Challenges Affecting Effective Application of Strategic Management Techniques in the Process of Implementing Organisational Change in Zambia Correctional Service

Maureen Himbondo[1], Dr. Kelvin Mukolo Kayombo[2]

[1] Zambia Correctional Service, Kabwe Zambia

[2] ZCAS University, Lusaka, Zambia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Published Online: 01 November 2023 **Corresponding Author:** Maureen Himbondo.	Strategic management is a management tool that both public and private sector entities adopt to improve organizational performance especially in the process of implementing organizational change. Zambia Correctional Service in particular has been undergoing a paradigm shift in order to implement new security sector reforms. Like many other public entities world over, the Service has continuously recorded failure in achieving strategic objectives, as noted by Cabinet Office's 2020 performance assessment. Therefore, this study sought to identify challenges that affect effective application of strategic management techniques in the process of implementing organisational change. This research involved ten top management leadership officials, using qualitative methods like in-depth interviews and focus group discussions for data validity, reliability, and triangulation. Thematic and content analysis was performed using Google Forms software, ensuring reliability and validity of the data. Research findings indicate that the Service has been experiencing a number of challenges and these include having an ambiguous vision statement, operating on an outdated organisational structure, inadequate end-user engagement and ineffective examination and modification of work processes. The findings show that the Service needs to develop a model for application of strategic management techniques that support implementation of organisational change. The model should include elements such as establishing a clear end goal (vision), revise the structure to suit the demands of the current strategic plan, conduct program impact assessments to effectively measure performance and examine and modify work processes for effective and efficient public resource management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Many studies have been conducted to prove that effective application of strategic management tools and techniques in any organisation, including the Corrections Industry, is a cornerstone for improving organisational performance especially in times of implementing change (Klein *et al.*, 2022; Zhao *et al.*, 2019; Miranda, 2018; Moscoso-Sánchez *et al.*, 2017; Dissel, 2008). Zambia Correctional Service (ZCS) in particular has adopted strategic planning to define its goals, direction, strategies and as a basis for decision making in allocating resources. Some of the strategic planning techniques the Service has adopted are SWOT analysis, PESTEL analysis and Institutional Assessment. The main strategic goal of the Service is to contribute to community safety through achieving custodial, rehabilitation and operational excellence. However, findings of the 2020 performance assessment conducted by Management Development Division under the Cabinet Office revealed that, like other government departments in Zambia, ZCS has continuously failed to achieve its strategic objectives. Unfortunately, no published empirical research has yet been carried out on challenges hindering effective application of strategic management for implementing organisational change in Zambia Correctional Service. The aim of this study is to fill this knowledge gap. Therefore, the research question posed for this study was 'What challenges hinder effective application of strategic management

techniques to implement organisational change in Zambia Correctional Service?'

This study sought to establish two research objectives, namely:

1. To identify challenges in application of strategic management techniques to effectively implement organisational change in Zambia Correctional Service.

2. To provide recommendations for effective application of strategic management techniques to implement organisational change in Zambia Correctional Service.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to explore the effectiveness of strategic management practices in Zambia Correctional Service, using an interpretive research philosophy. According to Blaxter *et al*. (2010) and Collins and Hussey (2014), this approach allows for depth rather than breadth, based on rich and subjective findings. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with lived professional experience in using strategic management practices for organizational change (Collins and Hussey, 2014). The Zambia Correctional Service's mandate is discharged through ten directorates and four top leadership members, resulting in a sample size of fourteen participants.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, in person, and virtually, with participants' consent recorded and transcribed. Interviews are appropriate for exploring complex and subtle phenomena, such as opinions, feelings, experiences, or privileged information based on someone's experience (Denscombe, 2017). In-depth interviews were proposed as the main data collection instrument, combined with focus group discussions and archival research for triangulation. Interviews provide deep insight into industry professionals with lived experiences in applying and implementing strategic management at the strategic level in an organization.

The researcher used inductive thematic and content analyses to analyze the qualitative data collected through the interviews. Thematic analysis generates themes based on raw data, supporting the research objective of developing theory based on research findings. Quest *et al*. (2012) suggest that using thematic analysis is most appropriate for capturing complexities of meaningful insights within a data set. The themes served as a basis for the researcher's analysis and interpretation of data.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The effective application of strategic management techniques in the process of implementing organizational change is essential for businesses seeking to remain competitive and adapt to the dynamic business environment. In Europe, as in many parts of the world, organizations face unique challenges in this context. This literature review explores the key challenges affecting the application of strategic management techniques during organizational change in the European context.

Europe is renowned for having a wide range of nations, dialects, and cultural customs. The application of strategic management strategies during change processes might be influenced by cultural variations. According to Oetzel and Oh (2016), effective change projects in Europe require a grasp of and ability to manage these cultural variances. The intricate regulatory structure of the European Union (EU) contributes to the intricacy of organisational change. The consistent use of strategic management strategies may be hampered by variations in taxation, labour laws, and industry-specific regulations among EU member states (Hitt *et al*., 2016). This calls for a deep comprehension of EU laws and how change management is affected by them. Europe has a wide spectrum of regional and national economic imbalances. According to Schiavo and Lazzarotti (2019), these differences have an impact on the resources that are available for putting change initiatives into practise. Companies need to adjust their strategies to take into consideration fluctuations in the economy and any resource disparities. Managing change processes effectively requires effective leadership, and the dynamic climate of Europe need leaders who are skilled in using strategic management approaches. According to Vakola and Nikandrou (2017), investing in leadership development is necessary because it can be difficult for leaders to effectively drive change. In organisations across the globe, resistance to change is a typical occurrence, and this is also true in Europe. European workers frequently show a significant preference for stable and secure employment (Piderit, 2000). One of the biggest obstacles to putting strategic management concepts into practise is managing resistance to change.

In the United States employee resistance is a major obstacle to organisational change implementation. Kotter (1991) asserts that employees frequently oppose change out of a sense of job security loss and a fear of the unknown. The success of change projects depends on how well this resistance is managed. When it comes to leading organisations through change, effective leadership is crucial. According to Kotter (1996), executives need to spearhead the transformation process and offer a compelling vision for change. In America, the effectiveness of change is largely determined by the competence and compatibility of leadership teams. With a wide range of cultures and regional differences, the United States is a varied nation. These cultural variations must be considered when putting strategic management approaches into practise (Hofstede, 2001). Change projects may not be as effective if cultural quirks are ignored. State-by-state variation in a complicated regulatory framework affects enterprises operating in the United States. To implement changes, it is necessary to comprehend and navigate these regulatory nuances (Larsson & Vinberg, 2010). If you do not, then you may run into

problems with the law and compliance. The swift advancement of technology in the United States presents a range of advantages and obstacles for the execution of change endeavours (Christensen, 1997). It is critical to adjust to new technology while maintaining data security and staff upskilling.

A study by Guchu (2014) in Kenya focused on the Parliament of Kenya's strategic management practices, revealing that employees were often excluded from the planning process. The process was primarily a high-level exercise, leaving the organization's most important assets, managers, and employees disconnected from the system. The implementation of the strategic plan varies across organizations and depends on the actual strategic plan. Middle managers were not involved in strategy development, which was primarily a responsibility of senior managers. To ensure successful implementation, basic steps such as evaluation, vision creation, team selection, and progress meetings were identified.

A similar study by Tamimi (2018) investigated the applications of strategic management practices in the Middle East countries. The study used content analysis techniques to analyze variables, public reforms, and strategic planning elements (planning, implementation, and evaluation). It found that most Middle Eastern countries struggled to practice strategic management due to various reasons. Public reforms and decentralization were identified as critical scientific management approaches for transforming traditional public administration into more effective strategic administration. Improving public sector administration requires strategic thinking, decentralization of authority and responsibilities, research, initiatives, and innovation based on long-term planning processes. Balancing authorities and responsibilities help rationalize resource allocation at all levels, leading to efficiency and effective public service delivery.

Tamimi (2018) found that Middle East countries, including Nigeria, have not effectively applied strategic management tools in their public administration. This is due to a lack of public administration reforms, weak strategic management preconditions within government departments, and a lack of organizational policy for guiding public strategies. Gideon and Georgina (2016) found that there was a lack of essential organizational policy, lack of training, improper leadership style, and a weak focus on top management interest, resulting in weak government performance and blurred organization visions and relations.

Common (2008) found that Oman's highly centralized political systems and organizational cultures made it resistant to reform tendencies, resulting in decreased utilization of strategic management tools at the organizational level. Most managers were generally aware of strategic management practices and tools, but most managers failed to use them frequently.

In Saudi Arabia, Gulf States are highly resistant to administrative modernization, leading to challenges in public reform and decentralization. Otaibi (2015) found that Saudi Arabia spent large amounts of money on modernizing bureaucratic public management systems, but developments were slow due to cultural and structural setbacks.

Hasm and Aamery (2006) found that the central government of Saudi Arabia failed to apply strategic management practices due to the lack of strategic management specialists, resulting in a reduction in motivation to develop strategic plans. The failure to apply strategic management practices is mostly attributed to weak training, lack of competence and capability for future thinking, and lack of competition within government agencies.

IV. FINDINGS

This section reports the findings of the study on challenges hindering effective application of strategic management techniques to implement organisational change in Zambia Correctional Service.

A. Zambia Correctional Service

Established in 1964 as Zambia Prison Service (PS), the Institution changed its name to Zambia Correctional Service (ZCS) in 2016. Headed by a Commissioner General, the Service is established under Article 193 of the Constitution Amendment Act No. 2 of 2016 and governed by the Correctional Service Act No. 37 of 2021 of the Laws of Zambia to manage and regulate all prisons and correctional centres. The Service operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security. Its main goal is to contribute to national security through provision of quality humane custody, rehabilitation and extension services to people who commit crime and sentenced to imprisonment. With a prison population of about 25,000, overcrowding has been one of the Service's main challenges to effective service delivery. The most common offences committed are theft, robbery and sexual related crimes. Zambia has 102 correctional/prison facilities dotted across the country.

B. Challenges Affecting Effective Application of Strategic Management in ZCS

In the quest to improve performance during the paradigm shift, ZCS adopted strategic management as a tool to define goals, direction, strategies and a basis for decision making on resource allocation (ZCS, 2022). Some of the strategic management techniques the Service adopted are SWOT analysis, PESTEL analysis and Institutional Assessment. The main strategic goal of the Service is to implement recommendations of the new security sector reforms through a paradigm shift. To ZCS, this means contributing to community safety through providing quality correctional service. The strategic pillars of the paradigm shift are custodial excellence, rehabilitation excellence, production excellence and operational excellence (ZCS, 2022).

However, findings of the study revealed that, like most of the Zambia's public entities, the Service has over the years been failing to achieve its strategic objectives due to the reasons outlined below.

1) Ambiguous Vision Statement

According to Bryson and Bert (2018), a vision is a state that provides an overall direction for the change process and serves as a foundation from which to develop specific strategies for arriving at a future end state. He therefore argues that developing a clear vision makes it easier for management to communicate the need for change to other members of the organization and to develop suitable programs to help the organization arrive at its future end state. However, the current study observed that ZCS's vision statement was not clear enough to be understood and interpreted by majority members of the organization. According to the research participants of the study, majority of the members of the organization including other key stakeholders such as inmates did not understand what is implied in the current vision statement. The study noted that the current vision statement is ambiguous and difficult to relate to the Service's core functions, hence difficult to interpret and transform into specific courses of action for effective implementation. This has subsequently led to failure in achieving strategic objectives and effective implementation of recommendations of the paradigm shift.

2) Outdated Organizational Structure

The study revealed that despite having an updated strategic plan, the Service has continued to operate with an outdated organisational structure. This makes is difficult to implement proposed change programs, subsequently creating a serious performance gap. The current organisational structure does not support effective execution of the new strategic initiatives.

3) Ineffective Program Impact Assessment

The study revealed that ZCS has been having challenges to conduct impact assessments consistently and systematically for ongoing programs. This has made it difficult for the Institution to effectively measure performance and identify specific areas of operation that need to be improved to effectively implement new organisational strategies. The study also noted that the ZCS management takes too long to provide intervention when there is a deviation in strategy execution, leading to under optimization of public resources.

4) Inadequate End-user Engagement

Studies have shown that a strategic plan must be developed in line with management functions. Hence, considering that managers are the end users of the strategic planning system, they must be the ones assigned to design it to achieve improved performance, especially in times of change (van Niekerk & Jansen van Rensburg, 2022; Buick, *et al*., 2018; Kitsios & Kamariotou, 2017). However, the case is different at ZCS. The institution's management does not fully engage end users of the strategic planning system in the process of designing a new strategic plan. The current study found that ZCS only consults top leadership when developing a new plan. Functional managers do not usually participate in the process of designing new strategic initiatives. This has made it difficult for end users to implement the planned activities considering that they lack full understanding of the document. As such, the document just ends up in their office drawers, another reason for failure in achieving strategic objectives.

5) Ineffective examination and modification of work processes

Studies have revealed that hosting new activities does not only require sufficient resources, but also means of managing the available resources to achieve optimal benefits (Klein *et al*., 2022). Therefore, this calls for application of strategic practices such as conducting organizational processes/procedures examination and modification to suit the prevailing demand. For ZCS, it was observed that the institution did not fully examine its work process to aid effective identification of the ones that needed to be revised or discarded before beginning to implement new strategies. This has led to sub-optimization of public resources and failure to effectively implement proposed organisational changes.

V. CONCLUSION

This study sought to identify challenges affecting effective application of strategic management during the process of implementing organisational change. The study has revealed that ZCS has so far been struggling to adopt and effectively apply strategic management to improve organizational performance during the process of implementing organizational change. The main challenges identified are an ambiguous vision statement, ineffective program impact assessments, inadequate end user engagement and ineffective examination and modification of work process.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively implement organizational change through application of strategic management techniques, ZCS management must consider undertaking the following steps:

- The Service should consider establishing a clear and less ambiguous vision statement which should be well communicated to all members of the organisation. This would help reduce resistance to change and aid effective implementation of organizational change considering that a clear vision forms an effective basis for formulating the right strategies. Implementing the right strategies will help the Service achieve intended organizational change outcomes**.**

- The Service should consider building internal support by fully engaging all functional managers at all stages in the process of designing strategic initiatives. This would reduce resistance to change, enhance efficiency

in resource management to enhance effective implementation of organisational change.

- The Service should continuously seek more productive ways to operate to reduce the cost of utilizing available resources. This can be done by continuous examination and modification of work processes, capacity building, restructuring, updating technology.

REFERENCES

1. Alvarez, P., García-Carrión, R., Puigvert, L., Pulido, C., & Schubert, T. (2018). Beyond the walls: The social reintegration of prisoners through the dialogic reading of classic universal literature in prison. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, *62*(4), 1043-1061.

2. Bryson, John M., Bert George, and Danbi Seo. "Understanding goal formation in strategic public management: a proposed theoretical framework." *Public Management Review* (2022): 1-26.

3. Christensen, C. M. (1997). The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail. *Harvard Business Review Press*.

4. Collins, R. P., Delagarde, R., & Hussey, S. (2014, September). Biomass production in multispecies and grass monoculture swards under cutting and rotational grazing. In *25. General Meeting of the European Grassland Federation* (Vol. 19, p. np). Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS).

5. Common, R. (2008). Administrative change in the Gulf: Modernization in Bahrain and Oman. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *74*(2), 177-193.

6. Davis, M. A., Dupree, C. H., & Meltzer, C. C. (2022). Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are organizational change management efforts. *Journal of the American College of Radiology*, *19*(1), 181-183

7. Denscombe, M. (2017). *EBOOK: The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

8. Dissel, A. (2008). Rehabilitation and reintegration in African prisons. *Human rights in African prisons*, 89-103.

9. Else-Quest, N. M., Higgins, A., Allison, C., & Morton, L. C. (2012). Gender differences in self-conscious emotional experience: a meta-analysis. *Psychological bulletin*, *138*(5), 947.

10. Gideon, E., & Georgina, E. (2015). Analysis of Employment Creation and Income Generation Potentials of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise in Abia State, Nigeria. *Singaporean Journal of Business, Economics and Management Studies*, *51*(1818), 1-9.

11. Griffiths, C. T., Dandurand, Y., & Murdoch, D. (2007). *The social reintegration of offenders and crime prevention* (Vol. 4). Ottawa, ON: National Crime Prevention Centre.

12. Guchu, A. M. (2014). *Strategic Management Practices in Parliament of Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

13. Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., & Hoskisson, R. E. (2016). *Strategic management: concepts and cases: competitiveness and globalization*. Cengage Learning.

14. Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations.* Sage Publications.

15. Kitsios, F., & Kamariotou, M. (2017). Strategic change management in public sector transformation: The case of middle manager leadership in Greece. In *Proceedings of BAM Conference 2017* (pp. 73-78).

16. Klein, N., Ramos, T. B., & Deutz, P. (2022). Factors and strategies for circularity implementation in the public sector: An organisational change management approach for sustainability. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, *29*(3), 509-523.

17. Kotter, J. P. (1991). *Force for Change: How Leadership Differs from Management*. Free Press.

18. Kotter, J. P. (1996). Leading Change. *Harvard Business Review Press.*

19. Larsson, R., & Vinberg, S. (2010). *Leadership and change in complex organizations: Developing a cross-cultural perspective*. Routledge.

20. Miranda, R. B., Goldberg, A., & Bermudez, X. P. D. (2022). Social reintegration programs for former inmates in Brazil: is there a gender perspective?. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, *27*, 4599-4616.

21. Moscoso-Sánchez, D., De Léséleuc, E., Rodríguez-Morcillo, L., González-Fernández, M., Pérez-Flores, A., & Muñoz-Sánchez, V. (2017). Expected outcomes of sport practice for inmates: A comparison of perceptions of inmates and staff. *Revista de psicología del deporte*, *26*(1), 37-48.

22. Musa, S. A., & Bello, S. M. (2023). A Review of Organisational Change on Employee Performance in Public Sector Organisation in Nigeria. *Organization and Human Capital Development*, *2*(1), 92-102.

23. Oetzel, J., & Oh, H. (2016). The influence of cultural variability on negotiation behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 101(5), 721-730.

24. Piderit, S. K. (2000). Rethinking resistance and recognizing ambivalence: A multidimensional view of attitudes toward an organizational change. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), 783-794.

25. Rosenbaum, D., More, E., & Steane, P. (2018). Planned organisational change management: Forward to the past? An exploratory literature review. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *31*(2), 286-303.

26. Schiavo, R., & Lazzarotti, V. (2019). The impact of EU funding on innovation in EU regions: A meta-analysis. *Research Policy*, 48(5), 1262-1276.

27. Tamimi, S. A., Khalil, S., & Abdullah, H. H. (2018). Applications of strategic management practices in public sector: Cases from some Middle East countries. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5(9), 36-51.

28. Vakola, M., & Nikandrou, I. (2017). Leading organizational change in South European organizations: Examining the role of managers' dispositional resistance to change. The *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28(6), 939-970.

29. Waddell, D., Creed, A., Cummings, T. G., & Worley, C. G. (2019). *Organisational change: Development and transformation*. Cengage AU.

30. Zambia Correctional Service (2022). 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. Volume 1

31. Zhao, Y., Messner, S. F., Liu, J., & Jin, C. (2019). Prisons as schools: Inmates' participation in vocational and academic programs in Chinese prisons. *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, *63*(15-16), 2713-2740.