	*Prof. Chris van der Hoven* *Chris.vanderHoven@usb-ed.com* *+27(0) 21 918 4351*

APPENDIX 5: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

(University Letterhead)

Topic: **Dynamic capabilities in strategy formation and knowledge conversion in Zimbabwean organisations**

Researcher: Brian V. T. Kagondo

I..., agree to participate in this research. The aims, objectives and intentions of the researcher as well as my role have been explained to me.

CONSENT	**Please tick response**	
	YES	**NO**
1. I understand that I am not obliged to participate in the research.		
2. I agree to participate in this research.		
3. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I shall not expect any form of reward for my participation.		
4. I understand and agree that my participation in this research will be kept confidential and that the responses may be referred to for future research.		
5. I understand and agree that the researcher may audio-record the interview for further analysis and reference.		

Signature of participant:...

Participant Role Code:..

Phone Number:..   Date:..

APPENDIX 6: ORGANISATION RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

SECTION A – GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Organisation Code:…………….............. Participant Role Code:..
2. Industry / Sector:...
3. Date of interview:... Time:…………………………………
4. SUMMARY COMMENTS:

   ....

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SECTION B - COMPANY PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

Knowledge Management

5. How is the responsibility over ideas about the running of the business and strategic direction generally shared in the organisation:
   a. Between the Shareholders and the Board?
   b. Between the board and executive?
   c. Between the executive and senior management?
   d. Between senior management and the rest of staff?
   e. Between the organisation and other stakeholders such as industry association, NEC, consultants, customers, regulatory authorities, statutory bodies, standards associations, creditors and competition?
6. Who has the ultimate say in the strategic direction that the business must take?
7. What is the ideal reporting structure? What is the current reporting structure? If different, has it been explained? What are your thoughts?
8. Do you have a dedicated resource (skill) or department for innovation, research and development?
   a. Why? (include full mandate if present and reasons why, if absent)

9. Does the organisation deliberately recognize and reward special skills (talent)?
    a. How do these skills transfer their knowledge / capabilities to others?
    b. Is there a formal 'individual to individual skills transference' program?
10. Does the organisation have any deliberate processes or mechanisms for knowledge transfer:
    a. From individuals in the business to external structures,
    b. From external intelligence structures or sources to internal individuals,

Strategy-making Processes

11. How does the business develop strategies (what is the sequence of events in the process)?
12. Is the strategy process formal or informal?
13. What are the key stages and sections of the process?
14. What informs the need to embark in the strategy process?
15. Who leads the strategy process?
    a. At overall (corporate) level?
    b. At each of the key stages and sections of the process described above?
16. How does the business decide to embark on the strategy process?
    a. Is it a planned process? If so,
        i. Who plans the process?
        ii. How often is the process engaged in?
        iii. What informs the process? What is the knowledge basis? (knowledge here is defined as information and data from within and outside the organisation – Industry, National & global)
        iv. Is there an established strategy process format followed periodically?
        v. How was it established? When did it start and how?
        vi. Who started the planned strategy process and format?
    b. Is it a **routine** process? If so,
        i. Who initiates the process?
        ii. Which section/department leads the routine process?
        iii. What prompts the need to initiate the process?
        iv. How often is the process engaged in?

v. What is the format followed?

Strategic Choices

17. How does the business determine the strategic choices to pursue?
    a. Are they pre-determined?
    b. If so, by who?
        i. How?
        ii. When?
        iii. On what basis?
    c. If not, explain the process and basis for determining strategic choices.

Environment & institutions

18. What is the role of the major shareholder or his/her parent company in:
    a. The business' current strategy processes?
    b. What is the choice of participants in the strategy process?
    c. Strategic choices
    d. Frequency of strategy sessions
19. What is the influence of the Industry level environment (events or processes) on:
    a. The business' current strategy processes?
    b. What is the choice of participants in the strategy process?
    c. Strategic choices
    d. Frequency of strategy sessions
20. How do government practices impact the business' strategy processes and decisions?
21. How different or similar are the business' strategy processes from:
    a. Similar businesses (competitors) in Zimbabwe?
    b. Similar businesses in Africa?
    c. Similar businesses at Global level?

APPENDIX 7: INSTITUTION RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

SECTION A – STAKEHOLDER SUMMARY INFORMATION

1. Institution / Stakeholder Code:……….......................... Year of Establishment..................
2. Establishing Authority:…...
3. Industry / Sector:..Location:…......…....………………………….
4. Spread of membership (geo):…………………………………………………………………………….

……

5. Average # of clients/members: (2015-17):............. (2010-14):........................

   (2005-09):……..... (1995-2004):..................
6. Average Annual membership growth rate - 20 years:.........................%
7. Summary of vision, aims & objectives:..

   ....

   ....

   ....

SECTION B - INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES & PROCESSES

8. How does the Institution develop its own strategies (what is the sequence of events in the process)?
9. Is the strategy process formal or informal?
   a. If YES, what are the key stages and sections of the process?
   b. If NO, then how are the strategies formed?
10. What informs the need to embark in the strategy process?
11. Who leads the strategy process?
    a. At the overall (Institutional) level?
    b. At each of the key stages and sections of the process described above?
12. How does the Institution decide to embark on the strategy process?
    a. Is it a planned process? If so,
       i. Who plans the process?
       ii. How often is the process engaged in?

iii. Is there an established strategy process format followed periodically?
iv. How was it established? When did it start and how?
v. Who started the planned strategy process and format?

b. What informs the process? What is the knowledge basis? (knowledge here is defined as information and data from within and outside the organisation – Industry, National and global)
c. Is it a **routine** process? If so,
    i. Who initiates the process?
    ii. Which section/department leads the routine process?
    iii. What prompts the need to initiate the process?
    iv. How often is the process engaged in?
    v. What is the format followed?

<u>Strategic Choices</u>

13. How does the Institution determine the strategic choices (defined as those choices which seek to locate the organisation concerning the prevailing environment and to choose methods to operate within that environment) to pursue?
    a. Are they pre-determined?
    b. If so, by whom?
        iv. How?
        v. When?
        vi. On what basis?
    c. If not, explain the process and basis for determining strategic choices.

<u>Institution and Membership Effectiveness</u>

14. What is the nature of the relationship between the institution and member organisations or clients (explain)?
    a. Statutory
    b. Mandatory
    c. Voluntary
15. Do you keep track of your member organisations/clients' strategic decisions and internal strategy processes?

a. Why? Why not?
b. If so, how?

16. Are there deliberate knowledge-sharing or exchange processes between the institution and member organisations and clients?
    a. If yes,
        i. How do they work?
        ii. Are they formal or informal?
        iii. What is the distribution of focus between (explain):
            1. Technical skills,
            2. Managerial skills,
            3. Entrepreneurial skills
            4. Social skills
    b. If NO, how does the institution contribute to improving the competencies of the member organisations/clients?
17. How does your institution assist member organisations and clients in improving their capabilities through:
    a. Innovation in operations systems and processes,
    b. Improvement of technology systems,
    c. Modelling business structures (mergers, acquisitions or demergers),
    d. Facilitating interaction and transactions with global trend-setters in the industry?
18. What is the process of proposing industry-level policy changes?
    a. Who initiates the changes between the institution, members or government?
    b. What is the role of the institution in the process?
    c. What is the level of participation of the members/clients?
    d. How do you ensure input from members/clients?
    e. What is the feedback process between the institution and members/clients?
    f. Who represents the member/client in the exchange on these changes?
        i. How is the representative chosen? By who?
        ii. How does the institution ensure the exchange gets to the rest of the business for input?

APPENDIX 8: CONSULTANT RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The Stakeholder Participant Research Instrument (Consultants)

SECTION A – GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Stakeholder Code:………………............. Participant Role Code:..
2. Date of interview:.. Time:…………………………………
3. SUMMARY COMMENTS:

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

SECTION B – STRATEGY FORMATION PRACTICES & PROCESSES

Knowledge Management

4. How is the responsibility over ideas about the running of an organisation and strategic direction generally shared:
   a. Between its Shareholders and the Board?
   b. Between the board and executive?
   c. Between the executive and the rest of the staff?
   d. Between the organisation and other stakeholders such as industry association, NEC, consultants, customers, regulatory authorities, statutory bodies, standards associations, creditors and competition?
5. Who has the ultimate say in the strategic direction that the organisation must take?
6. Is there an "ideal" management structure for organisations in Zimbabwe?
7. Do organisations in Zimbabwe have any deliberate processes or mechanisms for knowledge transfer:
   a. From individuals in the organisation to external structures,
   b. From external intelligence structures or sources to internal individuals,

Strategy-making Processes

8. From your experiences, how do Zimbabwe organisations generally develop strategies?
    a. Is the strategy process formal or informal?
    b. Is there a standard sequence of events in the process? (explain if or if not)
    c. Is it a planned process? If so, who plans the process?
    d. Is it a **routine** process? If so,
9. What are the key stages and sections of the process?
10. What informs the need to embark in the strategy process?
    a. What is the knowledge basis? (knowledge here is defined as information and data from within and outside the organisation – Industry, National and global)
    b. What proportion of this knowledge used to make strategy is internal and what proportion is external to the organisation?
    c. How do most organisations convert external knowledge into usable knowledge for strategy-making?

Environment & institutions

11. What is the role of the major shareholder or his/her parent company in:
    a. The organisation's current strategy processes?
    b. What is the choice of participants in the strategy process?
    c. Strategic choices
    d. Frequency of strategy sessions
12. What is the influence of the Industry level environment (events or processes) on:
    a. The organisation's current strategy processes?
    b. What is the choice of participants in the strategy process?
    c. Strategic choices
    d. Frequency of strategy sessions
13. How do government practices impact the organisation's strategy processes and decisions?

14. What is the role of the Strategy Consultant in the organisation's strategy formation process and decisions (on strategic choices, outcomes, actors and implementation model)?

Strategic Outcomes

15. How does the organisation define its preferred strategic outcomes?
16. Who defines the preferred strategic outcomes?
17. What is the distribution of emphasis between:
    a. **Internal outcomes** (systems and structure e.g. operations plans and performance)
    b. **External outcomes** (organisation model/configuration e.g. mergers and acquisitions)
18. What is the measure of the strategic outcomes?
    a. Duration of the outcome?
    b. Monetary value of outcome?
    c. Impact of the outcome on organisation valuation (share price, market value etc)
19. Who validates the outcomes, and what is the process of evaluating the strategy's performance?

APPENDIX 9: DOCUMENTS / RECORDS REVIEW GUIDELINES

SECTION A – PARTICIPATING COMPANY SUMMARY INFORMATION

1. Organisation Code:……………………………………………………………………………………
2. Industry / Sector:……………………………………………………………………………………
3. Date of Interview:…………………………………… Time:………………………………
4. Summary Comments:………………………………………………………………………………

   ……

   ……

   ……

SECTION B – STRATEGY PROCESS

1. How do you form strategies in the organisation?
   a. What are the key persons, and what are their roles?
   b. Summary pictorial view of the process – flow chart
   c. Where does the strategic planning take place, and who is invited?
   d. How often does this take place?

SECTION C – RECORDS AND REPORTS

2. What records are generated:
   a. At the planning stage?
   b. During strategy formation?
   c. After Strategy?

** request access to reports for shorthand notes.

3. How is the board updated on the progress of the strategy?
   a. How are corrective actions, new learnings and plans established and recorded?
   b. How are shareholders updated on the progress?
4. Some interviewees have submitted that consultations are done internally through meetings between management and employees and externally between

management and stakeholders such as key accounts managers. In order to establish this process, the following documents are requested:

a. Records of EXCO meetings prior to strategy formulation or evaluation?
b. Records of staff meetings prior to strategy formulation or evaluation?
c. Records of feedback meetings with staff and management after strategy has been approved,
d. Records of any meetings with persons from the company’s Key Accounts in consulting for input into strategy formation for the company.
e. Records of the meetings that were shared between management and employees, any records in which this meeting was referred to in future projects, and lessons derived from it.