

Strategising to effect change during a strategic change initiative: Middle manager perspective in a South African higher education institution

by

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(I)Declaration

I, Kirstin van Niekerk, declare that 'Strategising to effect change during a strategic change initiative: Middle manager perspective in a South African higher education institution' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Signature:



Date: 24 March 2018

(II) Acknowledgements

When I started my DBL journey in April 2016, God knew exactly with whom to pair me up.

On my first visit to the Unisa School of Business Leadership, I was introduced to my supervisor, Prof. Mari Jansen van Rensburg, and I also met my biggest advocate, who – unbeknown to me at the time – would become a dear friend, Belinda Wagner. These two women supported, encouraged and guided me throughout my journey. I would like to acknowledge both their roles not only from an academic perspective but also for being my sounding board, constantly challenging me and facilitating me to be the best that I can be.

Thank you, Mari, for your wonderful insights and in-depth knowledge that never once left me disillusioned. Your wisdom and guidance have been invaluable and your straightforward candour is genuinely appreciated.

Belinda, thank you for the countless telephonic calls, the brainstorming and the many laughs along the way. Your personal journey alone is awe-inspiring and your advice, instrumental.

This journey would have been very isolated without the both of you.

To my daughter Tristin, thank you for your support and love.

(III)Abstract

Problem statement – The strategic roles and responsibilities of professional middle managers (at a South African university) are not aligned with the accountability and authority required while strategising to effect strategic change. Through an in-depth exploration of practitioners, their practices, behaviour, cognition and emotions during strategising, insights in the development of practical wisdom was gained.

Purpose – The purpose of the empirical research study was to investigate how professional middle managers strategise to effect change during strategic change. The study context was a South African higher education institution undergoing internal organisational change. Four main research themes were explored with particular reference to the professional middle manager as a strategic practitioner, namely one who DOES, THINKS, FEELS and REFLECTS.

Design, methodology and approach – An explorative and interpretive study was conducted utilising a single case and qualitative research methodology. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was conducted, which aimed to explore the rich experiences of the participants and the way they make sense of their personal journeys during the strategic change initiative. Strategy as practice theory was selected as the theoretical foundation for the study. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and participants provided self-reflection assessments contributing to a unique data gathering method.

Findings – The results suggested the professional middle managers make use of holistic and comprehensive practices to effect change as they strategise during strategic change. Five formal strategic roles were confirmed relevant as enacted by the professional middle managers, i.e. implementing strategies, interpreting and communicating information, facilitating adaptability, downward supporting and upward influencing. In addition, six distinctive practices were identified, namely adapting, effecting change, collaborating, mobilising, peacekeeping and overseeing.

Research limitations and implications – The results of the study cannot be generalised due to the single case methodology; however, key learnings and insights can be utilised.

Practical implications – It is recommended that the middle managers' key performance indicators be aligned with the required accountability and authority required to fulfil their strategic roles while effecting change. In addition, the development of tailor-made training programmes as well as coaching and mentoring is advocated in order to transition adequately into a middle management role.

Keywords – higher education institution, key performance indicators, middle manager perspective, practical skills, practices, professional middle manager, routines, strategic change, strategic roles, strategising, strategy as practice (SAP), tools.

(IV) Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronyms and abbreviations	Meaning:
BRP	business rescue practitioner
CHAID	chi-squared automatic interaction
CHE	Council on Higher Education
ERP	enterprise resource planning
ERS	enterprise resource system
GE	General Electric
HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
HEPRO	higher education professionals
HOD	head of department
HR	human resource(s)
IP	interpretative phenomenological
IPA	interpretative phenomenological analysis
IT	information technology
KPIs	key performance indicators
MC	management controls
OR	operational research
OSS	Optimising Student Services
SA	South Africa
SAP	strategy as practice
SMS	short message service
SPC	strategic planning champion
SSD	support service department
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
StratAct	strategising activity
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
UK	United Kingdom

(V)Definition list

Construct:	Definition:
Middle manager	Middle managers report to managers at a more senior level and have managers reporting to them.
OSS	Optimising Student Services – classified as a strategic organisational change initiative within the context of this study.
Professional staff	Professional staff in this study refers to non-academic staff, i.e. support staff.
Restructuring	The merging and/or regrouping of organisational structures and entities to improve overall operational efficiency and effectiveness in order to enhance strategic positioning. The OSS is classified as a restructuring initiative in this research study.
Senior management	‘Senior management’ refers to top management within the context of the study university, also known as ‘the executive’.
Strategic change	Change that affects the people, processes and structures of the organisation and fundamental ways of working in order to achieve long-term survival of the organisation.
Strategising	Strategising encompasses the strategic activities as performed by multiple strategy actors in terms of their actions and interactions within a specific context, i.e. the doing of strategy.
Strategy as practice	Strategy as practice (SAP) in the broadest sense may be defined as the study of practitioners (who), practices (what) and praxis (how).
Study university	The university selected as the single case under study

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1. Overview

1.1. Introduction

South Africa's higher education (HE) sector experienced unabated, turbulent national unrest during 2015–2016 as a result of student and political groupings' activism and demands for access to quality education and transformation within the HE system (Eyewitness News, 2015). "Over the course of the year protestors toppled statues, closed campuses and brought government to its knees over tuition fee hikes, in scenes that quickly became iconic of the country's disillusioned youth" (Eyewitness News, 2015). These violent protests continued into 2016 despite the 0% fee increase agreement between the South African government, university management structures and students, as the matter of free education and transformational issues remained on the table (Universities of South Africa, 2016).

Figure 1.1 provides an illustrative presentation of selected news articles in the various South African media during the 2015–2016 protests taking place in the HE landscape.



Figure 1.1 Selected news articles relating to the #FeesMustFall protests during 2015–2016

Source: Own compilation

Significant pressures have been placed on the HE sector in South Africa with access to quality higher education taking centre stage (Universities of South Africa, 2016). Whilst the demand for access is increasing, the channel of entry-level applicants is weakening (University of Pretoria [UP], 2011). In addition, the demands for enhanced service delivery continue within this dynamic environment, putting extra strain on the already limited institutional resources. The cumulative effect of these demands required a strategic response.

This empirical research study highlighted a single case, namely a leading research-intensive higher education institution (HEI). The research took place during a period of considerable strategic change, both within and external to the institution.

During the course of the study, the institution was in the process of implementing a strategic change initiative, namely 'Optimising Student Services' (OSS), which was instigated by senior management. The purpose of the OSS strategic change initiative was the redesign of the student service delivery model relating to all student services and support-related functions and processes (UP, 2015). The internal strategic change coincided with the student protests placing an additional burden on the university structures, processes, staff, management and resources.

The OSS strategic change initiative required in-depth participation from key stakeholders and the professional (non-academic) middle managers were important contributors to this process and hence they were the unit of analysis. Figure 1.2 provides an outline for this chapter.

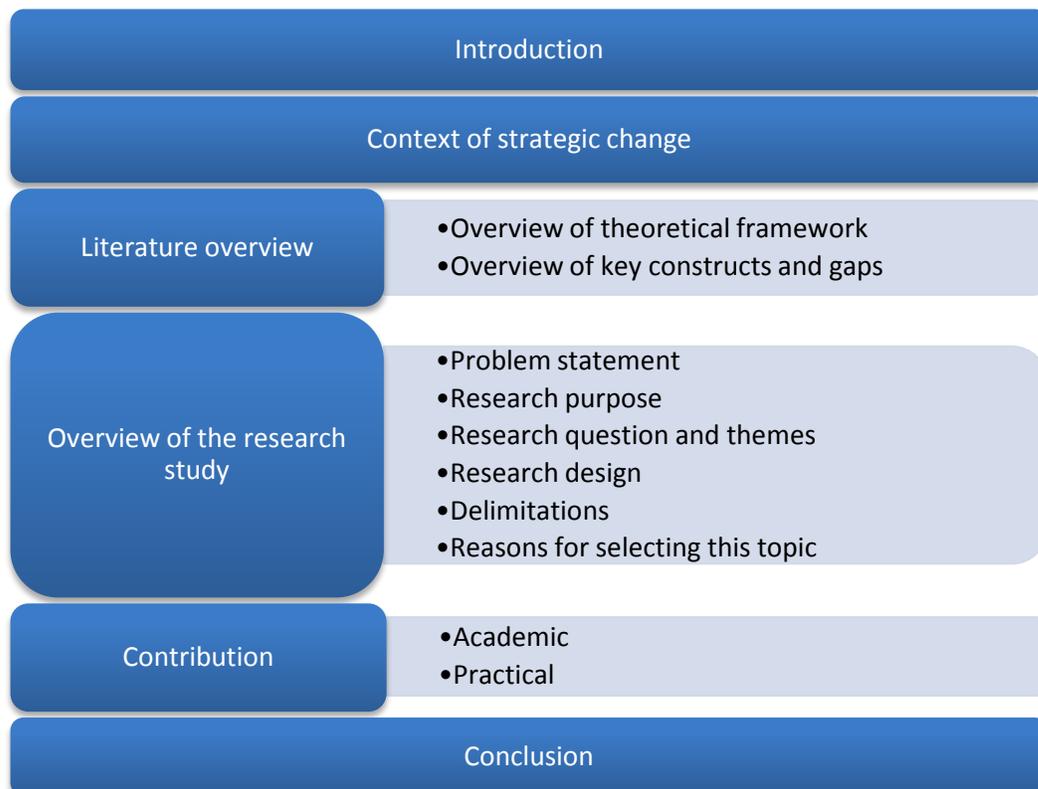


Figure 1.2 Chapter 1 outline

1.2.Context of strategic change

Due to increased competition and the dynamic market, organisations often are compelled to institute strategic change, such as restructuring in order to increase operational performance (Taplin, 2006). Strategic organisational change comprises shifts in the alignment between the environment of the organisation, which may originate internally or externally (Rajagopalan & Spreitzer, 1997). It has been argued that strategic change is crucial for the longevity and feasibility of organisations (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012).

Substantial and decreasing state funding has forced HEIs to restructure, and two overriding themes have emerged, namely cost savings through reorganisation, and producing more efficient and academically sound entities. In addition, not only are the academic entities affected, but also support service departments (SSDs) including the consolidation of various units or functions (Olson, 2010).

In order for the new structure to become operational, the “structural blueprints” that have been designed by senior management have to be put into practice by “others” (Balogun 2007: 81). A key stakeholder identified for this role is the middle manager. Middle managers have been shown to behave as independent change agents during restructuring, and they have a role to play as agents of strategy implementation (Taplin, 2006). However, during imposed change, such as restructuring, managers are not only strategy implementers but also recipients of change who have to navigate the changes (both personal and organisational), grasp the new design and negotiate the details with other staff who are equally detached from the strategic decision-making process (Balogun, 2007). Middle managers have a key leadership role during the implementation of change in terms of assisting their staff through the change process.

A middle management perspective was an appropriate viewpoint for the study, as it is this layer within the institution that make use of their operational expertise and skills to deal with the daily operational realities at the coalface of the organisation, and they have access to engage with senior management (Wooldridge, Schmid & Floyd, 2008). Although middle managers have

traditionally been seen as the implementers of strategy, contemporary views acknowledge middle managers as strategists who play a crucial role in influencing execution of strategy (Salih & Doll, 2013). In addition, the strategising roles and practices of middle managers – particularly in a South African HEI – remain limited (Davis, Jansen van Rensburg & Venter, 2016). Therefore, a clear definition of who the middle manager is, his or her roles in terms of how he or she strategises (practices and behaviour), needs exploration, specifically from the perspective of an emerging country context like South Africa.

Within this macro- and micro-contexts, the research study was conducted from a strategy-as-practice (SAP) theoretical perspective. The SAP lens provides a suitable perspective for understanding strategy with a strong focus on the strategising activities of human actors in the strategy process (Johnson, Langley, Melin & Whittington, 2007).

It has been advocated that, in order for the SAP field to advance it would be effective to link 'local' strategising activities with 'larger' social phenomenon thereby circumventing micro-isolationism (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). The concept 'micro-isolationism' refers to the sole focus on local empirical instances as opposed to acknowledging larger phenomena or society at play (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). A tall ontology has been followed in this research study, whereby micro-level strategising practice "depends hierarchically on larger macro structures or systems" enlarging the scope of SAP research (Seidl & Whittington, 2014: 2). In other words, the significant disruptions in the macro environment in the form of the protests that destabilised the HE sector had a substantial effect on the university, which in turn required middle managers to respond to the change. The macro extra-organisational forces influenced and shaped the micro intra-organisational strategising of the middle managers. A more comprehensive understanding of strategising can be achieved by "connecting the micro-level more explicitly to the larger picture" (Seidl & Whittington, 2014: 2).

The external and internal context reflected in this research study was bound to place immense strain and pressure on management who had to navigate the

new complexities, not only dealing with the implementation of the deliberate strategic change but also managing the daily operational activities of their teams during such turbulent times (Jansson, 2013). It is possible that deliberate or intended strategy, such as the OSS strategic change initiative, may turn into an unrealised or partially realised strategy, just as an emergent strategy (as a response to the dynamic changes) may contribute to the realised strategy (Ikävalko, 2005). Further to that, realised strategy is affected not only by context but also by human interaction (Balogun, Best & Lê, 2015; Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015).

Professional middle managers are expected to deal with both deliberate and emerging strategies during organisational strategic change, as well as deal with external turbulent environmental changes. Despite clear expectations pertaining to behaviour, the strategic roles and responsibilities of middle managers are not always aligned to the complex operational realities and organisational response requirements. This creates a vacuum in terms of accountability and authority during strategy making and implementation. This in turn led to the problem statement of this study:

The strategic roles and responsibilities of professional middle managers (at a South African university) are not aligned with the accountability and authority required while strategising to effect strategic change.

Research was required to create a deep level of understanding of “how leaders actually go about reviewing and revising their mental models in the midst of change”, “how leaders’ approaches to change evolve with time and experience” and “how leaders tackle a wider range of situations” (Lawrence, 2015: 251).

The purpose of this research study was therefore to explore professional middle managers’ strategising to effect change during a strategic change initiative at a South African HEI. The research study sought to discover emerging themes relating to the strategising roles, practices and behaviours of middle managers to gain insight into this group of strategic actors.

1.3.Literature review

This section provides a high-level synopsis of the selected theoretical approaches, namely organisational theory and practice theory. In addition, the literature review highlights the key constructs of the research study, namely –

- strategising from a SAP perspective;
- practitioner from a middle management perspective; and
- the roles, practices, behaviours, cognition and emotions of middle managers.

Proposed gaps within recent literature are also highlighted. A wide range of disciplines were drawn upon during this study, namely strategy, leadership, psychology, organisational change and organisational behaviour. The comprehensive literature review and detailed discussion of key constructs are presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.3.1.Overview of theoretical framework

Organisational theory and practice theory were selected as the two theoretical approaches for this research study. Both organisational and practice theories are known to explain and predict how people within organisations behave (Corradi, Gherardi & Verzelloni, 2010; Shafritz, Ott & Jang, 2005). These theories do not take place in isolation and the micro and macro environments matter (Postill, 2010; Shafritz et al., 2005), which was an important aspect for this study.

Within the agenda of a practice perspective, known as strategy as practice, strategy research highlights what people within organisations actually do (Whittington, 2006). The advantage of the SAP perspective is the capacity to clarify how strategy making is enabled and constrained by prevalent societal and organisational practices (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Strategy as practice appears to demonstrate a consistent effort to utilise rich in-depth data to theorise, by making use of various theories of strategy and organisation to describe and contextualise strategy as a social practice (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007).

This study focused on how middle managers strategise, and consequently on the doing of strategy work. The SAP perspective was therefore deemed a relevant theory to apply.

1.3.2. Overview of key constructs

The SAP research agenda is interested in the micro activities that constitute strategy work, or as it is referred to – strategising (SAP International Network, 2016). Strategy as practice proposes a shift from strategy to strategising (Corradi et al., 2010: 272). **Strategy as practice** in the broadest sense may be defined as the study of practitioners, practices and praxis as found in the literature, where –

- **practitioners** refer to the individuals who do strategy work;
- **practices** are the norms and routines through which strategising is done; and
- **praxis** is defined by the flow of activity in which strategising is achieved (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006).

There is a strong focus on the human element as the actor or practitioner. Practitioners are not acting in seclusion but their actions are rather part of a social contextualisation within which they operate. Therefore in order to understand strategy formulation and implementation, “it is necessary to re-focus research on the actions and interactions of the strategy practitioner” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 6).

From a SAP perspective, practitioners are the active actors, the doers, in the formation of activities, and they shape the outcome of the strategy of an institution. Building on this, the role of the middle manager as strategic practitioner has gained prominence (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Middle managers have constraints placed on them in terms of senior management’s role expectations; however, middle managers have the ability to fulfil these expectations through enabling conditions with a key insight being the reciprocal view of role expectations, i.e. “the expectations the middle managers place back on their superiors” (Mantere, 2008: 308).

Gaps in the literature, pertaining to the emphasis on middle managers, have been identified as potential areas for further research. The examining of strategic actors besides top managers, which would include a focus on middle managers (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). There is also insufficient published research on middle managers' activities when doing strategy work at universities (Davis, 2013; Davis et al., 2016). In addition, focused research on middle managers within a university context who are non-academic, i.e. support service staff, is significantly lacking (Davis, 2013).

The traditional role of middle managers as strategy implementers has been advocated for many years (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Ikävalko, 2005; Mantere, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). However, there is growing consensus within contemporary management viewpoints that middle managers take on additional active strategic roles. Previous literature identified the roles of middle managers in implementing, facilitating adaptability, synthesising information and championing alternatives (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Mantere, 2008). Role conflict, as a result of inconsistent expectations amongst managers at various hierarchical levels, has been acknowledged as a key factor accounting for the differences in the strategic roles as performed by middle managers (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Apart from role conflict, role ambiguity has also been identified as a role stressor that is related to unfavourable performance (Kauppila, 2014). Research on middle manager practices with specific focus on the identified roles and an improved understanding of how these strategic roles are perceived by middle managers has been advocated (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014).

Practices have been defined as behaviour, which is routine in nature, comprising interrelated components, such as bodily and mental activities, know-how, use of things, emotional states, language or discourse and knowledge of background and motivations (Reckwitz, 2002). The doing of strategy is therefore inherently linked to such practices as “they provide the behavioural, cognitive, procedural, discursive and physical resources through which multiple actors are able to interact in order to socially accomplish collective activity” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 9). Executing, reflecting, initiating, coordinating, supporting, collaborating

and shaping context were found to be strategising practices identified amongst strategy teams involving both recursive and adaptive activities (Paroutis & Pettigrew, 2007). Attention for more research into the “broader societal practices, rather than just organizational practices” is required and that, “in addition to human social action, there is still plenty to explore regarding the role of material artifacts, technology, and the body in strategy-making” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 287). A call for further empirical research into the identification of who strategists are and the experiences that these actors bring to the role of strategising, with particular reference to the nexus between practices and practitioners, has been made (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

It is important for strategy makers to understand that strategy tools could act as enablers or as constraints in strategy making, and that these should be seen as most beneficial as part of the process as opposed to solely the source of the solution. “By viewing strategy tools as tools-in-use, we can understand that tools do not cause managers to make right or wrong decisions but rather enable them to engage in strategy making” (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015: 551).

Strategising, real-world practices and empirical research can be enhanced by bringing realistic assumptions about cognition, emotion and behaviour to the management of strategy (Huy, 2012). Human emotion has shown that emotion has an extremely compelling effect on both human cognition and behaviour – specifically in uncertain or ambiguous circumstances (Huy, 2012). There is an “interrelationship between cognition, emotion and action in strategizing” (Jensen, Jensen Schleiter & Sechi, 2015: 3). It is argued that “the dynamics of strategizing – i.e., the action of engaging, manipulating, and eventually adopting an idea of strategy” will not be totally comprehended without a “systemic idea of cognition” (Jensen et al., 2015: 1). The inclusion of emotions and motivations within the strategising process should not be underrated as these practices are inherently linked to practitioners in terms of who they are and what they do (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). The types of practices that are used and how they are used are likely to be closely associated with strategists’ emotional states, intentions and motivations (Mantere, 2005). A further research opportunity identified in recent

literature is the link between displayed emotions and strategising practices (Huy, 2012; Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Suddaby, Seidl & Lê, 2013). In addition, the role of middle managers (among others) as organisational actors “in perceiving and managing their own as well as others’ emotions and developing emotional capability, remain to be investigated more thoroughly” (Huy, 2012: 244–245). Very recently the role of cognition (apart from sensemaking studies) and emotionality were identified as research themes that have not been entirely embraced by strategy practice research and therefore offers untapped areas for future research (Burgelman, Floyd, Laamanen, Mantere, Vaara & Whittington, (2018). Burgelman et al., (2018) mention that emotionality plays a fundamental role in strategy making.

Strategy as practice highlights, “sometimes it is specific behaviour, cognition or emotion that matters; there is no grander theme” in that the “little things do matter” and it is through these micro-modifications with which practitioners engage on a daily basis that may result in fissures in the foundation of the organisation and start to change that “what was once taken for granted” (Suddaby et al., 2013: 337).

Through the in-depth exploration of practitioners, their practices, behaviour, cognition and emotions during strategising we may provide further insights in the development of “practical wisdom through a better understanding of strategy in practice” (Jarzabkowski & Whittington 2008: 282).

1.4.Overview of the research study

This section presents the problem statement, research purpose, research question and themes as well as the research design. The delimitations and assumptions will be highlighted and the reason for my topic selection will be provided.

1.4.1.Problem statement

Following a review of the literature the problem statement of this study is defined as follows:

The strategic roles and responsibilities of professional middle managers (at a South African university) are not aligned with the accountability and authority required while strategising to effect strategic change.

1.4.2. Research purpose

The purpose of this single-case study was to explore and interpret the strategising of professional middle managers to effect change during a strategic change initiative at a South African HEI. The current study sought to discover emerging themes relating to the strategising roles, practices, behaviours, cognition and emotions of middle managers during strategic change to contribute to theory.

1.4.3. Research question and themes

– *Research question:*

How do professional middle managers strategise to effect change during a strategic change initiative?

– *Major research themes:*

Case study researchers are not driven by theory per se, but are rather “driven to theory” (Yin 1999: 1213). Only once data gathering and analysis are underway, in a recursive approach, can the alignment of emerging patterns and themes be traced back to the theory while allowing new theories to emerge. The following broad themes therefore guided the data gathering process:

- professional middle managers’ strategising behaviour during strategic change;
- professional middle managers’ cognition during strategic change; and
- professional middle managers’ emotions during strategic change.

1.4.4. Research design

The empirical research study adopted an exploratory and interpretive approach (see Gray, 2013). The reason for this selection was that at the time of this research, there were limited studies that focused on professional middle

managers' strategising within a university in a South African context. The study therefore sought to explore the 'how', which aligned with the research question and associated open themes. A constructivist–interpretivist theoretical paradigm underpinned the study.

The research approach included both inductive and deductive discovery. However, an inductive approach was predominantly used and the deductive approach played a less significant role. The inductive approach allowed for themes to emerge from the data in a recursive manner (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

A qualitative research methodology was adhered to, making use of a single-case study that comprised the research strategy. The primary data gathering method was in the form of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Multiple sources of data gathering were however used, and included the interview transcripts, documentation, secondary data, field notes, reflexivity journal and participant self-reflection assessments. A key benefit of case research is the flexibility of multiple sources in order to comprehend a phenomenon meticulously in depth (Easton, 2010: 119). A comprehensive case study enables existing theory to be challenged (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, single-case studies have been advocated by various authors in practice-related research (Floyd, 2012; Frigotto, Coller & Collini, 2013; Kaplan, 2011; Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015; Teulier & Rouleau, 2013).

The selection of the HEI as a single case was based on the following key reasons. The institution was considered a leading university within the South African HE sector. The successful implementation of the OSS strategic change initiative contributed to the effectiveness and efficiency of the university from a strategic perspective and also enhanced the competitive positioning within the HE environment. The OSS strategic change initiative, coincidentally, occurred almost parallel to an unprecedented external climate in the HE sector leading to highly unusual and unrepeatably events. The climate, both internal and external, created a unique research opportunity. Amidst the context of strategic change,

the ability of the professional middle managers to strategise in terms of fulfilling their roles and responsibilities presented a distinctive focus area for study.

As I am employed at the university and was involved in the OSS strategic change initiative, an insider perspective is presented. A first person style of writing is used.

The units of analysis under study were the professional middle managers, permanently employed at the university, directly involved and affected by the OSS strategic change initiative. A purposeful approach was used to select the participants from the population size of 18. A total of 11 middle managers were interviewed, and data saturation took place at interview eight.

The detailed research design components are discussed in Chapter 5.

1.4.5.Delimitations and assumptions

The research study primarily focused on the strategising of professional middle managers at an HEI during a strategic change initiative. The boundaries that had been set for this research study are addressed next.

External consultants, academics and other management layers were excluded, as were all other departments and functions.

Due to the single-case qualitative research strategy, generalisations of the research results were deemed risky and were therefore not commonly applied to other situations; however, certain insights could be learned and future research questions might be raised (Zikmund, 2003).

An assumption made was that the SAP viewpoint would be best suited, for this study was based on recent similar studies and articles (Davis, 2013; Hendry, Kiel & Nicholson, 2010; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; 2013; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Suddaby et al., 2013; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006).

A further assumption related to the importance of the roles of middle managers in strategy work has been advocated and this was likewise based on recent

literature (Davis et al., 2016; Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Wooldridge et al., 2008).

1.4.6.Reasons for selecting this topic

I have been working at the university for over 20 years. Within this institution, I have been promoted into various positions within the SSDs and have gained significant experience as a middle manager. I have always held fast to the belief that as a 'middle manager', I have an obligation to the institution to ensure my operational and managerial knowledge and experience informs the strategy decision-making process as well as strategy work. Middle managers are in a critical role, acting as the liaison amongst senior management as the strategic decision-makers and staff as the operational implementers. During my master's in Business Administration studies at the Gordon Institute of Business Sciences, I encountered an elective subject, Operationalising Strategy, and this module was a key turning point in my thinking. Not only do middle managers have the capacity to influence strategic decision-making; it is almost an imperative to ensure senior management understands the practical and operational implications of strategy decisions within the institution as well as the staff on the ground. Middle managers are close to the coalface of the institution and yet fortunate enough to be able to engage, negotiate and influence senior managers (either formally or informally). During the recent Optimising Student Services (OSS) initiative implementation – a major strategic change for the institution – the importance of the role of middle managers in strategy work became apparent. Based on my involvement and experience in the OSS strategic change initiative and close engagement with other middle managers during this time, this topic seemed appropriate, relevant and interesting for me to pursue. In addition, my MA (Research Psychology) qualification contributed to my knowledge and understanding of behavioural, cognitive, emotional and psychological aspects pertinent to this topic.

1.5. Contribution

The academic and practical contribution of the research study is discussed in this section.

1.5.1. Academic

The outcome of this research study will contribute to academic theory development. The findings and interpretations will make a unique contribution to contemporary organisational and practice theory development as the focus of the study was on professional middle managers' strategising to effect change during a strategic change initiative within an academic HEI in a South African context. In addition, the findings will contribute to the SAP perspective, specifically with regard to the practitioner and practices of strategising, thereby attending to the strategy-as-practice research agenda. A contribution will similarly be made towards the middle manager perspective specifically the professionals employed at an HEI. Lastly, the research outcomes will present unique emergent insights within the selected theories and theoretical perspectives pertaining to middle managers' roles, practices, behaviour, cognition and emotions while strategising to effect change within a university context.

1.5.2. Practical

Further to the above, the practical value of the research will be to provide pragmatic recommendations and proposals to senior management of the university for potential learning opportunities. The findings and interpretations will therefore contribute to the pragmatic body of knowledge of strategising, with a specific focus on the professional middle manager perspective. The practical knowledge of this group of strategic actors within a university setting will be augmented and the micro-level activities that take place while strategising will be identified, due to the rich, deep data gathering techniques.

1.6. Conclusion

This study attempted to create a bridge between theory and practice by examining the rich, detailed accounts of professional middle managers

performing their routine activities during a strategic change initiative at a South African university amidst an unstable external climate. The research study sought to discover emerging patterns and themes relating to middle managers' strategising roles, practices, behaviours, cognition and emotions during strategic change to gain insight into this group of strategic actors. A holistic and comprehensive account of participating middle managers will be presented.

The research study aimed to address selected knowledge gaps identified in the literature. The contribution will be to create new understanding of emerging themes and patterns as well as the development of new theories pertaining to the professional middle managers' strategising, combining disparate concepts in new ways while drawing upon varied disciplines for conceptualising, namely strategy, leadership, psychology, and organisational behaviour.

The outline of the thesis is shown in Figure 1.3. Chapter 2 will discuss the context of the research study and provide a foundation for the rest of the research.

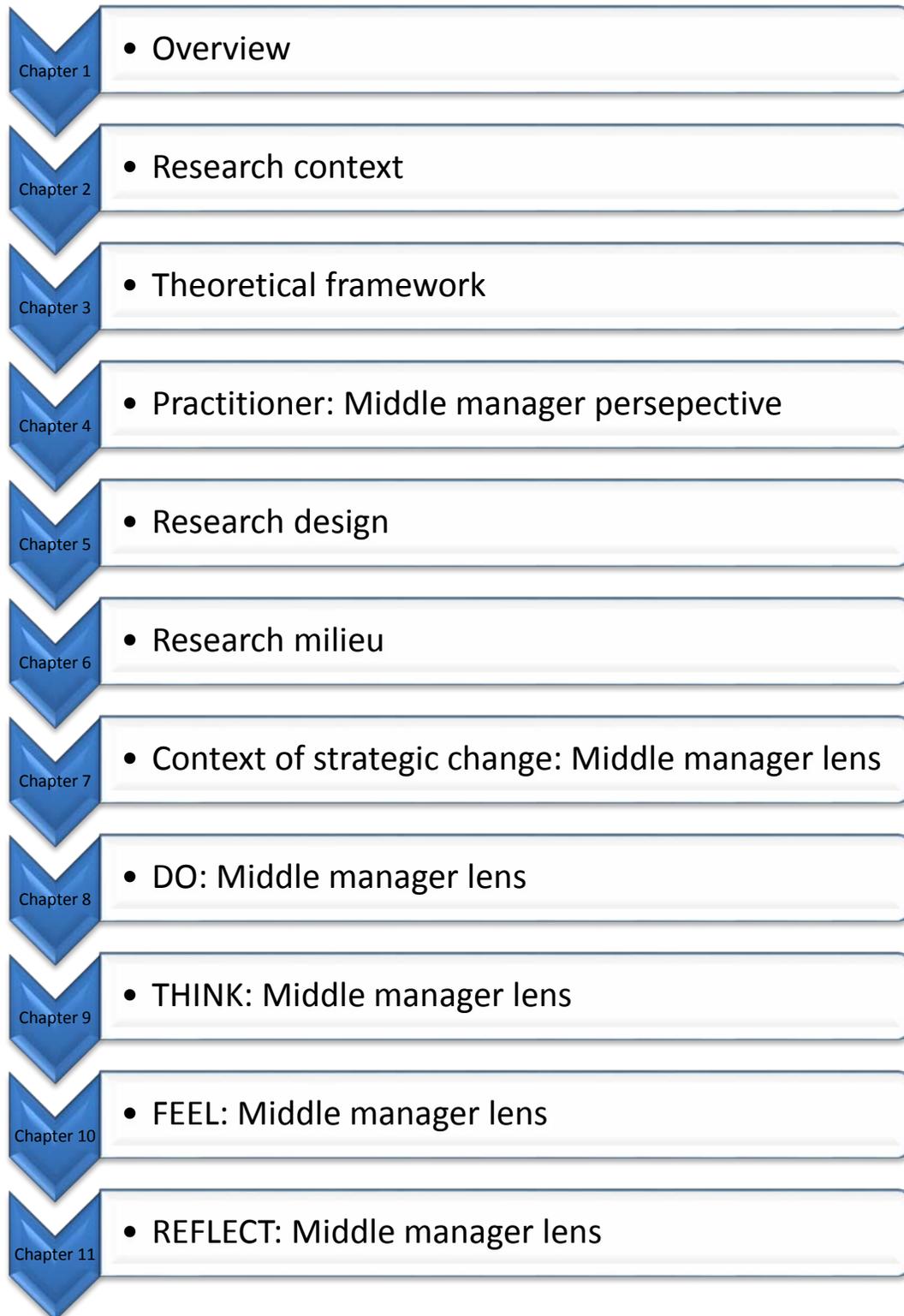


Figure 1.3 Thesis outline

2. Research context

2.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 provided the overall introduction and a summary of the research study under investigation. This chapter describes the context of the empirical research study and introduces the unit of analysis. The context includes both the external macro environment and the internal environment and circumstances prevalent during the study. Figure 2.1 highlights the chapter outline.

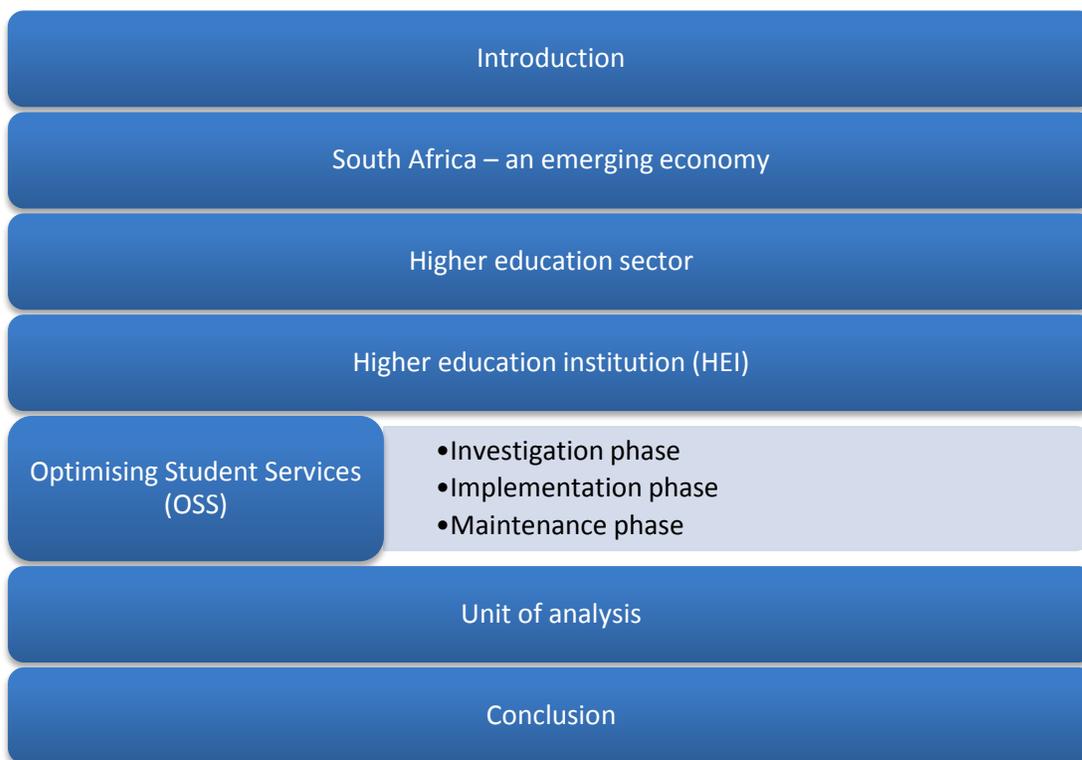


Figure 2.1 Chapter 2 outline

The single-case study took place at a public university within the South African HE sector. The university is a dynamic leading research-intensive institution situated in Gauteng, a province in South Africa (QS Top Universities, 2018). A visual representation of the contextual layers of the study and the core being of the unit of analysis is depicted in Figure 2.2.

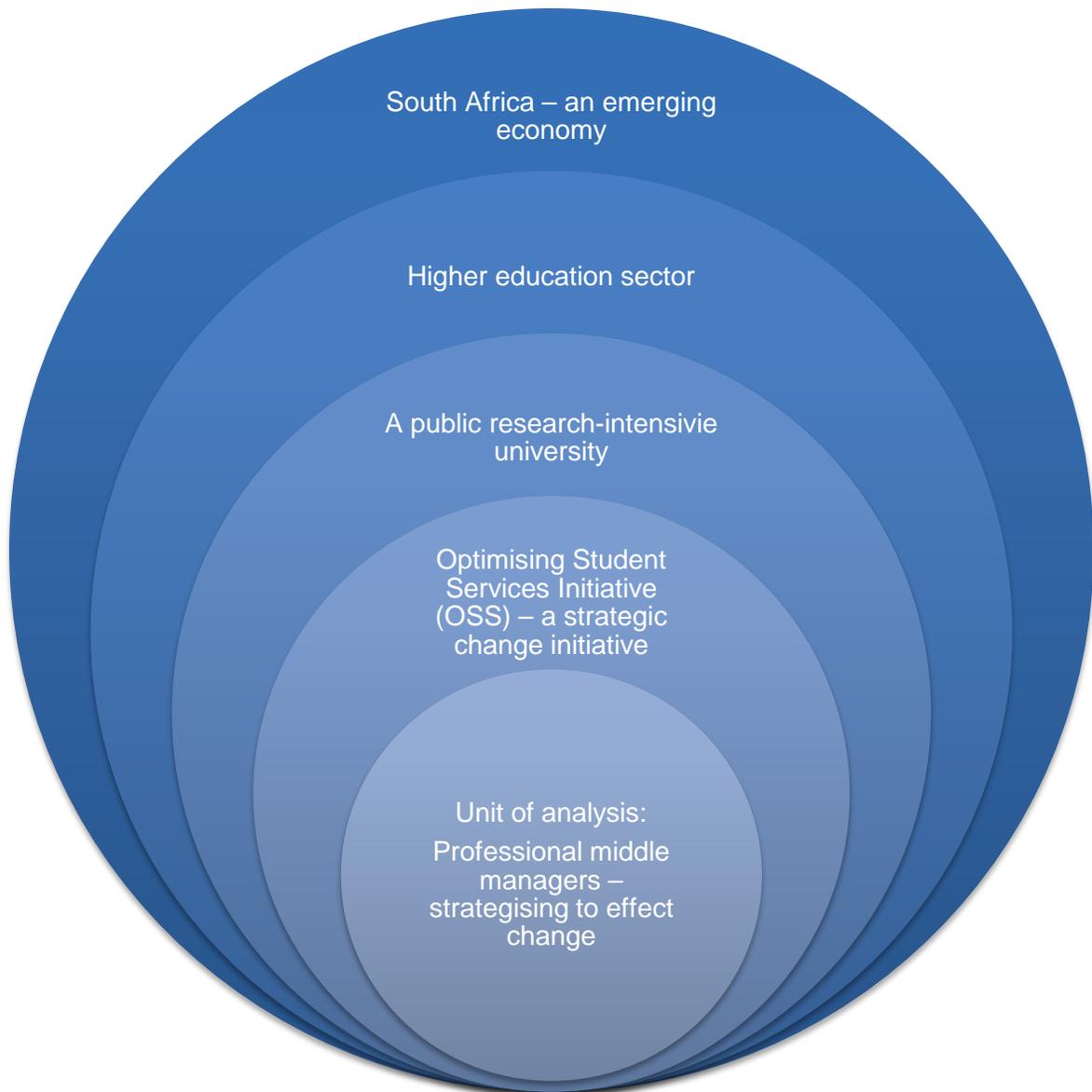


Figure 2.2 Context and unit of analysis

Source: Own compilation

2.2. South Africa – an emerging economy

South Africa, being the third largest economy in Africa (after Nigeria and Egypt) (see Statistics Times, 2018), has made steady development over the last two decades; however, it remains a country of significant paradoxes 21 years into its democracy (Kruger, 2016). The economy is on a downward trajectory and “South Africa’s ratings have been downgraded by most rating agencies” (World Bank,

2016: n.p.). South Africa narrowly missed junk status in June 2016 by Standard and Poor's, which was an important decision for the economy at the time (TMG Digital, 2016). However, the struggling economy could not escape a junk status rating, and South Africa was downgraded by both Standard and Poor's and Fitch in April 2017 (Le Cordeur, 2017).

As a developing country, South Africa is faced with significant challenges and "remains a dual economy with one of the highest inequality rates in the world, perpetuating inequality and exclusion" (World Bank, 2016: n.p.).

High levels of poverty, with a poverty headcount of 56.8%, and an unemployment rate of 26.7% (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2016) further compound the peace and stability challenges the country faces. "As in the rest of Africa, where 60% of the workforce is under 30 years old, it is critical that South Africa turns its fast-growing young population into a dividend rather than a burden" and an important aspect of realising this potential is through education and training (Kruger, 2016: n.p.).

Kruger (2016) further asserts that the underlying cause of unemployment is not just a scarcity of jobs, but an inadequately educated workforce plays a significant role. The high level of skills shortages has given rise to significant socio-economic issues, and skills development has been acknowledged as a key factor in South African transformation and economic growth (Kruger, 2016). In addition, significant disparities in the quality of basic education leads to a weak pipeline for university entrance (UP, 2011) further exacerbating the knowledge deficits in South Africa.

In the years 2015–2016, the South African national HE sector was marred by violent disruptions, damage to property and unrest by students and political groups (Universities of South Africa, 2016). The statement made by the Vice-Chancellors of Universities in South Africa in January 2016 (Universities South Africa, 2016) underscored the urgent need for additional financial resources and access for all to quality HE learning.

2.3.Higher education sector

The HE sector within South Africa is comprised of 26 public institutions of which 11 are traditional universities, eight are comprehensive universities, six are universities of technology and a health sciences university (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2015). In addition to the public universities there are 124 private HEIs (CHE, 2016).

Access to quality higher education and the demand for institutional transformation has placed substantial pressures on HEIs (Universities South Africa, 2016). The competitive environment amongst leading national universities recruiting top applicants is growing and these applicants have a wide range to choose from; however, despite the intensification in demand for access, the pipeline of entry-level applicants has become weaker (UP, 2011).

Socio-economic and political challenges in the national South African landscape have placed huge financial strain on universities, such as decreasing state subsidies per capita (UP, 2011), further exacerbated by the 2015–2016 South African national unrest and violent protests by students and political groupings demanding 0% increase in tuition fees amongst other ultimatums (Universities South Africa, 2016). Increased security costs to protect the students, staff and physical assets of academic institutions, in addition to the associated costs estimated at R300 million for the actual physical damage caused by the unrests, which included burning, defacement and destruction of property, were announced by the Department of Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande in April 2016 (Gqirana, 2016). However, in September 2016, the number almost doubled and was projected to be over R600 million worth of damages to universities and counting (BusinessTech, 2016).

“The revolution will be tweeted”, is a catchphrase which first arose during the Arab Spring uprising “where social media played an important role in the organisation of protests which rocked the Middle East and Africa” (Thomas, 2015: n.p.). In a similar vein, social media has enabled groups to mobilise quickly and create mass involvement during the South African national 2015–2016

student unrests known as #FeesMustFall, #OutsourcingMustFall and #AfrikaansMustFall campaigns (see South African History Online, 2016). Twitter and Facebook hashtag handles allowed for increased interaction and engagement on social media platforms resulting in significant mobilisation in a short period of time. “Throughout the course of the protests, social media has been used not to just organise and disseminate messages, but to actively subvert the traditional media approaches to the protest” (Thomas, 2015: n.p.). As a result of the rapid mass activism, several universities (including the university under study) closed their doors during the unrest period, which had significant implications for the academic calendars, including examination as well as registration delays (Nicolaides, Bendile & Whittles, 2016).

Universities are operating in turbulent times, and issues such as sustainability and transformation are receiving increased prominence (Universities South Africa, 2016). Strategies to mitigate the ongoing South African national unrest and political instability on campuses to ensure peace and stability are being thrust to the forefront while the usual university operational activities are being undertaken on a day-to-day basis.

The identified case study for this research is discussed in the next section.

2.4.Higher education institution

The vision of the university under study is to be a leading research-intensive university on the Africa continent, which is internationally recognised for its quality, relevance and impact, as well as its focus on the development of people, generating knowledge and having an impact both locally and globally (UP, 2016a).

The relevance of the university’s vision, which is “closely tied to its commitment to local needs and development challenges and, at the same time, to remain a hub of knowledge production recognised within the global scientific community” (UP, 2011: 4), remains as valid now, if not more so, as it did when the UP2025 Strategic Plan was drafted in 2011.

The university's UP2025 Strategic Plan document highlights the strategic direction and core strategies of the university (UP, 2011). However, due to the significant changes in the external landscape, it was deemed necessary to review the strategic goals and align them with the changes. The updated Strategic Plan: 2017–2021 identifies the updated five core strategic goals as:

- “To enhance access and successful student learning;
- To strengthen the University's research and international profile
- To foster and sustain a transformed, inclusive, and equitable University community;
- To optimise resources and enhance institutional sustainability;
- To strengthen the University's social responsiveness and impact in society” (UP, 2016b: 9).

Further to the above, the university acknowledges the importance of quality support and services to its students and staff (UP, 2017). The value chain offered by the SSDs is essential to accomplishing the university's vision. Core support functions offered by the university, focusing on student-related functions, are –

- efficient and effective student administration;
- effectual communication; and
- on-going support throughout the student life cycle; namely –
 - recruitment;
 - application;
 - selection;
 - financial aid;
 - residence placement; and
 - registration and graduation (UP, 2017).

It is this very focus on student-related services and support that warranted the university's senior management to request an investigation into the revision and redesign of processes and functions pertaining to the student life value chain. The vice-chancellor and principal of the university is quoted, “[i]n the context of multiple change and changing demands – nationally, regionally and globally – it is crucial that we continuously assess whether we are optimally positioned to meet these demands” (UP, 2014: n.p.). The strategic initiative was launched

under sponsorship of the vice-chancellor and principal, and external consultants were appointed to ensure that the university maintains a competitive position in the HE environment through rendering effective and efficient services to students. The strategic initiative was named 'Optimising Student Services' (OSS).

2.5. Optimising Student Services (OSS)

The primary strategic purpose for the OSS initiative was to recognise the prevailing market drivers with a view to improve and enhance the student experience as well as the competitive positioning of the university. The information provided in this section has been sourced from the OSS documentation.

The market drivers, as identified by the university included the “increasingly competitive local higher education environment; research intensive focus of universities globally; drive for internationalisation of universities; demand for the enrolment and retention of top student talent; [and the] ever changing business model for higher education” (UP, 2015: n.p.).

The OSS initiative was instigated by the senior management team, and was divided into three main delivery phases, namely:

- investigation phase – initiated in May 2014 and concluded towards the end of 2014;
- implementation phase – initiated in April 2015 and concluded at the end of February 2016; and
- maintenance phase – commenced in March 2016 and concluded towards the end of February 2017, followed by an independent review in May–June 2017.

2.5.1. Investigation phase

During this phase, external consultants were appointed to investigate all student-related administration and service functions. The external consultants' brief by senior management was mandated with two main objectives:

- “Develop and present the necessary operating model requirements needed to execute and support the UP 2025 Strategy, especially with regard to Student Services;

- Investigate and present opportunities to optimise processes and services related to recruitment, applications, admissions, residence placement, as well as study finance, for both undergraduate and postgraduate students” (UP, 2015: n.p.).

The external consultants presented a final report to senior management detailing an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the communication channels, processes, key performance indicators (KPIs), technology platforms, organisational structures, proposed student service model designs, recommendations and findings. Senior management approved the high-level principles of the future design in August 2014 and mandated that implementation of the above commence.

2.5.2.Implementation phase

The implementation phase was facilitated by an in-house team, and several working groups were established to give effect to the recommendations made by the external consultants.

The strategic initiative outcomes resulted in substantial financial resource commitments as well as extensive structural and human resource (HR) implications. This required “the regrouping and refocusing of functions with a fundamental revision of business practices, processes and protocol” aligned with the UP2025 Strategic Plan (UP, 2015: n.p.).

The implementation phase culminated in a final service delivery model designed to deliver a seamless experience to students over the student life cycle. In order to ensure that the implemented model was functioning effectively and efficiently as designed, senior management mandated an oversight period of 12 months referred to as the ‘maintenance phase’.

2.5.3.Maintenance phase

The main objective of the maintenance phase was to ensure full integration and alignment, between all student-related services and support functions (according to the new service delivery model). This took place as planned and to address any outstanding issues or risks as identified. Therefore the main role of the in-

house team tasked with this phase was to provide strategic control and to drive compliance.

After the maintenance phase had been completed, senior management again appointed the same external consultants to conduct an OSS review. The objective of the review was to establish deviations in the actual implementation to date based on the initial OSS recommendations (2014) and to recommend future actions and/or corrections.

The majority of participants involved during the OSS initiative, particularly the implementation and maintenance phases, were professional middle managers as defined in this research study (see section 4.2). An intensive participatory process of organisational re-design took place during the work group sessions. Significant strategic decision-making, input and strategy formulation were required by these participants to achieve the objectives of ensuring the strategic change initiative (OSS) was successfully implemented.

2.6. Unit of analysis

Within this research study, the unit of analysis was therefore the professional middle managers employed within the student support functions at the university.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, the context of the empirical research study was introduced and the unit of analysis was also briefly described. A single-case research methodology was adopted and the selection of the university as the single case was based on several key criteria. The university is considered to be a leading institution within the South African HE sector. The successful implementation of the OSS initiative as described above, will contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the university from a strategic perspective as well as enhance the competitive positioning of the university within the HE environment. The institution undertook a major strategic change initiative, namely the OSS, which coincidentally occurred almost parallel to an unprecedented climate in the HE sector leading to highly unusual events. The climate, both internal and external,

created a unique research opportunity. Amidst the context of change, the professional middle managers' ability to cope in terms of fulfilling their roles presented a distinctive focus area for study.

The next chapter deals with the literature review for the study taking the above context into account.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. Introduction

In Chapter 1, the background and overview of the research study were presented. The problem statement and research questions were defined. Subsequently, in Chapter 2, the detailed context of the study was discussed as well as the overview of the unit of analysis. The selected university as a single-case study was introduced against the background of significant internal changes and extraordinary macro environmental changes. In this chapter, the research study is positioned within the existing literature. In selecting the appropriate body of knowledge, a wide range of disciplines were drawn upon, namely strategy, leadership, psychology and organisational behaviour, in order to ensure the study was well grounded and positioned.

The theoretical framework provided the underpinning theories for a detailed literature review of the key constructs leading to the identification of research gaps in the literature as discussed in Chapter 4.

The problem statement of this study was the departure point for the literature review, which provided a foundation, which supported the research study in addressing the research purpose and ultimately considered the research questions and themes.

The structure of Chapter 3 is outlined below in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1 Chapter 3 outline

3.2.Organisational change

“To say that we have mastered the process of organisational change would simply be untrue” (Woodman, Pasmore & Shani, 2009: n.p.). Although significant research in this area has been produced, mastery of the subject has not yet been attained. However, due to the inherent nature and emotions of humans accompanied by the change in organisational environments, no clear formula of success will ever be achieved. That being said, there are increasingly new perspectives and improvements in the field. From a practice perspective, there may be new ways of thinking about longstanding problems through challenging the taken-for-granted practices associated with organisational change (Jansson, 2013).

It has been argued that, in order to understand organisational change completely, it is imperative to attend to both the typical considerations of the traditional formally planned change as well as the less formal emergent change, which are usually seen as opposite poles of organisational change efforts (Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek, 2009).

3.2.1.Planned and emergent organisational change

Organisational change theory has been dominated by the planned change approach (see Lewin, 1951). Planned change views change as moving through formal pre-planned steps from one fixed state to another and was advocated by the 'grandfather' of organisational change, Kurt Lewin, and his popular three-stage model of change in 1951 (Hornstein, 2015). This model, which comprises **unfreezing** (breaking down of current meaning constructions), **movement** (establishing new meanings) and **refreezing** (solidifying the new meanings) underlies most planned change accounts, which are usually initiated and vigorously managed by either managers or consultants (Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek, 2009; Sonenshein, 2010). A drawback to the three-stage model, is that the dynamic interchange of meaning construction between managers and the workforce is overlooked (Sonenshein, 2010). Livne-Tarandach and Bartunek (2009) highlight that this approach has received criticism since the early 1980s as it does not consider the ever-changing environmental factors, ignores the open-ended and continuous process of organisational change (Burnes, 2004; Dawson, 1994; Pettigrew, 1990a) and does not give much attention to organisational politics and conflict (Burnes, 2004).

The emergent change perspective, on the opposite hand, appeared during the 1980s. According to this perspective, change is advocated as continuous, unpredictable, informal and generally political, as well as being an open-ended process of adaptation to the dynamic changing environment (Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek, 2009). The emergent change approach is a 'bottom up' action as opposed to the 'top-down' control normally associated with planned change (see (Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek, 2009). Advocates for this perspective, as

highlighted by Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek (2009), believe it has merits in dealing with both internal and external environmental uncertainties and complexity, as organisations are required to become open learning systems. The emergent change approach is focused on change readiness and change facilitation by change agents as opposed to pre-planned phases during organisational change initiatives (see Todnem By, 2005).

“In recent years, a multitude of authors have compared and contrasted traditional, episodic approaches to change management with more dynamic and continuous approaches that have emerged from thinking around complexity and complex adaptive systems” (Lawrence, 2015: 231). The results of a study by Lawrence (2015) suggest that most managers do not rely upon the traditional change models, as they are (intuitively) aware of the limits of this approach.

Criticisms of the emergent change view raise the points that there are many disparate models and approaches as well as limited knowledge on how change can be effected and how it evolves over time (Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek, 2009).

Livne-Tarandach and Bartunek (2009) promote that the most effective approach would be to connect the two opposite poles, i.e. planned and emergent change over time. These authors believe a more comprehensive picture of organisational change will emerge. The connection method “seeks to embrace, draw energy from, and give equal voice to planned and emergent change” and recommends a new avenue for further organisational change research (Livne-Tarandach & Bartunek, 2009: 22). Furthermore, the authors go on to say that organisational change agents, such as managers, should not be considered exclusively as initiators or implementers of planned organisational change, nor should they be seen merely as reactive agents to emergent change. Managers as change agents should play a proactive role in both emergent and planned change through shaping and influencing initiatives. This includes the ability to persuade and communicate; keeping staff engaged in order to create synergies of emergent and planned change.

Further research is required to create a deeper level of understanding of –

- how leaders actually go about reviewing and revising their mental models in the midst of change;
- how leaders' approaches to change evolve with time and experience; and
- how leaders tackle a wider range of situations (Lawrence, 2015: 251).

The concept 'leaders' within Lawrence's study (2015) identified individuals who had experience in leading change in multicultural organisations or who had led large-scale projects with several levels of management. Within the context of the current study, this aligned with the middle managers' strategy work during the strategic change.

Organisations are constantly affected by change at both operational level as well as strategic echelons, and it is therefore vital for organisations to establish where they desire to be in the future and how to manage the changes that are required to reach that future vision (Burnes, 2004). It can thus be established that organisational change cannot be disconnected from organisational strategy (Hornstein, 2015; Rieley & Clarkson, 2001). This then leads to the next section that provides an overview of the evolution of strategy research with a particular focus on deliberate and emergent strategy.

3.2.2. Deliberate and emergent strategy

Strategy research has evolved significantly over the years with the initial perspective of strategy being what senior management teams of an organisation intend or plan to do in the future (direction), usually as an analytical process-driven discipline aimed at developing long-term goals followed by implementation. Strategy was seen as something an organisation has as opposed to more recent perspectives of strategy being something individuals do, i.e. a contextual perspective (Johnson et al., 2007).

More recently, there has been a shift in thinking pertaining to the strategy actors or practitioners responsible for strategy formulation and strategy implementation (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Top managers were traditionally seen as the primary actors in this regard; however, research has shown that other actors,

both internal and external, have significant influence on strategy making (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, Caillaet & Yakis-Douglas, 2011). Strategy is considered “a precarious profession subject to cyclical demand and shifts in organizational power” leading to more “open forms of strategy-making, with more transparency inside and outside organizations and more inclusion of different actors” from within and from outside (Whittington et al., 2011: 531).

Much growth has taken place within this research area with the movement towards the operationalisation of strategy taking a much wider perspective into account of how strategy is actually formulated (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985: 257). The seminal work of Mintzberg and Waters (1985) identified two types of strategies, namely deliberate strategies (i.e. those that are intended) and emergent strategies (i.e. those that are realised quite unintentionally).

Previous studies of the strategy process (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) have depicted it as “an emergent pattern in a stream of actions” (Jarzabkowski, Kaplan, Seidl & Whittington, 2016: 7). On the other hand, it is clear that organisations take part in deliberate strategy formulation, such as strategic planning (Giraudeau, 2008; Hendry et al., 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Ocasio & Joseph, 2008; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

Deliberate strategy tends to focus on ensuring things are done as planned, driven from hierarchical management, giving central direction and control (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). In contrast, emergent strategy allows for strategic learning – doing what works through “unintended order”, requiring “collective action and convergent behaviour” from those closest to the situation who can play a vital role in shaping realistic strategies requiring management that is open, adaptable and receptive to a complex environment (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985: 271). Emergent strategies are therefore driven from within an organisation requiring managers and other key staff close to the operations to play a significant role in strategy revision and formulation in line with operational requirements given the dynamic environment in which the company operates (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

SAP research has provided rich insight into deliberate strategy making, such as formal strategic planning and strategising activities; however, the emergence of strategy making has not received as much attention as would be expected (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). By zooming in on the actual happenings in organisations, the strength of strategy as practice enables the ideal opportunities to identify the informal activities that give rise to emerging strategies. Researchers have provided theoretical and conceptual frameworks on emergent strategies (Chia & Holt, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Chia & Rasche, 2010) in order to understand the emergence of strategies and the link to prevalent practices better. SAP research has the potential to explain the “dialectic of deliberate vs. emergent strategies”, in other words how both types of strategies contribute to the progression of the organisation (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 315). Researchers (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 8) have defined strategy as “a particular type of activity” linked to particular practices, and this activity is acknowledged as strategic “to the extent that it is consequential for the strategic outcomes, directions and competitive advantage” of an organisation whether these consequences are part of the formal, intended strategy or not.

Further contemporary thinking is that these two types of strategy are not dichotomous in nature, “strategy is neither deliberate nor emergent” but rather “emergence involves continuous deliberation, in who is doing the strategizing (e.g. operational, middle or top managers) and how they do it shape the pattern that emerges in distinctive ways” (Jarzabkowski, Burke & Spee, 2015: 7).

In reality, both types of strategising take place within organisations and both may or may not lead to realised strategies (Balogun et al., 2015). It is possible that a deliberate or “intended strategy may turn into an unrealized strategy, just as an emergent strategy may contribute to the realized strategy” (Ikävalko, 2005: 13). Further to that, realised strategy is affected not only by context but also by human interaction (Balogun et al., 2015; Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015).

Organisational change has been defined in the literature as “[a] context-dependent, unpredictable, non-linear process, in which intended strategies often

lead to unintended outcomes”. Furthermore, empirical research demonstrates that “strategy development and change should be viewed as an emergent process” (Balogun & Johnson, 2005: 1573).

Two types of change, namely transactional and transformative change, have been distinguished (Louw & Venter, 2013). **Transactional** change is also known as ‘first-order change’ whereby the organisation remains unchanged (Louw & Venter, 2013). Examples of transactional change include changes to systems or management practices. **Transformative** change on the other hand, or ‘second-order change’, is revolutionary and changes the fundamental framework of the organisation (Louw & Venter, 2013). This type of change is achieved by changes in the underlying strategy and structure of the organisation affecting the entire organisation, and may be referred to as strategic change. The next section defines strategic organisational change and relates this concept back to the current study. The current study does not focus on the change initiative per se; however, the change initiative created the specific context within which the study was conducted.

3.2.3.Strategic organisational change

Strategic change has been defined as “a dynamic and developing alteration from one state to another, effected over some measure of time, and with some level of intent or plan behind its execution in an organisational context” (Slocum, 2007: 12). Strategic organisational change encompasses shifts in the alignment between the environment of the organisation, which may originate from within and from outside the organisation (Rajagopalan & Spreitzer, 1997).

According to Pettigrew (1990b: 273), change “is whatever the researcher defines it to be in his/her theoretical framework” and therefore it befits “researchers to define explicitly what change means in their research design”. I therefore define strategic organisational change of this research study as change that affects the structures, people, processes and fundamental ways of working in the organisation in order to achieve long-term survival of the organisation.

Ambiguity is said to be one of the distinguishing characteristics of strategic change processes (Hendry & Seidl, 2003). It is further noted that “a precondition of strategic change is a change of context from which the organization is observed” (Hendry & Seidl, 2003: 184).

Literature shows that “strategic change is vital to the long-term viability” of organisations (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012: 16) and serves to “transform” the organisation (Slocum, 2007: 21). Strategic change initiatives are however costly involving significant commitments in terms of financial and human resources to parts of the organisation that have been identified for change by top management (Wiedner, Barret & Oborn, 2017). However, despite the commitments, implementing strategic change is one of the most significant endeavours of an organisation, potentially leading either to invigorating the organisation successfully or to a catastrophic outcome (Sonenshein, 2010).

An integrative approach to understanding strategic change permits research scholars to investigate strategic change within diverse situations, “increasing the value of knowledge about strategic change as a guide to action as well as contributing to debate on the robustness of change and implementation issues overall” (Dufour & Steane, 2006: 142). A holistic perspective allowing for divergent approaches, which include rational, structural, behavioural and political approaches, further enhances the understanding of strategic change.

A recent study challenged some of the taken-for-granted practices pertaining to organisational change “in order to understand how organizational change as practice is conditioned by mundane assumptions” (Jansson, 2013: 1003). Taken-for-granted assumptions were identified in the study according to the traditional view and the critical practice view based on the three dimensions of the practice theory framework, namely practices (making changes), praxis (how change takes place) and practitioner (the actor) (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). It is stated that “new insights can be generated by critical analysis of the taken-for-granted aspects of social practices” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 324). A critical analysis of the literature by Jansson (2013),

utilising practice theory was conducted, as a result of which human behaviour and social context are interwoven. The concept 'organisational change as practice' corresponds to the SAP perspective and "is regarded as shared understanding of organizational change practices in theory" (Jansson, 2013: 1004). Practice theory is a reasonable choice as it investigates practice (in this case the change), in its social setting (i.e. the organisation). A key finding of Jansson's research is that certain aspects in organisation change, which are believed to be universal, are indeed particular to a specific context. In other words, "organizational change in practice is a manifestation of particularity" (Jansson, 2013: 1003). 'Universality' defined as "the commonly applicable" and 'particularity' defined as "the locally applicable" were the definitions used in the study (Jansson, 2013: 1004). The universal perspective in literature overlooks the significance of the context and particularity, which are fundamental to practice theory in order for social change to ensue. This analysis demonstrates the realities of practice intricacies and highlights that organisational change is context-dependent, and the social aspects (sociality), which are important to organisational change, should not be misjudged by practitioners. "Organizational change in practice is a manifestation of particularity" (Jansson, 2013: 1011).

Organisations endeavour to implement new strategies through change initiatives that are driven from the top down (Balogun & Johnson, 2005). "Top management-driven change focuses first on changing strategies, structures, and systems – the 'hardware' of the organization" with the focus on achieving desired goals through a well sequenced plan (Torraco, 2005: 306). Given the context of this research study, one such situation was a strategic organisational change initiative universally referred to as 'restructuring'. Research has shown how efforts "to align strategic change with operational re-structuring can have different outcomes that have much to do with management agency" demonstrating the resilience of management practices during organisational change (Taplin, 2006: 299). The next section deals with the topic of restructuring.

3.2.3.1. Restructuring as a strategic organisational change initiative

Organisational restructuring is commonplace, instigated by senior management in order to create alignment between a new strategic intent and ways of working (Balogun, 2007; Whittington, Molloy, Mayer & Smith, 2006). Due to “market volatility, uncertainty and heightened competition” organisations are often pressured to restructure in order to improve operational performance (Taplin 2006: 285). Restructuring, as a planned organisational change initiative and the successful implementation thereof, is therefore vital in ensuring the longevity, productivity and efficiency of the organisation. In addition, of specific importance for the restructuring process is the management practice known as organisational ‘sensebreaking’ (see Pratt, 2000), whereby the symbolic destruction of old strategies are performed in order to make place for the new strategies (Mantere, Schildt & Sillince, 2012).

Financial pressures globally have been a major stimulus for tertiary institutions to restructure; however, other reasons have also been reported on, namely:

- intellectual synergies;
- transformation to a more academically selective institution with a higher research profile;
- response to cut in state support;
- [to] strengthen academic offerings;
- trim administrative costs to best serve the needs of students; and
- budget cuts as well as to “increase efficiency and streamline operations (Olson 2010: 1–2).

Substantial and decreasing state funding has forced HEIs to restructure, and two overriding themes have emerged, namely cost savings through reorganisation and producing more efficient and academically sound entities. In addition, not only are the academic entities affected, but also the support service departments including the consolidation of student support units, student affairs, student centres, finance and administration (Olson, 2010).

Many organisations share similar issues when restructuring, regardless of the type of restructuring. The “nature of restructuring” (see Balogun, 2007: 82) requires –

- consideration to or decisions about how new units, divisions or departments could be created out of older entities;
- which structure to support improved and fundamentally different ways of working;
- a top-down imposed implementation of a strategic structural framework; and
- staff within the structure to complete the detailed design and make it operational (Balogun, 2007).

Provost and Vice President of Idaho State University, Gary Oslon stated that which “once seemed so foreign and unimaginable soon becomes a source of optimism as faculty and staff members begin to realize the benefits of the new organisation” (Olson, 2010: 4). According to Gary Oslon (2014) by imagining the possibilities instead of an automatic resistance to change, there would be no need for campus unrest or no-confidence votes. Restructuring creates uncertainty for staff in terms “of how things are to be done in the future” and poses a challenge for management of how to make the new structure ‘work’ (Balogun, 2007: 82).

Managers are able “to generate strategic change themselves, either by relying on the organization’s own resources or by drawing on those of external consultants (Hendry & Seidl, 2003: 178). External consultants are frequently involved in strategy making (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). These strategy practitioners are categorised as “outside strategy advisers” (Whittington, 2006: 619). Consultants often assist top management with the formation of new strategies and structures to bring about systemic organisational change (Torraco, 2005). Varyani and Khammar (2010: 31) found that the “middle managers’ perception of strategy is more about the ‘what’ and ‘when’ of the strategic goals, while the consultants

focused on 'how' as well". The role of the external consultant however was not included in the scope of this current study.

3.3. Theoretical framework

Two theoretical approaches have been selected to be included in the review, namely organisational theory and practice theory. Theoretical and empirical studies dealing with strategic change (initiatives) confirm that both these theoretical perspectives are appropriate (Arnaud, Mills, Legrand & Maton, 2016; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Brown, Colville & Pye, 2015; Dahl et al., 2016; Lungren-Henriksson & Kock, 2016; Rantakari & Vaara, 2016; Rouleau, 2005; Stensaker & Falkenberg, 2007; Vaara, Kleymann & Seristo., 2004). Researchers may consider "how a practice perspective can draw upon and extend existing organisational and strategic management theory" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 22) and through the combination of these two theoretical perspectives the current study will contribute to theory building and provide in-depth, rich insights.

Both theories have foundations in the social sciences drawing from disciplines such as sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology and philosophy to name a few. Similarly, both organisational theory and practice theory rely on many theories to "explain and predict how organizations and the people in them will behave in varying organizational structures, cultures, and circumstances" (Corradi et al., 2010; Shafritz et al., 2005: 3). As the current research study was focused on exploring how middle managers strategise to effect change within an institution during the implementation of a strategic change initiative, the two theoretical frameworks were deemed relevant to the topic under discussion.

The literature (e.g. Balogun et al., 2003) confirms that different theoretical perspectives have been considered in diverse studies when deliberating on strategic organisational change as a backdrop to behaviour. Various problems raised in existing strategy research may be enlightened by a practice-based approach; hence, "the field does not require 'new' theories per se, but to draw upon a range of existing theories to explore the strategy problems" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 19). Organisational theories, such as sensemaking and narrative

theory, have also been applied to studies that focus on how strategic change is constructed, executed and altered through the daily actions of practitioners (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Rouleau, 2005).

Organisational theory is especially relevant for organisations facing significant external and internal change and is discussed in the next section.

3.3.1. Organisational theory

The theory of organisations developed out of the academic or intellectual investigation of life in real-world organisations (Shafritz et al., 2005). The main question for organisational theory involves “how best to design and manage organizations so that they achieve their declared purposes effectively and efficiently” (Shafritz et al., 2005: 352). In this context, “organizations are self-consciously constructed and managed” (Shafritz et al., 2005: ix). Organisations are different from other social groupings in that they are articulated and formalised. Organisations are therefore social units with specific purposes.

The complexity of organisational theory is evolving, with the humble beginnings of drawing some people and activities out of a disordered societal environment and structuring them in a coherent and uniform manner. The basic organisational components have remained somewhat constant, namely organisations –

- have implicit or explicit purposes;
- attract individuals;
- obtain and assign resources to achieve goals;
- form structures to divide and coordinate activities; and
- rely on certain individuals to manage or lead others (Shafritz et al., 2005).

Organisations are however varied in terms of their purposes, structures, ways of doing things and methodology for coordinating. These variations may be due to the adaptability of organisations to the environment as they are open systems influenced by the world around them (Shafritz et al., 2005).

“Organizations are inseparable parts of society and the culture in which they exist and function. Human behaviour – and thus also organisational behaviour – is

influenced by culturally rooted beliefs, values, assumptions, and behavioral norms that affect all aspects of organizations” (Shafritz et al., 2005: 2). Organisational theories therefore do not occur in isolation but reflect what is going on in society.

Organisational theories are based on a plethora of diverse disciplines and it is understood that there is no one theory of organisations. Many scholars have endeavoured to enlighten and foresee how organisations and the individuals within them will act or perform in different structures, cultures and conditions. Criticism of organisational theories, therefore, may be that consensus has not been reached about what makes up knowledge in organisational theory. However, to refute this, various scholars at least seem to share a similar purpose: “to organize and extend knowledge about organizations and how to study them” (Shafritz et al., 2005: 4).

The major organisational theory perspectives, the associated fundamental tenets and the main contributors are summarised succinctly in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Major organisational theory perspectives, tenets and main contributors

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
<p>Classical organisational theory</p> <p>Origins in the eighteenth century to around the 1930s</p>	<p>Originated – factory system in Great Britain</p> <p>Industrial Revolution of the 1700s</p> <p>Organisations exist to accomplish production-related and economic goals</p> <p>There is one best way to organise for production (i.e. systematic scientific enquiry)</p> <p>Production is maximised through specialisation and division of labour</p> <p>People and organisations act in accordance with rational economic principles</p> <p>Workers viewed as interchangeable parts in an industrial machine</p> <p>Narrow and simplistic but pioneers in the field</p>	<p>Adam Smith –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ father of economics ▪ specialisation of labour ▪ ‘invisible hand’ <p>Daniel McCullum –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ general principles of organisation; ▪ division of responsibilities; ▪ reporting system; ▪ first organisational chart <p>Henri Fayol –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ general and industrial management; ▪ first comprehensive theory of management <p>Henry Towne –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ principles of administration; ▪ management database of shop practices <p>Henry Metcalfe –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ principles of administration; ▪ record production events to improve production processes <p>Frederick Winslow Taylor –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ principles of scientific management <p>Max Weber –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ analytical sociologist ▪ studying bureaucratic organisations <p>Luther Gulick –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ principles approach to managing of functions of organisations;

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
<p>Neoclassical organisational theory</p> <p>End of World War II to around the 1950s</p> <p>Some theorists continue to contribute into the turn of the century</p>	<p>Revises or is critical of classical organisational theory</p> <p>Opposes the minimising of issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the humanness of organisational members • coordination needs between administrative units • operation of internal-external organisational relations • processes used in decision-making <p>Modified or added to or extended classical organisational theory only – did not develop a new body of theory</p> <p>Moved away from the overly simplistic mechanistic view</p> <p>Organisations cannot exist as self-contained islands isolated from the environment</p> <p>Played a pivotal role in opening up thinking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ POSDCORB* functions of executive management <p>Chester Barnard –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ economy of incentives; ▪ functions of executives; ▪ comprehensive theory of behaviour in organisations; ▪ cooperation amongst members; ▪ persuasion <p>Robert Merton –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sociologist; ▪ structure of bureaucracy; ▪ 'ideal-type' <p>Herbert Simon –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ proverbs of administration; ▪ theories of organisational decision-making <p>Philip Selznick –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sociologist; ▪ foundations of the theory of organisation; ▪ structural-functional analysis; ▪ co-optation; ▪ distinction between concepts 'institution' and 'organisation' <p>Richard Cyert and James March –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ behavioural theory of organisational objectives; ▪ influence of power and politics on organisational goals; ▪ coalitions

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
HR theory or organisational behaviour perspective 1960s onwards	<p>Optimistic and humanistic assumptions and values – trust and honesty</p> <p>Basic assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisations exist to serve human needs Organisations and people need each other (i.e. co-dependence) When the fit between the two is poor one or both will suffer When the fit between the two is good both will benefit Under the right circumstances, people and organisations will grow and prosper Human relations movement Focus on how organisations should allow and encourage people to grow and develop Support by large body of literature with various subfields (leadership, motivation, teams and groups, effects of work environment, power and influence, organisational change) 	<p>Elton Mayo –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hawthorne studies – the precursor to displacing the assumptions of the classical organisational theory; laid the foundation for the organisational behaviour perspective; ‘grandfather’ of HR theory. <p>Mary Parker Follet –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving of orders; participatory leadership style advocated <p>Frist Roethlisberger –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hawthorne experiments chronicler of the studies; management and morale <p>Douglas McGregor –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the human side of enterprise; management and motivation; theory X and theory Y – self-fulfilling prophecies; articulated basic assumptions of the organisational behaviour perspective <p>Abraham Maslow –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> theory of human motivation; hierarchy of needs <p>Irving Janis –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> groupthink; drive for consensus at any cost; pressures for conformance

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
<p>'Modern' structural organisational theory The word 'modern' is used to differentiate between the structural theorists of the second half of the twentieth century and the pre-World War II classical school of structuralists</p>	<p>Concerned with vertical differentiations – hierarchical levels of authority and coordination and horizontal differentiation, such as product or service lines or skills</p> <p>Organisational chart is main tool</p> <p>Basic assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational efficiency is essence of organisational rationality with purpose to accomplish established objectives • There is a 'best' structure for any organisation (most appropriate) • Specialisation and division of labour increase quality and quantity of production in highly skilled operations and professions • Most problems result from structural flaws and can be solved by changing the structure • Legitimate authority and formal rules 	<p>Tim Burns and G Stalker –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mechanistic and organic systems <p>Peter Blau and Richard Scott –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ concept of formal organisation; ▪ informal (social) and formal elements in organisations <p>Arthur Walker and Jay Lorsch –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ organisational choice – product versus function structure <p>Henry Mintzberg –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ theory of management policy; ▪ five basic parts of the organisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic apex; • middle line; • operating core; • technostructure; and • support staff <p>Elliot Jaques –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ in praise of hierarchy; ▪ managerial hierarchies <p>Richard Burton and Børge Obel –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ technology as a contingency factor; ▪ effects of technology on organisational design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formalisation; • centralisation; • complexity; • configuration; • coordination;

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
<p>Organisational economics theory</p> <p>Second half of twentieth century and onwards</p>	<p>Use concepts and tools from the field of economics to study internal processes and structures</p> <p>Originated from a 1937 article, "The nature of the firm" by Ronald Coase.</p> <p>Encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ agency theory ▪ game theory ▪ price theory ▪ transaction cost economics ▪ contractual nature of firms ▪ bounded rationality <p>Deals with:</p> <p>How to induce managers and other employees to act in best interests of those who control ownership or have authority to control policy and resource allocation decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ control and incentives <p>Oliver Williamson –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ markets and hierarchies – understanding the employment relation; ▪ analogous to market transaction; ▪ bargaining models <p>Michael Jensen and William Meckling –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ theory of the firm – managerial behaviour; ▪ agency costs and ownership structure <p>Jay Barney and William Ouchi –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ learning from organisational economics <p>Paul Rubin –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ managing business transactions; ▪ transaction cost theory; ▪ ethics
<p>Theories of organisations and environments</p> <p>1960s onwards</p>	<p>Organisations as open systems</p> <p>Interdependent activities embedded in and dependent on wider environment</p> <p>Focus on interactions and interdependencies among organisations and their environments</p> <p>Multidimensional and complex in assumptions</p>	<p>Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ organisations and the system concept; ▪ organisations as open systems that need to adapt continually to the environment <p>James Thompson –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ organisations in action; ▪ rational systems; ▪ contingency perspective; ▪ bridge gap between open and closed systems; ▪ organisations abhor uncertainty <p>John Meyer and Brian Rowan –</p>

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ institutionalised organisations – formal structure as myth and ceremony; ▪ socially created and validated meanings define reality; ▪ environments are sources of legitimacy and support <p>Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ external control of organisations – resource dependence perspective; ▪ organisations exchange resources with their environments as a condition of survival; ▪ context important <p>Glenn Carrol and Michael Hannan –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ demography of corporations and industries; ▪ organisational ecology; ▪ focus on populations of organisations rather than individual units; ▪ environmental selection is prime process by which organisations change
<p>Power and politics organisational theory Rejects the assumptions of the ‘modern’ structural, organisational economics and system or environment theories</p>	<p>Basic assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations viewed as complex systems of individuals and coalitions, each having its own interests, beliefs, values, preferences, perspectives and perceptions. • Coalitions continually compete for scarce organisational resources • Conflict is inevitable • Influence (power and politics) is primary ‘weapon’ 	<p>Jeffrey Pfeffer –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understanding the role of power in decision-making; ▪ resource dependence; ▪ relativity of power – context or relationship specific; ▪ ‘place of power’ <p>John French and Berton Raven –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the bases of social power; ▪ reaction of recipient agent – social influence

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
	<p>for use in competition and conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power, politics and influence are essential and permanent facts of organisational life • Organisational goals rarely set by people in positions of formal authority – goals result from ongoing manoeuvring and bargaining among individuals and coalitions • Power is a structural phenomenon 	<p>and power;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ five bases or sources of social power: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reward power; • coercive power; • legitimate power; • referent power; • expert power <p>James March –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the power of power; ▪ community power; ▪ models of social choice <p>Henry Mintzberg –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the power game and the players; ▪ influencers – external and internal coalitions <p>Rosabeth Moss Kanter –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ power failure in management and managerial power is necessary; ▪ distinction between power, dominance, control and oppression; ▪ powerlessness and empowerment
<p>Organisational culture theory</p> <p>Rejects the assumptions of the ‘modern’ structural, organisational economics and system or environment theories</p>	<p>Set of organisational theories with its own assumptions about organisational realities and relationships</p> <p>Assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational decisions and behaviours are predetermined by patterns of basic assumptions held by members of an organisation • Patterns of assumptions continue to exist and 	<p>Edgar Schein –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ defining organisational culture – formal definition of organisational culture <p>Scott Cook and Dvora Yanow –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ culture and organisational learning <p>Harrison Trice and Janice Beyer –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ changing organisational culture; ▪ define eight prescriptive aphorisms in changing organisational culture;

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
1980s onwards was a major turning point	<p>influence behaviours as they have 'worked in the past'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeated use allows for the assumptions to drop out of people's consciousness but continue to influence organisational behaviour 'the way we do things here' Behaviours repeated even if the environment changes 'organisational culture' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> common sources of resistance to change <p>Joanne Martin –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organisational culture; define what is and what is not culture; culture as a metaphor
<p>Reform changes in organisational culture</p> <p>1980s–1990s and onwards</p>	<p>Common theme: lasting organisational reform requires changes in the organisational culture</p> <p>Seek to increase productivity, flexibility responsiveness and customer service by reshaping organisational cultures</p> <p>Empowered workforce is mostly advocated</p>	<p>Edward Deming –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> total quality management; leadership, customer focus, continuous improvement, empowerment and management; fourteen points of management <p>William Ouchi –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Z organisation (Japanese movement); organisations are social beings; foster close interchange between work and social life; intimacy and trust <p>Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in search of excellence – loose–tight properties; eight attributes of management excellence; coexistence of firm central direction and maximum individual autonomy <p>Peter Senge –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the fifth discipline; teaming and learning is change;

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ learning organisations; ▪ five component technologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ system thinking; ▪ personal mastery; ▪ mental models; ▪ shared vision; ▪ team learning <p>Joan Acker –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ gendering organisational theory; ▪ ordinary activities in organisation are not gender neutral; ▪ feminist organisational theory <p>Taylor Cox –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ multicultural organisation – managing diversity; ▪ presence of real diversity is unsustainable
<p>Third and fourth industrial revolution – digital revolution and technological convergence</p>	<p>Proliferation of automation, artificial intelligence and robotics leading to mass unemployment and negative effects on wages</p> <p>Internet of Things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ merging between and across digital, physical, biological technologies resulting in the transformation of how products are made and used; ▪ marriage between information technology and operational technology <p>Existing and future technologies to be fully embedded in societies</p>	<p>Kevin Ashton –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ coined the term ‘The Internet of Things’ <p>Klaus Schwab –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ author of the “The fourth industrial revolution”; ▪ emerging technology breakthroughs

School of thought	Fundamental tenets	Main contributors
	Linking the virtual to the physical world Convergence between hardware and software Predictive maintenance Smart factories Big data analytics Workforce must be far more educated 3D printing capabilities, online data sharing and processing Cyber security becoming a challenging aspect increasing risks of cyber insecurities Distributed manufacturing – enables entrepreneurs to do business almost anywhere Significant effect on regulation and governance frameworks	

Note: *POSDCORB = planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting

Source: Adapted and summarised from Bloem, Van Doorn, Duivestein, Excoffier, Maas & Van Ommeren (2014), Maynard (2015) and Shafritz et al. (2005)

From the table above, it is evident that organisational theory perspectives have progressed and developed over the years from the initial views of the classical organisational theories to those of organisations being open and complex systems where the dynamics of the external environment play a significant role within the internal organisation. Hence, organisations and their external environments are “becoming increasingly more complex” (Hammer, Edwards & Tapinos, 2012: 909). Due to this “constant change in the external environment and evolving organisational structures” (Hammer et al., 2012: 909), the development of strategy has also increasingly become more complex. Strategy making has evolved becoming more ‘open’ thereby allowing for more transparency both inside and outside the organisation (Whittington et al., 2011). Due to this openness, other actors are able to participate in the strategic conversation and more strategic information is accessible (Hautz, Seidl & Whittington, 2017).

It is argued that it may be difficult to tell strategy apart from organisational development (Whittington et al., 2011: 541). Attempts by organisations to “align strategic change with operational restructuring” may result in different outcomes “that have much to do with management agency” (Taplin, 2006: 299).

The next section addresses practice theory, which deals with “individual actors” and their “micro-activities that contribute to the reproduction and change of strategic orientation (the outcome of strategising, the content of strategy)” (Adamides, 2015: 273).

3.3.2. Practice theory

The original version of practice theory emerged in the 1970s led by Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist (Postill, 2010). “In linking social structure and human agency through structuration theory” –

[Giddens] insists on the primacy of social practices, ordered through time and space. Thus, in one way or another, the human actor is never a discrete individual detached from context, but rather a social being whose possibilities are defined by the practices in which he or she is immersed (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 288).

Vaara and Whittington (2012), however, have traced the origins of the practice perspective back to Wittgenstein and Heidegger (1951 and 1962 respectively). Wittgenstein's work has been accredited as the philosophical background of practice theory, and is well known for his language game philosophy (Reckwitz, 2002). Heidegger, an existential phenomenologist and philosopher, introduced the concept of 'being there', and he explored the 'lived world' (Groenewald, 2004). Heidegger initiated the "relationally based view of practical action and agency" (Chia & Holt, 2006: 639). "His existential ontology provides valuable resources for developing practical rationality as an alternative framework for scientific rationality" (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011: 342).

As a branch of social theory, practice theory focuses on 'practices', which are the embodied actions that humans execute to varying degrees of competence (Postill, 2010). Postill (2010) concurs that agreement has been reached among social theorists that a comprehensible, cohesive 'practice theory' does not exist. There is only an accumulation of highly assorted research by theorists who have embraced an elusively defined 'practice' perspective. This has been defined as "a collective journey" or "bandwagon" of sorts, where a group of theorists pursue a similar goal bringing together "various strands of inquiry with certain common features" (Corradi et al., 2010: 266).

Postill (2010) differentiates between two plausible 'waves' of practice theorists and the resulting 'practice turn'. The seminal theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens led the first wave, which led to the underpinnings of what is now known as 'practice theory' (Whittington, 2006). The initial generation of practice theorists sought to free agency, i.e. the human capability to take action and transform the world from the constraints of systemic models, structuralism and methodological individualism (Postill, 2010). The human body was considered as the connexion of humans' practical dealings with the world (Postill, 2010).

Practice theory contests the "agent-based individualisms of economic and systems theory" (Whittington, 2011: 184). The shared aspiration of practice

theorists is to overcome social theory's dualism between individualism and society. According to Whittington (2006: 614), practice theorists regard both the efforts of individual actors as well as the social workings; "to the individualists, they insist there is such a thing as society; to the societists, they affirm the significance of individual activity". Accordingly, practice theory has three core themes:

- society;
- individual's actual activity 'in practice'; and
- the actors on whose skills and initiative activity depends (Whittington, 2006: 614–615).

The society theme encompasses practices as "shared understandings, cultural rules, languages and procedures that guide and enable human activity" (Whittington, 2006: 614). The second theme encompasses practice that addresses the actual activities of actors within the lived-in moment. The third theme refers to the importance of actors as their practical skills and competencies make a difference, i.e. actors are creative agents using practices, reproducing practices and amending practices. In sum, actors and their actions cannot be isolated from society. "For practice theory, people count" (Whittington, 2006: 615).

Due to the explosion of practice research over the past few decades, it has been duly dubbed the 'practice turn' (Reckwitz, 2002; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The 'practice turn' has been recognised as criticism on "[the] positivistic, cognitivistic and rationalist conceptualisation of organisations" (Geiger, 2009: 133). Practice-based studies reject positivism and argue that "knowledge is socially constructed, situated in particular practices and always provisional" (Geiger, 2009: 133). The argument against cognitivism is that knowledge is "something people do together and therefore not an individual cognitive resource" (Geiger, 2009: 134). Lastly, "knowledge as knowing is not the outcome of rational decisions resulting from scientific methods" but rather "a process of continuous enactment, refinement,

reproduction and change based on tacitly shared understandings within a practicing community” (Geiger, 2009: 134).

The second wave of practice theorists such as Ortner, Schatzki, Reckwitz and Warde, are scrutinising the foundational work and extending the theoretical knowledge base (Postill, 2010). Although continuing with the emphasis of the importance of the human body, a strong focus on culture and history questions the application of practice theory to other areas (Postill, 2010). A key figure of the second wave practice theorists according to Postill (2010) is Theodor Schatzki, who postulates that as actions and the human body are constituted within practices the ‘skilled body’ occurs where mind and activity meet as well as where individual and society meet. Actions are only understood fully within specific practical contexts.

A more recent and contemporary practice theorist, Andreas Reckwitz (2002) integrates components from Schatzki, Bourdieu, Giddens and Taylor amongst others, to develop an ‘ideal type’ of practice theory. He presents practice theory “as a conceptual alternative to other forms of social and cultural theory, above all to culturalist mentalism, textualism and intersubjectivism” (Reckwitz, 2002: 243). In addition, he adds that for practice theory, “social practices are bodily and mental routines”, therefore “mental activities do not appear as individual, but as socially routinized; the ‘individual’ consists in the unique crossing of different mental and bodily routines ‘in’ one mind or body and in the interpretative treatment of this constellation of ‘crossing’” (Reckwitz, 2002: 257).

Corradi et al. (2010: 277) identify three main dimensions on which the concept of practice is built, namely

- the set of interconnected activities;
- the sense-making process; and
- the social effects generated by a practice in connection with other social practices (reproduction of practices).

It is when these three dimensions are combined that construction of a practice theory of organisation can commence.

Supplementary to the above, six common themes have been identified as important to practice theorists (Rouse, 2007). These are summarised by (Whittington, 2011: 184–185) as follows:

- a) the commitment to shared practices, rules and norms;
- b) recognition of individual agency, which is reliant on the social practices;
- c) agency and practices exist in the bodies and artefacts (materiality) through which they occur;
- d) language or discursive practice is reliant on shared understanding although a great deal of practice is inherently tacit and difficult to express discursively;
- e) limitations of social scientific knowledge, itself a discourse, with a strong focus on researcher reflexivity and distrust of observer-centred empiricism; and
- f) rejection of the reductionism of the micro, in emphasising the autonomous effects of the social.

Practice theory research does not necessarily have to address all six themes simultaneously (Giddens, 1984; Whittington, 2011). However, whatever the theorists' focus area is, the central commitment to practices and fundamentally to social practices is required. "Cohesion around a shared commitment to practices and a mutually-respected set of themes provides a powerful platform for transdisciplinary research" and it is agreed that practice theory acknowledges diversity (Whittington, 2011: 185).

To synthesise, "practice theory is a body of work about the work of the body" (Postill, 2010: 9). With some variances, these loosely grouped perspectives of practice theory view the human body as the nexus of practices that humans perform to varying degrees of competency. "Whilst some of these practices are widely diffused across social space and time, others are found clustered in configurations that change over time through the socially (re)productive agency of practitioners" (Postill 2010: 9).

The theory of practice has dispersed significantly in various subfields since its early manifestation in the 1950s. Emerging from this second wave, are new ways in which practice theory is being applied across a broad variety of disciplines. Of relevance here, is the application of practice to strategy research. The increased focus on activity within the strategy discipline fits within a broader 'practice turn' in contemporary social theory gathering impetus in the 1980s (Whittington, 2006).

The label 'practice' may contribute "to the institutionalization of a field of interest". It further demonstrates –

[H]ow the collective appropriation of a label simultaneously serves a process of institutional isomorphism (things are done which have already been done by others in order to legitimate what one is doing) and of allomorphism (thanks to the legitimacy resources that the label confers, different things can be done) (Corradi et al., 2010: 266).

In addition, the label tends to have a double meaning where 'practice' refers to both the endeavour to be close to the reality of practitioners as well as to a commitment to the social theories of practice (Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

Nevertheless, strategy research within the framework of a practice perspective (i.e. strategy as practice) focuses attention on "what people actually do" (Whittington, 2006: 616). The power of the SAP perspective lies within "its ability to explain how strategy-making is enabled and constrained by prevailing organizational and societal practices" (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 285). Strategy as practice may therefore be viewed within a "broader concern to humanize management and organization research" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 6). Strategy as practice and other organisational theories show "a consistent effort to theorize from rich data, drawing upon theories of strategy and organization in order to frame and explain strategy as a social practice" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 20).

3.3.2.1. Strategy-as-practice perspective: Early development

As a perspective, within the broader strategic management field, strategy as practice considers strategy as something people do as opposed to something an organisation has (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Jarzabkowski, Spee & Smets, 2013;

Whittington, 2006). In this context, practice is defined as an ‘empirical object’, as the practices become “the locus in which scholars study the activities of the practitioners” (Corradi et al., 2010: 268). The emphasis is on the concrete activities carried out by strategy practitioners and the way they mobilise tools of practice or assume particular roles when engaging with strategic work (Rouleau, 2013). All levels of the organisation are therefore involved in strategy and include multiple actors or others besides senior management (Hardy & Thomas, 2014; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2011).

The development of the SAP field as a distinctive identity is attributed to particular influential scholars, such as Whittington (1996), Jarzabowski (2003), Johnson (2003) and Balogun (2003) dating back to 1996 (Corradi et al., 2010). Corradi et al. (2010: 272) discuss the early development of the SAP perspective by these prominent scholars as summarised in Table 3.2:

Table 3.2 Summary of strategy as practice early development

Influential author(s)	Contribution
Whittington (1996)	Practice perspective – focus on managerial activity, the way managers do strategy.
Jarzabkowski (2003)	Theoretical framework of activity theory as a starting point. System of activity can be comprehended by studying ways in which management practices converts strategy into practice.
Balogun, Huff and Johnson (2003)	Strategy as practice should not only include senior management but middle management and non-managerial staff.
Johnson, Melin and Whittington (2003)	Proposes an activity-based view of strategy that focuses on the detailed processes and practices, which constitute the day-to-day activities of organisational life and which relate to strategic outcomes.
Jarzabkowski (2004)	Introduces concepts of ‘recursiveness’ and ‘adaptation’. Demonstrated the existence of a system of ‘practices-in-use’ by drawing on the work of social theorists.
Whittington (2006)	Argues that strategy research should be established on a ‘new’ theoretical foundation, which combines ‘strategy praxis’ and ‘strategy practitioner’.
Whittington (2007)	Proposes the ‘4Ps model’: praxis, practices, practitioner and profession.

Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) Conceptual framework proposed for analysing strategy as practice and identification of key challenges.

Johnson et al. (2003) used the original term ‘activity-based view’, which has since been incorporated within the broader ‘strategy-as-practice’ research agenda, “where ‘practice’ refers both to the situated doings of the individual human beings (micro) and to the different socially defined practices (macro) that the individuals are drawing upon in these doings” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 7).

The SAP research agenda provides an alternative to the individualistic models of decision-making that tend to dominate the strategic management field (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Vaara and Whittington (2012: 290–291) identify distinctive features of SAP research:

- a) SAP research principally draws on sociological theories of practices as opposed to economic theories;
- b) SAP research widens the scope of the traditional strategy research agenda (more than just economic performance) with a focus on a range of outcomes;
- c) strategy as practices has broadened the types of organisations being studied and substantially extended the sectoral scope of strategy management research; and
- d) Strategy as practice has achieved a significant methodological shift with a strong focus on qualitative methods frequently in single organisations.

Rouleau (2013) argues that it is this pluralism of theoretical and methodological influences that have assisted the SAP approach to emerge and be successful. However, the various influences have resulted in differences as to what ‘practice’ actually means and how it is used, and Rouleau (2013) identifies five different underlying views.

3.3.2.2. Practice perspectives

This study acknowledges the work done by Rouleau (2013), and the five views of practice within the SAP research stream are summarised in Table 3.3. Although

distinct, these views influence one another and have coexisted since the establishment of SAP research. The next section will address each of these practice perspectives briefly.

Table 3.3 Five views of practice in strategy-as-practice research

Views:	Practice as managerial action	Practices as a set of tools	Practice knowledge	Practices as organisational resources	Practice as global discourse
Main research question	How do managers and others strategise?	How do managers and others use the tools of strategy?	How do managers and others perform strategy?	How do organisational practices and strategic competitive advantage shape do	How does strategy discourse produce managers and organisations?
Main theoretical influences	Management and organisational theories	Communication and language theories	Social science theories	Management and organisational theories	Critical theories
Unit of analysis	Managerial activities	Strategic plans, tools and meetings	Routines, conversations and interactions	Organisational routines, capabilities and processes	Extra-organisational discourses
Main contributions	A deeper comprehension of managerial roles, skills and abilities related to strategising	A stronger comprehension of the informal procedures of strategic planning	A better interpretation of contextual hidden characteristics of strategising	A renewed understanding of the organisational level	A critical understanding of the institutional and disciplinary role of strategy

– *Practice as managerial action*

This view of practice is anchored in Mintzberg's (1973) seminal work, which focused on 'what do managers do'. As such, this perspective is "dedicated to the analysis of the managerial practice, looking at how top and middle managers strategize or participate in strategy-making" (Rouleau 2013: 549). By focusing on the roles of strategic practitioners, a better understanding emerges of the skills and competencies managers utilise during strategy work.

– *Practices as a set of tools*

Practices (plural) are concerned with the "various sets of relational, discursive and material tools related to strategy formation" and generally "associated with the procedures, norms and traditions by which strategy is actively accomplished" (Rouleau 2013: 550). This perspective of practices as a set of tools delivers a sound understanding of the informal procedures of strategy work and offers to elucidate how these practices "draw upon, interpret and sometimes challenge organizational strategy" (Rouleau 2013: 550).

– *Practice as knowledge*

According to Whittington (2006), this view originated from the seminal theorists in the social sciences domain associated with the 'practice' turn, e.g. Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau and Anthony Giddens. The practice as knowledge perspective has to do with the "social and tacit knowledge" that is used by managers and others during strategy work (Rouleau, 2013: 550). It is not "directly accessible, observable, measureable or definable", i.e. it is 'hidden' knowledge (Corradi et al., 2010: 267). The underlying assumption is that practice is connected to the practitioner's knowledge frame that is used to achieve strategy making. Rouleau (2013: 551) states, "in looking at how managers and others perform strategy, the view of 'practice' as social knowledge aims to highlight the contextual and hidden characteristics of strategy-making rather than to provide general expertise and proposals for becoming effective managers". The focus should therefore be on the collective accumulation of knowledge, which is a prerequisite for action.

– *Practices as organisational resources*

The focus of this perspective is at organisational level and therefore has to do with the consequences of practitioners' actions during strategy making, which affect the organisation. The basis of this view is “organizational practices, such as processes, organizational routines and capabilities, are the roots of strategic advantage” (Rouleau, 2013: 551). It should be noted that this perspective of practices as organisational resources is different from the first three views as it involves the micro-perspective of ordinary activities and processes at an organisational level.

– *Practice as a global discourse*

Practice as a global discourse is advocated by this perspective where “subjectivity impacts society, organizations and individual life” (Rouleau, 2013: 552). The main contribution of this view is critical analysis of the “institutional and disciplinary role of strategy” with a focus on extra-organisational discourse (Rouleau, 2013: 549).

The five practice perspectives above denote feasible ways to research the doing of strategy. In addition, SAP scholars have highlighted that strategic practices are “complex, flexible, and polyvalent” and go “beyond simple rational strategy analysis, involving the social and material as well” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 292).

The focus of the current study was on the first two perspectives, namely practice as managerial action and practices as a set of tools, as the research study focused on how professional middle managers strategise to effect change during a strategic organisational change initiative.

In summary, the contemporary perspective of strategy is that strategising is a human activity – it is what people do (Grant, 2016). However, it is not solely the domain of top management; middle managers are strategists too (Salih & Doll, 2013). Finally, strategy formulation is seen as a messy reality (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008) and not just as a rational cognitive activity.

This messy reality of strategy formulation and implementation in practice has been part of the SAP research agenda for two decades (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016). The SAP research agenda is concerned “with what people do in relation to strategy and how this is influenced by and influences their organizational and institutional context” (Johnson et al., 2007: 7). The next section deals in more detail with strategising from a SAP perspective.

3.4.Strategising: Strategy-as-practice perspective

The SAP research agenda is interested in the micro-activities that constitute strategy work or as it is referred to – strategising (SAP International Network, 2016). The SAP perspective proposes a shift from strategy to strategising (Corradi et al., 2010: 272).

Strategising encompasses the strategic activities as performed by numerous actors in terms of their actions and interactions within a specific context, i.e. the doing of strategy. A central insight of SAP studies is that ‘strategising’ is reliant on organisational and other practices that meaningfully affect the process and outcome of resulting strategies (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). A distinctive contribution to strategy research is the “focus on the ways in which actors are enabled by organizational and wider social practices in their decisions and actions” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 286). Strategy as practice in the broadest sense may be defined as the study of practitioners, practices and praxis as found in the literature (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006), where:

- **practitioners** are the individuals who do strategy work (strategists);
- **practices** are the norms and routines through which strategising is done (shared routines of behaviour, traditions, norms, procedures); and lastly
- **praxis** is defined by the flow of activity in which strategising is achieved

“Practitioners are crucial mediators between practices and praxis, and disconnection or ineptitude can profoundly disable strategy” (Whittington, 2006: 626). Without understanding the background and status of the practitioner, a risk may result in confusing the outcomes arising from the practices with the

outcomes arising from the skills, competency and legitimacy of the practitioner (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016). The practice approach to strategy promises a shift in society towards enhanced strategising praxis, enabled by more effectual practices and a broader depth of skilled practitioners (Whittington, 2006).

3.4.1. Who, what and how in strategising

The interconnectedness of the three core elements – practitioner (who), practices (what) and praxis (how) – is important to ensure an integrated whole. Jarzabkowski et al. (2015) identify the key aspects of each element and these are discussed in this section.

3.4.1.1. Who

In order to understand strategy formulation and implementation, “it is necessary to re-focus research on the actions and interactions of the strategy practitioner” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 6). During strategising, there is a strong focus on the human element, which is a move away from the traditional micro-economics perspective propagated by Michael Porter (Porter, 1996). Practitioners are not acting in seclusion but their actions are rather part of a social contextualisation in which they operate.

A SAP perspective progressively identified ‘other actors’ as vital strategic practitioners in comparison to the traditional view that only top managers are responsible for strategy formulation. This gives rise to the notion that, despite no formal strategy role or authority being assigned to these ‘other actors’, they are able to influence and act strategically (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). Therefore, practitioners consist of all strategy actors who conduct, make, shape and execute strategy work, including senior management, middle management, consultants, strategy advisers amongst others (Whittington, 2006). “[I]t is important to identify these actors as strategists, opening a research agenda that goes beyond top managers to studying other levels of employee as strategic actors” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Whittington (2006: 628) states, “[the] changing nature of strategy practitioners, and the manner in which they are formed, is a matter for society as a whole”.

From a SAP perspective, it is important to focus on who performs the strategising. Important characteristics of the practitioner have major implications for the way strategising is enacted. Practitioner roles (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014), cognitive, emotional and behaviour traits (Huy, 2012; Jensen et al., 2015), social competency (Jarzabkowski, 2008) and positions (Balogun & Johnson, 2004) all have a direct influence on the practitioners' use of practices. Practitioners' ability to influence strategy has been shown to be affected by the adaptability of practices (Mantere, 2005).

As it is not feasible to focus on all categories of practitioners during a research study due to resource and time constraints, it is acceptable to identify one focus area, i.e. a specific group of strategy actors, to ensure a realist and practical study contributing to the overall SAP perspective. The roles of middle managers as practitioners, the focus of the current study, are discussed in more detail later on in Chapter 4 (see 4.4.1.).

3.4.1.2. What

Practices are performed by practitioners who are able to apply and transfer the practices (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016). Practices are enacted within a specific context and may be adapted or improvised depending on the changing conditions. In addition, the effects of practices may vary depending on the "presence or absence of other practices" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016: 4). These groupings of practices are referred to as 'bundles' according to certain practice theorists such as Seidl and Whittington, (2014). In order to avoid accrediting the outcomes of a single practice incorrectly, studies should investigate "which practices are typically combined and how their interdependence shapes performance outcomes" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016: 4). It should be noted that, due to contemporary circumstances (referring to social media technologies as an example), strategy practices are changing rapidly and they are challenging the traditional top-down approach. The different social media technologies used in strategy making, such as collaboration tools, wikis and blogging, are able to facilitate the mass participation of many employees (Whittington, 2015).

3.4.1.3.How

Lastly, another important aspect of the practice perspective is to understand how the practices are enacted, i.e. praxis. Strategy praxis is what the practitioners essentially do, including all activities that form part of strategy formation (making) and implementation (executing). Strategy practices are drawn upon by practitioners in their praxis and comprise of tacit, informal and explicit practices. Practitioners can use (apply), create, reproduce and transfer practices while doing strategy work (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016). It is important to understand the dynamics involved in performing practices. In other words, investigations should not just focus on practices or practitioners but “also [on] the rich interactions within which people and things are engaged in doing strategy work”, within context, and examine “the multiplicity of potential outcomes, and the social processes that produce them” (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015: 537-538).

Studies should not only include what people do in organisations, but should also try to address the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of practices being practised in organisations (Geiger, 2009). An integrated practice perspective is argued to understand the importance of studying practices within context, taking into account who is engaging the practices and how the practices work. The strategic results of such an integrated perspective will therefore be dependent on the interaction between the ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ – “highlighting entanglement and interdependence” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016: 8). “[P]ractitioners are inseparably carriers of practices, while practices have only a virtual existence outside of praxis” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016: 3).

3.4.1.4.Practitioners, practices and praxis: Conceptual framework

A useful framework that encapsulates the interconnections between practitioners, practices and praxis has been put forward, and assists to understand that strategising occurs at the nexus between practitioner, practice and praxis (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

Figure 3.2 highlights the various focus research areas that can be addressed based on the intersections between the three components, namely practitioner,

practices and praxis. Practice-based research does not need to focus on all three elements simultaneously (Whittington, 2006). However, the performance “outcomes depend on the interaction of all three aspects” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016: 2). Based on this framework, strategising at the nexus between the practitioners and practises was the focus of this study although it was clearly understood that strategising occurs at the nexus of all three components. In other words, praxis was in the background but the practitioner and practices were in the foreground.

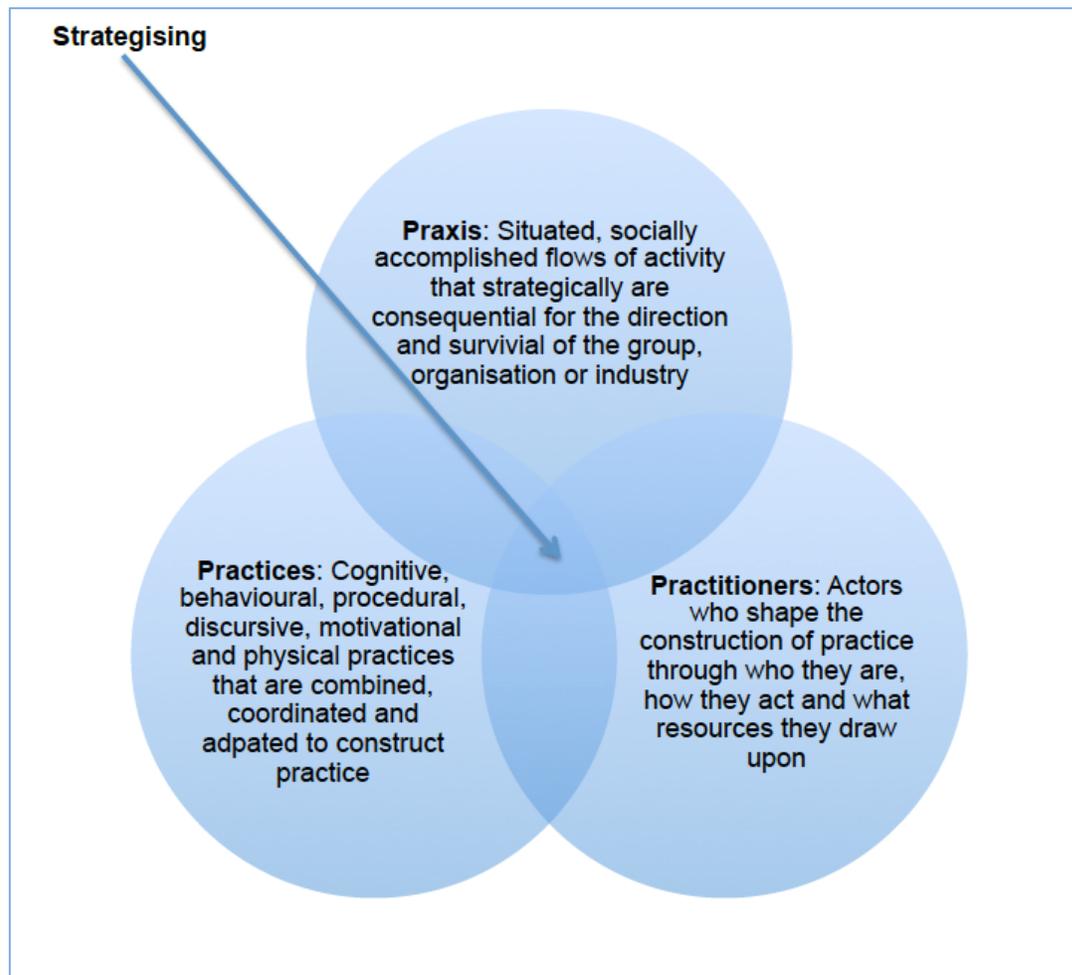


Figure 3.2 Conceptual framework for analysing strategy-as-practice

Source: Adapted from Jarzabkowski et al. (2007: 11)

Strategising consists of “actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity”

(Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 8). Two key strategising practices identified from empirical data are procedural and interactive strategising (Jarzabkowski, 2005). ‘**Procedural** strategising’ refers to the use of formal and administrative practices, e.g. plans and budgets as well as the corresponding committees and procedures. Structural legitimacy is acquired through procedural strategising (Jarzabkowski, 2005). On the other hand, **interactive** strategising encompasses direct face-to-face interactions between practitioners. Interpretative legitimacy is the purpose of interactive strategising (Jarzabkowski, 2005).

3.4.2. Strategy-as-practice research agenda

A typology matrix initially published in 2009, groups SAP research into nine distinct research domains (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). More recently a comparative typology matrix was constructed by Stander and Pretorius (2015) to track the progress made within each research domain depicting the number of articles published between 2008 and 2015. The articles analysed were obtained from the official SAP website, hosted by the Strategy as Practice (SAP) International Network, and evaluated according to set criteria (Stander and Pretorius, 2015). Seventy-seven articles in total met the criteria set by Stander and Pretorius (2015). Table 3.4 presents the comparative typology matrix, which categorises the research articles per type of practitioner and the level of praxis between 2008 and 2015.

Table 3.4 Comparative typology matrix of strategy as practice research (2008–2015)

Level of praxis	Macro	Domain C N empirical = 0 N theoretical = 0	Domain F N empirical = 1 N theoretical = 0	Domain I N empirical = 2 N theoretical = 1
	Meso	Domain B N empirical = 3 N theoretical = 0	Domain E N empirical = 7 N theoretical = 1	Domain H N empirical = 0 N theoretical = 0

	Micro	Domain A N empirical = 2 N theoretical = 1	Domain D N empirical = 56 N theoretical = 3	Domain G N empirical = 0 N theoretical = 2
		Individual actor within organisation	Groups of actors within organisation	Groups of external actors
Type of practitioner				

Source: Stander and Pretorius (2015: 8) adapted from the original source in Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009: 74)

The main findings of the “comparative typology matrix shows that relative to other domains, domain D appears ‘overly researched’, whilst no research has been carried out on domains C and H from 2008 to 2015” (Stander & Pretorius, 2015: 1). Relating to domains on the meso- and macro-levels, Stander and Pretorius (2015: 8) hypothesise:

[T]he sensitivity of information, and the inevitable imitability of data collected at these levels, could threaten the competitive advantage of organisations participating in research at this level, making it extremely difficult to find participants for research in these domains, and therefore one sees only a limited number of research outputs in this domain.

Although the researchers consider domain D to be “overly researched” (Stander & Pretorius, 2015: 1), it does demonstrate that this domain of research is an appropriate lens within the SAP research agenda. Whilst it may be that the other domains require future research, Stander and Pretorius (2015) concur that the increased shift of research in domain D (which focuses on micro-level praxis of the aggregate practitioner), may be due to the likelihood that it is easier to obtain permission for research within this domain and to gain access to the organisation. In addition, “as it involves a group of people, authority is also easier to ensure” and a sense of anonymity is instilled (Stander & Pretorius, 2015: 7).

Of the 56 (out of 77) empirical studies analysed over the eight-year period in domain D, only 15 articles identified the ‘manager’ as a practitioner and only two of these articles included aspects of strategic change (Mantere et al., 2012; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). Of these 15 empirical articles, only one was

conducted within a university context (Lavarda, Canet-Giner & Peris-Bonet, 2010).

3.5.Conclusion

Recently, a call has been made to amalgamate the SAP field through developing “specific theoretical contributions” and this highlights the “need for systematic research into specific empirical issues” such as, middle managers (amongst others), that might ultimately lead to a “cumulative knowledge base” (Rouleau, 2013: 561). In line with the above calls, a middle manager perspective will be addressed in the next chapter, with specific focus on the middle manager as a strategy practitioner.

4. Practitioner: Middle manager perspective

4.1. Introduction

“Organizations do not create, implement or renew strategies. People do” (Mantere, 2008: 312).

From a SAP perspective, practitioners are the active actors, the doers, in the formation of activities, and they shape the outcome of the strategy of an organisation. Building on this, the role of the middle manager as strategic practitioner has gained prominence (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Top managers were traditionally seen as the primary actors in strategy making, and middle managers as the implementers of strategy; however, contemporary views acknowledge middle managers as strategists who play an important role in influencing strategy implementation and strategy making (Browne, Sharkey-Scott, Mangematin, Lawlor & Cuddihy, 2014; Lavarda et al., 2010; Mantere, 2008; Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk & Roe, 2011; Rouleau, 2013).

The middle manager perspective has expanded significantly over the past few decades (Besson & Mahieu, 2011; Davis, 2013; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Ikävalko, 2005; Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014; Mantere, 2008; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Salih & Doll, 2013; Teulier & Rouleau, 2013; Varyani & Khammar, 2010). Middle managers have constraints placed on them in terms of top management’s role expectations; however, middle managers have the ability to fulfil these expectations through enabling conditions with a key insight being the reciprocal view of role expectations, i.e. “the expectations the middle managers place back on their superiors” (Mantere, 2008: 309).

The structure of Chapter 4 is outlined below in Figure 4.1.

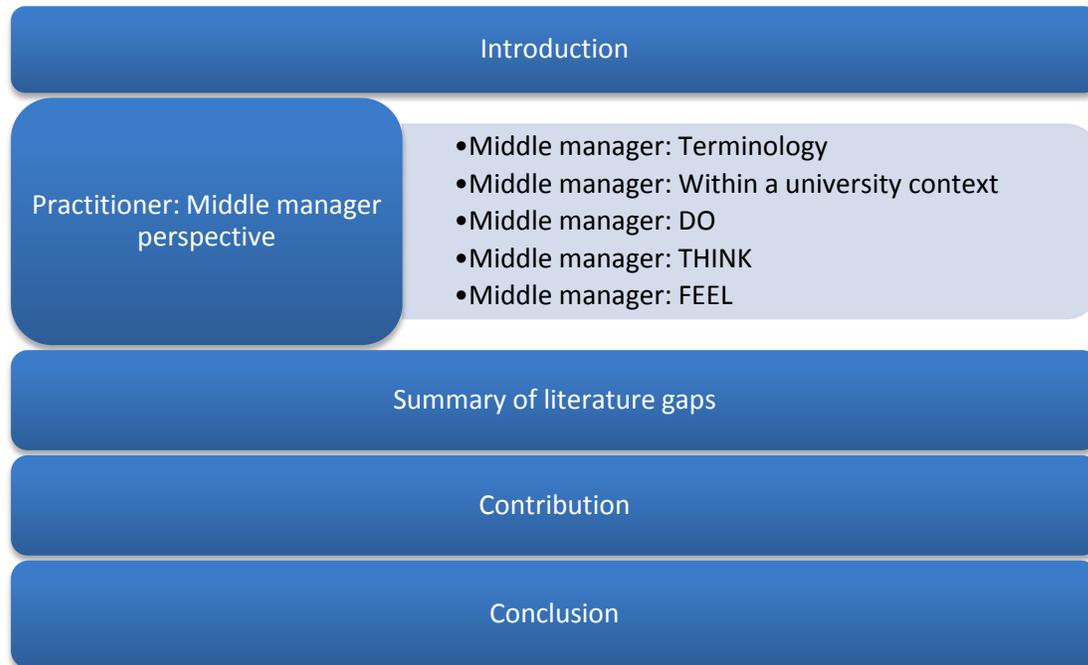


Figure 4.1 Chapter 4 outline

4.2.Middle manager: Terminology

Middle managers hold an essential position within the hierarchy of an organisation and are responsible for executing top management plans by ensuring reporting staff carry out their duties (Harding, Lee & Ford, 2014). The term ‘middle manager’ is mentioned quite extensively in the research literature but varies in broad definitions and conceptualisations. It is not necessarily the job title used within many organisations, nor within the university context but rather translates to “an operational function or hierarchal placement” (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 167).

Terminologies of ‘middle manager’ are defined in the literature in terms of the middle manager’s roles and responsibilities or reporting structures (e.g. the organogram) within the organisation.

Conceptualisations for the term ‘middle manager’ in terms of roles and responsibilities include:

- “middle managers synthesize the tacit knowledge of both frontline employees and top management, make it explicit, and incorporate it into new technologies and products” and therefore are the knowledge creators of an organization (Nonaka, 1994: 32);
- middle managers do not necessarily have direct subordinates but are “responsible for managing some topic area in their organization on which organizational strategy has an impact” (Mantere, 2008: 298);
- “middle managers are central to explaining key organizational outcomes” and “serve as important interfaces between otherwise disconnected actors” (Wooldridge et al., 2008: 1191); and
- middle managers have distinguishing features, namely their direct contact with and access to top management and their operational expertise and skills (Wooldridge et al., 2008).

Conceptualisations for the term ‘middle manager’ in terms of reporting structures include:

- middle managers are “participants in multiple, vertically related groups, ‘linking pins’ coordinate top- and operating-level activities” (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992: 154);
- “[m]iddle managers as those actors who act as both subordinates and superiors” (Ikävalko 2005: 26);
- middle managers “lack the formal role authority held by seniors to act strategically” yet they “influence upwards as well as laterally and downwards” (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011: 954);
- middle managers have limitations in the ways they can “think, speak and act; middle managers are therefore controlled by the very dis-course that gives them the power to exercise control over others. Middle managers are therefore both controllers and controlled” (Harding et al., 2014); and
- “[m]iddle managers have managers reporting to them and are also required to report to managers at a more senior level” (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 167).

The above conceptualisations highlight the important function that middle managers play within an organisation, in that they are seen as central connection points, which add value to organisational outcomes or performance due to their operational experience.

For the purpose of this study the following reporting structure categorisation was: “Middle managers have managers reporting to them and are also required to report to managers at a more senior level” (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 167). The categorisation is simple yet effective. It highlights access to senior management as well as to operational staff. In the current study, this conceptualisation allowed for the inclusion of the majority of participants who were directly involved in the OSS initiative. In addition, the university is hierarchical in structure and job titles are inconsistently used across the support services departments. The responsibilities or KPIs also vary considerably for this group, so the selected categorisation is an astute way to cluster middle managers with different job titles and responsibilities but ensuring that they have access to senior management as well as having a team reporting to them.

Gaps in the literature, pertaining to the emphasis on middle managers, have been identified as potential areas for further research. The examining of strategic actors besides top managers is called for, which would include a focus on middle managers (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). There is also insufficient published research on middle managers’ activities of strategy work at universities (Davis, 2013; Davis et al., 2016). As highlighted in the study by Stander and Pretorius (2015), only 15 articles over the eight-year period identified the ‘manager’ as a practitioner and only one did so within a university context. In addition, focused research on non-academic middle managers within a university context, i.e. support service staff, is significantly lacking (Davis, 2013). Within this context, the focus by prior research was mainly on top management or academic managers (Bryman, 2007; Floyd, 2012; Wolverson, Ackerman & Holt, 2005).

4.3.Middle manager: Within a university context

It has been established that there is limited research on middle managers within the university context, specifically in developing countries (Davis et al., 2016).

A thematic search with search criteria 'middle manager(s)', 'managers' 'strategy' 'strategising', 'university' or 'universities' or 'higher education' identified studies on middle managers in higher education and are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Middle manager research in a university context (2001–2016)

Author	Focus area	Context	Unit of analysis
Hellawell and Hancock (2001)	The changing role of the academic middle manager between hierarchical control and collegiality	United Kingdom (UK) university	Academic middle managers (dean, associate dean and HOD)
Smith (2002)	Role of head of department (HOD)	UK universities	HOD
Hancock and Hellawell (2003)	Academic middle managers experiences in terms of trust issues, which may influence degree of concealment	UK university	Academic middle managers (dean, HOD)
Rowley and Sherman (2003)	Challenges of academic leadership	United States (USA) colleges and universities	Academic staff
Parker (2004)	Personal reflections on becoming an HOD	UK university	HOD (academic)
Deem (2004)	Academics in management roles and the changes in expectations	UK universities	Manager – academics
Wolverton et al. (2005)	Preparation of academic department chairs for effective leadership	USA university	Academic department chairs (mid-level)
Clegg and McAuley (2005)	Role of middle management as a multifaceted phenomenon and the move away from the managerialism and collegiate duality debate	Universities	Middle management
Whitchurch (2006a)	The changing professional cross-boundary roles and identities and the implications of these for leadership and management development	UK universities	Professional managers (quasi-academic)
Bryman (2007)	Literature review of effective leadership at departmental level	UK, USA and Australian	Departmental chairs and HODs (academic)

Author	Focus area	Context	Unit of analysis
		publication	
Kallenberg (2007)	The roles of academic middle managers in strategic innovation	Dutch universities	Academic middle managers
Whitchurch (2008a)	Changing roles and identities of professional staff	UK, Australian and USA universities	Professional staff in management (non-academic)
Bryman (2007)	Leadership effectiveness at departmental level	UK, USA and Australian universities	Departmental level (academic)
Winter (2009)	To reduce academic disengagement, two interrelated strategies are proposed for bridging identity schisms in academe	UK and Australian universities	Academic managers
Lavarda et al. (2010)	Middle management activities in strategy processes and practices	Spanish university	Organisation (academic and non-academic)
Rayner, Fuller, McEwen and Roberts (2010)	Literature review of educational management and academic leadership applied to role of professor	UK university	Professor (academic)
Wallace and Marchant (2011)	Female administrative middle managers' roles, experiences and perceptions relating to gender issues	Australian universities	Middle managers (female and non-academic)
Floyd (2012)	Personal and professional circumstances that lead academics to become middle managers	UK university	HODs (academic)
Preston and Price (2012)	Motivations for and experiences of a management role while retaining some level of research and teaching responsibilities	UK university	Associate deans (academic)
Burnes, Wend and By (2014)	Review of English universities over 25 years. Win-win form of collegiality	UK universities	Academic and senior management

Author	Focus area	Context	Unit of analysis
Santana, Diniz, Jose and Fernandes (2013)	Contribution of strategic planning to the achievement of institutional objectives	Brazilian universities	Top and middle managers
Schneijderberg and Merkator (2013)	Literature review, analysis and proposed overlap model of academic, administration and roles and functions of higher education professionals HEPROs	Australia, Germany, Great Britain, Norway and United States	HEPROs, academics and administrative staff
Birds (2014)	The role of reflexivity in supporting middle managers in understanding and facilitating large-scale change management projects	UK university	Academic middle managers
Saunders and Sin (2015)	Middle managers' experiences of their role during policy implementation and mediation	Scottish universities	Academic middle managers (HOD, course director, head of school or division)
Davis et al. (2016)	Effects of managerialism on university managers	South African (SA) university	Academic and non-academic middle managers
Sato and Tateishi (2016)	Changing culture of the university and the experiences of academic middle managers	Japanese university	Academic middle managers (HOD, dean, course leader)
Seale and Cross (2016)	Appropriate leadership development interventions for deans	SA universities	Deans (academic)
Floyd (2016)	Supporting, training and role preparation of academic middle managers to become effective leaders	UK universities	Academic middle managers (department head)

Source: Adapted and updated from Davis (2013: 163)

The summary demonstrates that the majority of the research took place within developed countries (United Kingdom, United States, Europe and Australia) and the unit of analysis is predominantly the academic middle managers (HODs or chairs). The recent claims made by Davis et al. (2016) can therefore be confirmed, as demonstrated in Table 4.1. It can further be confirmed that limited research on middle managers, specifically 'non-academic' middle managers within the university context in developing countries, is evident.

The highlighted studies conducted within a university context have termed the unit of analysis in multiple ways, namely 'academics', 'academic managers', 'non-academic managers', 'administrative managers', 'administrative staff', 'support staff', 'general staff', 'administrators', 'manager' as well as 'professional manager' 'professional staff'. The nomenclature of university administration has been debated for over a decade, specifically in the United Kingdom and Australia (Sebalj, Holbrook & Bourke, 2012; Whitchurch, 2006a). The movement is away from umbrella terms such as 'general' and 'technical staff' in preference of the term 'professional staff'. It was found that there was a dissatisfaction with the term 'non-academic staff' which has been depicted as a form of negative categorisation (Sebalj et al., 2012; Szekeres, 2004).

The trend is towards 'blurred' boundaries where academic and non-academic lines are becoming irrelevant resulting in a hybrid or multi-professional identity between academics and administrators (Sebalj et al., 2012). "Multi-professional staff have established themselves as hybrid workers, crossing functional areas and developing new fields of knowledge" (Whitchurch, 2006b: 169). Thus, the term 'professional staff' has been adopted and gained in prominence since the mid-2000s (Sebalj et al., 2012). Literature states, "[the] emerging use of the term 'Professional Staff'" indicates "growing aspirational and professional needs of this occupational group, with due reference to increasing academic capital and growing performance expectations and accountabilities" (Sebalj et al., 2012: 469). Due to the increasing complexity with which universities are faced, including mass higher education and local and international markets, boundaries have become increasingly fluid, resulting in the changing roles and identities of

professional administrators and managers (Whitchurch, 2006b). A cohort of managers studied by Whitchurch (2006b) displayed characteristics of multi-professionals – all of which were in middle management roles. The characteristics included –

- the ability to interface with a multiplicity of tasks and people;
- a facility for boundary crossing;
- a lack of status consciousness;
- an awareness of organisational cultures; and
- an interpretive role (Whitchurch, 2006b: 168–169).

Professional staff are proactively interpreting their given roles as well as moving horizontally across functional and organisational boundaries “to create new professional spaces, knowledges, relationships and legitimacies” (Whitchurch, 2008b: 375). Whitchurch (2008b: 375) further proposes that the professionals’ roles and identities “are more complex and dynamic than organisation charts or job descriptions might suggest”. It is therefore of importance that the middle manager’s strategic roles be further explored (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014), specifically the understanding of the professional middle management roles within a university context of increasing complexity.

Duncan (2014) identifies three issues that affect professional, managerial and administrative (PMA) staff in higher education:

- the challenge of career advancement; secondly,
- the interface with the academic community may be hostile resulting in feelings of being a second class citizen; and
- the tendency for the support role to enforce rules and regulations (bureaucrats) as opposed to supporting and enhancing the core academic purposes.

He concludes, “valuing PMA staff is a complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic issue, but one which universities can ill afford to neglect” (Duncan, 2014: 38).

It has been argued that a better distributed and collaborative approach between academics, executive and professional staff is required, in order “to continue to

provide leading edge change” (Jones, Lefoe, Harvey & Ryland, 2012: 74). This call echoes a similar call made one year earlier, stating that more cooperative community-based respect and trust is required of each other’s roles (Szekeres, 2011).

An exploratory, qualitative study within a South African university context, was conducted on middle managers (comprising both academic and non-academic managers) to understand the effects of managerialism (Davis et al., 2016). Key findings demonstrate that middle managers are constrained by the effects of managerialism, which have resulted in oppressiveness due to bureaucracy. The consequence is “disempowered middle managers, a culture of conformance over collegiality, control at the cost of innovation and experimentation and an over-articulation of strategy which devalues the strategy” (Davis et al. 2016: 37). Middle managers found a way to cope with the negative effects by creating their own systems external to the bureaucracy and by providing extra support to colleagues. It is also interesting to note that there are more similarities in experience, practices and views between academic and non-academic middle managers than differences (Davis et al. 2014). In the study by Davis et al. (2016), both academic and non-academic middle managers felt that they were held accountable for decisions they did not make and that they were required to solve issues they did not create. They felt that they had little or no influence on strategic decisions. Upon request to provide input, participating managers felt their input was disregarded by senior management, corresponding with research conducted by Mantere (2008). In addition, the middle managers in the study by Davis et al. (2016), did not appear to agree to nor accept the strategic plan despite the university’s over-articulation of the strategy, and reported that they acted merely as implementers.

In summary, further research on non-academic middle managers within the context of developing countries, like South Africa, is called for as these studies are limited and provide an opportunity for further exploration (Davis, 2013; Davis et al., 2016). Although the shift in nomenclature towards ‘professional’ staff has been advocated, studies have predominantly taken place in developed markets

(see e.g. Sebalj et al., 2012; Whitchurch, 2006) and the term (i.e. 'professional') has not yet been adopted in emerging markets. However, the current research study used the more progressive term 'professional' middle managers as the unit of analysis with a clear understanding that this grouping equates to 'non-academic' (i.e. support) middle managers.

The next three sub-sections provide a detailed literature review of the main research themes as identified in Chapter 1, pertaining to the middle managers' behaviour, cognition and emotions, which can be classified as DO, THINK and FEEL.

- DO relates to the middle managers' formal strategic roles, their practices and practical skills while strategising.
- THINK addresses the cognitive and political aspects of middle managers; and
- FEEL relates to the emotional aspects, specifically referring to change resistance and acceptance during a strategic change initiative.

By combining these main research themes, a holistic and comprehensive approach to exploring strategising can be achieved. Cross-pollination between the three themes may occur as the constructs are often interrelated and interdependent. This may result in terminology being raised in more than one section.

4.4.Middle manager: DO

Middle managers have been subject to criticism, such as being resistant, self-seeking and change saboteurs. However, they can and do make an important contribution and play a pivotal role in strategic situations, such as change and restructuring, and their contributions should not be undervalued (Balogun, 2007).

In order for the new structure to become operational, the "structural blueprints" that have been designed by senior management have to be put into practice by 'others' (Balogun, 2007: 81). A key stakeholder identified for this role is the middle manager. Managers have been shown to behave as independent change

agents during restructuring, and they play a role as agents of strategy implementation (Taplin, 2006: 299). However, during imposed change, such as restructuring, managers are not only the strategy implementers but also the recipients of change who have to navigate the changes (both personal and organisational), grasp the new design and negotiate the details with other staff who are equally detached from the strategic decision-making process (Balogun, 2007: 81). Middle managers play a key leadership role during the implementation of change in terms of assisting their staff through the change process.

Mantere (2008) argues that the role expectations of middle managers have the potential both to enable and to constrain strategic agency. This author's contribution was to explain how the role expectations of top management enable varied aspects of strategic agency. Eight enablers were identified, namely narration, contextualisation, resource allocation, respect, trust, responsiveness, inclusion and refereeing. The findings propose that "enabled agency in the fulfilment of their strategic roles enables better utilization of middle managers as a crucial strategic resource" (Mantere, 2008: 312).

In the next three sections, I discuss the formal strategic roles of the middle managers followed by their practices and practical skills.

4.4.1. Formal strategic roles

Roles "are a part of everyday strategy discourse and practice" (Mantere, 2008: 297), and middle managers rely on the concept of role to think and communicate. In addition, top management places role expectations on middle managers through a role discourse; however, "knowledgeable middle managers are capable of transcending and transfiguring these expectations of their behaviour, that is, they have agency" (Mantere, 2008: 297). Mantere (2008: 297) goes on to state that it is important to pursue the understanding of middle manager roles as well as "to aspire to understand what enables agency for middle managers operating under specific role expectations".

The traditional role of middle managers as strategy implementers has been advocated for many years (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Ikävalko, 2005; Salih &

Doll, 2013). However, as Mantere (2008) argues, there is growing consensus within contemporary management viewpoints that middle managers take on increasingly active strategic roles (Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Suominen & Mantere, 2010). Previous literature identified the middle manager roles of implementing, facilitating adaptability, synthesising information and championing alternatives (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Mantere, 2008). However, a recent qualitative research study by Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014) of 654 South African middle managers' responses, deductively identified five prominent themes to describe the strategic roles of middle managers and linked these themes to the roles identified in the literature, namely:

- implementing strategies;
- interpreting and communicating information;
- facilitating adaptability;
- supporting downward; and
- influencing upward.

Table 4.2 summarises the identified formal strategic roles and strategising activities of middle managers as well as the linkages to previously identified roles in the literature as reviewed by Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014) for the period 2001–2011. Following an extensive literature review, the table was updated to include the years 2012–2016 to inform the current study. The search terms used the same or similar identified strategic roles and strategising activities as in the original review.

Table 4.2 Formal strategic roles and strategising activities of middle managers (2001–2016)

Strategic roles	Strategising activities	Linked studies (2001–2016)
Implementing strategies	<p>Executing strategic plan</p> <p>Translating and aligning objectives and targets to own operational plan</p> <p>Resourcing – allocating resources to support the strategic plan</p> <p>Monitoring and controlling performance and compliance</p> <p>Advocacy – selling the plan to internal and external stakeholders</p> <p>Improving operational practice</p>	<p>Huy (2001), Huy (2002), Marginson (2002), O’Shannassy (2003), Currie and Proctor (2005), Briggs (2005), Ikävalko (2005), Kuratko, Ireland, Covin and Hornsby (2005), Mantere (2005), Rouleau (2005), Chia and Holt (2006), Herzig and Jimmieson (2006), Sillince and Mueller (2007), Costanzo and Tzoumpa (2008), Mantere and Vaara (2008), Nordqvist and Melin (2008), Lavarda et al. (2010), Raes et al. (2011), Salih and Doll (2013), Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014), Saunders and Sin (2015), Lê and Jarzabkowski (2015), Gylfe, Frank, LeBaron & Mantere (2016)</p>
Interpreting and communicating information	<p>Upward sensegiving</p> <p>Relating messages between subordinates and management</p> <p>Communicating</p> <p>Sensemaking</p> <p>Downward sensegiving</p>	<p>Huy (2001), Currie and Proctor (2005), Briggs (2005), Ikävalko (2005), Rouleau (2005), Chia and Holt (2006), Mantere and Vaara (2008), Nordqvist and Melin (2008), Lavarda et al. (2010), Rouleau and Balogun (2011), Teulier and Rouleau (2013), Salih and Doll (2013), Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014), Balogun, Jacobs, Jarzabkowski, Mantere & Vaara (2014), Lungren-Henriksson and Kock (2016), Král and Králová (2016), Nordin and Ravald (2016), Darbi and Knott (2016),</p>
Facilitating adaptability	<p>Crafting change</p> <p>Creating strategy</p> <p>Integration</p>	<p>Huy (2001), Huy (2002), Marginson (2002), Balogun and Johnson (2004), Currie and Proctor (2005), Briggs (2005), Ikävalko (2005), Rouleau (2005), Mantere (2005), Balogun (2006), Herzig and Jimmieson (2006), Costanzo and Tzoumpa (2008), Mantere and Vaara (2008), Nordqvist and Melin (2008), Lavarda et al. (2010), Raes et al. (2011), Barton and Ambrosini (2012), Teulier and Rouleau (2013), Rouleau (2013), Browne et al. (2014), Jansen van Rensburg et al.</p>

Strategic roles	Strategising activities	Linked studies (2001–2016)
Downward supporting	Emotional balancing Creating continuity Professional support Managing performance Driving compliance	(2014), Thomas and Ambrosini (2015), Král and Králová (2016), Labelle and Rouleau (2017) Huy (2001), Huy (2002), Briggs (2005), Ikävalko (2005), Kodama (2005), Kuratko et al. (2005), Ling, Floyd & Baldrige (2005), Chia and Holt (2006), Herzig and Jimmieson (2006), Rouleau and Balogun (2011), Salih and Doll (2013), Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014), Labelle and Rouleau (2017)
Upward influencing	Championing alternatives Influencing strategic issues	Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill & Lawrence (2001), Ling et al. (2005), Mantere and Vaara (2008), Lavarda et al. (2010), Rouleau and Balogun (2011), Teulier and Rouleau (2013), Salih and Doll (2013), Browne et al. (2014), Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014)

Source: Adapted and updated from Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014)

4.4.1.1. Implementing strategies

“Strategy implementation is interested in how the decisions are put into action” and can be defined as “the process of putting the intended strategy into action” (Ikävalko, 2005: 5,11). According to Balogun (2007: 86), “a blueprint is imposed in a top-down fashion leaving middle managers to work out the detail”. Middle managers play a key role in strategy implementation, and it was found that “management style, strategic alignment, internal communication, and middle management contribution are critical factors influencing strategy implementation” (Salih & Doll, 2013: 32). The role of the middle manager as strategy implementer has been promoted for many years as highlighted in Table 4.2 row 1, column 3.

Strategy implementation is an integrative function linking top management intent with organisational tasks (Salih & Doll, 2013). Middle managers are highly likely to acknowledge that their primary strategic responsibility is the implementation of strategy (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014; Lavarda et al., 2010; Mantere, 2008; Salih & Doll, 2013).

However, contemporary perspectives on middle managers’ roles have expanded as demonstrated in Table 4.2. Nordqvist and Melin (2008: 326) introduced the concept of “strategic planning champions (SPCs) to refer to strategy practitioners who introduce, promote and guide the strategic planning process in an organisation”. SPCs should perform the role of “the social craftsperson” and “the artful interpreter” (Nordqvist & Melin, 2008: 326). Important factors influencing the implementation of strategy is communication as well as interpretation, translation and meaning of such communication (Salih & Doll, 2013). The next section presents a discussion of the role of interpreting and communicating information.

4.4.1.2. Interpreting and communicating information

This strategic role deals with the middle manager as a “facilitator of strategic conversations and information flow”, which refers to the strategising activities of “synthesising of information, sensemaking, sensegiving and communication” (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 170).

Synthesising information can be described as the “ability to feed back past experiences regarding strategy realization, helping strategy to adapt” and creating “a sense of continuity in work and a sense of involvement in strategizing” (Mantere, 2008: 304).

Communication is a social activity within organisations whereby “humans communicatively constitute strategy by way of interaction and social practices that involve the entire organization and its environment” (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012: 199). In other words, during the communication process, the construction of shared meaning takes place for an individual; however, it is the outcome of dynamic communication that results in the collective action of constructing strategic meaning. Strategic processes are brought to life through communication and it is therefore an essential component of strategy (Marchiori & Bulgacov, 2012).

Sensemaking is defined as the “continued redrafting of an emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporates more of the observed data, and is more resilient in the face of criticism” (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obsfeld, 2005: 415). Other studies show the integral nature of communication practices and language use in middle manager sensemaking exploration (Besson & Mahieu, 2011; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Thomas, Sargent & Hardy, 2011). Sensemaking is “empirically grounded in the discrete talk and actions” of actors during conversations or meetings (Teulier & Rouleau 2013: 311).

There has also been an interest in middle managers’ sensemaking and sensegiving activities (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Davis, 2013; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Sonenshein, 2010), where “sensegiving, a sensemaking variant [is] undertaken to create meanings for a target audience” (Weick et al., 2005: 416). Sonenshein views “a narrative as a discursive construction that actors use as a tool to shape their own understanding (sensemaking), as a tool to influence others’ understandings (sensegiving)” (Sonenshein, 2010: 480). Sensemaking and sensegiving as proposed by Teulier and Rouleau, should be seen according to a practice perspective whereby the development and

communication of ideas comprise the focus as opposed to defining and transmission with the aim to engage with audiences and gain their support (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013).

Managers influence the “meanings, interpretations and understanding of others through their processes of sensemaking and sensegiving” (Balogun et al., 2014: 187). Sensegiving by management is successful when others “construct a shared interpretive scheme congruent with the goals of the managers” (Mantere et al., 2012: 7). Following from the above, it is recognised that discourse is important for the achievement of influencing through the sensegiving process (Balogun et al., 2014). In other words, sensegiving is based on the capability to tell a story discursively at the right time in the right place in the right way. According to Weick et al. (2005: 413), sensemaking answers the questions “what is the story?” and “now what?”. Middle managers can therefore create order out of chaos and construct and reconstruct meaning for themselves (sensemaking) and for others (sensegiving). Sensemaking and sensegiving activities “combined with middle managers’ tacit knowledge create meaningful messages within the unique organisational context” (Davis, 2013: 342). Middle managers are consequently involved in the ongoing complex “patterns of shared understanding” to support and reframe for others the interpretation of the change intent” (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013: 311). It is through sensemaking that middle managers are able to make sense of change and in doing so provide direction and guidance for reporting staff. It is stated, “sensemaking is about organizing through communication” (Weick et al., 2005: 413).

Sensemaking is a social process and “involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action” (Weick et al., 2005: 409). Recent studies regard change as continuous and emergent with a strong focus on the social nature of sensemaking, narratives and dialogue (Horst & Järventie-Thesleff, 2016; Weick et al., 2005). It was found that there is a recursive relationship between sensemaking and change “such that sensemaking by leaders and others also accomplishes strategic change” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014: 89). Managers

who are successful in influencing sensemaking by individuals in the organisation results in these individuals being motivated to change their own roles and practices.

Middle managers were found to make use of sensemaking and sensegiving micro-practices in order to act as interpreters and sellers of strategic change at the micro-level of the organisation (Rouleau, 2005). Through their conversations and routines, middle managers are able to contribute to the competitive advantage of the organisation and to renew networks with stakeholders through their daily activities and their tacit knowledge (Rouleau, 2005). Findings in another study demonstrate how middle-level managers “mediate the impact of top-down strategy”, in this instance, a change intervention, “through their sensemaking”, which largely occurs through lateral informal processes (between middle managers) in the absence of more senior managers (Balogun & Johnson, 2005: 1596).

Due to middle managers’ unique position within the organisation they “can be seen as a channel for the translation of top management strategic intents”, “providing information to decision makers” and “communicating the strategic intent of senior management throughout the organization” (Salih & Doll, 2013: 36–37). Middle managers act as the translators and “they made sense of the change either as individual or as collective translators” (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013: 330).

The strategic role of the middle manager has been confirmed by the ability to influence information upward, downward and laterally (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014). It has however been found that, despite the expectation for middle managers to provide feedback and input, top management seldom responds or provides a satisfactory response leading to frustration by middle managers (Mantere, 2008).

4.4.1.3. Facilitating adaptability

Three strategising activities have been found to be associated with the facilitating adaptability role, namely “crafting changes, creating strategy and integration”

(Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 178). The middle manager is accountable for crafting change in order to improve operational practices or to respond to the changes in the external environment. Middle managers are also identified as “key actors in strategic change” (Barton & Ambrosini, 2012: 721).

Building on their conventional role as strategy implementers, middle managers are also strategy formulators, and they engage and collaborate internally and externally as social actors in order to enhance their own working practices (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014). Literature shows that middle managers play an important role in strategy shaping (Balogun, 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Mantere, 2005; Rouleau, 2013; Teulier & Rouleau, 2013). When it comes to “managing integrative and emergent strategy formulation processes”, the middle manager role is vital (Lavarda et al., 2010: 358). The middle manager acts as a facilitator to ensure the success of integrative strategy creation and is able to intervene and change the direction of the organisation.

Middle managers are able to adapt top management strategy to accommodate shifting customer demands within a dynamic environment as they possess the “expert market and customer knowledge and insights” (Browne et al., 2014: 949). They are therefore not just “passive implementers” but rather “active adapters” of strategy, and they play a valuable role in shaping strategy making (Browne et al., 2014: 949).

It has been shown that the relational aspect between top management and middle management affects each other’s role behaviour in the “effective execution of strategy formulation and implementation” (Raes et al., 2011: 108). In other words, when the interaction between top management and middle management is inadequate, their role behaviours can become misaligned, leading to a situation where middle managers withdraw from their strategic role and focus on their own functional units. The reciprocal influence between top and middle management and the effect on the strategy making and implementation processes are important factors to be taken into account.

It has been argued that middle managers play a pertinent role “in leading the integration and re-utilization of knowledge – which is a valuable, rare, and partially inimitable resource – within teams and across the organizational boundaries” (Costanzo & Tzoumpa, 2008). In doing so, middle managers make a significant contribution to the efficient functioning of teams through facilitating knowledge transfer that ultimately leads to enhanced learning across the organisation.

4.4.1.4. Downward supporting

Five main strategising activities have been identified in the literature for the downward supporting role, namely:

- emotional balancing;
- creating continuity;
- professional support;
- managing performance; and
- driving compliance (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014).

It was also found that middle managers felt accountable for the emotional support to staff, mentoring and coaching, providing motivation, facilitating change within their “sphere of influence to create continuity”, on-the-job training, performance reviews, monitoring, engagement as well as empowering staff (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 179).

Middle managers have traditionally been seen as having a focus on control and operational decision-making but are now acknowledged as being a valuable resource for staff providing coaching and supporting activities (Wooldridge et al., 2008).

Middle managers “play a key role, giving emotional support to their subordinates” (Salih & Doll, 2013: 37). Due to their unique position within the organisation, middle managers are able to influence others and manage the daily operations. During radical change, middle managers manage the emotional states of their staff and take on the emotional balancing role in order to maintain continuity

(Huy, 2002). As a result of their close proximity to their staff, they are attuned to the staff's emotional needs.

This distinctive situation allows middle managers to "influence upwards as well as laterally and downwards" even if they "lack the formal role authority held by their seniors to act strategically" (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011: 954).

4.4.1.5. Upward influencing

Championing alternatives and influencing strategic issues are the two strategising activities classified under the upward influencing role (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014). Championing alternatives involve "self-initiated strategies" requiring acceptance from key stakeholders before implementation (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 181). Influencing strategic issues relates to "self-initiated" activities requiring "conceptual interpretation of existing information" similar to the concept of selling (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 182).

The strategising activity of championing comprises the ability to influence upward and in this role, middle managers' "divergent thinking has the potential to reshape upper management's concept of strategy" (Wooldridge et al., 2008: 1203). Literature suggests that middle managers systematically offer alternatives to top management (Lavarda et al., 2010). They are able to do so by adapting their "selling argument according to their company's strategic priorities" (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013: 328). During strategy making, "middle managers enable upward exchange of expert functional knowledge" (Browne et al., 2014: 967).

Further to the above, middle managers assist with strategic direction evaluation and risk identification, taking the internal capabilities, resource requirements and external environment into account in order to ensure the strategy is executed successfully (Salih & Doll, 2013).

This integrated account highlights the importance of middle managers as 'linking pins' (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 167). Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014) found that middle managers mostly associate themselves with traditional strategic roles, such as being strategy implementers and communicators bridging

the link between their staff and senior levels of management. However, recent literature, as indicated in Table 4.2, shows that the other formal strategic roles are gaining in prominence as are the expectations of top management. Middle managers need to “be aware of and enact the broader strategic roles that a changing business environment requires them to fulfil” and not to be constrained by the traditional perspectives (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 183).

Wooldridge et al., (2008) suggests that the demands made on the middle manager are compounded by the lack of positional authority and role conflict. “Role conflict, caused by different interpretations of environmental cues and inconsistent expectations among managers at different hierarchical levels, has been identified as an overarching factor accounting for differences in the strategic roles middle managers perform” (Wooldridge et al., 2008: 1205). “Role conflict is typically present in boundary-spanning roles such as middle managers in organizations” (Han, Wang & Dong, 2014: 473). Middle managers are required to manage concurrently the frequently conflicting expectations and changing demands of top management, reporting staff and colleagues as well as those of external parties, such as customers (Han et al., 2014). The resulting effect is that middle managers have to deal with role conflict during their daily work. Role conflict is a likely impediment to managing uncertainty, and often arises from conflicting communication (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006). A study by Han et al. (2014) revealed that an increase in role conflict did not necessarily lead to decreased work satisfaction; however, it did lead to a considerable increase in work-related anxiety thereby affecting productivity. As middle managers take on various roles simultaneously within organisations, they are exposed to role conflict, which is a regular work stressor. Organisations are able to assist middle managers overcome role conflict and maintain a healthy psychological well-being by decreasing role conflict. This may be achieved by clarifying strategic goals, providing clear informational support, providing autonomy, ensuring all staff understand the goals and skills training, thereby reducing “incongruent role expectations” placed on middle managers (Han et al., 2014: 483).

Interestingly, results of a study by Mulinge & Munyae (2008: 180) demonstrate that –

[staff] whose jobs are characterized by high levels of role conflict and who are socially bold are more likely to accept change, while those who have high levels of desire to find a job elsewhere are less likely to support the same.

Staff experiencing role conflict are therefore potentially expected to support organisational change, especially if the change offers a solution to the predicament (Mulinge & Munyae, 2008).

In addition to role conflict, role ambiguity is another role stressor that is related to detrimental organisational outcomes with a negative relationship on employee work performance (Kauppila, 2014). Role clarity can be defined as a situation where an employee clearly understands the responsibilities, duties, tasks and expectations of his or her work roles. “Role clarity emerges as an outcome of the interplay between individual characteristics and practices at higher levels of organizing” (Kauppila, 2014: 738). The study by Kauppila (2014) found that role clarity may be influenced by the practices of the organisation and the actions of management. In other words, management should develop high-quality relationships with their subordinates as this promotes role clarity. The reasoning is that management provides the detailed role descriptions, knowledge and resources that enable strategising.

Future research on middle manager practices with specific focus on the identified roles and an improved understanding of how these strategic roles are perceived by middle managers has been advocated (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014). The current research study therefore responded to this call for future research and sought to demonstrate how middle managers perceive their strategic roles while strategising to effect change during a strategic organisational change initiative within an HEI.

Closely associated with the practitioners are their practices within which they engage in their daily work. Strategy-as-practice focuses on the “concrete activities carried out by strategy practitioners” and investigates various ways that

individuals “mobilize the tools of practice or adopt specific skills and roles when engaging in strategic activity” (Rouleau, 2013: 548). The next section deals with the practices of middle managers during strategy work followed by a section on specific practical skills.

4.4.2. Practices

Practices, initially introduced in section 3.4.1.2. above, are defined as behaviour which is routine in nature, comprising interrelated components such as bodily and mental activities, know-how, use of things, emotional states, language or discourse and knowledge of background and motivations (Reckwitz, 2002). The doing of strategy is therefore inherently linked to practices such as “they provide the behavioural, cognitive, procedural, discursive and physical resources through which multiple actors are able to interact in order to socially accomplish collective activity” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007: 9). Practice theory places importance on the how these practices are enacted, and it is argued “that without close attention to the situated enactment of practices, observers are liable to overvalue formal practices while undervaluing practice adaptations in context” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016: 2).

The emphasis of practices is on specific contextual or situated activities within which practitioners engage when strategising, drawing on organisational theory (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). These practices include meetings, workshops, administrative practices, tools, planning, quality management as well as how practitioners go about strategising within a specific setting, in other words, practitioners and practices are entwined (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; 2016). It is important to study “practices in context, attending to who engages them and how they work” as this perspective emphasises that strategic results are dependent on “the interaction of the what, who and how of practices” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016: 3). Vaara and Whittington (2012) state that the practitioner is not a separate individual disconnected from context, but a social actor whose potential can be defined by the practices within which he or she is immersed.

Strategy practices are enablers, which not only assist with decision-making, but which also have the potential to shape and change the view of the organisation itself. It is through the understanding of these practices that a deeper understanding of the practitioner as strategist will unfold. SAP research has discovered “how the roles and identities of practitioners are constructed in and through discursive and other practices” (Vaara & Whittington 2012: 308). Executing, reflecting, initiating, coordinating, supporting, collaborating and shaping context were found to be strategising practices identified amongst strategy teams involving both recursive and adaptive activities (Paroutis & Pettigrew, 2007).

Table 4.3 highlights example studies over the years 2001–2016, which focused on a wide variety of practices where practices were in the foreground. Vaara and Whittington (2012) identified the studies published between 2001 and 2011. The table was updated to include the years 2012–2016 as part of the literature review of the current study. The search terms included practice(s) and strategy or strategic or strategising (strategizing) or change. This summary demonstrates the significant contribution that research has made in this area of study, thereby validating the importance and influence that practices have with regard to strategy work.

Table 4.3 Studies of practices (2001–2016)

Researcher	Focus area of the study	Findings about practices
Dutton et al. (2001)	Issue selling and organisational change	Through the practice of 'issue selling', managers can shape top management's attention and effect strategic change by navigating strategic and structural contexts not only to better themselves but also their organisations
Jarzabkowski (2003)	Formal strategic practices	Formal strategic practices can promote change if they mediate contradictions between constituents
Vaara et al. (2004)	Discursive practices of strategy legitimisation	Strategies are constructed through discursive practices that delegitimise or legitimise
Molloy and Whittington (2005)	Strategic change practices	Material and analytical practices require a skilful balance between standardisation and customisation for effectiveness
Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson and Schwarz (2006)	Strategy workshops and their micro-practices	Strategy workshops are key arenas for strategy making, in processes of 'planned emergence'
Jarzabkowski and Fenton (2006)	Strategising and organising practices	Pluralistic environments require dialogic strategic planning practices, as small issues are prone to rapid escalation
Whittington et al. (2006)	Strategy workshops, projects and artefacts	Strategic change involves practical and material activities, where craft skill matters as much as analysis
Gunn and Williams (2007)	Use of strategic tools in strategy contexts (e.g. SWOT [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats], benchmarking)	Relationship between educational background of participants and groupings of strategic tool usage was established. A variety of tool usage is advocated in strategic decision-making.
Giraudeau (2008)	Strategic planning documents	Drafts of strategic plans can promote experimentation and openness in strategy work
Heracleous and Jacobs (2008)	Embodied metaphors in strategising	Embodied metaphors (i.e. physical artefacts) can foster creative thinking

Researcher	Focus area of the study	Findings about practices
Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008)	Strategy meeting practices	Strategy meeting practices (e.g. bracketing of issues, turn-taking, voting, and stage managing) stabilise or destabilise strategies
Ocasio and Joseph (2008)	Strategic planning over time	General Electric (GE) did not, as often claimed, lead in abandoning strategic planning, but continually renews its practices
Epper and Platts (2009)	Interactive visual methods in strategic planning	Managers rely heavily on visual representations for understanding and generating strategy
Moisander and Stenfors (2009)	Strategy tools, their development, and use	Strategy tool designers may misunderstand the epistemic culture of tool users, exaggerating problem solving and rationality
Jarratt and Stiles (2010)	Strategy methods and tools (e.g. SWOT)	Analysis tools, such as SWOT, may be used in a routinised, reflective or engaged manner
Cabantous, Gond and Johnson-Cramer (2010)	The field of decision analysis and its techniques	Rational decision-making techniques involve the construction of social-material assemblages
Hendry et al. (2010)	Board-level strategising practices	Combination of procedural and interactive practices lead to minimalist, transformational, continuous or oversight involvement by boards
Johnson, Prashantham, Floyd and Bourque (2010)	Strategy workshops and their ritualisation	Ritualisation (e.g. degree of removal, use of liturgy, role of specialists) influences the outcomes of strategy workshops
Vaara, Sorsa and Palli (2010)	Discursive practices in strategic plans	Strategic plans have vital power effects based on discursive practices, i.e. self-authorisation, forced consensus and discursive innovation
Gomez and Bouty (2011)	Emergence of new strategic practices	Agents create new practices by linking the micro (habitus and capital) and the macro (field) through implicit action
Kaplan (2011)	PowerPoint as discursive practice	PowerPoints are part of the 'epistemic machinery' of strategy
O'Brien (2011)	Use of operational research and strategy tools	Operational research (OR) specialists often support strategy processes with analytical tools, but rarely with 'soft' OR tools
Kornberger and Clegg (2011)	The power effects of strategic plans	Strategy as text is 'performance' in redefining and disciplining the organisation
Rouleau and Balogun	Middle managers' strategic	Two situated, interlinked discursive practices: 'performing the

Researcher	Focus area of the study	Findings about practices
(2011)	contribution and importance of discursive competence	conversation' and 'setting the scene' are important to the success of middle manager sensemaking
Marchiori and Bulgacov (2012)	Communication practices that constitute strategy	Individuals communicatively constitute strategy by their interactions and social practices that include the organisation and environment
Cuccurullo and Lega (2013)	Strategising practices in pluralistic contexts	Practices (strategy workshops, brutal facts and graphic charts) identified can reduce risks in strategy agenda setting in pluralistic organisations
Pretorius (2013)	Core activities (practices and praxis) of the business rescue practitioner (BRP)	Identification of five tasks and 15 activities derived from practices and praxis of the BRP during rescue
Teulier and Rouleau (2013)	Discursive character of middle managers' sensemaking during change	Sensemaking as translation. Identification of four translation spaces and translating or editing practices and the dynamic between them
Jarzabkowski et al. (2013)	Material artefacts and how they are used in strategising	Identification of five artefacts (pictures, maps, data packs, spreadsheets and graphs) and five situated practices (physicalising, locating, enumerating, analysing and selecting) shows how practices vary in level of abstraction from physical properties
Dameron and Torset (2014)	What it means to be a strategist: discursive construction of strategists' subjectivities	Four tensions emerge from strategists' discourses on strategising work. Strategising is theorised as the art of balancing these tensions and that multiple strategists' subjectivities within a paradox lens on strategy may co-exist
Balogun et al. (2014)	Discursive aspects of strategy: a review	Potential highlighted of discursive research in the integration of key theoretical domains (sensemaking, power and socio-materiality) and realms of analysis (institutional, organisational and episodic)
Leonardi (2015)	Materiality of strategy making	Strategy making and implementation are not distinct sequential activities. Effective strategies are made when strategy makers start to think about the technologies that will enable workers to implement their strategy i.e. the technologies that are key for strategy implementation also shape strategy making.
Dameron, Lê and	Materiality in the field of	Defining materiality by a review of five types of material used in strategy

Researcher	Focus area of the study	Findings about practices
LeBaron (2015)	strategy and its potential to illuminate strategy	work: strategy tools, objects and artefacts, technologies, built spaces, and human bodies
Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015)	How tools are actually mobilised by strategy makers	A framework for observing the interaction between strategy tools and strategy makers to shape how and when tools are selected and applied
Belmondo and Sargis-Roussel (2015)	Collective use of strategy tools in local contexts	Proposed process model for analysing how strategy tools are collectively used and adapted through negotiation processes and transformation of strategy objects
Jarzabkowski et al. (2015)	Material, discursive, spatial and bodily aspects of strategy work	Demonstration of how strategic work is achieved in the orchestration of material, speech (discursive), bodily resources.
Whittington (2015)	Mass-produced artefacts and mass participation	Material artefacts are mass-produced (e.g. laptops) and commonly used across multiple sites of strategy work. Material artefacts (e.g. social media) are increasingly used as tools for mass participation enabling the involvement of numerous employees in strategising
Jarzabkowski et al. (2016)	Practices should not be studied in isolation	An integrative practice perspective is advocated linking what (practices), who (practitioner) and how
Marin, Cordier and Hameed (2016)	Actions of knowledge workers implementing formal knowledge strategies	Knowledge workers implement the standard in differing and conflicting ways due to ambiguous knowledge management practices, enablers or inhibitors of knowledge sharing and dissimilar ideas of continuous improvement
Mailhot, Langley (2016)	Gagnon, Binette Distributed leadership practices	The coupling of leaders and objects assists to maintain the world-view of different groups involved in a collaborative research project while leading them towards the research project objectives
Nordin and Ravald (2016)	Relationship gap management from a practitioner perspective	Practitioners manage relationship gaps through four alternative gap management practices each characterised by a definite set of activities

Source: Adapted and updated from Vaara and Whittington (2012: 293–296)

SAP researchers have identified a wide range of practices, such as:

- strategic planning (Giraudeau, 2008; Hendry et al., 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Ocasio & Joseph, 2008);
- analytical practices (Belmondo & Sargis-Roussel, 2015; Cabantous et al., 2010; Cuccurullo & Lega, 2013; Epper & Platts, 2009; Jarratt & Stiles, 2010; Moisander & Stenfors, 2009);
- socio-material practices (Dameron et al., 2015; Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Jarzabkowski et al., 2016; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008; Johnson et al., 2010; Kaplan, 2011); as well as
- discursive practices (Balogun et al., 2014; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Teulier & Rouleau, 2013; Vaara et al., 2004; 2010).

Each of these is now addressed.

4.4.2.1.Strategic planning

In SAP studies, strategic planning has a vital place, and research shows how the “practice of strategic planning can enable more complex and flexible praxis than in traditional accounts” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 292). During strategic organisational challenges, formal strategic planning (as a collaborative activity) can function as a facilitator and assist with the resolution of the challenges (Jarzabkowski, 2003). A study conducted in the mid-1990s showed how strategic plans play an important role in contributing to emergent strategies depending on how the plans were written and read, thereby enhancing strategic imagination (Giraudeau, 2008). In addition, it has been found that the iterative nature of strategic planning in terms of strategic plan drafts can encourage creative experimentation and candidness in strategy work (Giraudeau, 2008). However, a study by Hendry et al., (2010) revealed that procedural practices during strategic planning can be used by board members intentionally to thwart strategic change and therefore be a source of inflexibility. It was however also found that strategic planning can also be a source for flexibility and transformation.

Strategy workshops have been found to play a role in formal strategy development, and these workshops form part of the strategic planning processes

relying on discursive approaches (Hodgkinson et al., 2006). Hodgkinson et al. (2006) argue that strategy workshops are key for the emergence of strategy.

It has been noted that there is a decrease in research pertaining to strategic planning practices (Ronda-Pupo & Guerras-Martin, 2012) and perhaps more prominence should be given to new emerging practices.

4.4.2.2. Analytical practices

Increased attention to the use of analytical practices contests the conventional thinking with regard to their practical usefulness (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). Studies (see Epper & Platts, 2009; Jarratt & Stiles, 2010; Moisander & Stenfors, 2009) have focused on the use of strategy tools during strategy work. A multi-dimensional framework was devised consolidating and incorporating the use of strategy tools on factors of strategic planning and management. The “framework sheds light on the potential impact of tools used by managers from the perspective of organizational planning strategies and the outcomes they can achieve” (Tassabehji & Isherwood, 2014: 78). Tools include SWOT, financial forecasting, scenario planning, value chain analysis, Porter’s five forces, PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal), game theory and scenario planning to name a few. Another study by Thomas and Ambrosini (2015) proposed that management controls (MC) “should be considered a strategic tool” and by conceptualising MCs as such “can start to be seen as resources that shape strategizing and that can also be manipulated to affect their outcome” (Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015: 119).

A study (see Kaplan, 2011) revealed how PowerPoint, a powerful communication tool, can be mobilised in strategy formulation, and the findings highlight how the production and usage of PowerPoint can shape strategy-making ideas during collaborative negotiations..

Recent research (see Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015) showed how tools are essentially mobilised by strategy makers. The researchers “offer a framework for examining the ways that the affordances of strategy tools and the agency of strategy makers interact to shape how and when tools are selected and applied”

(Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015: 537). Jarzabkowski and Kaplan (2015: 554) however caution that tools should not be seen simply as “sources of the answer” but rather “as parts of the process”.

“By viewing strategy tools as tools-in-use, we can understand that tools do not cause managers to make right or wrong decisions but rather enable them to engage in strategy making” (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015: 551). It is important for strategy makers to understand that strategy tools can act as enablers or as constraints in strategy making and should be seen as most beneficial when part of the process as opposed to solely the source of the solution.

4.4.2.3.Socio-material practices

The “appreciation of the social nature of strategy has also led SAP scholars to examine the socio-material practices” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 297). Studies have focused on meeting practices during strategic sessions (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008), ritualisation during strategy workshops (Johnson et al., 2010), and material artefacts during strategising (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). Following a study, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) explained how the practice of meetings is related to important strategic outcomes as well as playing a role in shaping stability of prevailing strategic orientations or change by proposing variations.

Dameron et al. (2015) advocate a shift in strategic management research towards an improved understanding of the role of materiality in strategy making. They reviewed five different types of material used during strategy work, namely strategy tools, objects and artefacts, technologies, built spaces and human bodies. Their findings are that “materiality lies at the heart of strategy work” and that “the notion of materials and practices are intimately entwined” (Dameron et al. 2015: 5). In addition, it is noted that materials are social and can only be understood within context.

Whittington (2015) highlights the mass production of material artefacts, such as laptops, that are now commonly utilised in strategising. In addition, mass participation by numerous employees across multiple sites during strategy work is now possible and enabled through material artefacts, such as social media.

The combination of both, i.e. mass production and mass participation, results in a tendency towards more open strategising, “even if ultimate control remains at the top, strategy becomes the business not just of elites but of the organizational masses” (Whittington, 2015: 14).

4.4.2.4. Discursive practices

The SAP perspective has taken a keen interest in the role communication plays during strategy (Balogun et al., 2014; Cooren, Vaara, Langley & Tsoukas, 2014; Fenton & Langley, 2011; Jensen et al., 2015; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Vaara, 2010). “The so-called ‘linguistic turn’ has gone hand-in-hand with the ‘practice turn’ in management and organization studies” (Mueller, Whittle, Gilchrist & Lenney, 2013: 1171). The ‘linguistic turn’ that evolved in organisational studies placed a strong focus on communication and discourse where communication is understood as “organising social life” (Jensen et al., 2015: 2). Language and communication within organisational processes play a constitutive role (Cooren et al., 2014). It is through language that the “potential for meaning” (Gergen, Gergen & Barret, 2004: 45) is created between individuals as they communicate with one another within a contextually, historically and culturally embedded situation.

“Strategy work involves talk in all its forms” and “such talk is consequential for constructing, making sense of, and communicating strategy” (Balogun et al., 2014: 175). SAP researchers are further investigating the discursive practices during strategy making (Balogun et al., 2014; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Vaara et al., 2004; 2010). It was stated by Rouleau and Balogun, (2011: 953) that “language use is key”; however, it needs to be “combined with the ability to devise a setting in which to perform the language”. Marchiori and Bulgacov (2012: 199) highlighted that “interactions of strategies and practices as a fundamental process for creation of meanings whose expressiveness comes from communication and language”. Strategy as a communicative practice occurs throughout the entire organisation and strategy is communicatively constituted by way of interaction and social practices.

Two situated and interlinked discursive practices were identified by Rouleau and Balogun (2011: 953) as important to the achievement of middle manager sensemaking, namely “performing the conversation” and “setting the scene”. Literature shows how middle managers proficiently enact discursive practices in their daily operations by “drawing on contextually relevant verbal, symbolic, and sociocultural systems, to allow them to draw people from different organizational levels into the change” (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011: 953). The emergent school of thought has brought “useful insights as to how change happens, particularly with regard to the way that people make sense of change and how this sensemaking process may be influenced through dialogue” (Lawrence, 2015).

Discursive competence is key for middle managers needing to adopt a strategic role, as effectual strategic actors are able to engage and relate meaningfully with those they need to influence and lead. This competence necessitates the requisite practical skills, which are addressed in the next section.

4.4.3. Practical skills

Discursive skills have been highlighted above as an important attribute for middle managers to engage in influential conversations with top management, peers and reporting staff during the implementation process (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). Middle managers require the necessary discursive skills and experience when it comes the communication of complicated ideas (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013). Apart from the importance of the use of language, the nuanced contextual understanding is emphasised as key for strategic sensemaking of middle managers (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011).

A study (Balogun & Johnson, 2005) revealed that the outcomes of emergent change was mostly as a result of the informal interactions between middle managers doing their daily work. Rouleau (2013: 550) argues that strategic skills and abilities are usually “less related to the strategists’ formal roles than to their informal activities through which they make sense of changes, influence them or use their networks”. In their research, Olsen and Stensaker (2014) found that “middle managers were required to learn new skills because of changes in their

work tasks and managerial roles” and as change recipients they “engaged in informal and horizontal communication to resolve uncertainties related to new skill and role requirements” (Olsen & Stensaker, 2014: 22).

Although the traditional strategic analytical skills are needed, strategy professionals will also require organisation development skills and a broad range of strategy skills (Whittington et al., 2011). According to Whittington et al. (2011: 541), professionals will discover that “process skills such as coaching, facilitation and communication” are more essential than “analytical skills”. People skills have been found key to keeping staff motivated and to facilitate change (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014) as well as the skill to manage staffs’ emotional states particularly through strategic change (Huy, 2001).

Balogun et al. (2015) explored how practitioners contribute to the realised strategy of the organisation and how they bring the strategy into being through adeptly combining language (interactional competence), material (physical and spatial) and bodily expressions (actions and gestures) in the flow of their work in the realisation of strategy. Middle managers are able to design innovative solutions and develop organisational capabilities through knowledge search practices in order to solve non-routine problems (Tippmann, Mangematin & Scott, 2013). Organisations that have “a knowledge use advantage, namely an ability to mobilize accessible knowledge” is able to pursue capability development (Tippmann et al., 2013: 1869). Other identified middle manager practical skills are:

- creative skills in order to respond to emerging changes;
- technical skills to assist in reacting to new technology and the opportunities and threats technology may pose;
- collaborative skills that may access unique resources (Costanzo & Tzoumpa, 2008); and
- negotiating and political skills (Whitchurch, 2008b).

Middle managers also have to deal with conflict resolution in the work place. Conflict within organisations is unavoidable, and a natural result of human

interactions (Rahim, 2016). Three conflict types have been identified in the literature, namely “cognitive conflict (task conflict), affective conflict (relationship conflict), and process conflict” (Papenhausen and Parayitam, 2015: 103). Research by Parayitam and Dooley (2009) has shown that affective conflict tends to have dysfunctional consequences whereas cognitive conflict inclines to have positive consequences, such as improved decision outcomes. Papenhausen and Parayitam (2015: 116) demonstrate that when teams approach conflict as a shared problem to solve, i.e. ‘we are in this together’ the “positive effect of cognitive conflict on affect conflict will be reduced and vice versa”. Likewise, when teams approach “the process of implementing decisions” that are advantageous to all and to the organisation, “the positive effect of process conflict on affective conflict will be reduced” (Papenhausen & Parayitam, 2015: 116).

In a recent study, Lê and Jarzabkowski (2015) investigated task and process conflict of middle managers during a strategic implementation in real time. The “findings identify a recursive micro-process of interaction between task and process conflict within which strategy emerges and is implemented” (Lê & Jarzabkowski 2015: 452). It is therefore important for middle managers to understand the recursive nature of the two types of conflict. If managed correctly, the conflict will have generative effects and will enable practitioners to “iterate between strategy process and content, working out what the strategy is and how to make it work in practice” (Lê & Jarzabkowski 2015: 456).

Organisations have a role to play in equipping staff (both management and subordinates) with the required skills to manage conflict, either through training opportunities or by encouraging continuous self-learning. Through the acquisition of effective conflict management competencies, job burnout will reduce and work performance is more likely to improve (Rahim, 2016).

Future research is necessary for a better understanding of middle managers’ skills, particularly discursive skills, that are drawn upon when performing their role as translators across organisational boundaries (Teulier and Rouleau, 2013).

“Words, in both their spoken and their materialized forms in text, are some of the most powerful resources for making and signifying an organization’s strategy” (Balogun et al., 2014: 175). Furthermore, the routine day-to-day practices of managers, such as the use of tactics and ways of speaking, display how managers artistically use, oppose and appropriate strategy discourse in the course of strategic management and “this strategy consumption represents the art and practice of everyday strategy usage” (Suominen & Mantere, 2010: 213). A previous call for additional empirical research into the identification of who a strategist is and the experiences that these actors bring to the role of strategising, with particular reference to the nexus between practices and practitioners, has been made (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). Calls for more research into the “broader societal practices, rather than just organizational practices” have been made and, “in addition to human social action, there is still plenty to explore regarding the role of material artefacts, technology, and the body in strategy-making” (Vaara & Whittington 2012: 287).

4.5.Middle manager: THINK

Strategising, real-world practices and empirical research can be enhanced by bringing realistic assumptions about cognition, emotion and behaviour to the management of strategy (Huy, 2012: 240). Jensen et al. (2015: 3) affirm that there is an “interrelationship between cognition, emotion and action in strategizing”. This section will discuss cognition and related aspects and the section 4.6.1 will analyse and consider the role of emotions.

4.5.1.Cognition

Jensen et al. (2015) argue, “the dynamics of strategizing – i.e. the action of engaging, manipulating, and eventually adopting an idea of strategy” will not be totally comprehended without a “systemic idea of cognition” (Jensen et al., 2015: 1). Cognition is a key focus area for SAP researchers pursuing to understand the social cognitive (meaning-making) processes, particularly during organisational change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Kaplan, 2008; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Suddaby et al., 2013).

The field of cognitive science offers a more fine-tuned approach to strategy-as-practice and strategising, widening the knowledge of human action, to include not just communication or behaviour but also a “dynamic exchange of internal and external cognitive resources” as well as understanding that strategising is a “complex cognitive activity that emerges when human beings coordinate activities” (Jensen et al., 2015: 2). The authors describe cognition as “embodied, embedded, enacted and ecological” (2015: 5).

A qualitative longitudinal study conducted on middle managers’ interpretations of senior management’s design and actions, highlights how middle managers “build an understanding of what the new structure means for them, their work, roles and responsibilities” through the ‘sensemaking’ process (Balogun, 2007: 82) as discussed in detail in section 4.4.1.2. In other words, middle managers undergo a cognitive reorientation, where their mental maps need to develop and change as the restructuring process takes place. This requires a shift in assumptions and beliefs. “If an organisation is to change, the mental representations that individuals share about that organisation also need to change” and the sensemaking process is key to the formation and change of individuals’ mental models (Balogun, 2007: 83).

Research scholars have highlighted how middle managers create (Balogun & Johnson, 2004), negotiate (Thomas et al., 2011) and diffuse (Huy, 2011) meaning during organisational change (Teulier & Rouleau 2013: 310). Due to the fast-changing dynamic environments, middle managers frequently have to participate in sensemaking in order to deal with the fast-paced change (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013). The sensemaking history within an organisation needs to be understood in order to explain the success or failure of the strategic change efforts (Mantere et al., 2012).

In addition to the association between cognition and strategic change, a previous study found that “cognition in strategy making” is “inherently political in nature” (Kaplan, 2008: 746). Contemporary research (see Mueller et al., 2013), adhering to the process approach in organisational theory, found “that sensemaking is a

political and power-laden process” and is therefore “central to the interpretation of strategic actors and strategic action as political and power-laden” (Mueller et al., 2013: 1191). The next section discusses politics and its role in strategising and change.

4.5.2.Politics

Politics, along with power, play a key role during strategy making and strategic choices (Carter, Clegg & Kronberger, 2010). It has been said that, in order to observe “politics in action choose cases where there are consequential and structurally complex decisions being made” (Pettigrew, 1990b: 275). Such complexity may include strategic change within organisations, as was the case in this research study.

“Political behaviour implies the existence of dominant coalitions whose power structure is superimposed upon the formal structure of relations” (Janczak, 2005: 65). In other words, politics operate within the informal processes of an organisation. Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) found that power and social order are part of the communicative process, particularly in the university setting, where interests have political implications with regard to influence and power.

Politics “constitutes a key interpretive method through which organizational reality is constructed and strategic decisions are made” (Mueller et al., 2013: 1168), “through which the group makes sense of a variety of issues”, i.e. shared understandings are generated and how the group decides what to do (Mueller et al., 2013: 1178). Mueller et al. (2013: 1191) suggest that political ‘talk’ is not just talk, as “it is constitutive of the very organizational reality that it describes and is central to the very practical work of strategic decision making”.

Foundational work by Mintzberg (1983) found that the mobilisation of political support is necessary during strategy implementation.

A review conclusion reached after exploring strategic management reflected that strategy making and implementation are significantly affected by organisational politics, culture and cognition, and it is these processes that influence how an

organisation competes (Mellahi & Sminia, 2009). Decision-making has also been found to be a product of organisational and political processes (Janczak, 2005). Earlier it was noted that politics appeared to slow the decision-making process (Eisenhardt, 1989a).

Politics can also be utilised as a device to accuse, exclude and shift responsibility (Mueller et al., 2013). Current research (Laamanen, Lamberg, & Vaara, 2016) shows how failure accounts, more than success accounts, raise questions of blame, responsibility and a hunt for scapegoats, together with the associated vested interests in advocating certain interpretations of events. It was further suggested by Laamanen et al., (2016) that various interpretations by management of the same account may all differ as failure discourses are motivated by politics.

Criticism has been raised against the SAP field as little attention has been given so far to the issues of power and politics (Brown & Thompson, 2013; Mueller et al., 2013). This is therefore an area for future research within the SAP research agenda.

Organisational politics have been found to be shaped by intense, mostly negative emotions, such as distrust and frustration, and therefore highlight emotion as integral component in the strategy-making process (Eisenhardt, 1989a). Human emotion, a burgeoning psychological area of research (Huy, 2012), has shown that emotion has an extremely compelling influence on both human cognition and behaviour – specifically in uncertain or ambiguous circumstances (Huy, 2012). The next section, FEEL, deals with the middle managers' emotional aspects, specifically relating to change resistance and conflict.

4.6.Middle manager: FEEL

Literature has highlighted the importance of the role of emotion during strategy making and strategy discourse (Huy, 2012; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Samra-Fredericks, 2003). Emerging research “demonstrates that emotional dynamics drive organizational processes by influencing interpretation” (Suddaby et al., 2013: 335). In addition, “strategizing can be a highly emotional

process involving a variety of different emotions, both positive and negative” (Liu & Maitlis 2009: 6).

4.6.1. Emotions

Emotions have been described as “social and intersubjective constructions” (Moisander, Hirsto & Fahy, 2016: 966). Emotions hold a vital place in the discourse of participants, as, even though one to three years might have passed since a strategic change, some still felt despair, anger and anxiety while others felt excited and expressed positive emotions during their talk (Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014). It was identified in Harbour and Kisfalvi’s (2014) conceptual model of ‘managerial moral courage’, that for managers to act courageously during strategic decision-making and change, requires an increase both in emotional intensity as well as in emotional control.

The inclusion of emotions and motivations within the strategising process should not be underrated as these practices are inherently linked to practitioners in terms of who they are and what they do (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). In particular, strategy as practice aims to humanise management and organisational research to include humans “whose emotions, motivation and actions shape strategy” (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009: 70). The types of practices that are used and the way they are used are probably closely associated with strategists’ emotional states, intentions and motivations (Mantere, 2005). Emotions are able to influence both individual human behaviour and cognition strongly (Huy, 2012). By attaining emotional self-awareness and self-management of emotions, it is possible to increase performance as well as self and social mastery (Goleman, 2011).

Research has shown that negative emotional dynamics during management strategic sessions can obstruct discussions of urgent strategic nature and thereby delay strategic change (Liu & Maitlis, 2014). A study conducted by Liu and Maitlis (2014) explored the displayed emotions during strategic discourse and showed how emotional and team relationship dynamics produced and shaped strategising processes of a top management team. Positive valenced

emotions were found to be associated with collaborative strategising processes and, the intense negative–positive ‘tug of war’ emotions were associated with unreconciled strategising processing. It was also found that agenda issues, which were of a strategic nature, involved increased intense emotions as well as more diverse emotional dynamics (Liu & Maitlis, 2014).

Research has given significance to the “study of micro-practices in meaning generation” as well as the implications for organisational actors and their dynamic interactions “where issues of sensemaking and emotion are equally important” (Suddaby et al., 2013: 335). Sensemaking behaviour, such as gossiping and rumour-mongering, assists in formulating new understanding during organisational restructuring thereby coming to terms with the new way of working for the individual and their teams (Balogun, 2007).

Strategic organisational change, such as restructuring, can result in large groups of individuals experiencing comparable emotions or collective (shared) emotions (Huy, 2012). In addition, small groups of individuals have also shown to be influential in key organisational outcomes. However, according to Huy (2012), these areas remain vastly underexplored and a more granular look into how strategic organisational events result in varying emotions among different individuals or groups of individuals, and how the emotions are dealt with or managed as well as their resulting outcomes. Huy goes on to say that the middle managers’ role (among others) as an organisational actor, “in perceiving and managing their own as well as others’ emotions and developing emotional capability, remain to be investigated more thoroughly” (Huy, 2012: 244–245).

4.6.2.Change resistance

“Change is difficult for everyone” and causes much apprehension and anxiety amongst staff “[who may find] it difficult to imagine a new way of doing things different from what they are accustomed to” regardless of the potential benefits of restructuring (Olson, 2010: 3). Staff who display resistance to change experience negative emotions, which may be as a result of previous unfavourable change experiences or the anticipation of adverse outcomes (Jones & Van de Ven,

2016). This resistance may lead to decreased levels of organisational commitment and identity.

Organisational change is prevalent, normal and ongoing, occurring through daily interactions as “actors engage in the process of establishing new meanings for organizational activities” – and meaning is negotiated through the “social world as enacted in the microcontext of communicative interactions among individuals” (Thomas et al., 2011: 22). Thomas et al.’s (2011: 24) summary of the literature indicates that the negotiation of meaning is a prerequisite during organisational change.

Organisational change is an emotionally charged process, and resistance to change is directly influenced by staff emotions and their psychological resources (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016). The research results produced by Helpap and Bekmeier-Feuerhahn (2016: 911) suggest, “the emotional responses of employees are significantly related to change commitment, change efficacy, and expectations involving organizational change” and “emotions indirectly affect the level of intentional resistance behavior through change commitment and efficacy”.

Organisational change may be beneficial to the success of the organisation; however, it may affect staff well-being negatively (Turgut, Alexandra, Rothenhöfer & Sonntag, 2016). It has also been shown that organisational changes are related to substantial risks of staff health problems due to the increase in frustration, uncertainty, fear and emotional insecurity, which in turn may lead to increased negative stress (Dahl, 2011). The psychological consequence of the change is problematic for the organisation in that staff are likely to be less productive and less committed with an associated increase in absent days. Dahl (2011: 254) states, “organizational changes are associated with significant risks of negative stress”, despite decades of focus on the management of change processes. Emotional exhaustion has been positively related to dispositional resistance to change and organisations are encouraged to provide coaching and training programmes to support staff during an

organisational change – especially staff who are highly change-resistant (Turgut et al., 2016).

It is known that “change creates additional work” during the “transitionary phase” further adding to the strain of change, and it is wise for senior management to provide additional resources or reduce workloads during this phase to ensure success, else the potential for the new structure to fail is high (Balogun, 2007: 89).

“[R]esistance to change often occurs when incumbents feel their positional authority within an organisation is being challenged” (Taplin, 2006: 285) especially if the changes are mandated by central head office (Taplin, 2006). “Politics due to self-interest and defence of turf are realities of change” (Balogun, 2007: 90). Resistance to change is surrounded by micro-politics and is revealing of the subtle behaviour of managers to “manipulate and interpret information to justify their sometimes self-serving actions” (Taplin, 2006: 299). Taplin further demonstrates how robust existent management practices can be used during organisational change, particularly when managers remain wary of the strategic intent and organisational commitment to the change.

Common sources of resistance to change have been summarised by Shafritz et al., (2005) as fear of the unknown, self-interest, selective attention and retention, habit, dependence, need for security – all of which are at the individual level. At group or organisational level, threats to power and influence, lack of trust, different perceptions and goals, social disruption, resource limitations, fixed investments and interorganisational agreements all play a part in resistance to change (Shafritz et al., 2005).

Contrary to the resistance research above, a study conducted by Sonenshein and Dholakia (2012) on a Fortune 500 retailer highlighted that, despite the adversities involved in organisational change implementations, certain staff members are able to construct remarkably positive interpretations of the change, thereby contributing to the change process as opposed to resisting the change. Meaning-making research (based on social psychology) investigates how

individuals are able to overcome objectively adverse circumstances through interpreting the events using psychological resources (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012). Applications to strategic change can be made, whereby staff believe that they are resourceful enough to deal with the change implementation through the facilitation of meaning-making by the managers. “Through the mechanism of communication, managers can facilitate the employees’ meaning-making of change – their creation of a strategy worldview and initiation of benefits finding – both of which are essential in the broader process employees use to adapt to change” (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012: 18).

Factors that enable and constrain middle managers (amongst other actors), “to perceive and manage the collective emotions” of diverse strategic events, such as restructuring within an organisation context, is a productive avenue for research (Huy, 2012: 245). A further research opportunity identified in recent literature is the link between displayed emotions and strategising practices (Huy, 2012; Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Suddaby et al., 2013: 335). A potential area for study is “how individual emotions are influenced by the reactions of their surroundings – and how this influence affects sensemaking” (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016: 912). Helpap and Bekmeier-Feuerhahn (2016: 912) further highlight that emotional states are likely to change over a period of time “in response to an evolving change”. Future studies “on sensemaking in response to organizational change must analyze and compare the responses of employees to different stages of a given change initiative” (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016: 912).

Strategy-as-practice highlights that “sometimes it is specific behavior, cognition or emotion that matters; there is no grander theme” as the “little things do matter” (Suddaby et al., 2013: 337). Practitioners engaging with these micro-modifications on a daily basis may result in fissures in the foundation of the organisation. This may start to change “what was once taken for granted” (Suddaby et al., 2013: 337).

Through the in-depth exploration of practitioners, their practices and behaviour during strategising, we may identify enablers and constraints that may provide

further insights into the development of “practical wisdom through a better understanding of strategy in practice” (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008: 282).

4.7. Summary of literature gaps

Research has been conducted on middle managers, change and strategy work; however, gaps in the knowledge have been identified in areas discussed below.

4.7.1. Middle manager context

Gaps identified relating to the middle manager context are:

- limited research of strategising within the context of emerging markets or developing countries like South Africa (Davis, 2013; Davis et al., 2016);
- focused research on middle managers within a non-academic university context, i.e. support service staff, is significantly lacking (Davis, 2013). The focus of prior research within this context was mainly on top management or academic managers (Bryman, 2007; Floyd, 2012; Wolverton et al., 2005); and
- a shortage of published research on middle managers’ activities of strategy work at universities (Davis, 2013; Davis et al., 2016);

4.7.2. Middle manager: DO

Gaps identified relating to the DO research theme involve:

- research on middle manager practices with specific focus on the identified roles and an improved understanding of how these strategic roles are perceived by middle managers (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014);
- studying of strategic actors, other than top managers, which would include a focus on middle managers;
- empirical research into the identification of who is a strategist, and the experiences that these actors bring to the role of strategising with particular reference to the nexus between practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007);
- research necessary for better understanding of the middle managers’ skills, particularly discursive skills, that are drawn upon when performing

their role as translators across organisational boundaries (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013); and

- research that investigates “not only the taken-for-granted assumptions but also the taken-for-granted practices and the way they condition organisational change research and practices” (Jansson 2013: 1014). Adding to this, “new insights can be generated by critical analysis of the taken-for-granted aspects of social practices” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 324).

4.7.3.Middle manager: THINK

Gaps identified relating to the THINK research theme:

- criticism has been raised against the SAP field in that there has been a lack of attention given to the issues of power and politics (Mueller et al., 2013); and
- research is required to create a deeper level of understanding of –
 - how leaders actually go about reviewing and revising their mental models in the midst of change;
 - how leaders’ approaches to change evolve with time and experience; and
 - how leaders tackle a wider range of situations (Lawrence, 2015: 251).

4.7.4.Middle manager: FEEL

Gaps identified relating to the FEEL research theme:

- the role of middle managers (among others) as organisational actors, “in perceiving and managing their own as well as others’ emotions and developing emotional capability, remain to be investigated more thoroughly” (Huy, 2012: 244–245);
- factors that enable and constrain middle managers “to perceive and manage the collective emotions” of diverse strategic events such as restructuring within an organisation context, is a productive avenue for research (Huy, 2012: 245);

- the link between displayed emotions and strategising practices is a further opportunity for research (Huy, 2012; Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Suddaby et al., 2013);
- a potential area for study is “how individual emotions are influenced by the reactions of their surroundings – and how this influence affects sensemaking” (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016: 912); and
- as emotional states are likely to change over a period of time “in response to an evolving change”, future studies “on sensemaking in response to organizational change must analyze and compare the responses of employees to different stages of a given change initiative” (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016: 912).

Further to the above, the SAP International Network invites researchers from “various disciplinary backgrounds to contribute to our understanding of the actions and routines that constitute strategizing” (SAP International Network, 2016: n.p.).

Based on the above, strategising of professional middle managers within a South African university context during strategic change remains largely unexplored. The current research aimed to address the knowledge gaps identified above. The contribution comprises the creation of new understanding of emerging themes and patterns and the development of new theories pertaining to the professional middle managers’ strategising, combining disparate concepts in new ways while drawing upon varied disciplines for conceptualising.

4.8. Academic and practical contribution

The outcome of the current research study will contribute to academic theory development in the following ways:

- The research findings will contribute to contemporary organisational and practice theory development as the focus of the study was on professional middle managers strategising to effect change during the implementation of a strategic change initiative within a South African HEI.

- The study used a unique data gathering method, which involved participants taking photographs or selecting images symbolising their journey and then reflecting why the image represented their journey (participant self-reflection assessments).
- The results contributes to the SAP perspective relating to practitioners and practices of strategising, thereby addressing the SAP research agenda.
- The research outcome will add value and expand the body of knowledge of the middle manager perspective. The middle managers participating in this study were employed within a university context but formed part of the support service staff complement and thus provided a unique viewpoint.
- The research further contributes to the development of organisational change theory as the study considered a strategic change initiative at a university within a developing country.
- Finally, the research results identify new emergent insights within the selected theories and theoretical perspectives pertaining to the middle managers' roles, practices, and behaviour (cognitive, practical skills and emotions) within a university context.

Further to the above, the practical value of the research will be as follows:

- Recommendations and suggestions will be offered to the management team, which may provide deep insights and learning opportunities.
- The findings will contribute to the pragmatic body of knowledge of strategy practices and strategising available within a university.
- Practical knowledge about middle managers' perspective at a university will be expanded upon and the micro-level activities that take place will be identified, due to the rich, deep data gathering techniques.

4.9. Conclusion

Chapter 3 presented the theoretical framework of the research study and Chapter 4, a detailed literature review of the key constructs. In addition, the stated objective of the literature review to identify knowledge gaps in recent literature was highlighted and the contribution of the study was demonstrated. Figure 4.2

illustrates the framework of the research study as discussed in the literature review.



Figure 4.2 Framework of the research study

Source: Own compilation

The current research study contributes to contemporary organisational theory development and to the SAP perspective relating to practitioners and practices of strategising. The research findings add value to and expand the body of knowledge of the middle manager perspective, specifically professional middle managers within a university context. The research results further show the development of new emergent insights of the middle managers' DO in terms of

roles, practices, routines, tools, practical skills and communication; THINK in terms of the middle managers' cognitive aspects; and FEEL pertaining to middle managers' emotions as well as REFLECT.

Further to the above, the practical value of the research is to provide deep insights, learning opportunities and recommendations to senior management. Recommendations pertaining to KPIs were identified that might assist middle managers' performance reviews by aligning their roles with the appropriate and relevant responsibilities and accountabilities pertaining to their formal strategic roles and strategising. Practical knowledge about middle managers' perspective at a university was expanded upon due to the rich, deep data gathering techniques.

This study attempted to create a bridge between theory and practice by examining the rich, detailed accounts of professional middle managers performing their daily activities during a strategic organisational change initiative at a South African university.

Chapter 5 will provide the comprehensive research methodology that was followed during this research study.

5. Research design

5.1. Introduction

Chapters 3 and 4 presented the literature review starting with the theoretical framework of the study, which was grounded in organisational and practice theory. The key perspectives and constructs were addressed in turn. The chapters then highlighted the identified knowledge gaps and the contribution of the study was set out.

Building on the literature review, this chapter describes the research design components and the process that was followed during the empirical study in order to answer the research question and themes as set out in Chapter 1 (see 1.4.3). The purpose of the study, research philosophy, research approach, research methodology, research strategy, data gathering method, and data analysis method are described in detail. This chapter discusses the limitations and strengths of the research design as well as the assessment of quality and rigour. Finally, ethical considerations taken into account during the study are addressed. Figure 5.1 presents the chapter outline.



Figure 5.1 Chapter 5 outline

Figure 5.2 provides a high-level illustration of the research design components that were adhered to during the empirical research study. The various components are addressed in detail in this chapter, and provide answers to how the research was conducted as well as regarding the rationale for the study.

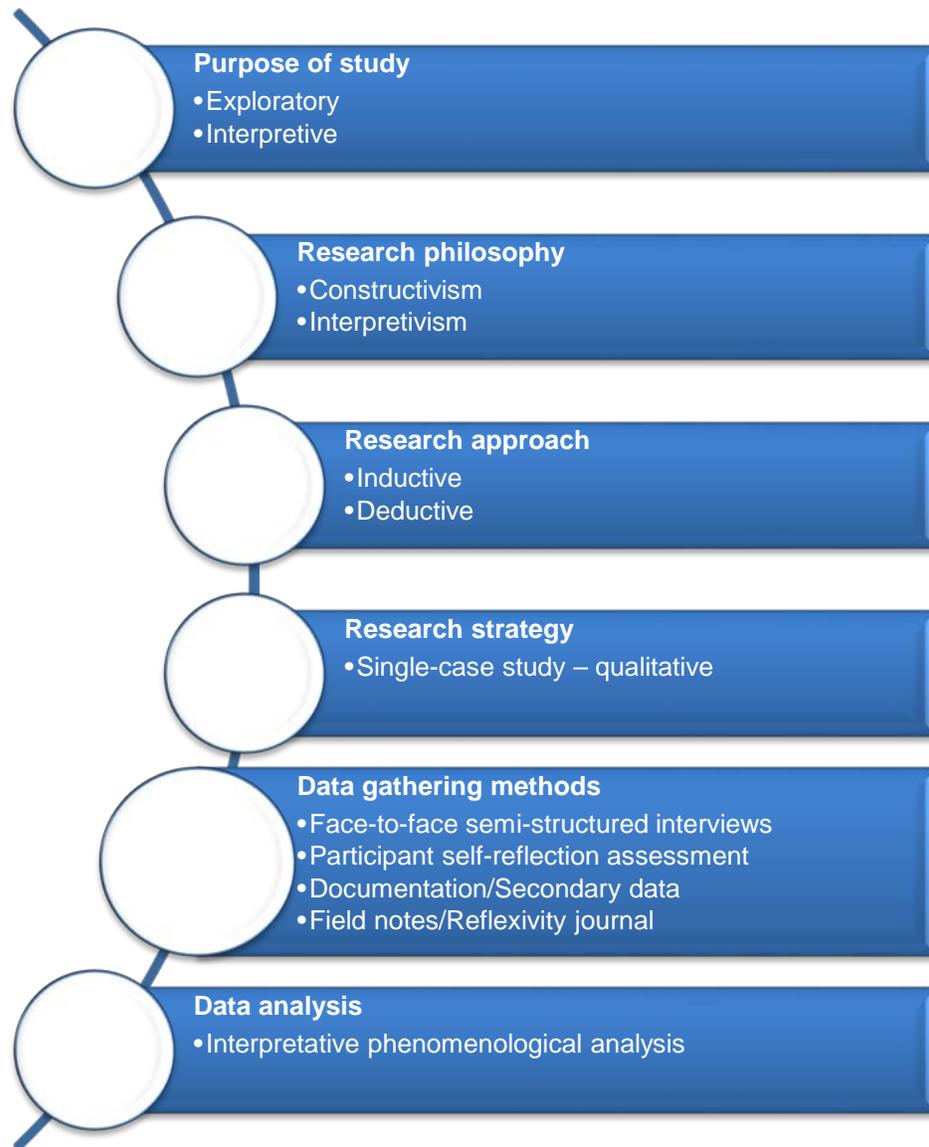


Figure 5.2 Overview of research design components

Source: Own compilation

Each component depicted diagrammatically was a building block for the next block ensuring the study was integrated and aligned, beginning with the purpose of the study.

5.2.Purpose of study

The main purpose of the empirical study was exploratory in nature with the aim to explore how professional middle managers strategise to effect change during a strategic change implementation. Taking the various aspects at play within a dynamic change scenario, an exploratory study was reasoned to be the most appropriate (Lawrence, 2015).

Exploratory research studies focus on questioning and exploring what is happening, especially when more information is required by a phenomenon (Gray, 2013). Exploratory research is “intended to generate insights” (Bertels & Lawrence, 2016: 10). Generally, this “means that not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on what is heard” (Creswell, 2009: 26), which was indeed the scenario in this study.

Exploratory studies can be conducted by a literature search, speaking to experts in the area, or by focus group interviews (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This study made use of both a literature search as well as in-depth engagements with participants (i.e. middle managers) who were directly involved in the change process.

The initial focus of exploratory studies is usually broad and becomes gradually narrower as the research advances. This can be demonstrated by the broad range of questions devised based on the identified research themes. It has been stated that, when conducting exploratory research, there must be a willingness to change the direction of the study as a result of emerging data that may appear and new insights that may occur (Saunders et al., 2009). Following on from this point, although the research question was set in Chapter 1 (see 1.4.3.), the exploratory approach allowed for “additional research questions, hypotheses, and theory” to emerge from the data collected (Johnson & Christensen, 2012: 66). In

other words, as the exploratory study progressed, new research themes emerged.

In addition to the exploratory nature of the research purpose, an interpretive study was also conducted. "Interpretive studies seek to explore peoples' experiences and their views or perspectives of these experiences" (Gray, 2013: 37). Gray (2013) states that interpretive studies are usually inductive and qualitative in approach giving rise to emerging concepts, patterns or themes.

The exploratory and interpretive purposes of the current study aligned well with the comprehensive identified research themes, i.e. to ask questions and to provide new insights. Therefore, the main objective of the exploratory and interpretative research study was an attempt to understand how actors go about the 'doing of strategy' work during organisational change (Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014).

The theoretical perspective of the study provided the underlying foundation of the research, and this is discussed in the next section.

5.3. Research philosophy

A constructivist-interpretivist perspective was the underlying theoretical paradigm for this study. Constructivists embrace the "assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" and that they "develop subjective meanings of their experiences" (Creswell, 2009: 8). Constructivists hold the belief that it is the "subject's interactions with the world" that create meaning, in other words, "meaning is *constructed* not discovered" (Gray, 2013: 20). This implies that various inconsistent or conflicting accounts of a phenomenon may exist and be considered valid. This perspective aligns itself well with the explorative research study under investigation. The participants in the current study therefore constructed their experiences and the participants might have done so according to their own unique interaction with the world, taking their background, culture and subjective frame of reference into account.

Constructivism offers an alternative to the traditional dominant realist paradigm, and it has been acknowledged as having the potential to add to the understanding of strategy (Mir & Watson, 2000). Constructivism may be “used to describe the social nature of practitioners, practices and praxis in reality” (Grebe, 2014: 74). In the current research study backed by the constructivist paradigm, it was assumed that the middle managers as social actors produced their social reality through their social interactions and practices.

In the current study, a benefit of this perspective was the close cooperation that took place between the participants and myself as the researcher, thereby allowing the participants to tell their stories (Crabtree & Miller, 1991). In addition, this close collaboration was further accomplished through an insider perspective. Generalisability was deemed less important than understanding the real workings behind ‘reality’, and therefore in-depth thick descriptions of the participants were explored through the gathering of qualitative data by conducting face-to-face interviews (Gray, 2013).

Linked to constructivism is interpretivism. Interpretivism is a “major anti-positivist stance” where there is “no, direct, one-to-one relationship between ourselves (subjects) and the world (objects)” (Gray, 2013: 23). According to Gray (2013) interpretivism supports the idea that the complexity of the world cannot be reduced to finite ‘laws’ and generalisations. Rather the researcher needed to “understand differences between humans in our role as social actors” (Saunders et al. 2009: 116) and the interpretations of the day-to-day social roles and the meaning we ascribe to those roles. Phenomenology is an example of an interpretivist approach with a strong focus “on human experience of the ‘life-world’” (Gray, 2013: 24). The inductive approach of phenomenological research explores the personal construction of the subject’s world through in-depth, unstructured interviews. The phenomenological researcher engages in an interpretative relationship with the data where “meaning is central and the aim is to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings” (Smith & Osborn, 2007: 66).

Another theoretical perspective that might have been deemed suitable, is critical realism. Easton (2010: 39) “proposes critical realism as a coherent, rigorous and novel philosophical position that not only substantiates case research as a research method but also provides helpful implications for both theoretical development and research process”. He does however concur, “as with all philosophical approaches critical realism cannot be proved to be the ‘right answer’” (Easton, 2010: 128). Critical realism (also known as postpositivism) accepts the role of the researcher as an objective, impartial observer, which is passive and value-neutral (Ponterotto, 2005).

The difference between critical realists and social constructionists lies in the acceptance of the possibility of knowing reality in the former case and its rejection in the latter who, in general, concentrate instead on uncovering the constructions that social actors make (Easton, 2010: 123).

Due to the insider perspective followed and the value biases brought to the current research study, it was not considered as appropriate or relevant as the constructivist-interpretivist perspective. In addition, the heart of this research study comprised exploring the constructions and interpretations that social actors make.

The axiology that I cannot be removed or separated from that which was being researched, was followed. I acknowledged that my own background and personal experiences shape my interpretations (Creswell, 2009). The researcher is subjective (Saunders et al., 2009) and the researcher’s “intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (Creswell, 2009: 8). “Constructivism does not consider the phenomenon under investigation and the researcher as separate” (Suominen, 2009: 49). The results and findings of the researcher are determined by the researcher’s philosophical paradigm, and therefore the researcher is “never objective or value-neutral” (Suominen, 2009: 50). Based on the above discussion, the constructivist-interpretivist philosophy and more specifically interpretative phenomenology, was deemed relevant for this research study.

5.4. Research approach

Inductive discovery (see Gray, 2013) or theory building was selected for this study as the predominant research approach. However, a deductive component was also included to affirm the formal strategic roles of the middle managers as identified in the literature (Davis, 2013; Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014).

Literature shows that inductive and deductive reasoning are not mutually exclusive and may be combined (Gray, 2013; Jarratt & Stiles, 2010; Lockett, Currie, Finn, Martin & Waring, 2014). Inductive reasoning was appropriate for this study, as the “research setting [was] somewhat under-explored” and therefore allowed for the “emergence of new insights” (Darbi & Knott, 2016: 404). It should be noted that the inductive approach “does not set out to corroborate or falsify a theory”; however, “through a process of gathering data, it attempts to establish patterns, consistencies and meanings” (Gray, 2013: 17). Data gathering methods that support this approach, such as rich, in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews and participants’ self-reflection photographs or images were therefore selected, as discussed in section 5.8. However, concurrently, a deductive approach allowed for the prevailing theoretical viewpoints to inform the research questions and provide background, context and focus for the research study (Darbi & Knott, 2016). The deductive approach was applied to the formal strategic roles and the associated strategising activities.

5.5. Research methodology and strategy

In accordance with prescriptions set in the inductive approach, a qualitative research methodology was used in this empirical research study. A single-case study was the research strategy and the data gathering took place in the form of face-to-face semi-structured interviews (verbal reports), public documents, secondary data, field notes, a reflexivity journal and self-reflection assessments and photographs or images. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Vaara and Whittington (2012) identified that one of the distinguishing features of SAP research is the shift in methodology with a strong focus on qualitative methods frequently in single organisations.

“What the case study does represent is a research strategy, to be likened to an experiment, a history, or a simulation, which may be considered alternative research strategies” (Yin, 1981: 59). Yin (1981: 59) further argues that the differentiating characteristics of the case study is that it endeavours to study “a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context”, particularly when “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. The context within which the practitioners act is of vital importance and goes “beyond providing a static snapshot of events, and cut[s] across the temporal and contextual gestalt of situation” (Bonoma, 1985: 203).

An important contribution of strategy research per se, is the “legitimation of small sample in-depth studies” such as the single-case studies by Mintzberg (1973) and Pettigrew (1985), which “proved to be the source of rich and enduring insight” allowing for contextual and holistic understanding necessary for “unpacking the complex driving forces of strategic change” (Johnson et al., 2003: 11). Not only are these in-depth single-case studies valid in themselves but an indispensable feature of the strategising perspective and the micro-strategy research field.

Single-case-based research has been used extensively in practice-related studies over the years (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Floyd, 2012; Frigotto et al., 2013; Kaplan, 2011; Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015; Rouleau, 2005; Teulier & Rouleau, 2013). Balogun and Johnson (2005) used a real-time, embedded single-case study design to research change recipients and the way they make sense of change events in order to capture the complexity and contextual richness. Similarly, Lê and Jarzabkowski (2015) also selected a real-time case study with the focus on strategic initiative implementation and instances of conflict types that required the situated activities to be analysed in order to reveal the underlying complex dynamics. Furthermore, when studying phenomena which are complex, an inductive single-case study is deemed suitable (Eisenhardt, 1989b; Siggelkow, 2007; Yin, 1981). The current case study, as discussed in Chapter 2, therefore met the requirements of complexity and a need for greater appreciation of the contextual understanding in which strategising

takes place during a strategic change initiative. The single-case study was therefore deemed appropriate for this research study.

Research shows that “case construction implicates multiple data sources” and “often rely heavily on verbal reports (personal interviews) and un-obtrusive observation as primary data sources” (Bonoma, 1985: 203). Qualitative case approaches involving these various data sources, “serve as a means of ‘perceptual triangulation’ and provide a fuller picture” of the area under study (Bonoma, 1985: 203). For a case study, “evidence may come from fieldwork, archival records, verbal reports, observations, or any combination of these” (Yin, 1981: 59). The current study considered multiple sources of evidence to ensure a rich, intensive, in-depth approach to data gathering, which included interview transcripts (verbal reports), public documents, secondary data, field notes, a reflexivity journal and self-reflection assessments and photographs or images. The flexibility of multiple sources, according to Easton (2010), is a major benefit of case research. In addition, “the key opportunity it has to offer is to understand a phenomenon in depth and comprehensively” (Easton, 2010: 119).

Case research suited the ‘how’ questions that were posed in this research study and allowed “the researcher the opportunity to tease out and disentangle a complex set of factors and relationships, albeit in one or a small number of instances” (Easton, 2010: 119). The type of problem best suited for a case study strategy is when a “researcher has a case bounded by time or place that can inform a problem” (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano & Morales, 2007: 241). Case study research strategy is often associated with exploratory research (Saunders et al., 2009).

A case study strategy that is well-constructed can facilitate the testing of a current theory and may also propose a basis for new research questions (Saunders et al., 2009). Further reasoning for the selection of a single case was the uniqueness of the case (Saunders et al., 2009: 146), as well as the unusual access and proximity I had to the real-life situation and context within the university. It is argued, “research involving case data can usually get much closer

to theoretical constructs and provide a much more persuasive argument about causal forces that broad empirical research can” (Siggelkow 2007: 22). By providing a plausible conceptual argument, a case study can further substantiate and justify the argument by seeking to understand the world better.

As I am employed at the university, the role of practitioner-researcher was appropriate. My in-depth knowledge and understanding of the complexity within the institution and the research context as a whole was an added advantage (Saunders et al., 2009). The drawbacks of the practitioner-researcher role may be pre-conceived ideas and assumptions that may exist, and therefore I was vigilant of these concerns when it came to data quality and integrity. These issues were carefully addressed within the study, and these pre-conceived ideas and assumptions were made explicit in the reflexivity journal and field notes. In addition, there may have been suspicions about why I conducted the research study and what the data would be used for, which could have resulted in cognitive access being denied even though physical access had been granted (Saunders et al., 2009). However, this aspect was addressed directly with each participant in the pre-interview dialogues, and did not appear to be problematic based on the open and frank engagements.

An insider gives “the benefit of being acutely tuned in to the experiences and meaning systems of the participants” (Davis, 2013: 228). The relationships I had with the middle managers in this study were disclosed in Chapter 1 to ensure transparency and openness.

Figure 5.3 below provides an overview of the research process that was adopted and followed.

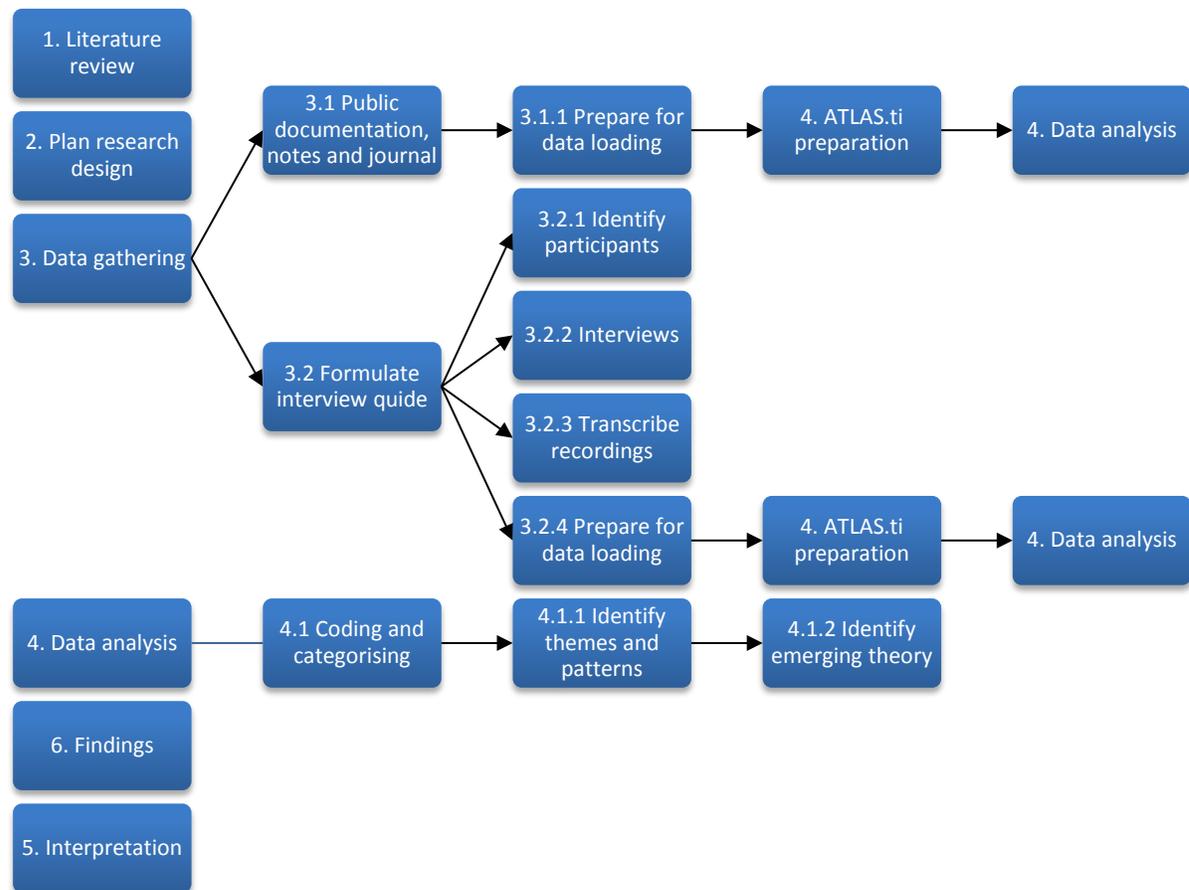


Figure 5.3 Overview of the research process

Source: Own compilation

5.6.Participants

Within this research study, the unit of analysis was identified as professional middle managers. This translated to the selected university's job titles of 'director', 'deputy director' and 'assistant director'.

For the purpose of this study as identified in Chapter 1 (see 1.4.2), the following definition was used: "Middle managers have managers reporting to them and are also required to report to managers at a more senior level" (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014: 167). The three identified levels of 'middle managers' (see Table 5.1) had access to senior management in various instances, be it in meetings, at workshops or in terms of quarterly reviews, and they all had

managers reporting directly to them. They therefore conformed to the definition of middle managers as identified in the study. Senior management in the context of this study refers to top management or executive members.

Table 5.1 below summarises the population participant breakdown. The participants were from the white, black, coloured and Indian population groups and the numbers were aligned with the racial composition of the targeted functions. I will not be reporting on race or gender as the selection criteria were based on the participants' job titles and responsibilities.

Table 5.1 Participant breakdown

Potential participant breakdown based on population:	
Job title	Director, deputy director, assistant director
Appointment type	Permanently employed professional at UP within the support departments
Job responsibilities	Student administration and/or student support services functions
Gender	Female = 10, male = 8
OSS involvement	All participants involved in the OSS initiative and directly affected (i.e. reporting lines changed, re-deployed, new or significantly changed role and responsibilities)

Based on the above criteria, academic middle managers and contract or temporary staff were excluded from the population.

As the case study was focused on a small group of individuals as described above, it was possible for data gathering to be done from the entire population and therefore no sampling was needed (see Saunders et al., 2009). However, the principle of data saturation was used as a determining factor in terms of the number of interviews that were conducted. 'Data saturation' refers to gathering data until it no longer provides new insights (see Saunders et al., 2009). According to Patton (1990), there should be no rule that determines the exact number of interviews that are required. He believes that the rich, in-depth nature of qualitative inquiry and the researcher's skills are more important. However, different perspectives are offered, from 12 in-depth interviews within a fairly

homogenous group being sufficient to between 25 and 30 interviews for a general study (Creswell, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009). Interpretative phenomenological (IP) studies are usually conducted with small sample sizes but there is no 'correct' sample size (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Gray (2013) purports in-depth, unstructured interviews ranging between five and 15 participants are appropriate when adhering to a phenomenological approach.

This research study identified a population size of 18 possible participants who were directly involved and affected by the OSS strategic change initiative. The approach was to conduct interviews based on a purposive method until data saturation occurred and taking non-participation into account. IP scholars make use of purposive sampling in order to find a "more closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant" (Smith & Osborn, 2007: 56). In the current study, this resulted in a total of 11 face-to-face semi-structured interviews while two potential participants declined due to unavailability during the interview period (mid-November–December 2016).

5.7. Research questions

The main research question and associated research themes were framed in Chapter 1 and were demarcated as follows.

5.7.1. Main research question

How do professional middle managers strategise to effect change during a strategic change initiative?

5.7.2. Sub-themes

A qualitative research process is an emergent design where the initial plan may change or shift during the data gathering, even "the questions may change" (Creswell, 2007: 39). Whether a comprehensive literature review is conducted before or after data gathering during a qualitative research study, it should not "constrain and stifle the discovery of new constructs, relationships and theories" (Johnson & Christensen, 2012: 67).

“Investigators doing case studies are not ‘theory driven’ (a criticism that has been raised by some), but are ‘driven to theory’” (Yin, 1999: 1213).

An inductive exploratory approach allows for the data to speak and for patterns and themes to emerge during data gathering and analysis (Gray, 2013).

A recursive approach was therefore followed, where the alignment of emerging patterns and themes was traced back to theory where possible while allowing new theories to emerge. As an inductive approach was selected, sub-questions were not defined in detail. The following concepts formed part of the data gathering process as identified in the literature and the associated major themes identified as depicted in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Research sub-themes

Middle manager concepts	Major themes
Formal strategic roles, practices, routines, practical skills and tools	DO
Cognitive aspects, role of politics	THINK
Emotions, motivations and productivity, change resistance	FEEL
Reflections of the middle managers’ experiences and journeys	REFLECT

The major themes of the research, namely DO, THINK, FEEL and REFLECT pertained to how middle managers strategised to effect change during a strategic change initiative.

The next section details the data gathering method and provides a conceptual depiction of the interview guide used to gather the primary data.

5.8.Data gathering methods

Multiple data gathering methods were used in the study to ensure richness and integrity. Figure 5.4 provides an overview of the methods used and a concise description of each. This section will discuss each method and the contribution it made to the current research.

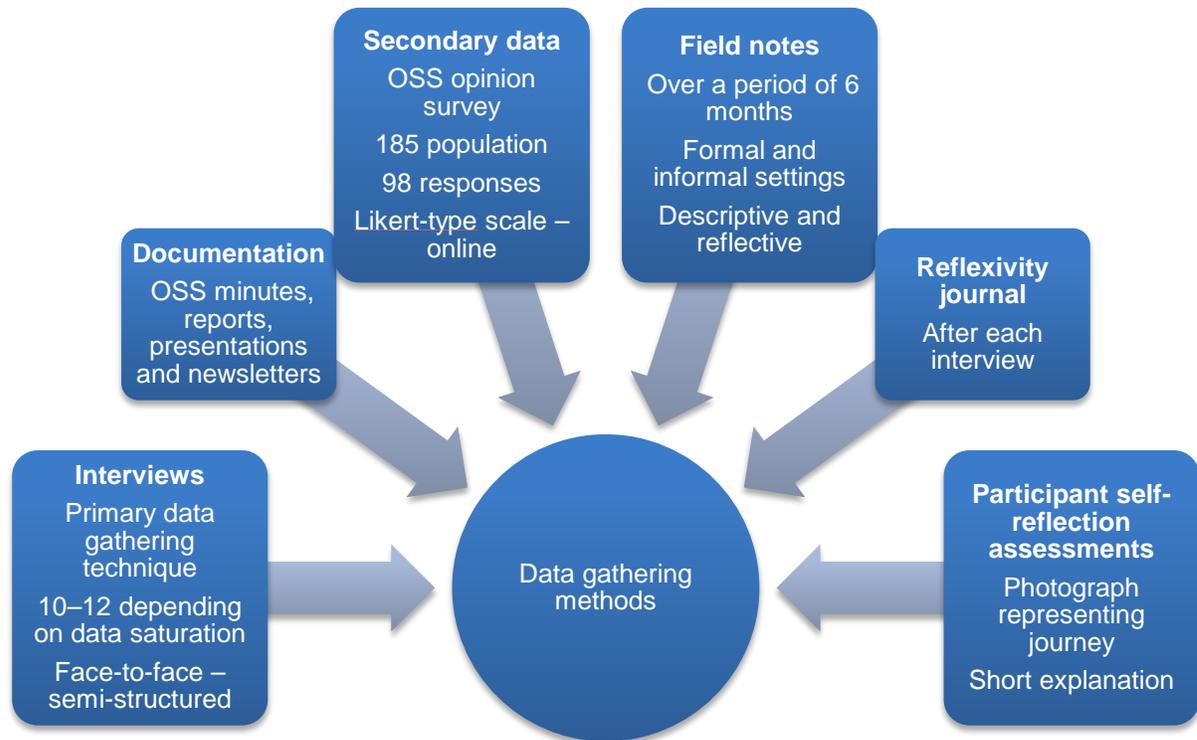


Figure 5.4 Overview of data gathering methods

Source: Own compilation

5.8.1. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews

The primary data gathering technique was in the form of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are often used during exploratory qualitative studies and are considered non-standardised (qualitative) interviews (Bertels & Lawrence, 2016; Lawrence, 2015; Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015; Rouleau, 2005; Sarpong & Maclean, 2014). Furthermore, the majority of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) studies are conducted through semi-structured interviews allowing for a dialogue between researcher and participant (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Before each interview, the participant was provided with an information sheet and consent form (Annexure A). I guided the participant through the information sheet

and requested the consent form to be signed. All 11 participants signed the consent forms thereby agreeing to participate voluntarily in the research study.

An interview guide was designed consisting of a list of questions exploring the various research themes, identified in the literature review. These questions were all open-ended in nature. Potential probing questions were also listed to facilitate the conversation if required. Probing offers the opportunity for seeking explanations and deep rich responses, especially where the researcher is striving to understand the meanings of phenomena (Saunders et al., 2009: 324). The questions were framed broadly and openly in line with the interpretative phenomenology approach with the aim to explore in detail in a flexible manner (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

The order of the questions differed from interview to interview to ensure the conversation flow was not disrupted (see Saunders et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Probing questions were asked during the interviews, which enabled the participants to tell their full stories and lived experiences. In some instances, probing questions were not needed as the participants shared their full stories; however, in several instances, the probing questions were asked to gain more insight. To ensure that the interview outcome was not being influenced, no leading questions were asked. Initial questions were slightly “modified in the light of participants’ responses” (Smith & Osborn, 2007: 57) to improve dialogue flow and understanding for future participants. The interview sessions were digitally recorded to ensure accuracy and integrity during data interpretation and analysis. The average length of each interview was approximately one hour. Each interview ended with a self-reflection assessment task for the participant.

5.8.2. Participant self-reflection assessment

Each participant was asked to take a photograph or select an image that represented his or her personal journey over the previous three years. The photograph could be literal, abstract or metaphorical. An explanation or narrative about why the photograph or image represented the participant’s personal journey was also requested. The purpose of these assessments was to provide

the participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and journey during the OSS strategic change initiative. In addition, these self-reflection assessments contributed to the multivocality of the study allowing the participants to 'voice' their own thoughts thereby providing further input into the research study (refer to Table 5.5). According to phenomenological inquiry, an example of the interpretivist approach, reliability of a study is accomplished through confirmation by the participants themselves (Gray, 2013). The participants' self-reflection assessments therefore encouraged the participants to reflect after the interview process and to confirm their experiences and thoughts in their own words and through visual representation.

The current study therefore used a unique data gathering method, which involved participants taking photographs or selecting images symbolising their journey (i.e. participant self-reflection assessment). Furthermore, this unique data gathering method enhanced the crystallisation process of the study. The participants were asked to delete the photos or images once sent to prevent identification.

Figure 5.5 depicts the conceptual layout of the interview guide. The three research themes, namely DO, THINK and FEEL of professional middle managers formed the foundation of the interview guide. Each theme was addressed in detail with questions pertaining to professional middle managers' strategy work during the OSS strategic change initiative. The detailed interview guide was aligned with linkages to the literature review and the identified research gaps. Refer to Annexure B for the full interview guide as well as Annexure C for the list of emoticons to which question 19 of the interview guide refers.

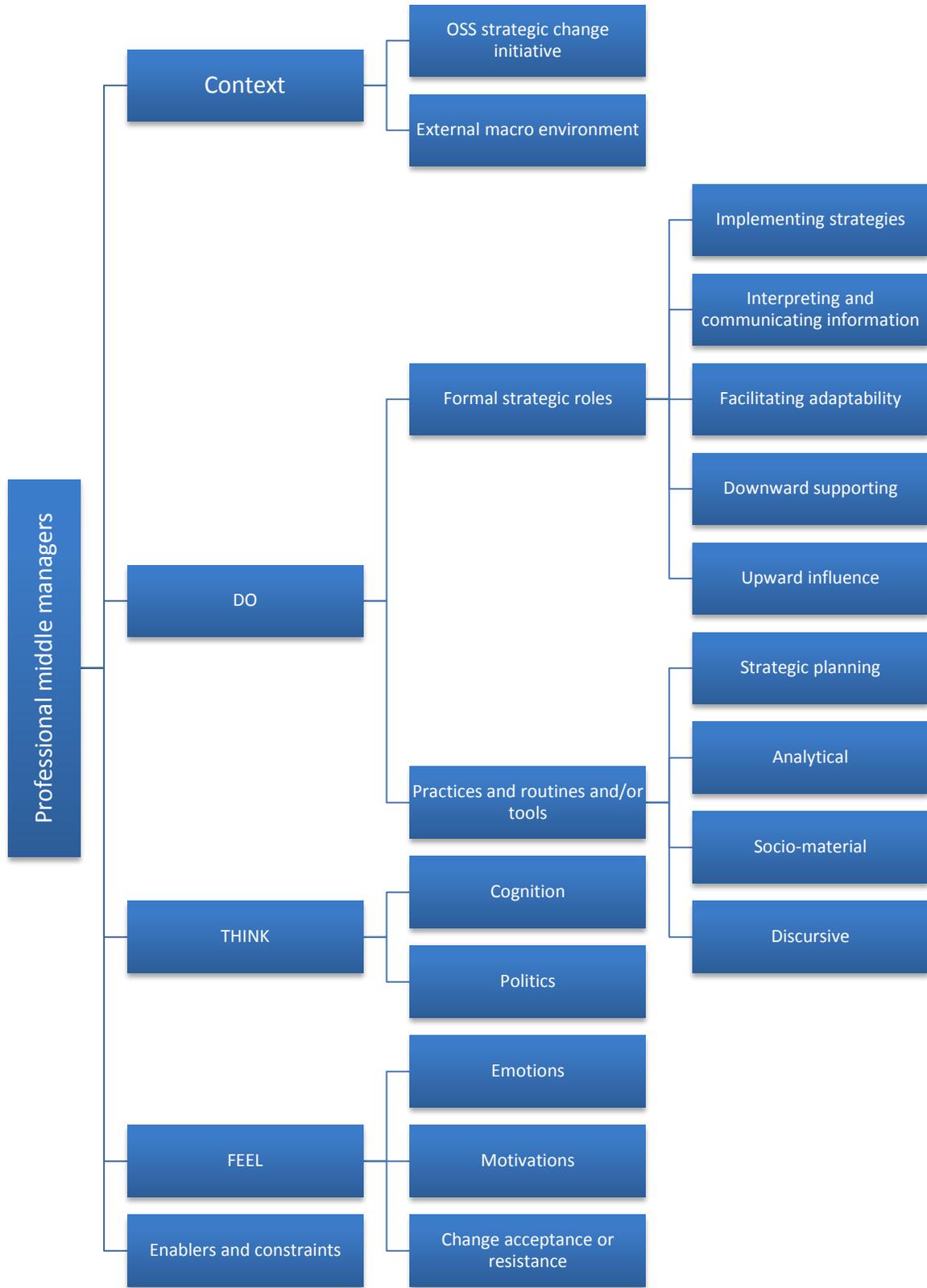


Figure 5.5 Interview guide: Conceptual layout

Source: Own compilation

In addition to the primary data gathering method, field notes, documentation, secondary data and a reflexivity journal were used during the data gathering phase.

5.8.3.Documentation, secondary data, field notes and reflexivity journal

A case research strategy is essentially concerned with the “researcher’s interpretation of management’s signification of events, information, and reality – that is, it depends on the researcher’s perceptions about management’s meanings, not on some “objective reality” (Bonoma, 1985: 204). Therefore, unlike some other qualitative methods, a case strategy “draws on numerous other data sources to triangulate these perceptions and significations within a broader context” (Bonoma, 1985: 203).

Triangulation is defined as the “use of two or more independent sources of data or data collection methods to corroborate research findings within a study” (Saunders et al., 2009: 154). It involves a process where a researcher investigates possible convergence among numerous sources of information to form themes or categories (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The concept ‘triangulation’ “assumes a single reality (or point on the map) to be known” (Tracy, 2010: 843). It should be noted, however, that a concept known as ‘crystallisation’ was deemed a more suitable practice for this qualitative research study. Crystallisation encourages the use of multiple sources of data gathered by different methods as in this research study (e.g. face-to-face semi-structured interviews, field notes, secondary data [i.e. an opinion survey], reflexivity journal and other documents). However, contrary to triangulation, the main goal of crystallisation “is not to provide researchers with a more valid singular truth, but to open up a more complex, in-depth, but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue” (Tracy, 2010: 844). This process enhanced the validity and credibility of the research results and also provided a stronger substantiation of the constructs (Eisenhardt, 1989b).

5.8.3.1. Documentation

Documentation pertaining to the OSS strategic initiative, such as minutes, presentations, newsletters, organograms, proposals and reports were collected for thematic document analysis. Annexure E lists documents considered during the current study. These qualitative documents were a combination of documents (see Creswell, 2009), i.e. internal university documents as well as documents provided by the external consultants. Table 5.3 defines the description and purpose or relevance of each OSS document type used in the study.

Table 5.3 Document type, description and purpose

Document Type	Description	Purpose or relevance
Minutes: Internal	Minutes from OSS workgroup sessions Senior management minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Determined the process flow •Identified the input and feedback from managers, staff and senior management •Identified key milestones, recommendations and approvals
Presentations: Internal	Presentations to staff by OSS detailing the way forward, status and progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Determined the OSS purpose and objectives and relevance to the UP 2025 strategy
Newsletters: Internal	E-newsletters to staff communicating the OSS initiatives objectives, status and progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identified what was communicated to managers and staff and when (frequency) •Identified change management processes and outputs
Organograms: Internal	Functional and structural organograms used during the workgroup sessions as visual representations of the new entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identified the input and feedback by managers and staff in the co-creation of the new entities •Identified the new entities and effect on structural and HR changes
Proposals: Internal and external	Proposals submitted for decision-making highlighting proposed recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Determined if the recommendations made by the workgroups aligned with proposals to senior management
Reports: Internal and external	Reports detailing the OSS progress, recommendations and scenarios throughout the three phases as well as the identification of risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Determined the major outcomes and risks of the OSS •Identified the measure of success for the OSS initiative

5.8.3.2. Secondary data (staff opinion survey)

The approach “for combining research methods generally, and more specifically that for combining qualitative and quantitative methods, is strong” (Gable, 1994: 112). Gable (1994) argues that the usefulness of survey research is enhanced when used in combination with other qualitative research methods.

An internal staff survey was conducted during the OSS maintenance phase in October 2016, and the findings provided valuable information pertinent to the research study. The purpose of the quantitative survey was to determine the opinions and experiences of staff relating to the OSS initiative – a perceptual climate audit for management information purposes. I felt the quantitative survey findings would add value to this study and therefore supplement the research findings (Tracy, 2013).

In my official work capacity, I compiled an online Likert-type response survey as part of the OSS closure report (refer to Annexure D for the survey questionnaire). “Likert scaling is widely used in instruments measuring opinions, beliefs, and attitudes” and it has been recommended that the survey statements be “fairly strong” and clear (DeVellis, 2003: 79).

The survey was administered anonymously online and only staff directly affected by the OSS initiative received the link to the survey via an email invitation to participate. The survey consisted of a four-point scale (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree). It has been found that the optimum number of response alternatives, in terms of both reliability and validity for a Likert-type format, is between four and seven response options (Lozano, Garcia-Cueto & Muniz, 2008). However, there was an option of not answering a question if unsure, neutral or not applicable, by just skipping to the next question. Twenty-five questions were asked in total. At the end of the survey, staff had to indicate their post level category. The targeted staff included the middle managers as defined in this study and could be easily identified by the post level categories.

The results of the staff opinion survey were initially used for management information and to gauge the climate as the OSS initiative was coming to a close. The survey findings were made available to staff and management in the final OSS closure report in early 2017. It was also stated the survey findings might be used for potential future research. I took advantage of the survey results and conducted additional analysis on the data set for the purpose of this research study. The summary of the analysis and results section is included in Chapter 6.

5.8.3.3. Field notes

“Additional strategies commonly integrated into qualitative studies to establish credibility include the use of reflection or the maintenance of field notes” (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 556). Complementing the actual interview data, 37 field notes were taken for a period of six months in parallel to the last six months of the OSS maintenance phase (August 2016–February 2017). December was excluded due to the recess period. Field notes were taken after relevant encounters with the middle managers in both formal (meetings and workshops) and informal settings (coffee chats and corridor talk). A researcher’s background, tacit knowledge and beliefs may affect the note taking process and the decision to embark on either a “salience hierarchy” or a “comprehensive” approach to taking notes may be followed (Wolfinger, 2002: 93). I followed a salience hierarchy strategy, writing down “whatever observations struck” me “as the most noteworthy, the most interesting or most telling” (Wolfinger, 2002: 89). According to Wolfinger (2002), by acknowledging the assumptions and beliefs involved, the researcher can develop a better understanding of the note taking process. Therefore, the field notes I took included both descriptive and reflective summaries that focused on the research problem and research themes. The physical setting, date and place were noted, and a code name was used to protect the confidentiality of the middle managers. Emergent themes and questions were established during the process. These encounters and notes aided the design and development of the interview guide.

5.8.3.4. Reflexivity journal

An additional source that was utilised, which comprises a procedure for enhancing credibility “is for researchers to self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases” (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 127). In other words to make these elements “as explicit as possible” (Gray, 2013: 28). A reflexivity journal was maintained throughout the interviewing phase, which made my assumptions, prejudices and biases explicit and detailed any other thoughts, ideas, feelings or concerns experienced during the interview process. Journaling was conducted after each interview and I captured non-verbal elements during the interview, such as mood, emotions, tone, body language and attitude. In addition, reflexivity was incorporated by “interpretive commentary throughout the discussion of the findings” (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 127).

Rich, in-depth data was therefore gathered during the data gathering process. The data was then transcribed. The analysis and interpretation process involved the exploration of the data and the identification of patterns and themes as they emerged from the data (Gray, 2013). The next section addresses the analysis method that was adhered to during the study.

5.9. Data analysis method

The first step in the process was to have the digital interview recordings transcribed as soon as possible. An external transcriber was contracted for this task to save me time. I verified the transcriptions once completed (data cleaning) to ensure the accuracy and integrity of data and at the same time reacquainted myself with the interview data. Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti™) was used to support the analysis of data. All transcriptions, participant photographs (representing their journey), field notes, reflexivity observations and supporting documents were then uploaded into ATLAS.ti™ (version 7) as separate files. A coding system was used to name the files as well as to categorise the data. Due to the complex nature of qualitative data, the analysis phase consisted of a series of grouping and condensing the data into sensible, meaningful categories and conceptualisations (Saunders et al., 2009).

In line with the theoretical paradigm of the study, “interpretivists conduct thematic analyses” which give rise to emergent themes (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005: 380).

Thematic analysis is classified as a categorising strategy, and “refers to the process of identifying themes in the data which capture meaning that is relevant to the research question, and perhaps also to making links between such themes” (Flick & Metzler, 2014: 147).

5.9.1. Participant breakdown

In total, 11 participants were interviewed out of a potential population of 18, of which 45.4% were male and 54.6% were female. The participants represented four different departments, where five were appointed as director or deputy director and six were appointed as assistant deputy director. All races were covered, namely white, black, coloured and Indian, in relation to the staff composition under study. However, these descriptors were not used in the findings and interpretations as no generalisations nor any distinctions were made based on gender or race.

5.9.2. Data coding and analysis

A predominantly inductive approach to data coding and analysis was used in line with the inductive research approach selected for the study. A deductive component was included to confirm the formal strategic roles as discussed in section 4.4.1. The formal strategic roles were the only codes that were predefined deductively before the analysis took place. All other codes emerged through an inductive approach applied during the analysis. An inductive approach seeks to build up a theory that is grounded in the gathered data (Saunders et al., 2009). Themes and patterns emerging from the data were identified as well as the relationships between the data, resulting in the development of clearly defined research questions. The “theory emerges from the process of data collection and analysis”; however, a clear research purpose had been identified upfront (Saunders et al., 2009: 490).

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was conducted, which aimed to explore the rich experiences of the participants and the way they make sense of their personal journey during the strategic change initiative (Smith & Osborn, 2007). IPA is especially appropriate when “concerned with complexity, process and novelty” (Smith & Osborn, 2007: 55). IPA aligns well with the interpretivist theoretical paradigm, the purpose of the study, i.e. exploratory and interpretive research, the predominantly inductive research approach, as well as the research methodology and strategy of the study.

5.9.2.1. Interpretative phenomenological analysis

“The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (Smith & Osborn, 2007: 53).

Smith and Osborn (2007: 54) state that IPA acknowledges that the participant is a “cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being and assumes a chain of connection between people’s talk and their thinking and emotional state”. This chain of connection is complex as participants battle at times to express their feelings and thoughts, not wishing to self-disclose, leaving the researcher to interpret the emotional and mental states by what is said. IPA therefore focuses on sensemaking by both the researcher and the participant.

Once all the data sources of information had been prepared and loaded into ATLAS.ti™, an iterative process of data analysis was conducted. IPA is a dynamic process where the researcher plays an active role (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Table 5.4 outlines the data analysis stages that were followed. At this stage, it should be noted that there is no single or definite way to conduct IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2007: 54). Qualitative analysis is non-prescriptive and unavoidably a subjective process, and the analysis itself is the interpretative work conducted by the researcher at each iterative stage.

Table 5.4 Iterative stages of data analysis

Stage	Analytical activities	Output
Develop thick descriptions to generate initial insights	<p>Generate thick descriptions of the individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews, reflexivity journal entries, participant self-reflection assessments and field notes</p> <p>Participants provided self-reflection assessments after the interviews to improve trustworthiness</p>	<p>Verified thick descriptions per interview and associated reflexivity journal entry or participant self-reflection assessment</p> <p>Thick descriptions of field notes</p>
First-level analysis to familiarise and gain understanding of the transcripts as well as the project documentation	<p>Ensure the transcripts are a true account of the recordings</p> <p>Clean the transcripts</p> <p>Read the transcripts attentively a number of times making notes of that which is interesting or significant</p>	<p>Verified and cleaned transcripts</p> <p>Familiarity of content</p> <p>Interesting and significant insights noted</p>
ATLAS.ti™ (version 7) preparation and loading	<p>Prepare the transcripts, reflexivity journal entries, field notes and documentation</p> <p>Load the above into ATLAS.ti™</p>	<p>Data loaded into ATLAS.ti™</p> <p>ATLAS.ti™ used extensively during the iterative stages of data analysis.</p>
Code data to identify themes	<p>Prepare data for coding</p> <p>Develop coding scheme for formal strategic role themes</p>	<p>Identified coding scheme reflecting the formal strategic themes in terms of the roles (deductive) PLUS emergent coding scheme created during the coding process (inductive)</p>
Examine one interview transcript in detail before moving on to the others one by one	<p>Develop synonym list and behavioural cues to define possible patterns (e.g. emotive word usage or emotion-evoking words; physical gestures, such as finger pointing or demonstrating with hands and arms)</p>	<p>Comprehensive synonym list</p>
Examine documentation in detail	<p>Code data using the identified coding scheme for formal strategic roles</p>	<p>Documentation and secondary data classified</p> <p>Comprehensive list of generated codes</p> <p>Comprehensive list of sub-themes</p>

	Code data making use of emergent schemes and iteratively add to the coding scheme list	(categories)
	Confirm coding scheme and data classification	
	Create sub-themes (categories) by grouping relevant codes	
Map themes and patterns over time to identify the journey	Identify higher-level abstractions and pinpoint themes	Higher level of abstraction in order to highlight theoretical connections
Iterative process ensuring my own interpretations are aligned with what participants actually said or what the text in the documentation actually states	Map the themes and patterns over the three OSS phases for each transcript	Identified emergent themes clustered where appropriate
	Connect the emergent themes	Identified superordinate concepts where appropriate
	With each transcript, identify repeating patterns as well as any emergent themes	Convergences and divergences of data between the transcripts
Review and confirm themes and clusters	Generate a single file for each theme and its associated quotes of all participants to review and confirm	Reviewed and confirmed themes and concepts
Translate themes into narrative account	Write up a narrative account and argument based on the themes and associated quotes of all participants linking to the literature where appropriate	Narrative account written up
		Links created to literature per theme in a single results and discussion section.

Source: Adapted from Lê and Jarzabkowski (2015: 445) and Smith and Osborn (2007)

A second qualitative coder was approached to verify the accuracy of the IPA process and to check for consistency. The second coder provided a detailed report of his review, which included recommendations regarding the structure, defining the codes, themes, categories, conceptualisation and groundedness of the analysis. Areas of ambiguity and discrepancy were discussed in order to reach agreement (Lê & Jarzabkowski, 2015). However, consensus was reached with no resulting conflicts. The second coder also noted that the contextual theory, paradigmatic perspective, environmental concerns and context were considered in the structure of the analysis.

5.10.Limitations and strengths of research design

This section addresses the limitations and strengths of the research study.

5.10.1.Limitations

Qualitative inductive data gathering and analysis of case study research may be labour- and time-intensive (Mouton, 2015). Data gathering via face-to-face semi-structured interviews is demanding and the transcribing, analysis and interpretation phases can be time-intensive due to the volumes of data and the gradual emergence of patterns and themes. This may pose a risk for the research study as with induction the researcher is never guaranteed that useful patterns and theory will emerge (Saunders et al., 2009). The detailed IPA process of individual transcripts is extremely time-consuming and due to the usual small participant pool – as is the situation in case research – general claims cannot be made (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Bonoma (1985) highlights the trade-offs between data integrity and high currency (generalisability) that needs to be taken into account when doing research. He is of the opinion that precision in measurement frequently comes at the expense of contextual richness. He is a promoter for case research and the inductive, theory-building methodology despite its limitations of a small sample size (Bonoma, 1985).

Accordingly, no generalisations were made during the current study due to the small sample size as well as it being an exploratory single-case research study. The “applicability of the results to other organizational or strategic contexts” is limited (Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014: 511). However, the intent of the case study was twofold: to build theory (Mouton, 2015), and to identify themes and patterns in the areas of interest in order to provide insights, learnings and further debate as opposed to generalising the findings (Cassell, Bishop, Symon, Johnson & Buehring, 2009).

A further limitation of the study lay in its exploratory, inductive and subjective nature, as it was “possible that the biases of both subjects and researchers have influenced the data gathering and analysis” (Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014: 511).

5.10.2. Strengths

Exploring the real lived experiences and events in a natural setting offers rich, in-depth descriptive data allowing for a deep understanding of the phenomena under study. Such studies aim for practical wisdom and the development of theory that is high in accuracy (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008). Despite the small sample size, a distinguishing feature of “IPA is its commitment to a detailed interpretative account of the cases included and many researchers are recognizing that this can only realistically be done on a very small sample” (Smith & Osborn, 2007: 56), such as in the case of a single-case study. This allows for in-depth engagement with each participant in order to produce an appropriately penetrating analysis. Similarly, Mouton (2015) highlights that one of the strengths of case research is the ability to establish a rapport with the participants and gather deep insights. This results in high construct validity (Mouton, 2015).

Advantages of semi-structured interviews include the flexibility to probe interesting aspects in order to produce rich data, and the ability to build rapport and empathy through open dialogue (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

A SAP approach may “be influential in enabling practitioners to better understand their own action, to reflect on its strategic implications, and to potentially

reconstruct activity in light of these reflections” (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008: 283).

A prevalent practice is for qualitative researchers “to provide corroborating evidence collected through multiple methods, such as observations, interviews, and documents to locate major and minor themes” (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 125). The account is deemed valid as researchers who go through this practice then rely on numerous forms of evidence as opposed to just a single account. The current research adhered to the concept of crystallisation through the data gathering and analysis of multiple data types and sources, at various points in time thereby increasing credibility and creating a more complex multifaceted picture of the context (Tracy, 2013). Credibility will be discussed in more detail in the next section, which addresses the assessment of the research process.

5.11. Assessing research quality and rigour

A qualitative research quality model proposed by Tracy (2010), was used as a guideline in this study as it is distinctively extensive, yet adaptable. By identifying “universal end goals from a complex mix of mean practices, qualitative researchers can speak, if desired, with a unified voice while simultaneously celebrating the complex differences within” the community (Tracy, 2010: 838). Tracy (2010) used interpretive research coupled with inductive analysis to determine the emergent conceptualisations. Methodologically, the current research study followed a similar interpretive, inductive approach.

Qualitative methodological research of high quality is therefore identified by “eight key markers” or universal end goals, namely “(a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence” (Tracy, 2010: 837). These markers were addressed in the study to ensure adherence to qualitative best practices. Each marker was explored in relation to the research study, as reflected in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Eight key markers for qualitative research of high quality in relation to the study

Quality end goal	Means, practices and methods	Relevance to study
Worthy topic	<p>Topic was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •relevant •timely •significant •interesting 	<p>The middle managers' involvement within the OSS initiative was deemed to provide for an opportunistic study with larger significance within the university context. The study explored the taken-for-granted roles and behaviours of middle managers while strategising to effect change during a strategic change initiative. The study coincided with a timely societal event in the HE national landscape (i.e. the violent and unabated national protests) adding further complexity, intricacy and thought-provoking aspects to the study.</p>
Rich rigour	<p>Study used abundant, appropriate and rich complexity relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •theoretical constructs •data and time in field •samples •context • data collection (gathering) and analysis processes 	<p>Thick, in-depth and rich descriptions, quotes and explanations were provided during the study. The documentation, secondary data, field notes, reflexivity journal, face-to-face semi-structured interviews and participant self-reflection assessments provided an abundance of rich complexity. Field notes were taken over a period of six months aligned with the last six months of the maintenance phase of the OSS initiative. The sample was appropriate as relevant middle managers were interviewed until data saturation had been reached. The interviews lasted on average one hour ensuring all semi-structured questions were attended to. An external transcriber was used to transcribe the interviews. Documentation provided rich, detailed context and data on the role of the external consultants as well as the objectives of the strategic change initiative. The outcomes of the OSS initiative were then aligned with the documentation, secondary data, reports and interview transcripts. Extreme care was taken with the data during the data gathering and analysis phases, and I followed rigorous transparent procedures as can be seen in the analysis and findings chapters. The complete process was clearly documented and is transparent. The coding process is described and explained (see</p>

		Table 5.4.), and proof of the process included the use of the ATLAS.ti™ coding scheme and list of documents analysed (Annexure E).
Sincerity	<p>Study was characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-reflexivity about values, biases and inclinations • transparency about methods and challenges 	<p>A reflexivity journal entry was created and recorded after each interview ensuring that my biases, prejudices, self-reflection, values, goals and relevant thoughts were made explicit to ensure transparency, genuineness and authenticity. The strengths and shortcomings of the interview process were addressed in the journal. In addition, the field notes were reflective and honest thereby ensuring further authenticity of the research process. A clear audit trail of the research process is provided to adhere to the principles of honesty and transparency. Challenges are disclosed openly.</p>
Credibility	<p>Research was marked by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (non-textual) knowledge and showing rather than telling • triangulation or crystallisation • multivocality • member reflections 	<p>The trustworthiness and plausibility of the research findings were demonstrated throughout the research process. Thick, rich, in-depth descriptions were provided backed by relevant quotes, field notes and documents. I attempted to show rather than to telling the audiences what to think. The field notes and reflexivity journal provided detailed accounts of tacit knowledge by attempting to understand what lies beneath the surface. Making use of multiple data sources allowed for valuable complex, in-depth and rich (partial) understanding and for the participants' full stories to unfold. Multivocality was achieved through collaboration with participants to ensure that the participants' voices were heard. This included participant self-reflection assessments whereby participants had the opportunity to reflect on the thick descriptions as identified by myself after the face-to-face interviews to provide further feedback thereby contributing significantly to the credibility of the findings. The participants provided a photograph or image as part of the self-reflection assessments of their personal journey, which further contributed to the credibility of the process.</p>
Resonance	Research was expected to influence,	It was my aim to involve the audience through aesthetic and

	<p>affect or move particular readers or a variety of audiences through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •aesthetic, evocative representation •naturalistic generalisations •transferable findings 	<p>evocative writing. I wanted the audience to be fully empathetic with the participants' journey and emotional experiences. Qualitative narratives were provided that attempted to evoke emotions in the audience. The notion to attempt to ensure the findings of this study had the potential to resonate across a variety of situations was also an objective. In other words, the audience identifies with the stories and can align the research findings with their own situation in a different context (vicarious experience). By using the participants' actual quotes and my own field notes, I attempted to create a truly authentic representation of the middle managers' experiences and perceptions.</p>
Significant contribution	<p>Research provides a significant contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •conceptually/theoretically •practically •morally •methodologically •heuristically 	<p>This study sought to expand on the SAP body of knowledge in terms of strategising, focusing on the nexus between the practitioner and their practices. The study should also contribute to both organisational and practice theory with a focus on middle managers doing their daily strategy work. The findings provided practical significant information for management as well as practical wisdom (phronetic research [see Tracy, 2013] by shedding light on the contemporary issues facing middle managers within a university context during a challenging and turbulent external environment event (i.e. the student protests) as well as during a strategic change initiative. The study explored how practitioners deal with and cope with their situated problems and provides potential implications that may assist others in dealing with similar issues. In addition, the study contributes towards a unique data gathering method, which involved participants taking photographs or selecting images symbolising their journey (participant self-reflection assessments). Refer to section 5.8.2. for further detail.</p>
Ethical	<p>Research considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • procedural ethics (human subjects) • situational and culturally specific ethics 	<p>Ethical considerations were tightly intertwined throughout the current research study. Section 5.12 discusses the procedural and relational ethical issues in detail. I was the human instrument, and respect for the participants and the research process was therefore a key objective. Research results were discussed with the</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •relational ethics • existing ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research) 	<p>participants to ensure the 'truth' and 'accuracy' of each participant's story was shared. I also shared my experiences and the influence I may have had on the research findings. Ethical clearance was obtained from both the University of South Africa (Unisa) and the study university.</p>
Meaningful coherence	<p>The study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achieved what it purported to be about • used methods and procedures that fitted its stated goals • meaningfully interconnected literature, research questions, findings, and interpretations with each other 	<p>The research design components, data gathering and data analysis phases were interconnected throughout the study and aligned with the theoretical perspectives to achieve the purpose of the study and research themes. A constructivist-interpretivist approach was used (specifically interpretative phenomenology) and participants collaborated through their self-reflection assessments after the interviews to add to or amend by way of clarification. The style of the data representation matches the qualitative research methodology that was followed. The literature review informed the research themes, which in turn aligned with the findings, implications and conclusions.</p>

Source: Adapted and updated from Tracy (2010: 840)

A few data quality issues may arise when making use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews, namely reliability, bias and validity (Saunders et al., 2009). However it is acknowledged that the application of traditional criteria, such as reliability, objectivity and generalisability to qualitative research is not deemed legitimate (Tracy, 2010). In the current study, credibility in the research process and in presenting findings was critical to ensure the data was accurately seen for what it is and that it was not clouded by hunches and assumptions. As a result, this section deals with the application of the traditional criteria within the context of the current study.

'Reliability' refers to whether another researcher would have discovered similar information or made similar findings as well as the absence of random error with a focus on transparency and replication (Gibbert, Ruigrok & Wicki, 2008). This study was not intended to be repeatable but rather to explore complex and dynamic phenomena, and it was acknowledged that replication is not feasible or realistic (Saunders et al., 2009). Transparency however can be achieved through careful and meticulous documentation and clarification of the entire process. Rigour should be maintained during the whole research design process, carefully detailing the process, and the reasoning for selected research decisions should be made clear up front (Gibbert et al., 2008). This research study therefore followed a rigorous and transparent process by clearly documenting the research process as well as maintaining detailed field notes, and keeping a reflexivity journal after each interview. The coding and theme identification process was made explicit through the use of ATLAS.ti™ and the generation of files for each code, category or theme and associated quotes. The use of a second qualitative coder to verify and check my work also contributed to the credibility of the research.

'Validity' "refers to the extent to which the researcher gains access to their participants' knowledge and experience, and is able to infer a meaning that the participant intended from the language that was used by this person" (Saunders et al. 2009: 327). In addition, Saunders (2009: 327) states, "the high level of validity that is possible in relation to non-standardised (qualitative) interviews that

are conducted carefully is due to the questions being able to be clarified, meanings of responses probed and topics discussed from a variety of angles”.

Qualitative validity is a process of checking for accuracy of the results and is deemed one of the strengths of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). According to Creswell, there are several validity strategies available to researchers to ensure the findings are accurate, namely triangulation, participant checking of findings (collaboration), “use of rich, thick descriptions to convey” findings, explain the researcher’s bias up front, include contradictory findings to ensure authenticity, and making use of an “external auditor” to review the whole project (Creswell 2009: 191–192). An additional procedure that can be used to ensure validity is the researcher’s journal as previously discussed (see 5.8.3.4.). In this research study, crystallisation, participant self-reflection assessments to enhance collaboration, and the use of a second coder were used as highlighted in Table 5.5.

The use of non-standardised interviews should not lead to a lack of rigour in relation to the research process – if anything, greater rigour is required to overcome the views of those who may be wedded to the value of quantitative research to the exclusion of any other approach (Saunders et al., 2009).

As mentioned the aim of the study was not to generalise the findings (see 5.10.); however, the outcomes of a qualitative case study may be transferable. ‘Transferability’ refers to theory development that can be extended to other cases. Firestone (1993) proposes, “analytic generalization can be very helpful for qualitative researchers but [...] sample-to-population extrapolation is not likely to be” (Firestone, 1993:16).

5.12. Research ethical considerations

Research needs to take place according to certain principles and professional practices. According to Zikmund (2003), participants are entitled to certain rights, namely the right to informed consent, to be fully informed, privacy, confidentiality and voluntary participation. In addition, participants are required to meet certain obligations, namely to be truthful and honest. Following on from this, researchers

are obliged to be ethical, objective, protective of subjects' data and not to misrepresent the research findings nor to shade research conclusions (Zikmund, 2003).

Researchers "need to be rigorously ethical" (Saldaña, 2009: 29). In other words, it was essential for me to be extremely honest with the participants, and to be ethical with the data and with the analysis of the data by ensuring academic integrity. All sources used in the research study have been fully referenced and credit has been given to the appropriate sources as required. A declaration in this regard was signed. A deontological perspective was used in this study whereby "the ends served by the research can never justify the use of research which is unethical" and therefore no deception or harmful behaviour took place (Saunders et al., 2009: 182). Based on the above, the research conducted in this study was treated with extreme care and confidentiality. The participants' data was kept private and anonymous thereby ensuring integrity and trust.

Participation in this study was completely voluntary and no incentives were offered to participate. The principle of informed consent also prevailed. An information sheet and consent form were given to each participant before the face-to-face semi-structured interviews commenced and they had the option to retract from the study at any time (Annexure A). During the interviews, participants had the liberty to respond freely and they were not misled or deceived. Participants were not pressed for answers and were given the option to speak in either English or Afrikaans. The participants had the right not to answer any question. Written approval to conduct the research study at the selected university was obtained from management. Ethical clearance was approved by the university's Ethics Committee. Before the research commenced, the research proposal was presented to my supervisor and the Unisa School of Business Leadership Ethics Committee for approval. Approval was duly given before the data gathering process commenced.

Full disclosure of the digital recording of conversations was made up front. Transcribed data was kept digitally and access was password-protected. All back-ups were kept securely under lock and key.

The introduction of data protection legislation has led to this aspect of research assuming a greater importance and to a need for researchers to comply carefully with a set of legal requirements to protect the privacy and interests of their data subjects (Saunders et al., 2009: 202).

The transcriber and second qualitative coder who were involved in the research study each signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure the rights of the participants were adhered to in terms of security and confidentiality. The data gathered during the study will be destroyed according to research ethic practices. No ethical issues were encountered during the research study. Confidentiality was ensured and participants had been kept anonymous throughout the entire research process including the findings chapter.

5.13. Conclusion

This chapter described the research design components and research process that was followed during the study, and presented the detailed methodology that was followed in order to answer the research question and themes.

The purpose of the study, theoretical perspectives, research approach, research methodology, research strategy, data gathering method, and data analysis method were described in detail. The participant sheet, consent forms and interview guide were introduced and are available at the end of the document as annexures. The interview guide questions were linked to the research gaps identified and aligned to the literature review. This chapter also addressed the limitations and strengths of the research design as well as the assessment of quality and rigour. In closing, the ethical considerations taken into account during the study were also discussed.

Chapter 6 will detail the research context. The first section will be a discussion of the documentation findings regarding the OSS strategic change initiative; secondly, the secondary data analysis and results of the staff opinion survey will

be presented; and lastly, a summary of the interview settings and observations originating from the reflexivity journal will be provided.

6. Research milieu

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to verify that the change initiative complied with the requirements set for strategic change. In addition to Chapter 2, this chapter provides further insight into the complexities of the change event as found in the secondary data obtained in selected documents. Available documentation grounded the research study by providing background information as documented during the entire OSS process. The secondary data in the form of the staff opinion survey was analysed, and the results of this quantitative study are presented. Key insights from the staff opinion survey results are discussed. The last section of the chapter comprises a summary of the interview process, the setting and observations as extracted from the reflexivity journal.

Figure 6.1 depicts the chapter outline.

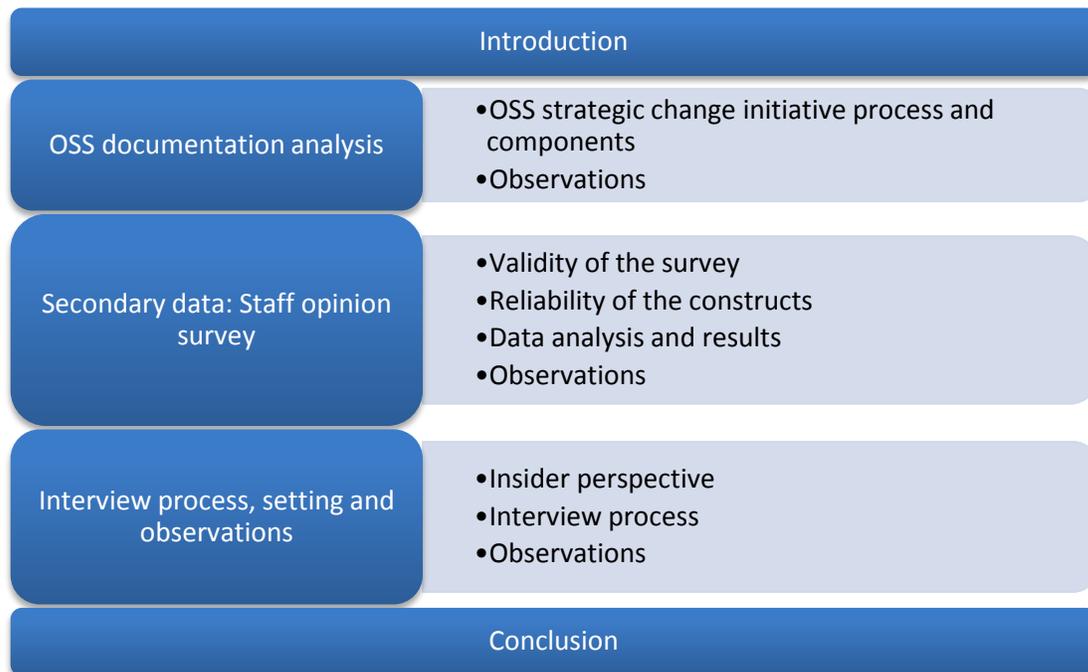


Figure 6.1 Chapter 6 outline

6.2.OSS Documentation analysis

The documentation of the research study provided a detailed account of the OSS strategic initiative in terms of the official strategy, scope, purpose and objectives, phases, participation, structural changes, HR aspects, risks, issues and challenges.

The list of documents collected for this research study can be found in Annexure E. Chapter 5 section 5.8.3.1 elaborates on the document types, descriptions and relevance. Pertinent to this section, the following documents were analysed, namely minutes, presentations, communications to staff in the form of newsletters, organograms, proposals and reports.

It was noted in Chapter 5 that all documentation was prepared and loaded into ATLAS.ti™ in order for the analysis to be conducted. ATLAS.ti™ (version 7) makes use of a specific referencing system, and two examples of this are provided in Table 6.1. Each file loaded was allocated a system-generated reference number and each quote was allocated a quotation reference number together with a beginning line and ending line. This referencing system was used throughout the analysis phase.

Table 6.1 ATLAS.ti™ referencing system

Example: P38:40 (67:67)
38 represents the reference number of the primary document
40 represents the quotation reference number
67 represents the beginning line
67 represents the ending line
Example: P43:33(103:111)
43 represents the reference number of the primary document
33 represents the quotation reference number
103 represents the beginning line
111 represents the ending line

6.2.1.OSS strategic change initiative process and components

The strategic imperative of the OSS initiative is for the study university to maintain a competitive position within the HE sector, to contribute to achieving the strategic goals of strengthening the international profile and visibility of the university, and to contribute to increasing access, throughput and diversity.

The main scope of the OSS initiative was focused on all student service-related functions, such as the organisation of those functions, revision of the processes and technology. The scope of the student life cycle under revision included those functions related to recruitment, application, admission, residence placement, study finance and registration. At the time of this research, these functions and processes were managed by the professional middle managers in the non-academic environment. The overall purpose, aligned with the strategy was therefore to improve the student experience and the competitive position of UP.

Two main objectives of the OSS strategic change initiative can be found in the documentation text:

P5:1 (7:9); P7:1 (1:408–1:904)

OSS [initiative] was mandated with two main objectives, namely:

- To develop and present the necessary operating model requirements needed to execute and support the UP 2025 Strategy, especially with regard to Student Services.
- To investigate and present opportunities to optimise processes and services related to recruitment, applications, admissions, residence placement, as well as study finance, for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The OSS initiative took place in three distinct phases over a period of approximately three years ending in February 2017. The investigation phase (2014) was carried out by external consultants and consisted of an overview of the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the presentation of recommendations for the revision of organisational structures, processes, KPIs, and communication channels pertaining to the students' experiences. The implementation phase (May 2015–February 2016) was facilitated in-house by the Strategy Execution Office, and this phase focused on the establishment of new structures to support

the approved recommendations through a detailed project roll-out plan. The final maintenance phase (March 2016–February 2017), again facilitated by the Strategy Execution Office, focused on coordinating and monitoring the deliverables of the initiative over a one-year period to ensure that the new integrated service delivery model was fully operational.

It is important to note that the OSS strategic initiative, particularly the implementation phase, encouraged participation and collaboration from all team members, i.e. the professional middle manager group. Other participants included in the process were the external consultants, unions, senior management and other key stakeholders. Three working groups were established during the implementation phase to facilitate participation, and the middle managers were expected to provide input, discuss meeting outcomes with their staff and provide feedback at the following session. The unions formed part of the engagement process and were kept updated throughout the various phases. The final recommendations made by the working group team members were submitted to senior management for approval.

The excerpts below from the documentation provide a glimpse into the level of participation. All quotations are reproduced verbatim and unedited.

P28:2 (8:8)

It was requested that all team members please review the minutes of all three working group sessions to ensure they are satisfied with the proposals and decisions made in the other sessions and if not to raise these concerns.

P35:2 (3:46-3:189)

Following the engagements with unions and key stakeholders a comprehensive submission was prepared and submitted to the executive for approval.

Structural changes were identified as a dominant topic in the analysed documents and was referred to frequently as the examples below highlight. The following display a significant commitment to the OSS strategic initiative and the UP 2025 Strategic Plan:

- merging and restructuring of departments;
- dissolution of old entities;

- revision, integration and refocusing of functions and processes;
- physical office relocation and identification of office space;
- post and post level changes and job evaluations; and
- the designing of a new operating model.

Example texts substantiating the structural changes are presented below:

P3:11 (14:14)

The dissolution of the Department of Academic Administration and the Client Service Centre.

P4:4 (1:763–1:916)

The process of regrouping and refocusing of functions and processes is currently in progress and a detailed departmental structure is being developed.

P5:29 (57:57) and P8:7 (2:1595–2:1677)

Physical office relocation will take effect once the new leadership team has agreed on the space requirements.

P7:12 (2:1064–2:1217)

The successful implementation of the project requires a fundamental revision and integration of the student services operating model.

Another prevalent topic was all key aspects related to human resources, namely:

- the establishment of new roles;
- retraining;
- job evaluations;
- new appointments;
- redeployments;
- mentoring;
- shadowing; and
- the freezing of posts during the maintenance phase.

The OSS strategic change initiative had substantial HR implications as demonstrated by the following extracts:

P6:2 and 6:4 (6:6)

[S]ince the project will have significant human resource implications.

Impact of the project on staff which may include the need to take on new roles, retraining, job evaluations which may take place and structural changes to their present position. It was also made clear that no staff members will lose their jobs.

P5:20 (37:37)

The new leadership team [middle managers] has been appointed.

P5:23 (46:46)

Staff redeployment at the lower levels will commence and this will entail a 'person–job fit' matching process resulting in an effective and efficient allocation or distribution of resources institutionally.

P4:13 (1:3270–1:3433)

Training, mentoring and shadowing will take place as far as possible to ensure that staff transitioning into a new role in 2016 are adequately equipped to do so.

P7:16 (2:2286–2:2436)

The need to take on new roles, retraining, job evaluations which may take place and structural changes affecting their present position.

P20:23 (248:248)

The freezing of posts and the delay in the conversion of contractors to permanent positions remains serious issues.

The OSS strategic change initiative was not without its challenges and risks, specifically those relating to –

- systems and information technology (IT);
- processes;
- behavioural and emotional factors;
- HR issues;
- timelines;
- funding; and
- the external climate.

Due to the magnitude of the initiative, the budget allocation came under strain. There was an added HR constraint, particularly within the IT and system functions. Furthermore, the system implications of the new operating model should not be understated. The success of the OSS strategic change initiative is

heavily reliant on the IT systems to support the new processes and ways of working.

The human factor, such as perceptions, morale and emotions, also played a substantial role during the restructuring due to the uncertainty that often comes with change. Of particular importance was the effect that the external climate had during the initiative resulting in increased constraints and uncertainty. Quotes below highlight these facets:

P20:9 (93:93)

Most of the above mentioned projects were not 'planned' for and arose due to crisis management situations thereby delaying the work on planned strategies such as the OSS IT projects.

P18:40 and 42 (84:84) and P34:48 (20:277–20:403)

It is no small task to merge the two very important support services into one cohesive department taking the huge system and human impact in such a limited time.

Difficult human perceptions and emotions during the transitional period.

Staff morale and productivity is currently being negatively impacted due to the uncertainties associated with restructuring.

P22:4 (11:11)

[D]ue to the current sensitive nature of campus stability.

6.2.2. Observations

Of importance here is that the OSS strategic change initiative necessitated significant structural and HR changes, affecting business practices and protocol, as well as fundamentally revising the regrouping and refocusing of functions. The main outcome of the initiative was to –

- maintain a competitive position in the HE sector;
- enhance the profile and visibility of the selected university; and
- render effective and efficient services to the clients (i.e. the students).

It is clear from the documentation and extracts provided that the OSS initiative was on a strategic level and hence complied with the theoretical requirements of

a strategic change initiative. The research context of the OSS strategic change initiative thus supports the purpose of this study as outlined in Chapter 1.

The next section discusses the analysis and results of the secondary data staff opinion survey.

6.3.Secondary data: Staff opinion survey

As part of the OSS maintenance phase, an online perceptual climate audit was conducted in the form of a four-point Likert-type survey. The purpose of the online quantitative survey was to understand the opinions, perceptions and experiences of staff on all job levels during the OSS initiative better. Although the survey did not fall within the qualitative approach of the research study, the findings of the survey were deemed relevant to the study and were used in a secondary capacity as part of the crystallisation process (Tracy, 2010).

The raw secondary data of the internal staff opinion survey was obtained and analysed specifically for the purpose of this study. The survey was anonymous but respondents were asked to indicate their post levels. (Refer to section 5.8.3.2 as well as Annexure F for the detailed statistical analysis tables and figures).

The online survey link was sent directly to the entire population, i.e. all staff directly and indirectly affected by the OSS initiative. This comprised middle managers on post levels 3–6 as well as staff on post levels 7–14. A total of 185 staff members were targeted and 98 responded, resulting in a 52.9% response rate.

The initial dimensions under scrutiny during the initial study were the perceptions and opinions of:

- the achievement of the OSS objectives;
- the successful outcome of the OSS initiative;
- the emotional state of self and others during the OSS initiative;
- involvement in the process;
- team and manager support during the OSS initiative;
- productivity and motivational levels during the OSS initiative;

- change resistance;
- conflict handling;
- communication; and
- future outlook

6.3.1. Validity of the survey

As the survey was initially used for an alternative purpose, the construct validity was determined based on the raw secondary data. To test the validity of the survey dimensions an exploratory factor analysis was performed to determine whether the individual items loaded on the factors as intended. Exploratory factor analysis was performed to the responses of the 25-item survey (Annexure D). The principal axis extraction method with oblique rotation was used to extract the factors. This method allows for correlation between the rotated dimensions.

Considering the scree plot, eigenvalues and cumulative variance explained by the factors, four factors with eigenvalues greater than one explaining 67.76% of the cumulative variance, were extracted (see the scree plot in Annexure F). In interpreting the rotated factor pattern, an item was said to load on a given factor if the factor loading was 0.40 or greater for that factor and less than 0.40 for the other.

Using the above criteria, 12 items (therefore Q2_9 is out) were found to load on the first factor, subsequently labelled “Strategic outcome and outlook”. Five items loaded on the second factor, labelled “Support and personal experience”; two items loaded on the third factor, labelled “Productivity and motivation”; and three items loaded on the fourth factor, labelled “Positivity”. A limitation was noted in respect to the third factor as three items are needed to form a construct. In this case, only two items displayed a load on this factor and one of the two items also had a cross-loading (Q2_19).

Cross-loading occurred on only one item (Statement 19) and the decision was made to assign this item to factor 3 as it made the most logical sense in terms of best fit. Items 6, 9 and 14 were removed, as the factor loadings were less than 0.4.

6.3.2. Reliability of the constructs

The internal consistency as measured by the Cronbach's alpha ranged between 0.70 and 0.95. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated acceptable or good reliability with no unreliable items or statements. Refer to Annexure F.

6.3.3. Data analysis and results

Factor (construct) scores were calculated by using the average of the reliable items that loaded onto that factor for each participant. These scores were then used in further analysis. The assumptions of normality and homogeneous variances were satisfied for all four constructs. Table 6.2 displays the targeted population for each group as well as the realisation rate for each group. More middle managers than staff responded to the survey when compared to the population targeted.

Table 6.2 Targeted survey population and realisation rate per post level group

Description	Category	Population	Percentage	Realisation	Percentage
	Staff groupings	Number of respondents		Number of respondents	
Middle managers	PI 3, 4, 5 and 6	*70	38	45	46
Staff	PI 7–14	115	62	53	54
Total		185	100	98	100

Note: *It is important to note at this point that the middle managers who responded to the staff opinion survey included those who were directly and indirectly affected by the OSS initiative as opposed to the middle manager population identified in the research study (section 5.6, Table 5.1) who were only directly involved and affected. This accounts for the differences in population size.

Each of the four factors were compared between the mean construct scores of the two post level groups using an independent T-test. It was established that no significant differences were found between the two post level groups for the four factors.

A Pearson chi-square test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant association between the post level (PL) groups (PL 3–6 and PL 7–14) and the perceptions of the various variables. The results revealed that there were no significant association between the PL groups and the various variables

except for variables 6, “The OSS project was a challenging experience for me”; 9, “I was involved in the OSS project and provided input”; and 21, “I did not experience resistance to change” (refer to contingency tables in Annexure F).

The results revealed that there was a significant association between the PL group (PL 3–6 and PL 7–14):

- The perception on “The OSS project was a challenging experience for me” (chi-square value = 5.766, df = 1, p = 0.0163). A significantly higher proportion of middle managers (90.48%) compared to staff (63.01%) agreed with the statement. In other words, proportionally more middle managers felt challenged than staff.
- The perception on “I was involved in the OSS project and provided input” (chi-square value = 9.227, df = 1, p = 0.0024). A significantly higher proportion of middle managers (70%) compared to staff (32.43%) agreed with the statement. In other words, proportionally, middle managers were more involved in the OSS initiative than staff.
- The perception on “I did not experience resistance to change” (chi-square value = 9.723, df = 1, p = 0.0018). A significantly higher proportion of middle managers (75%) compared to staff (35.71%) disagreed with the statement. In other words, proportionally, middle managers experienced more resistance to change than their staff.

It can therefore be concluded that the middle managers –

- found the OSS initiative more challenging than their staff experienced or perceived it;
- were more involved and provided more input than their staff; and
- experienced more resistance to change than their staff.

A chi-squared automatic interaction detection (CHAID) was also conducted. The decision tree (see SAS Institute Inc., 2017) was fitted (refer to Annexure F). The independent or target variable was post level (PL 3–6, PL 7–14). The proportion of middle managers (PL 3–6) were 21.43%. The R^2 was 0.3016, meaning that

30.16% of variation in post level was declared for by the tree model. This indicates a fair fit. In human sciences, R^2 values are also generally lower than other fields of study, because of the complexity of human nature as well as all the factors influencing human nature. The misclassification rate was 16.33%, which was fair. The confusion matrix (see SAS Institute Inc., 2017) (Annexure F) showed the correctly classified proportions. (Independent variables used in the model: Questions 2_1 to Question 2_25). The following profiles were found:

- Profiles of middle managers (PL 3–6): A respondent who disagreed with Q2_21 (I did not experience resistance to change) and agreed with Q2_9 (I was involved in the OSS project and provided input).

The proportion of middle managers for this profile was 64.71% (compared to the overall proportion of 21.43%). In other words, middle managers who were involved in the OSS project and provided input, experienced more resistance to change than staff.

- Profiles of staff (PL 7–14): A respondent who agreed with Q2_21 (I did not experience resistance to change) and disagreed with Q2_6 (The OSS project was a challenging experience for me).

The proportion of staff for this profile was 100% (compared to the overall proportion of 78.57%). In other words, staff did not perceive the OSS project as challenging and did not experience resistance to change.

The above can be interpreted as middle managers were more involved in the OSS project and consequently felt more resistance to change than their staff. Staff did not experience resistance to change, as they did not find the OSS challenging, possibly due to less involvement or disengagement.

6.3.4.Observations

Based on the above quantitative analysis, it could therefore be concluded that the middle managers found the OSS strategic change initiative more challenging, they provided more input and they participated more than their staff. This led to the middle managers experiencing more resistance to the change when

compared with their staff. It can therefore be said that middle managers did indeed perceive these three factors significantly differently to their staff.

The middle managers' involvement in the OSS was also demonstrated in the documentation in section 6.2.1. It would appear that the greater the involvement in the OSS strategic change initiative, the more difficult the process was as the middle managers may have been confronted by more of the decision-making activities and uncertainty than their staff who were less informed and uninvolved. The middle managers may have acted as a buffer for their staff during this emotional period thereby shielding staff from some of the uncertainty. This aspect ties in with the middle managers' role of emotional balancing, which is discussed in Chapter 8.

6.4. Interview process, setting and observations

This section describes the reflexivity journal entries recorded after each interview, which provided a detailed interpretation of the context of each interview. The first entry in the reflexivity journal was created soon after the first interview, and this iterative process was repeated for all 11 interviews. The reflexivity journal entries detail the setting of each interview, describe the atmosphere, mood and behaviour of the participants during the interviews, as well as pertinent information relating to my relationship with each participant. Furthermore, each journal entry highlights my interpretation of the process and general descriptions of the participants' responses. Important observations per interview were captured with the aim to improve the credibility of the process and enrich future interviews. I also incorporated my own reflective and reflexive thoughts, perceptions, observations and experiences. I endeavoured to disclose my feelings, thoughts and any biases I might have had as truthfully and authentically as possible. Other general information that I deemed relevant was included, culminating in a rich, comprehensive account of each interview. Refer to Annexure G for the complete reflexivity journal entries per participant.

For ease of use, Table 6.3 identifies the associated ATLAS.ti™ primary document reference number per participant reference number. The primary document is the transcript of the interview.

Table 6.3 Participant and document reference number

Participant reference number	Primary document reference number
1	38
2	40
3	41
4	42
5	50
6	43
7	44
8	34
9	51
10	39
11	54

6.4.1. Insider perspective

As indicated in Chapter 5, an insider perspective was followed as I am employed within the university at the time of this research and I work closely with the middle managers on a regular basis within the research context described in Chapter 2. This perspective allowed me direct access to the middle managers and they willingly availed themselves for participation in the interviews. The middle managers were transparent and honest. They shared intimate experiences of their journey, and it was easy for me to relate to it due to my involvement in the process. I was therefore able to access information and documentation that may not have been shared with an outside researcher. I am aware that my own opinions, experiences and perceptions may have influenced the study and therefore I kept field notes and a reflexivity journal to be as transparent as possible.

6.4.2. Interview process

The interview process was enriched and adjusted after each interview to improve the dialogue flow and understanding of the questions. This was particularly the case for the first four interviews, until I found my rhythm and the conversations began to flow smoothly. As I became more comfortable, I moved away from using the guideline questions as a 'script' and used it rather as a 'prompt', allowing for free-flowing dialogue to take place. However, each interview had its unique circumstances and I endeavoured to adapt as required. Improvements and personal criticism were included in my observations. The refining of the interview process included:

- rephrasing and/or simplification of questions;
- changing the sequence of questions to improve flow;
- adapting my interview style to speak less and to make use of non-verbal cues to encourage dialogue;
- allowing some time to pass before asking a follow-up question as the silence seemed to encourage further contributions;
- not asking questions if already answered in another instance; and
- providing reassurance when required.

It was also noted in my reflexivity journal that the few interruptions that took place during the interviews did cause slight distractions but I was able to re-focus the interviews quickly.

6.4.3. Observations

The reflexivity journal entries culminated in the overall observation that 10 of the 11 interviews went well in my opinion with positive exchanges and meaningful quotations from the middle managers. In the majority of cases, the middle managers were open and authentic and they revealed experiences I had not expected. My healthy working relationships with the majority of the participants may have had a positive effect in this regard. Participant 5 was hesitant to express herself at first but relaxed later and provided comprehensive meaningful narrative. Although I was under time constraints during the interview with

participant 11, after listening to the recording I realised this perception was mostly in my own thoughts, and the interview actually resulted in rich interpretations and examples. The only interview that I felt was limiting and fragmented was with participant 10. However, I did not discard the interview and was able to make use of various excerpts of the interview as will be shown in future chapters.

It is also important to note that data saturation was reached with interview 8, yet I decided to complete the remaining interviews as they had already been scheduled.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis of the documentation of the OSS strategic change initiative. The chapter highlighted the background information and context of the initiative as documented during the three phases of the OSS initiative. Relevant example texts were exhibited in an attempt to demonstrate that the OSS change initiative was indeed classified as a strategic change initiative and a relevant context for the research study.

Following on from the documentation analysis section, a section was devoted to the analysis and results of the secondary data, i.e. the staff opinion survey. It was concluded that the middle managers found the OSS initiative more challenging than their staff experienced or perceived it. The middle managers were more involved and provided more input than their staff and also experienced more resistance to change than their staff. These differences were found to be significantly different. The section ended with key insights.

The chapter additionally addressed my observations as recorded in the reflexivity journal, and the context of the interviews were provided. My reflective and reflexive entries created an authentic interpretation of each interview. This chapter provided the backdrop to and underpinning of the findings and interpretations of the middle managers' THINK, FEEL, and DO chapters.

Chapter 7 presents an analysis of the professional middle managers' accounts of their internal and external environment, which they experienced during the period of the research study. Although Chapter 2 addressed the comprehensive context of the research study in detail, Chapter 7 provides the participants' personal perspectives and stories, in other words, the middle manager lens. The internal context refers to the OSS strategic change initiative at the selected university while the external environment refers to the turbulent climate prevalent in the HE sector during that period. In addition, Chapter 7 will discuss the middle managers' views of the role of the external consultants as well as their thoughts and experiences of their involvement in strategy formulation.

7. Context of strategic change: Middle manager lens

7.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 discussed the research context as found in the OSS documentation and the results of the secondary data, i.e. the staff opinion survey. It was found that the research context was on a strategic level, and it was established that the OSS initiative was indeed a strategic change initiative thereby confirming the research context as a valid setting to investigate as outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 6 ended with a summary of the reflexivity journal entries as recorded after each interview providing the interview settings and key observations.

This chapter is devoted to an understanding of the internal and external environments as constructed by the middle managers and interpreted by myself. The context in which the middle managers carry out their daily work plays a substantial role in how they strategise to effect change. All middle managers had the opportunity to discuss their perceptions, circumstances and experiences of the environment in which they found themselves. My approach here is to demonstrate how the middle managers perceived and experienced the internal and external contexts by making use of the middle managers' verbatim quotes as reflected in the transcriptions. I am allowing the middle managers to tell their own stories as portrayed during the interviews. In essence this chapter is a data presentation and reporting chapter.

The chapter is divided into two main sections, namely the internal context, which specifically deals with the OSS as a strategic change initiative within the institution, and the external context that took place concurrently with the OSS, which details the outcomes of the turbulent external climate within the national HE landscape. The middle managers had to deal with both substantial internal changes due to the restructuring while they had to adjust and adapt to and cope with the demands of the external changes taking place in the national landscape. These confounding events therefore created a situation of immense uncertainty and instability for the middle managers as demonstrated in this chapter. These

findings are also supported by the secondary data, i.e. the staff opinion survey as discussed in section 6.3. Figure 7.1 provides an outline of the chapter.

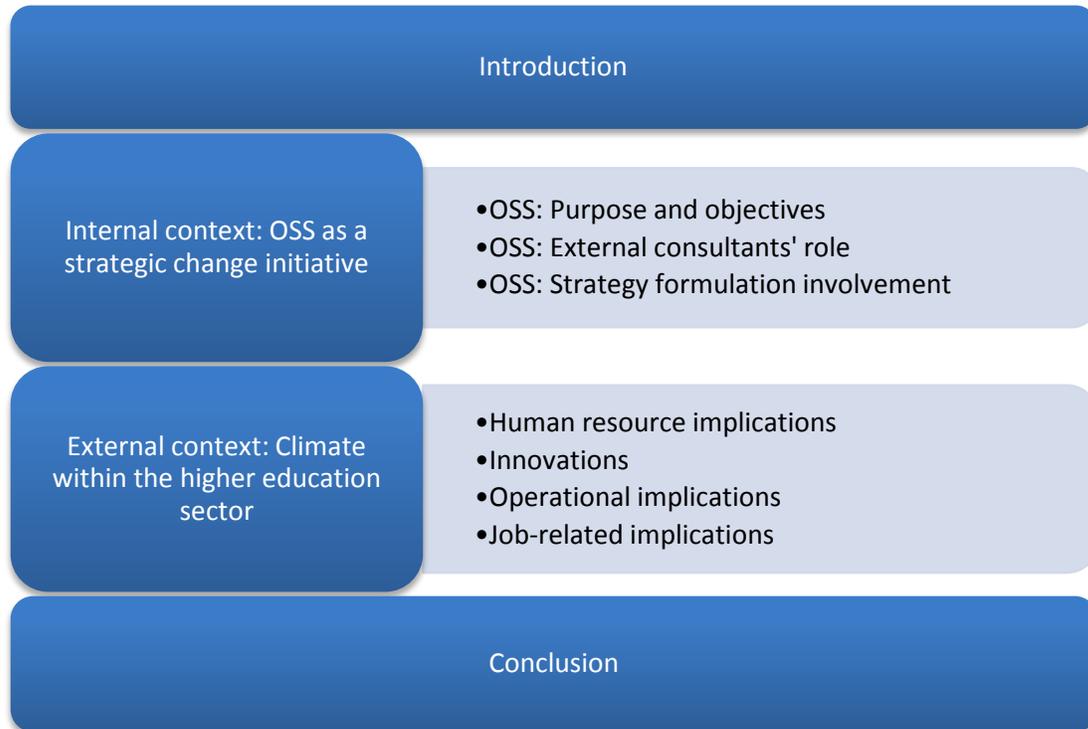


Figure 7.1 Chapter 7 outline

Table 7.1 provides an overview of the main themes per topic that will be discussed in this chapter together with the associated theme descriptions.

Table 7.1 Middle manager lens: Themes relating to the internal and external context

Topic	Theme	Description
Internal context: OSS strategic change initiative	OSS: Purpose and objectives	The theme refers to the middle managers' perceptions and an understanding of the purpose and objectives of the OSS strategic change initiative.
	External consultants' roles (theme emerged outside of the scope of the study)	The theme refers to the role of the external consultants as perceived and understood by the middle managers during the OSS investigation phase as well as their level of participation with the external consultants.
	Strategy formulation involvement	The theme refers to the middle managers' perceptions and observations on whether they were included or excluded in strategy formulation as well as their responses to intended strategy changes and their responses to emergent strategy.
External context: Climate within HE sector	External climate	The theme refers to the effect that the external climate had on the middle managers in their daily work while strategising.

Each of these topics and themes will now be discussed in detail, and selected relevant quotes as found in the transcriptions will be presented. Please note, all direct quotes are reproduced verbatim and unedited.

7.2. Internal context: OSS as a strategic change initiative

The internal context was addressed in Chapter 2. However, this perspective was taken from the middle managers' viewpoint and the way they perceived the internal context of the OSS as a strategic change initiative. Three main themes were identified from the transcripts following an inductive approach, namely –

- the OSS purpose and objectives;
- the role of the external consultants; and
- the middle managers' involvement in strategy formulation.

7.2.1. OSS: Purpose and objectives

A total of 46 codes were generated and 65 quotations were identified during the inductive approach. The theme included aspects pertaining to operational aspects, service delivery and process improvements; structural redesign, and integration.

7.2.1.1. Operational aspects, service delivery and process improvements

Example quotes to support this aspect were:

P40:47 (17:17) and 40:71 (33:33)

So from that perspective, to regroup processes, in one manufacturing line if I can put it that way, and the importance of that is, I think it will have a savings effect on the long term, not immediately visible, but on the longer term. Since processes get integrated, staff will move to accommodate the integrated process and in the long run it will definitely have a positive budgetary impact on the institution. So yes, that [is] more or less, on the one hand it has to do with efficiency and the other hand effectiveness.

I think the OSS principles to align processes, get it in one manufacturing line – again to compare with a factory principle. I think we've achieved that, I think then there's still some loose ends but business will show very quickly where we had to tie that.

P41:1 (17:17)

Well, I would imagine it's to streamline processes and avoid duplication and overlaps to take care of the silo effect and make it into an integrated whole – that's how I understand it.

P42:1 (13:13)

Well [...] the main aim as far as I'm concerned was to, first of all, on a general level, increase the level of service to students as much as possible by aligning certain administrative tasks and to get rid of things like duplication in the various departments.

P50:1 (21:21)

I think the whole thing was about students and to provide a better service to students, an outstanding service, focusing in particular on international students, postgrad students and also enrolment targets. (Translated)

P39:2 (13:13)

All that we were basically told is this is what the process entails, that we're going to look at all the different processes of the university and come with a best practice. I wasn't [aware] at that stage, whether it would be a huge reconstruction – restructuring but it was, there was a lot of movement. I wasn't aware that it was going to be so big from the beginning.

It was interesting to note that one participant used the terminology of a “manufacturing line” and a “factory principle” when discussing the purpose and objectives of the OSS initiative, which is counter-intuitive and contradictory in terms of customer centricity. The primary focus, as perceived by the middle managers, was on the improvement of processes and student service delivery. This focus implies an operational perspective as opposed to strategic insight as demonstrated in the example quotes above. The middle managers' observations concentrated on what should be done operationally in order to achieve processes and service delivery improvements as opposed to ‘what do we as middle managers aspire to achieve on a strategic level in order to realise the UP strategic goals’ and then ‘how do we go about strategising’.

The quotations also demonstrate a lack of in-depth understanding of the OSS purpose and objectives, as the use of the words, “I think”, “ I would imagine”, “as

far as I am concerned” and “we were basically told” implies a disconnection or uncertainty in terms of the whole process.

The OSS documentation clearly states the strategic positioning of the OSS initiative as discussed in Chapter 6.

The OSS documentation however further states that, in order to achieve the strategic purpose, the mandate had to include optimising processes and services to students. It appeared that the middle managers understood the operational aspects related to the OSS initiative.

7.2.1.2. Structural redesign

Example quotes in terms of structural redesign were the following:

P43:1 (13:13)

Now my understanding of the OSS was to breach the divide between front and back office, and also to empower the front office to be able to provide a better service so that the student journey at UP become a very pleasant experience.

P44:4 (25:25)

Why I'm saying it works well is because there's one reporting line now, so in that one reporting line, even though they might have different objectives, different rules and regulations and legislation that govern them, it now can be pulled together, and hopefully we can adapt and adjust and put in new proposals and policies in place to achieve that objective. So in that sense for me, I'm a personal beneficiary of, let's say the integrated model now.

P45:1 (15:15)

Initially, from where I was, I understood that it was the merging of two departments.

The middle managers acknowledged that the OSS purpose and objectives included an element of structural redesign. This understanding however appears to be oversimplified and again at operational level. On the other hand, the findings of the OSS documentation refer to the undertaking of fundamental structural changes and this was a dominant theme in the documentation, as discussed in section 6.2.1. Although the middle managers observed that the OSS strategic change initiative would ultimately include structural redesign, it however

appears that they may have underestimated the full implications of the strategic structural changes required.

7.2.1.3.Integration

The final OSS purpose and objective as observed by the middle managers included the aspect of integration:

P40:72 (33:33)

At least, from a system perspective, integration took place.

P41:3 (26:26)

It was about better integration, 'cause we've discussed this at various meetings.

P44:48 (91:91)

[T]he OSS took certain components that fit together [and] then placed them together.

Only four participants raised the aspect of integration. The support between the middle managers and their teams, as denoted by the field notes reflected in section 8.2.4. and the constant use of 'we' (to be discussed in section 7.2.3) may have resulted in autonomous units and a lack of comprehensive integration.

This aspect was also found in the OSS documentation and therefore aligns with the four middle managers' observations.

The middle managers perceived the OSS strategic change initiative with varying levels of success. Participants 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 10 perceived the objectives of the OSS strategic change initiative in varying degrees (though not in totality) as successful, in that more work is still required. Participant 1 felt the future benefits are still to be uncovered. However, participants 3, 4, 9 and 11 felt the main objectives had been achieved successfully. Participant 3 felt the implementation was one of the most successful initiatives at the university. Participant 4 observed that the external events taking place derailed the process somewhat. The effect of the external events will be covered in section 7.3. Participant 6 mentioned that the consultation process was very successful, and participant 7 found the whole process successful in terms of his own personal experience. Participant 8 acknowledged a difference had been made, but in terms of her own

operational tasks, nothing had changed. This is an interesting perspective as her role significantly changed during the OSS strategic change initiative and she was promoted. This may demonstrate a lack of understanding of her new role or it might be that her new role had not been defined clearly by senior management.

The following quotations show how the middle managers perceived the success of the project:

P41:59 (183:183)

So, I think this is one of the more successful implementations we've had for a big project.

P42:3 (21:21)

In general, I do. I think the main objectives were definitely achieved. I think where things did not probably work out the way it was anticipated was because it was sort of overtaken by external events. So, but yes, I think in general and in the main the objectives had been met.

P43:3 (21:21) and 43:4 (25:25)

If I look at when we started with the consultation process, that was a success on its own because the buy-in was already there before the implementation ... but with the maintenance phase, we are almost there.

Success, yes, but there's some challenges that still needs to be ironed out so I believe when we go now into a full year of implementation, I think it will be successful.

P44:3 (21:21)

Where I'm sitting today 'cause I went through the whole process and I would say it was successful and this is from a very personal perspective, not a institutional departmental perspective, my portfolio what I'm responsible for and my experience currently, and my experience would be yes, the OSS project was successful.

It appeared that the middle managers were in agreement that the OSS strategic change initiative was not a failure, and that success was achieved with varying levels of accomplishment.

7.2.2.External consultants' role

This theme emerged outside the scope of the study and will only be discussed briefly. A total of 34 quotations were identified during the inductive approach. The middle managers identified external consultant roles that have been classified as follows:

- gap, issue and improvement identifiers;
- independent impartial facilitators;
- information gatherers; and
- process and operating model designers.

Apart from the above four roles of external consultants as perceived by the middle managers, it is worth noting that a cynical perspective of the external consultants was observed. The quotations below demonstrate this cynical perspective:

P38:83 (35:35) and 38:84 (63:63)

They have done some work in higher education however, I at times felt that they were simply working with a blue print and they didn't necessarily have the industry experience as much as the operating model experience that they have but that was why they were there.

I think some of their recommendations and findings were impractical – or bizarre.

P50:3 (37:37)

From the beginning [I was] somewhat negative. It seemed to me as if someone brought someone in just to make money. A consultant, the company was contacted and contracted in and it was an opportunity for some people to make money. (Translated)

P44:7 (29:29)

I've got a bit of a cynical view when it comes to consultants because many times they – I believe they might have a pre – not pre-planned –they might have an instruction to say, 'guys, this is the problem, this is the possible solution, see if what you get aligns with what we're telling you'. So, effectively whatever you do in the middle of the process fits into that theme. So when we started out initially that was it

and I think the very first cohort of consultants that we got, they had quite a bad experience and it was quite a bad experience.”

Three middle managers indicated that they did not interact with the external consultants and one could not recall that far back. Although seven of the middle managers understood and acknowledged the value of the role that the external consultants performed, this was contrasted by five of the middle managers who had a cynical perspective. It is interesting to note that four of the five participants who held a cynical perspective actually acknowledged that the external consultants added value. This seems to imply that, although the external consultants were perceived to add value, five middle managers did not necessarily support the external consultants but rather perceived them as being distrustful.

Participants 1, 2, 4, 7 and 9 acknowledged direct participation with the external consultants (during the investigation phase). In addition, even though they had direct contact with the external consultants, participant 2 indicated it was on a high level only, participant 4 said it happened only intermittently, and participant 9 could only recall one workshop event. Participants 5 and 10 acknowledged limited participation with the external consultants during the investigation phase, and participant 10 further mentioned it was on an awareness level. Participants 3, 6, 8 and 11 had no involvement with the external consultants or none which they could recall. Therefore, it may be assumed that only one middle manager participated comprehensively with the external consultants.

It can be concluded that, although all middle managers were directly involved in the implementation phase, only five middle managers participated to some extent with the external consultants during the investigation phase. It emerged that the investigation phase was not as inclusive and participative as the last two phases of the OSS initiative. The documentation analysis supports the finding that all the middle managers were included in the working groups and the consultation process during the implementation and maintenance phases (see section 6.2.1.)

7.2.3.Strategy formulation involvement

A total of seven codes were generated, and 20 quotations were identified during the inductive approach.

Participants 3, 4, 5, 8 and 11 revealed that they were excluded during strategy formulation, either completely or in part. Participant 3 suggested that the exclusion was not necessarily deliberate but rather due to the lack of a holistic perspective. Participant 8 inferred that she was not engaged sufficiently and therefore felt excluded. Example quotes to support this are provided below:

P41:34 (123:123)

I saw it this morning again at the meeting, where people each do their own thing and nobody takes an overall view. So then you are excluded from areas where you should actually be involved in. And nobody thinks about it until you pick it up and go and poke your finger in there and say, 'hey I should be here, why am I not included in this?' So in that sense, I don't think it's a deliberate thing of like, 'let's exclude them', but it's not thinking it through in terms of the holistic view.

P45:33 (96:96) and 45:35 (104:104)

I wasn't included.

No, and also even if you get an email saying, 'provide a comment' or if there's a survey. If I understand something, I've been engaging with something then I can provide a comment or I can then give meaningful feedback but I think there's a lot to learn here about how communication should work with staff.

P54:7 (35:35) and 54:28 (88:88)

Of course, it's obvious that we've been excluded.

Currently, [on a] strategy level, wide projects and what's happening we've been excluded. We're not part of that. Clearly on any of the major developments that's happening, we only get to play a functional role when the need arises – that's what's happening.

It is noteworthy to mention that when participant 5 was asked about her role relating to strategy, she responded as follows:

P50:13 (94:94)

I am not sure.

This lack of role clarity may be one of the reasons why she felt excluded from the strategy formulation process.

Participants 1, 2, 6, 7, 9 and 10 believed that they were definitely included in the formulation of strategy, although participant 10 said she was not initially included. It is thought-provoking to note that six participants were confident of their inclusion in strategy formulation and five were not. Example quotes are provided to demonstrate their inclusion in strategy formulation:

P44:38 and 39 (75:75)

I'm a little bit narrow-minded when it comes to my area of responsibilities, there I feel comfortable in the fact that I am part of strategy formulation. So I don't have a problem with that one and that's why I've been so happy I think with what I'm doing.

For me now it's the bigger scope, it's not that it's a little focus and I do have the sense that I am allowed to give input into the strategy and the outcome of it eventually as well, so I'm not – I don't feel like I'm being dictated to and nobody's listening at the end of the day.

P51:32 (123:123)

I am included for sure, yes. (Translated)

The middle managers were asked how they responded to changes to the intended planned strategy. The example quotes are below:

P38:76 (263:263)

I actually then get very involved, and I take a lot of the work by myself. I do that.

P41:81 (267:267) and 41:82 (271:271)

It depends on where, or what it's about and where this deviation from the intended strategy comes from. It's more difficult if it comes from [senior] management, which is usually where it comes from.

Well, I mean, I just put it on ice for a bit, for instance if they don't have a change of plan. If there's a new clear strategy I don't mind ... if it's 'we're not going to do this, we're now going to do that' – that's fine, I can deal with that, because then I adjust my plans.

P42:78 (226:226)

First of all you have to be philosophical about it, you cannot – you have to first of all take cognisance of the situation to see to what extent it will affect you and your

planning, and then just re-root and see what, in what way you can still continue with your planning or continue in a modified way. It's, there's no use getting angry about it, there's no use throwing tantrums, it might make you feel better for a while but it's not going to solve the situation.

P44:96 (171:171)

No, that's very difficult, no, that's irritating, you know that's ugh! especially for me which is a person that wants – I'm set in a particular way, it's easy to tweak it and make it better and better and then to refine it until you get to excellence but if you're just starting with something and you're still busy tweaking it and then something else comes along and ugh! So for me it's very frustrating when that happens, very irritating and then I always think to compromise around quality and excellence, so you might have something, it might work – and it's good, it's good, but it could have been better.

The middle managers also managed and dealt with emergent strategy. Below are a few example quotes:

P38:150 (267:267)

You have to weigh your resources in terms of your time, capacity and money and you have to weigh it in the sense of what benefit there would be – it's again unfortunate that many times the strategic objectives were set aside for emerging or urgent operational demands.

P41:79 (230:230)

Again, you have to be open to all kinds of new developments and new strategies and I mean you should not be so dogmatic, although planning is important and a planned approach is important. You should never be so dogmatic that you ignore all other influences and especially if they might be influences for the better just in order to stick to your plan, so it's again, make it up as you go along.

P51:67 (309:309)

Easy, because as I said, I don't take it personally. I first look at the picture and then I ask myself, is this constructive? Is it beneficial to where we're headed? If it isn't, I will go and speak my mind, and if it is, I'll say, 'Wow, what a great idea.'

Five middle managers indicated that they would adjust or modify their plans as required if changes to the intended strategy were made, although they did indicate a level of irritation and frustration in terms of the possibility of this

happening. It appeared that the middle managers were familiar with changes being made to the intended planned strategy or that they were dealing with emergent strategy and seemed to have managed to adapt their practices to accommodate this. Section 8.3.1.1. will discuss the adapting practice in detail. One participant indicated she ended up taking on more of the workload when this happened as opposed to delegating which might have indicated a need to gain control over the situation. Furthermore, two middle managers expressed anger, difficulty and resistance to changes relating to the planned strategy, perhaps suggesting that this occurred frequently. The frustration and irritation expressed by the middle managers might be linked to the changes occurring in the internal and external environment as detailed in Chapter 2. Despite these negative emotions, the middle managers have found ways to respond in an accommodating and adaptive manner.

It was interesting to note the terminology usage of the middle managers during the interviews. The middle managers made use of the expression 'I think' 408 times in total. This may suggest some degree of uncertainty or hesitation.

In addition, the middle managers used the pronoun 'they' 541 times when referring to colleagues, other entities within the university, senior management, and other stakeholders, such as the unions and external consultants. This may suggest that the middle managers perceived them as 'outsiders' or that they might have felt disconnected and disengaged. An excerpt demonstrates this aspect:

P39:23 (102:102)

I don't think [at senior management level] they really understand the ground work where we're actually sitting at. I understand they're also under pressure but I don't think, for me, I feel more functional decisions could have been made on a lower level but anyway.

However, the pronoun 'we' was used 785 times and 'us' was used 63 times. So, although the middle managers described the 'outsiders' as 'they', there appeared to be an inclusiveness or cohesiveness in terms of those whom they perceived

were going through a similar journey as themselves. The 'we' often referred to the middle managers' staff or unit or division and in some cases, their direct reporting line intimating autonomous entities.

7.3.External context: Climate within the higher education sector

A total of 45 quotations were identified during the inductive approach. The effect of the external climate on the middle managers' strategising work can be classified into four main sub-themes as follows: HR implications, innovation, operational implications, and job-related implications.

The OSS documentation in section 6.2.1 highlights the effect of the external climate during the OSS strategic change initiative, specifically relating to the freezing of posts, resource constraints, difficult staff perceptions and emotions, as well as the demands related to the operational requirements all compounded by crisis management. These events also affected campus stability. Quotes pertaining to each of the four main sub-themes are provided in this section.

7.3.1.Human resource implications

The HR implications, as experienced by the middle managers, were indeed substantial as demonstrated in the quotes below:

P38:144 (344:344)

Yes, we had huge changes in the external market with #FeesMustFall, and after that it snowballed into 'insourcing' that had another significant effect. The unintended consequences of these things are now posts being frozen. In support services it has a huge effect on the staff component.

P41:90 (311:311)

But it's been a really rough year for the staff because apart from those changes we had all these protests with crisis management on top of the other management. So, I keep on telling them, 'Listen this is the bottom of the barrel – it can only get better, look forward to it getting better!' And it was the [access] card thing on top of everything else, so it was a three-pronged attack.

P41:103 (367:367)

Well, it had a huge impact because it's a burning point. They occupied the foyer as you know, threatened staff. I had staff in tears quite a few times with rude students

who are threatening [in] behaviour, so that was very bad for the staff, it made them feel insecure. So the physical occupation of the building, the fact that we had to close so often and couldn't deliver a service.

P50:5 and 6 (49:49)

The political situation could also have played a large role, and I think they were so focused on students and to deliver a service to outstanding students that they didn't consider the key role players, the personnel, and in the process the personnel struggle most to achieve, to place the university on an outstanding level and keep students happy, the personnel are struggling. (Translated)

The middle managers had to balance the HR implications of frozen posts and resource constraints while providing emotional support to the staff and facilitating change. Middle managers therefore had to fulfil multiple roles as discussed in section 4.4.1. The middle managers' roles as experienced during this time period are discussed in depth in the Chapter 8 – the DO-ing of strategy.

7.3.2. Innovations

An interesting perspective emerged from participants 3 and 6. Both participants observed that the external climate created an opportunity for innovation and creativity. The situation forced a new way of working, which resulted in innovations. Again, this links to the middle managers' role of facilitating adaptability.

P41:105 (375:375)

These times are forcing us to be innovative.

P43:87 (309:309)

They [external factors] impacted positively because when you look at the OSS, it doesn't define the environment in which this must happen – all it says, 'it needs to be pleasant for the student'. Now you're having a situation where the campus is on lock down, but services must continue, now what do you do? Then the creativity comes in now.

7.3.3. Operational implications

This sub-theme appeared to be prominent in the middle managers' interpretations of events. Nine middle managers intimated that the external

environment had an effect on their operations. It is clear from the example quotes below that the operational implications and ongoing disruptions had an effect on the middle managers' ability to strategise. Likewise, the OSS documentation in section 6.2.1 supports this aspect where unplanned work arose as a result of the external climate thereby delaying the planned strategies.

P38:127 and 128 (92:92)

During the implementation phase I think the circumstances of the university changed a bit and a lot of the strategy became short-term operational problem solving.”

The tension was between the strategy of doing something in strategic in the longer term versus an operational survival mechanism and the operational survival always won.

P42:93 (302:302) and 42:94 (306:306)

First off, the main one is the whole #FeesMustFall movement and the role the university – the role – the impact it had on the university, and the draw on resources. Everything that were sort of diverted to coping with that situation, including almost all resources I have which makes it very difficult to continue with your day to day work.

It does not change the long-term focus, and even the long-term goals but it definitely does change the short-term focus – it, it has to – if you suddenly have to divert resources to a specific situation or to counter something or to a new initiative – it has to change your focus, over the short term at least.

P43:37 (127:131)

There's some side things that are happening as a result of the current crisis that face all the tertiary institutions in South Africa, so I sometimes, I get a little bit side-tracked.

P45:36 (104:104)

I've just been thinking this morning, even a year [we have] had – I can't remember when last we've had a management meeting! I can't remember when last. Look, this is within the context of the kind of disruptions and kind of year we've had – I understand that.

P39:74 (387:387) and 39:21 (94:94)

Obviously the #FeesMustFall has had huge [implications] – its impacted us directly with everything – you know, it was ongoing. It impacted us directly.

No that affects us hugely, I mean all year, end of year processes is affected by this – the entire moving of the exams, the communication that needs to be sent – all impacted on us and it did and it still is. We can't fix dates yet, registration, we just had the schedules ready so in that line it's incredibly difficult, because at this stage still, I can't even give you an answer to say what takes priority because I got to continue at a certain thing and there are these other constant interruptions.

Short-term operational interventions appeared to consume the middle managers' time and it invaded their daily work environment thereby hindering them from focusing on the long-term strategic objectives. It may also be suggested that the middle managers were so engrossed in operational activities and dealing with crisis management issues that they did not adequately provide the required leadership during this period. Not only did the external climate have an effect on the middle managers' operational functions but it also had a direct influence on their own personal duties and activities.

7.3.4. Job-related implications

Seven participants observed that the outside influences did indeed affect their jobs as they were either disrupted on an ongoing basis or they had to do work outside of their normal responsibilities.

P42:29 (118:118)

I think, especially at the moment, I very much work outside of my annual KPIs, specifically because of outside influences and events.

P42:43 (146:146)

Most of the outside influences are ad hoc requests based on almost panic responses, hysteria and a sense of urgency, from higher up and that is very disruptive.

P50:18 (122:122)

[A]s a result of the whole political situation of the students we were so busy putting out other fires and at the moment I am doing completely different things to what my actual responsibilities are. (Translated)

P39:26 (114:114)

You're asking the wrong time of the year unfortunately, because no, the KPIs I'm supposed to be managing and leading and just in that role, I've still got [an]

incredible [amount of] functional work due to the lack of personnel at this stage. So, it wouldn't show a true reflection of what it must [be], it would be maybe next [year] this time but at this stage there's still too many loose ends I've still got to tie.

A discussion regarding the middle managers' alignment between their KPIs and responsibilities is presented in Chapter 9.

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter was divided into two parts, the first part was devoted to the middle managers' perceptions and experiences regarding the internal context during the OSS strategic change initiative. The second part of the chapter was focused on the middle managers' observations of the external environment. Although the context for the study was justified in Chapter 2, this chapter focused on the middle managers' lens of the context.

The findings suggested that, although strategy was deemed important by the middle managers, they were inclined to focus on operational requirements and gave this precedence over strategic objectives. The middle managers' interpretations of the purpose and objectives of the OSS strategic change initiative were also on an operational level, and strategic insight was absent.

The middle managers acceptance of the OSS strategic change initiative seemed questionable with the constant use of 'I think' and 'they', which might have indicated uncertainty, disengagement or detachment from the process. However, the frequent use of the pronoun 'we' when referring to their staff or division suggested cohesiveness and unity with their team but not necessarily with senior management. The reliance and support between the middle managers and their teams during these turbulent times might have resulted in autonomy and a lack of integration.

It was also intimated that leadership was perhaps neglected at times as everyone focused on operational realities and demands.

The middle managers were in agreement that the OSS strategic change initiative was successful to varying degrees and that future benefits are still to be realised.

Six of the middle managers felt that they were indeed included in strategy formulation while five mentioned that they were excluded. The middle managers adopted practices of adapting and accommodating when it came to changes made to the intended strategy and dealing with emergent change. In addition, the middle managers had to assume multiple roles to facilitate change and adaptability as well as to provide emotional support to staff during the turbulent period.

The main theme 'External climate' as identified from the transcriptions, resulted in four sub-themes, namely HR implications, innovations, operational and job implications. The HR and the operational implications were also identified in the OSS documentation, signalling that these aspects were not only noteworthy to document but simultaneously had a substantial effect on the middle managers. The external climate, specifically referring to the protests and unrest, effected the middle managers' regular strategising, not only at operational or job level but also at psychological, physical, behavioural and emotional level.

The following field notes illustrates my interpretation above:

P49:97 and 99 (141:141)

She [middle manager] has had a rough year as have many of my colleagues, not only dealing with the changes within the institution but also the demands that the #FeesMustFall and protest action has had on operations and planning going forward.

However it seems the middle manager has reached burnout as this behaviour I experienced during the meeting is very unlike her. She got very defensive and even at one point directed her frustration at one of the senior managers. The meeting concluded with a decision that most of the colleagues were not happy with and this further demoralised her and made her feel unheard and disempowered.

P49:24 (61:61)

A middle manager made a comment that it is not 'nice' working here and that the job is currently very difficult. The context for this statement was the decision by Executive [senior management] to close the campus for an addition week due to the protests. This caused major rework and duplication of effort to reschedule semester tests across the institution. I could sense the frustration and despair.

P49:37 (76:76)

I had a management meeting with the new leadership team [middle managers]. The team looks tired and drained. The protests and the impact that it has had on the staff is noticeable. One manager said she is so tired, she feels exhausted and it just does not want to end.

P49:60 (103:103)

As I noted before, the impact of these protests are resulting in huge amounts of stress for the middle managers, who not only have to deal with the crises but also attempt to get their normal operational work done. It is interesting to note that most of the middle managers are not 'moaners' or 'whiners' in general but most conversations with the middle managers (of late) are filled with a level of despondency.

These quotations demonstrate that context matters, and the external environment and associated constant operational disruptions were treated as a priority. As Vaara and Whittington (2012) suggest, the middle managers as practitioners are not detached individuals disconnected from their context. Despite the negativity that resulted, the emerging events however had a positive effect as two participants mentioned that the external climate forced them to be innovative and creative in carrying out their roles and finding solutions.

This chapter provided a comprehensive presentation and discussion of the participants' perceptions and experiences of their internal and external contexts in which they found themselves at the time of this research study. Key insights were offered and provided interpretive and explorative explanations as demonstrated by the middle managers' quotations. As an insider, I also experienced the context at the same time as the middle managers and I was careful not to taint my own personal experiences with those of the participants. This was achieved through example quotes from the transcripts which were used to 'show' (as opposed to 'tell') the audience how the middle managers interpreted their environment. The quotes ensure transparency and credibility of the study. Nonetheless, I also offered my own personal interpretations of the events and participants; responses to those events as captured in my detailed field notes.

The subsequent chapters will detail the findings and interpretations of the middle managers' DO, THINK and FEEL research themes as identified in the literature review in Chapter 4. Chapter 8 will concentrate on the DO component of the middle managers as they strategise to effect change during their daily work.

8. DO: Middle manager lens

8.1. Introduction

Chapter 7 reflected an in-depth discussion about how the middle managers perceived their internal and external context during the OSS strategic change initiative. The chapter provided the middle managers' lens of their experiences and observations highlighting that context does matter.

This chapter reports on the process of gaining an in-depth understanding of how middle managers go about their daily 'doing' of strategy within the context as detailed in Chapters 2 and 8. The middle managers' formal strategic roles, practices and routines, practical skills, as well as the tools they utilise during their strategising will be examined.

Figure 8.1 provides an outline for the chapter. Similarly to Chapter 7, example quotes from the middle managers' interview transcriptions as well as the field notes will be used to demonstrate their 'doing'. Each theme will be analysed comprehensively and the findings together with the interpretations will be presented. Key insights will be provided at the end of each section.



Figure 8.1 Chapter 8 outline

Figure 8.2 provides the framework of the research study with the emphasis on DO, which will be discussed in this chapter.



Figure 8.2 Framework of the research study: DO

Source: Own compilation

Several themes were found inductively while examining the transcripts, although one specific theme followed a deductive approach, namely the formal strategic roles of middle managers. The report on the literature review pertaining to the formal strategic roles can be found in section 4.4.1. A decision was made to make use of the existing roles as summarised in the literature section (4.4.1.)

with regard to comprehensiveness and thoroughness. However, the potential of inductively identifying additional formal strategic roles was included as a possibility.

The remainder of the DO themes identified during the findings and interpretation phase were all found inductively. These included the middle managers' practices and routines, practical skills, as well as the tools they use during their daily strategy work. Table 8.1 summarises the DO themes and sub-themes and provides a high-level description of each.

Table 8.1 Middle managers' DO themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Formal strategic roles	Implementing strategies	The sub-theme refers to the traditional middle manager role of executing the strategy, in other words operationalising the strategic plan.
	Interpreting and communicating information	The sub-theme refers to the middle manager as a facilitator of information flow, both upwards and downwards in the organisation, by interpreting, evaluating and compiling information and then distributing the information acting as bridges or social linking pins.
	Facilitating adaptability	The sub-theme refers to the middle manager as a strategy formulator and integrator of knowledge who facilitates change to meet the challenges of a dynamic market.
	Downward supporting	The sub-theme refers to the middle manager as an emotional and professional support to staff through empowerment, coaching, mentoring and ensuring performance measures are managed.
	Upward influencing	The sub-theme refers to the middle manager role of reshaping and influencing strategy through selling alternative strategic initiatives thereby contributing to the strategic direction of the organisation.
Practices	Adapting	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to adapt to ongoing changes in the internal and external environment through their capability to develop, learn, self-empower and grow as managers.
	Effecting change	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to bring about change within the environment including the ability to deal with and manage change, to influence others, regardless of position or hierarchy, and to be an information source to colleagues.
	Collaborating	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to engage, participate and collaborate with colleagues.
	Mobilising	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to mobilise people and resources to ensure that they are ready to move or act.

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
	Peacekeeping	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to manage and deal effectively with disagreements, confrontations, criticism as well as his or her ability to solve issues as a result of conflict.
	Overseeing	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to oversee and be responsible for operations, and to encourage, guide, lead, direct and empower staff.
Routines	Email	The sub-theme refers to the daily routine followed by middle managers in terms of reading, managing and administrating their email.
	Meetings	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' routine of participating in meetings and other engagements that may be formal or informal.
Practical skills	Creativity	The sub-theme refers to the ability of the middle managers to think outside the box, be innovative and visionary.
	Organisational skills	The sub-theme refers to the ability of the middle managers to organise effectively and approach their work in a systematic manner.
	Behavioural and emotive skills	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to manage and regulate their own behaviour and emotions effectively.
	Leadership	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' competencies to lead people.
	Technical skills and experience	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' experience and technical knowledge capabilities that have been developed and acquired to perform specialised tasks.
Tools	Policies and procedures	The sub-theme refers to the policies and procedures of the institution, which middle managers defined as a tool.
	Conventional tools	The sub-theme refers to conventional tools that middle managers recognised, such as spreadsheets, calculations, whiteboards, subject literature and training.

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
	Strategic plans	The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' usage of strategic plans as a tool to carry out their daily work.
	Analytical tools	The sub-theme refers to analytical tools that middle managers identified, such as theoretical models, SWOT analysis and visual mapping.
	Information technology	The sub-theme refers to the IT tools that middle managers identified, such as systems and software.
	Digital communication	The sub-theme refers to the digital communication tools that middle managers identified such as instant messaging, email, the Internet and other technologies.

8.2. Formal strategic roles

The analysis of the formal strategic roles followed a deductive approach, and the following five roles as identified from the literature were used as a basis, namely:

- implementing strategies;
- interpreting and communicating information
- facilitating adaptability;
- downward supporting; and
- upward influencing.

Each formal strategic role has associated strategising activities as identified in the literature review (section 4.4.1.), and these strategising activities were used as part of the coding system. The five formal strategic roles will be discussed in detail.

8.2.1. Role: Implementing strategies

A total of six codes, i.e. the strategising activities associated with this role, were pre-defined. These were:

- advocacy – selling the plan;
- executing strategic plans;
- improving operational practice;
- monitoring and controlling performance and compliance;
- resourcing; and
- translating and aligning objectives to own operational plan.

Ninety-six quotations were identified during the deductive approach signalling that this role was prevalent amongst the participants.

Example quotations found in the transcripts reflecting the implementing strategies are provided below:

P38:10 (104:104) (StratAct: Advocacy – selling the plan)

People relate easily to problems, so in order to sell it to them you have to tell them how it's going to make their life easier.

P42:19 (86:86) (StratAct: Advocacy – selling the plan)

If people tend to be negative then you just sell it in a positive way as if you have ... if it's your own idea and you believe in it.

P40:31 (109:109) (StratAct: Executing strategic plans)

My focus was to implement what was agreed upon and approved by executive, because you know, that's the only thing you can do.

P42:23 (94:94) (StratAct: Executing strategic plans)

I suppose everybody at my level actually, we are just handed certain strategies to implement.

P44:28 (53:53) and 44:31 (57:57) (StratAct: Executing strategic plans; monitoring and controlling performance and compliance)

So, if I can't translate a strategic document into something that can be implemented, where we can have measurement, where we can have feedback on it – that would be a failure for me, on my side.

P42:18 (82:82) (StratAct: Monitoring and controlling performance and compliance)

Then it is up to them to do what they need to do and I just monitor their outcomes.

P43:22 (57:57) (StratAct: Resourcing)

Then in that particular strategy I had to go look for resources, because in some of the strategies that we came up with, resources did not exist, so we had to go and look for [resources], I had to go and look for those resources.

P43:5 (177:177) (StratAct: Improving operational practice)

Now I'm embracing the change throughout the process. I'm especially seeing that there're certain aspects that are working and there're certain areas where we can do a whole lot more improvement, and there're certain things now that they are stabilising. There were teething problems but now they're stabilising and then obviously within the year, all of that will have been old, you have to start again.

It was found that all 11 participants concurred that the formal role of implementing strategies was a role that they fulfilled. This finding therefore confirms results in the literature review (section 4.4.1.1.). The 'resourcing' strategising activity was raised by all participants, followed by 'advocacy – selling the plan' (nine out of 11 participants) and 'executing strategic plans' (eight out of 11 participants).

A field note extract and quotation demonstrate the implementing of strategic plans, improving operations and dealing with emergent plans:

P49:138 (200:200)

She [middle manager] also has already identified what can be improved on and how the process can be enhanced should it be required to host registration off campus again. Apart from this major project, she is launching two significant campaigns in the next two months, which she is really excited about. She has played a pivotal role in these initiatives and is driving the implementation and providing direction.

P43:84 (301:301)

To be able to carry out the work. We were given an opportunity to present whatever problems that needed addressing and it was not a talk show, it was: 'that's the problem, how are you going to solve it, that's the solution you envisage, go and implement'.

8.2.2.Role: Interpreting and communicating information

A total of five codes, i.e. the strategising activities associated with this role, were pre-defined, namely:

- communicating;
- downward sensegiving;
- relating messages between staff and management;
- sensemaking; and
- upward sensegiving.

Ninety-five quotations were identified during the deductive approach suggesting that this may be a dominant role for the participants.

P38:16 (132:132) (StratAct: Downward sensegiving; relating messages between staff and management)

My direct reporting line does not know my environment better than I do, and that's hard. So there would be bizarre requests coming from them and I have to interpret it and water it down before I could hand it out.

P51:16 (57:57) (StratAct: Communicating; relating messages between staff and management)

I went to each work session we had here, and went back to my personnel and said to them, 'Come, we're having a meeting. Although I didn't sit in all the working groups, here is the feedback from this specific working group. This is what we discussed there, this is how it's going to impact on this office'. (Translated)

P40:33 (129:129) (StratAct: Communicating)

Many a time I had to talk on an individual level with people, which were either resistant to change, or felt left out of the process or even disengaged themselves for a reason. They would either get angry or feel they are not contributing. But it was more a people involvement [issue] than anything else, so most of my time was taken up by people engagement, stakeholder engagement, making sure that everybody is on board and knows what's going on.

P42:21 (90:90) (StratAct: Communicating)

It's not, and I think again it's very audience-dependent, if some people get the bigger picture a lot easier than others, but I think the main thing is to break it down in more digestible sort of chunks and to get them, or get their buy in into those various components and in the end you have their buy in whether they realise it or not, in the full strategy.

P41:38 (135:135) (StratAct: Upward sensegiving)

Well, the moment I pick up something like that, that somebody else has for instance duplicating on campus, I'll talk to them and if I'm at a meeting with that particular executive about something else I would use the opportunity to get my point of view across, just as an awareness thing, and that seems to help. If it's face to face, it makes a much bigger impact than sending an email, so I use these little opportunities to talk.

Similar to the previous role of implementing strategies, the formal strategic role of interpreting and communicating information was intimated by all 11 participants. Therefore, the finding supports the literature review in section 4.4.1.2. The example quotes revealed that this was a well-established and pervasive role. This makes logical sense as middle managers have been identified as the 'linking pins' in the organisation, connecting both vertically (upward and downward) as well as horizontally (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014). The strategising activities of 'communicating', 'downward sensegiving', and 'upward sensegiving' were found to be implied by all participants. During significant strategic change, communication and sensegiving play a pivotal role as highlighted in section 4.4.1.2. and the middle managers understood this requirement, specifically when dealing with their reporting staff (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Teulier & Rouleau, 2013).

8.2.3.Role: Facilitating adaptability

A total of three codes were pre-defined. Twenty-nine quotations were identified during the deductive approach. The associated strategising activities for this sub-theme were:

- crafting change;
- creating strategy; and
- integration.

This role is not as pervasive as the first two roles mentioned above (see 8.2.1. and 8.2.2.); however, the only participant who did not demonstrate this role was participant 5.

P38:2 (88:88) and 38:6 (96:96), (StratAct: Crafting change; integration)

In the ideal environment, it would be a great opportunity to do – to really make a change. That's what the role of a [manager] in that position is – to really change things. I don't think I've done nearly as much as I could've.

I was there to provide some clarity on what the divisions should do, that would be strategy of how the integration within the division should work, whether it's done or not is another story.

P43:21 (57:57) (StratAct: Crafting change; creating strategy)

Well, I had to come up with the strategy. I had to lead the strategy and then I had to lead the change that came with the strategy.

P44:29 (57:57) (StratAct: Crafting change)

I see my role in terms of strategy as helping to define what we need to change and what we need to develop, and what we have in place that we can strengthen to achieve the objectives as set out in the strategic documents.

Although the facilitating adaptability role is not as widespread (in terms of the frequency of relevant quotations) as the implementing strategies and the interpreting and communicating information roles, it was suggested by 10 of the 11 participants. These findings are in line with the literature review (section 4.4.1.3.). The strategising activity of 'crafting change' was the most prominent when compared to the 'creating strategy' and 'integration' activities, with all participants except participant 5 mentioning this activity. The creating strategy

activity was expressed by three participants although six participants indicated they felt included in strategy formulation (section 7.2.3.). This might have implied that the middle managers were involved in strategy formulation in terms of participation, influencing or making a contribution but that they did not necessarily consider themselves to be strategy creators. Although findings indicate that the middle managers executed strategic plans and participated in strategy formulation it was also evident in section 7.2.3. that the middle managers implemented changes to the intended strategy and acted as facilitators by managing the processes of emergent strategy formulation (Lavarda et al., 2010). Participant 1 was the only middle manager who mentioned the integration activity when discussing the formal strategic roles, although four participants implied that integration was part of the OSS purpose and objectives reflected in section 7.2.1.3. A field note capturing a participant's perceptions with regard to integration is provided:

P49:16 (34:34)

She [middle manager] felt annoyed that they [senior management] did not understand the actual workings of her department and how she is the process owner but works closely with other departments, not duplicating but integration and alignment takes place.

Participant 1 is observed expressing self-doubt in terms of the actual implementation of the integration strategy in her division. It is possible that this lack of integration as a focus area by middle managers denotes a level of autonomous behaviour or disconnected entities.

8.2.4.Role: Downward supporting

Six strategising activities as identified in the literature for this role were used as the six pre-defined codes. The strategising activities were:

- creating continuity;
- driving compliance;
- emotional balancing;
- influencing staff;

- managing performance; and
- professional support.

Seventy-six quotations were identified during the deductive approach and all participants revealed various aspect of this role.

P38:37 (104:104) and 38:25 (243:243) (StratAct: Emotional balancing; influencing staff; professional support)

You have to give them hope, that's what we need to give them. That's the only way to sell it is that – I can't give them the outcomes now.

I would then consult with both parties, and try and find a way for them to get ... for them to find a solution to their problem. It's a good way to get buy in from your staff to start solving their own problems.

P51:27 (103:103) (StratAct: Emotional balancing; influencing staff)

I think through always being positive, and saying to them, 'these are positive changes, it's things that we must do'. It's not things that we can say we're too old for, or we're too used to our own previous processes. I think my glass is always half full. I think a person eventually carries it over to the people who work with you and if you show them it can work, they buy into it.

P40:18 (81:81) (StratAct: Professional support)

So, it was to navigate between people, their perceptions, their resistance, their contributions, the way they are thinking and with the eye on the ball.

P42:15 (78:78) (StratAct: Creating continuity; influencing staff; professional support)

The main issue was to see that the structure actually reflected what we needed to achieve and also to then place the right incumbents into those positions and to instil into them the whole idea that they would now in all probability will have to work differently and will have to engage with people in order to do a change over and to get rid of those functional areas of which we were not responsible for.

P50:19 (130:130) (StratAct: Creating continuity)

I have done that, I thought out their roles, what each one is now responsible for, who is going to do what, I think it's mainly in place now. (Translated)

P45:32 (84:84) (StratAct: Managing performance; professional support)

It's about what you can do to insist, 'cause [with] all the performance review discussions ... what is it that you need in order for you to do your job better, so I

think in that, that has been to my advantage in terms of getting things to change and the people I work with.

The strategising activity that was utilised the most was 'creating continuity' with nine out of the 11 participants identifying with this activity. This was followed by 'emotional balancing' (eight out of 11) and 'professional support' (seven out of 11). The finding that the downward supporting role is indeed appropriate aligns with the literature review reflected in section 4.4.1.4. It was interesting to note that the driving compliance activity was only demonstrated by three participants. This may not be surprising as the findings in section 7.3.1. indicate that the middle managers felt accountable for the emotional support for their staff (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014), due to the effect of the external climate and constant disruptions. Moreover, the middle managers provided continuity and stability for their staff as they all adjusted to the new structures, reporting lines and new roles as a result of the OSS strategic change initiative. The extensive use of the pronoun 'we' as discussed in section 7.2.3. perhaps further supports this sense of cohesiveness and togetherness. It may also be possible that a reason for the driving compliance activity not featuring so prominently, is that middle managers acknowledged the emotional toll on the staff and responded with a supportive approach as opposed to a compliant one. Furthermore, the middle managers may have been lenient or tolerant as it is revealed that the staff supported and encouraged them during this turbulent period. Field notes as recorded and interview excerpts show this support:

P49:103 (152:152)

She [middle manager] mentioned she goes to one of her staff members and says she is not sure if she can do what is expected and her staff member says 'no, you can'. She seems to get support from this staff member in motivating her to move forward. She emphasised again to the staff member 'we are never going to get it done' and her staff member says 'yes, we will'. And then after thinking she agrees and says 'yes it can be done'.

P49:118 (181:181)

The middle manager relied on her manager and one staff member during the first week back and was supported by them. One provided encouragement and the other assisted with the technical tasks that needed to be done.

P50:81 (554:554)

I can really not do my work without people who support me nor take over some of the tasks where they are more skilled than I. I will not be able to function alone while doing my work. (Translated)

8.2.5.Role: Upward influencing

Two codes were pre-defined, namely championing alternatives and influencing strategic issues. Nineteen quotations were identified during the deductive approach. It was found that this role is the least often expressed of all five roles with only eight of the participants identifying with these strategising activities. Participants 5, 8 and 10 did not demonstrate this role as per my interpretations.

P41:37 (131:131) (StratAct: Influencing strategic issues)

Moving up, I think it's more like a support thing and also then sticking my nose in where it wasn't before so that I influence [senior management]. There is one of the executives now that is actually starting to acknowledge that he should talk to me about things that are in my area which he didn't before, so I try and influence where it pertains to my department and things we do, our functions, because there are so many of these cross-cutting functions and if you don't take a stand on it, everybody carries on.

P51:36 (143:143) (StratAct: Influencing strategic issues; championing alternatives)

I influence everybody. I influence my [senior manager], I influence my [senior manager], I influence my [manager], I influence the [staff] – I influence ... all of them. Yes, and in a positive way, in the sense of, I don't manipulate them, and I am not personally involved. I see the university's picture. Maybe it's a gift or a skill, I don't know. I don't think everyone can see the picture. (Translated)

I see the picture and I know where we're heading to, and I will go and talk to my [senior manager] about it. I will tell him, "Prof., I think I want to suggest, what do you think about this? Can't we do it like this, or like this? Prof., is it really necessary that we have six meetings to discuss the same topics? Because every meeting takes three hours and I have to sit in at all the meetings, where you only sit in at the last

meeting. Isn't there another way to do manage this? Can't we look at all the terms of reference of all the meetings again? Isn't there overlapping?" And you know what, then I go and chat to my [senior managers] that also sit in these meetings and I say to them, 'Do you really think this is necessary? Let's look and see what other [departments'] terms of reference look like.' This is just an example. (Translated)

Influencing strategic issues was the most applied activity as demonstrated by the participants for this role (eight out of 11). It is noteworthy to mention that the three participants who did not identify with the strategising activity of influencing strategy, were all newly appointed to the middle management level and possibly might not yet have had the know-how or awareness of this activity. Participant 9 employed a questioning approach to influence whereby proposed solutions were embedded in questions. This technique seemed to be applied intuitively, and perhaps strategies or tactics on how to influence strategic issues might be a productive area for future research. Only four participants showed that the championing alternatives activity was used during their daily strategy work. Due to the middle managers' focus on operational demands, tasks and plans as a result of the external climate (discussed in 7.3.3.), the middle managers had more of an effect on advocating operational alternatives or emergent plans as opposed to strategic alternatives. This can be demonstrated by the following quotes:

P41:106 (375:375)

So [as a result of the external climate] we have to make plans all the time.

P50:69 and 70 (470:470)

As I say, at first I feel, now I'm not going to do anything anymore, you guys can do whatever, you can't work like that. Afterwards, I just then go for plan B or I go with plan C. I have a very strong work ethic and I am terribly afraid of failure. So then, what I have to do, I try ... In the end, I will do it so it's good and correct because I am, what's the word? I don't like failure.

In summary, to varying degrees, all five formal strategic roles as identified in the literature review (see 4.4.1.) were found to be relevant in this study (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014). In accordance with Jansen van Rensburg et al. (2014),

specific findings suggest that all the middle managers mostly associated themselves with the more traditional strategic roles, such as being strategy implementers, communicators and providers of support to staff. However, the facilitating adaptability and upward influencing roles were valid for ten and eight participants respectively, thereby demonstrating that these non-traditional middle manager roles are indeed gaining prominence. The current study responded to the call for future research as explained in section 4.4.1.5., and demonstrated how the professional middle managers perceived their strategic roles while strategising to effect change during a strategic organisational change initiative within an HEI. The next section will introduce the practices and routine themes.

8.3.Practices and routines

A total of 113 codes were generated for 'Practices' and grouped into six sub-themes to be discussed in section 8.3.1. Further to that, a total of 29 codes were generated for 'Routines' and grouped into two sub-themes, which will be addressed in section 8.3.2. In total, 258 quotations were identified for practices and routines following an inductive method and categorisation into sub-themes. This high inference rate demonstrates that this was an important theme for this research study, particularly the practices.

The formal strategic roles as discussed in the previous section were specifically linked to strategy and the referenced study (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014) made use of a general survey following a deductive approach. Conversely, the sub-themes for practices and routines in this current study have been identified inductively, and the data is significantly richer in detail due to the data gathering method chosen, and therefore is one of the main contributions of the study. The practices drew on the middle managers' behavioural, cognitive, psychological and emotional resources while they strategised and further enabled the formal strategic roles. The inductive approach has allowed for the less obvious data to be interpreted and to allow for the low-level practices and routines as determined by the middle managers to be revealed. The uncovering of emergent data is true to the interpretivist perspective (see Gray, 2013).

8.3.1.Practices

The identified eight sub-themes for 'Practices' are:

- adapting;
- effecting change;
- collaborating;
- mobilising;
- peacekeeping; and
- overseeing

Each of these sub-themes will be demonstrated by making use of selected middle managers' quotations.

8.3.1.1.Practices: Adapting

This practice incorporates the ability of middle managers to adapt proactively and to include the following elements:

- adapting to change;
- adapting to management's indecision;
- adapting to outside influences and change;
- managing conflicting information;
- operating outside of KPIs;
- personal growth and development;
- self-empowerment; and
- researching solutions.

This practice may require behavioural, cognitive, psychological and emotional adapting. All these elements represent the onus placed on middle managers to adapt voluntarily and to manage their ambiguous, complex and ever-changing circumstances in order to perform their roles and responsibilities productively.

P38:140 (271:271) and 38:81 (352:352)

It's not so much a question of easy or not easy; it's a question of survival.

I think it's part of the growth. If you go through a thing like this and you're not learning from it, it's stupid.

P41:63 and 64 (207:207)

It was new for me and it's always a bit daunting going into a role and you know that the people that are reporting to you are checking you out saying, 'what does she know about this? Why [is] she here, she doesn't know anything?' So, I had to learn quickly just to have credibility.

Well, I did some research on for instance, how [the function] operates and the latest technology. I must say, I learnt as I went along.

P42:44 (162:162)

You can to some extent reschedule, you can to some extent reprioritise but if the outside influences become too much, you have to start making choices and ... if the choice is not necessarily what I have planned then your own schedule needs to be adapted, and again that can only be done so much before things really start falling apart.

P44:45 (87:87) and 44:25 (45:45)

Yes, but that's ok, because ultimately again the job description is the framework within which I get paid. If I go outside of my job description with, let's say the blessing of my [manager] or everybody else, I'm just expanding my influence and my experience and my exposure. It's not too bad.

The example quotes demonstrate how the middle managers adapted on a personal level as a result of the ongoing changes in the internal and external environment. The middle managers had to self-develop, learn, self-empower and grow as they navigated uncertain and multifaceted situations in their new roles. Floyd (2016) examined the support required for academic middle managers "taking on and adapting to this increasingly challenging role" (Floyd, 2016: 167). Floyd (2016) argues that individually tailored training is required. The implication therefore is that in order for middle managers to adapt continually as a practitioner, not only is self-development and personal growth key, but support from senior management and a strategic approach to leadership development in higher education for these middle managers are required.

All participants were found to demonstrate the adapting practice thereby indicating that adapting is an important practice, which made a unique contribution to this study. Although authors have reported on middle managers adapting their work practices or existing practices (Horst & Järventie-Thesleff,

2016; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2006), this does not cover the other aspects of proactively adapting on a behavioural, cognitive, psychological and emotional level comprehensively. The following field note demonstrates the adapting practice:

P49:73 (118:118)

She [middle manager] also said that one is never too old to learn and that she feels in the last ten years of her life she has learnt more than the previous 30.

8.3.1.2.Practices: Effecting change

This sub-theme is focused on the middle managers' perceptions and experiences with regard to effecting change and the way they embrace change or react to it. The following change-related elements are included in this practice:

- absorbing change;
- bringing about change;
- being a change agent, advisor or champion for change;
- initiating change;
- being decisive, providing direction;
- input during a change process; and
- subtle persuasion and voicing opinions to advocate change.

P38:54 (88:88) and 38:68 (203:203)

That's what the role of a [manager] in this position is – to really change things.

We kind of absorb the change and it remains to be reactive because we feel it so much but there's no point in resisting it, you got to live the change and then think differently.

P40:50 (76:76)

I was very positive for change, I've tried to urge the executive member I'm reporting to, to change.

P43:9 (49:49) and 43:35 (119:119)

During the implementation [which] was now to introduce things that did not exist before, like the role of one of my line managers. We didn't know exactly how it would pan out but we realised that if we sit back and wait for things to happen, they will not happen. So, then I had to now become the change agent; I had to drive the change.

Then also there were key stakeholders that needed to be brought on board. Now advising, I don't want to use the word 'convincing', but in advising the key stakeholders that we [are] now dealing with a new strategy from a new department – though they see the old department and the old department staff, so to bring the stakeholders on board – onboarding of stakeholders – to execute that strategy. Yes, that's what I did.

The example quotes highlight the middle managers' ability to bring about or effect change within the work environment, including the ability to cope with and manage change, to influence change in others, regardless of position or hierarchy, and to be a change agent to colleagues. The difficulties in effecting change from the top down or bottom up have been acknowledged, and therefore it is argued that this crucial role should emanate from the middle (Preston & Price, 2012). Effecting change therefore requires "translating strategic thinking into strategic acting by adjusting the current realized strategy of an organization to meet the requirements of the intended action" (Bartunek et al., 2011: 10). The middle managers have demonstrated how they go about effecting change and it was found that 10 of the 11 participants applied this practice. This is a unique contribution by this study as effecting change has not yet been identified as a middle manager practice in the literature, although it may have been implied.

When asked what her responsibility was in effecting change, one participant explicitly stated the following:

P50:16 (118:118)

I do not think that was my role. (Translated)

Further to the above quote, another participant revealed the following:

P39:9 (45:49)

It's difficult for me to say this is my role because at this stage I was, we were just trying to keep the wheels on in the [division] position.

Both the abovementioned middle managers were newly appointed at middle management level during the implementation phase. It emerged that there might have been a lack of role clarity and that responsibilities were unclear. This might

have been a result of taking on new roles, immaturity in the position, the HR constraints as well as the constant disruptions in the environment as discussed in Chapter 7.

8.3.1.3.Practices: Collaborating

This practice encompasses far more than merely communicating, in other words, the exchange of information. Collaborating requires proactive commitment, involvement, cooperation, engagement and participation to seek solutions as a team. Certain aspects were subsequently found, namely:

- accommodating;
- benchmarking;
- collaborating;
- communicating;
- creating context to enhance shared understanding;
- engaging with key stakeholders and colleagues;
- facilitating; and
- networking and building relationships.

P38:80 (336:336)

I've collaborated many times with the Strategy Execution Office on things that were not necessarily OSS-related.

P40:56 (81:81)

It was really important, making sure that you get people, which were involved in the OSS in general [...] getting them engaged, making sure that they participate as far as possible, communicate, make sure that they feel at ease.

P43:62 (209:209) and 43:49 (169:169)

I engaged with several managers. One, to hand over from the role that I was responsible for. I also engaged with the [division] [...] my counter-part in the [division] because now we needed to be handed over some of the responsibilities, and I also engaged with student administration because there's certain things that we needed to assist them with [...] I also needed to engage with other managers so that they can know how to channel information.

Having close relationships with Facilities' Management (FM), Security Services (SS) and Information Technology Services (ITS). I also then consult with them just to find out what is in the pipeline, what is happening, what can we improve, what are the complaints.

P45:12 (39:39)

We're lucky in the sense that we don't work within the normal UP, shall I say manner, we work in a participatory manner, we don't work in silos, we make sure everybody can do everything.

P51:31 (115:119)

I sat with my personnel and said, 'What can we, as admin [personnel] do to help academia to achieve this plan?' It was amazing what they said. They bought into it and we had a good discussion about it. People also need to just get out of the confusion and sit calmly and focus on what the objective is. (Translated)

The example quotations presented in this section show the middle managers' ability to engage, participate and collaborate with staff, other colleagues and stakeholders. Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007) found collaborating to be a strategising practice amongst strategy teams. A recent study (Davis, 2013) identified collaboration with outside parties and experts as a strategising practice; however, the engagement is limited to outside parties and experts. The collaborating practice as identified and defined in this study incorporates communication, but is far more comprehensive encompassing proactive, two-way participation, collaboration, networking and engagement between middle managers and others (staff, colleagues and stakeholders), regardless of hierarchical level. The collaborating practice is therefore more comprehensive in terms of depth, width and audience.

The transcripts show that 10 out of 11 participants employed a collaborating practice. It can therefore be stated that a collaborating practice is an important contribution to the SAP theory.

8.3.1.4.Practices: Mobilising

This sub-theme stood out as an important practice because the mobilising of people (bringing them along) and other resources is fundamental during a strategic change initiative, such as restructuring. The OSS strategic change

initiative necessitated the handing over of functions and responsibilities as well as receiving new functions, delegating tasks, and generally just getting work done utilising the available resources. This practice covers aspects related to the managing of the handover process.

P42:14 (74:74)

To actually raise awareness amongst my colleagues as to, first of all, what I should be responsible for and what they would need to be responsible for that they previously haven't been, that my area has been responsible for.

P43:13 (49:49)

Then there was the issue of handing over now from the old function to the new function, to people that didn't understand. So you had to now become [the] training and development officer, to make sure that you implement correctly and at the same time you had to deal with yourself because some of the information that you're giving out ... it is not being understood, so you also need to make sure that you yourself remain motivated.

P39:56 (271:271)

As far as what I can, yes, again having a few personnel and certain people that don't have the know-how yet. It takes me more time to train than it does to do it myself, it's difficult now still but I try as much as I can.

Middle managers play a central role in mobilising resources (Dutton & Wierba, 1997). Furthermore, middle managers bring together and mobilise people and resources required to do strategy work (Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). Although middle managers have been associated with the act of mobilising, it has not yet been defined previously as a practice as found inductively in this study, making this practice a unique contribution. In total, eight out of 11 participants referred to the practice of mobilising. The middle managers' ability to mobilise people and resources to ensure that they are ready to move or act is demonstrated in the example quotes. It is also inferred that the middle managers found this practice to be challenging as they mentioned, "one of my greatest challenges", "not being understood", "worried about the uptake" and "fighting a losing battle".

Field notes and a relevant quote demonstrate this challenge:

P49:20 (50:50)

He [middle manager] did mention an incident with another manager in his division who he felt was not taking ownership of issues that now resorted under her [middle manager] portfolio and no longer his. He had sent a strongly worded email in this regard indicating that handover has taken long and that she needed to take ownership.

P49:94 (136:136)

She seemed slightly out of her depth and has reached a stage of shrugging it off – almost defeatist or acceptance of the situation for what it is. She is struggling with handover and will have to learn this skill quickly if she is to cope with her new portfolio.

P39:13 (69:69)

I'm still struggling with a few of them because they [are] still sitting with other tasks that they couldn't shed, but I think generally they are still a bit demotivated because they feel I'm dumping a lot of stuff on them. I still haven't figured out who's doing well in what, in what role [and when] I've reasonably figured [it] out, when I've just figured out nicely, then another one resigns.

It appears the roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined or lacked clarity and therefore the middle managers struggled with the handover process. This supports similar findings reported in section 8.3.1.2. It appears that the required senior leadership and support were lacking. This led to an area for future research, in terms of the type of support middle managers receive from senior management during a process of strategic change.

8.3.1.5.Practices: Peacekeeping

This sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to manage and deal with disagreements, confrontations and criticism effectively and to solve issues as a result of conflict in a peaceful manner. With any change process, conflict is bound to emanate, and this practice was identified as an important sub-theme during the OSS strategic change initiative.

P41:75 (231:231) and 41:30 (107:107)

The most difficult things to handle of course is staff conflict – not to seem to take sides, but fortunately I've got managers that are quite cool-headed also which really helps.

So it's not so much conflict maybe, but just being hindered from doing what you want to do.

P42:61 and 65 (202:202)

Where I had – let's call it conflict – it was very civilised and very rational.

On a cognitive level, it's always difficult [...] I can only speak for myself, but you reflect it to yourself, to some extent you do self-searching. Have you caused the negativity? Is there something you could have done better? I think it's a good thing if you know, as long as you don't dwell on it, you just have to take note of it and move on.

P43:28 (86:86)

No I've learnt from it – from the episodes where there was a lot of conflict and change and also ... well conflict is an emotional situation, but where people felt 'you know what, 'I'd rather resign'. That's when I learned that actually my own shortcomings doesn't mean that I need to impose [it] on other people. So, I don't think, going forward, I will repeat what I [have] done because change – it's about the unit, it's not about the individual – yes, it starts with the individual but it's about the unit. So, should I be presented with the same situation again, [I] definitely will treat it differently from how I handled it from the past.

P44:34 (65:65), 44:86 (151:151) and 44:75 (135:135)

It, it's not easy, I think that, that should sum it up!

For me, conflict is necessary because it shows the honesty and the passion and the commitment of the staff involved.

One particular staff [...] that was transferred to me that had to report to another [middle manager] was very distrustful of the manager [...] I got a bit of that anger but then I could quickly tell them, 'Ooh! You're not angry with me; you're angry with the other person! Oh! But that person isn't here, so let's park that one side and let's look each other in the eye and say we're starting afresh and a new relationship'.

P51:72 (277:277) and 51:66 (301:305)

There are always people who are not happy. [...] I believe a person should speak about these things. It does not help sitting in your office brooding, you need to immediately deal with the issue before it escalates. (Translated)

I am relatively even-tempered [...] it doesn't make any sense to me that a person can be happy one day and the next day not. As I said, I throw things out of my cot, but then [...] I talk about it, and then we carry on again. I also don't bear grudges. I never dig up the past grievances, I don't even remember past grievances. If someone has discussed something, then it's over and done with, then we move on.
(Translated)

P39:48 (215:215)

Well, I listen and I don't answer usually immediately. I will listen to them and I don't make recommendations or anything, and then I speak to them I understand – is there anything that they feel that I can do and at this stage, I also use the higher authority at this stage because I'm still very new in the position.

The middle managers' quotations suggest that they focused their energy on both cognitive conflict (task conflict) and affective conflict (relationship conflict) (Papenhausen & Parayitam, 2015). The cognitive conflict was mostly associated with the handover process and associated activities, which proved to be challenging (see quotes in section 8.3.1.4.). The middle managers did however demonstrate that approaching conflict as a shared problem – “we are in this together” – did indeed facilitate the resolution of affective conflict, thereby supporting the findings by Papenhausen and Parayitam (2015). Example quotes are the following:

P51:73 (277:277)

One of my staff members sent out incorrect information to our first-year students [...] and this after I told her to go and check the info, check that it's correct [...] I was really angry. Really angry. I called everyone who was involved into my office and I said to them –

“You know what? I am here to protect you and to protect this faculty. I am very angry because I said to you, you must check it. Did you check it?”

“Yes.”

“Then why is it incorrect?”

“We are under pressure.”

I said, “We've been working on these documents for a month. We reached a point where we thought it was correct [...] couldn't it have waited a day so that you could check it thoroughly?”

“Yes, it could have waited a day.”

I said, "Okay, we're going to fix it, because you know what? Any mistake we make – we're human – the lucky thing is, we can fix it, because people are patient with other people. We need to send out another email and say, 'Sorry for the [incorrect information], please delete all previous information and replace it with the new information'."

P44:88 (151:151)

It's still a bit tender, it's still a bit early, and I think the key thing is to give people chance to understand the benefits of this process. Get to know the people involved and hopefully think, 'wait a minute, this is not so bad you know, this is not so bad, let's try the next thing' – and get a few champions going on a few things but if there's conflict like that, get it official as quickly as possible, try and resolve it, and in this instance it has been successful.

All the middle managers implied that they had been personally involved in conflict to some degree and demonstrated through their quotes how they managed and dealt with the resulting emotional situations in order to keep the peace. Peacekeeping as a practice is a unique contribution of this study as it was not found in the literature that was reviewed. Listening, talking and consulting appeared to be the most common methods indicated by the middle managers, to manage conflict and maintain peace. It is worth noting that these methods are peaceful in essence (collegial) as opposed to threatening and dismissive. Participant 10 mentioned that she was new in her role and if required she would refer issues to her line manager. This demonstrates the need for support from leadership when positioned in a new role with new responsibilities. It also implies the need for further training, mentoring and development. Conflict resolution skills are required to manage conflict and senior management are required to play a role in equipping managers with these skills.

8.3.1.6.Practices: Overseeing

The sub-theme refers to the middle managers' ability to oversee operations, implementations and functions, as well as to be responsible for their staff. This includes all staff-related issues:

- to encourage, acknowledge and motivate;
- provide guidance, leadership and focus;

- build trust;
- empower staff;
- appoint staff;
- provide training and knowledge transfer;
- engage with staff both formally and informally; and
- schedule and plan.

P38:55 (96:96)

I was luckily involved in the appointments of my management team, I was involved in each of those appointments.

P40:57 (97:97)

You must allow staff in an operational environment to make decisions on a daily basis, and even accommodate mistakes they might make, because it's a learning process. It's a maturing process for staff, and you must make it, you must create an environment where staff experience their own achievement in making decisions.

P41:68 (211:211)

I will now – towards the end of the month – I'll have a formal session again just to say thank you for everybody 'cause I think they've done an amazing [job]. I think everybody in that unit especially in the [function], they've gone through an amazing growth phase – all of them, so I think one needs to recognise that.

P42:17 (82:82)

I think it's giving direction, I am not the functional expert in many of those areas – they are, but I know where I want to go, I know where the department needs to go and I know where the university needs to go. So, I actually just – from that perspective – give direction and then it is up to them to do what they need to do and I just monitor their outcomes.”

P39:15 (74:74)

I'd like to empower them all to know the entire system [...] I can see with the new personnel coming in, they don't have the bigger picture. So, to have the time to actually take them from step one [...] it's important that we empower everybody.

The downward supporting formal strategic role (addressed in section 4.4.1.4.) focuses on the strategic level whereas the overseeing practice as identified in this section incorporates the operational level as well. The overseeing practice

includes the aspect of providing oversight of operational aspects relating to the middle managers' portfolios, gaining trust and getting people to follow – not out of positional authority, but out of a willingness to follow due to the middle managers' passion, commitment and personal investment. All middle managers revealed this sub-theme, demonstrating it in various ways. It was therefore identified as an important practice. Although different aspects were raised it was clear that the middle managers identify with this practice and have an understanding that their staffs' well-being is a key component in facilitating productivity and achieving performance success. An extract from the field notes support this:

P49:66 (108:108)

She [middle manager] mentioned that the division would be going on a team building session. She said with all the crisis management taking up their time she has not had much time to do team building. She seemed excited about the team building and told me what they are all going to do. She thought this would be good for the team just to get them out of the office and give them a chance to get to know each other better. She hoped that all could attend and it seemed important to her that they feel that they are part of a team.

The next section reports on the middle managers' routines.

8.3.2.Routines

Two identified sub-themes for 'Routines' were found to be prevalent, namely email and meetings.

8.3.2.1.Routines: Email

The sub-theme refers to the daily routine followed by middle managers dealing with their email. Attending to email appeared to be a routine performed by the middle managers on a daily basis during the OSS strategic change initiative.

P44:54 (108:108) and 44:55 (112:112)

It's starting with emails.

For me, the day normally starts with a good intention of reading all my emails and I usually don't get through all of them as well, and then there's basically interruptions that happen from one way through another.

P51:45 and 46 (199:199)

And then I try for the first hour while it's still quiet, and there aren't students and most of the personnel aren't there, to deal with my emails. I get between 50 and 130 emails a day that I need to reply to and you can think, if each email takes ten minutes, then you do just emails all day. It's really a lot, very scary. (Translated)

Yes, and then from there I run to meetings, and then in the evenings and Saturday I sit with my laptop, responding to emails I didn't get to. (Translated)

P39:31 and 32 (138:138)

Well, what I try in the evenings – so from when I stop work in the afternoons, I try and keep my emails up to date, but the first thing in the morning is again basically clearing out emails.

All the faculties still send all their requests – [I] see what I can delegate to who, send out emails and then it's just basically all the [...] I'm still getting a lot of emails with issues so at this stage it's sorting out issues still.

All the participants revealed that a component of their daily routine was to work through emails, and it was found that most would continue working through their emails after hours. Perhaps this routine of attending to email provided some stability amidst all the uncertainty as this might have been the one aspect that did not change.

In alignment with the discovery that email was a prevalent routine, the findings further suggested that the middle managers' email routine appeared to be a preferred communication method amongst them.

P42:75 (218:218)

If it needs to be, if there's something that I need to formalise, I will then just draw up a quick document or email just confirming that.

Upwards, – it's mostly officially written, either submissions or just emails and quick notes.

P50:59 (399:399)

I email, like email a lot, and I call, and I like one-on-one talk. (Translated)

P39:50 and 51 (239:239)

I'd prefer [...] it depends actually on the type of situation or what must be discussed, but email works incredible well. I like a paper trail because that's the only, the best way to communicate, so I prefer email.

Obviously, if it's a personal conflict situation then it will be escalated further and have actual one on one, but I prefer email. I think few people express themselves better without feeling you can't say this, so email I find [works].

A case study focused on understanding change (D'Ortenzio, 2012) found that the use of emails was regarded to be a popular means of communication. Another study (Davis, 2013) concurred that email is one of the most used channels for communicating.

A second routine, namely meetings, was also revealed by the middle managers and is discussed next.

8.3.2.2. Routines: Meetings and other engagements

This sub-theme refers to the middle managers' routine of attending meetings and participating in other engagements as they go about carrying out their strategy work.

P38:149 (182:182)

I think meeting, regular meetings, are important and that has continued since the implementation.

P42:53 (186:186)

I had a number of meetings specifically regarding the OSS project and the way things were being structured and just to manage expectations and to ... to let people know that they were not [...] or they should not feel left out in the dark.

P41:45 (159:159)

I meet with the [managers] once a month, I try and sit in with the two bigger units every now and then just to make contact with the people and I go and take walks.

P40:139 (129:129)

Engagement with people and stakeholders. I think, and I see that as my contribution to the OSS.

P43:66 (213:213)

It's continual engagements – not limited to meetings.

P54:22 (75:75)

I conduct regular meetings and I also have certain forums that I run.

Six of the 11 participants explicitly stated that they attended regular meetings and that this was part of their normal routine. However, it was also found that all middle managers suggested that they participate in various forms of engagement, both formal and informal. This practice appeared to be an important routine at the university. Although meetings appeared to be a common routine it was not necessarily popular amongst the middle managers, as shown in the quotations below.

P50:66 (411:411)

I do not always have the confidence to speak in front of a large group of people.

P45:39 (112:112) and 45:40 (116:116)

I think a combination [...] I don't like meetings. I don't like a meeting if it's going to waste my time, you know?

If I'm invited to a meeting, I want to know what is the meeting about [...] what do you expect from me, you know, at the meeting. If my role is important, if I need to give meaningful input then good and well or [if] it's something I need to learn or I need to take and I need to bring it back and provide input, then yes. So, meetings should be meaningful, also the occurrence of the meeting [...] don't have a meeting for the sake of having a meeting.

P39:13 (69:69)

We did away with the office meetings, the general meetings, because they were just sort of, almost just saying, 'OK, I did this and this and this', and that was it.

P49:39 (76:76)

The one manager was visibly frustrated during the meeting and afterwards mentioned she does not even get a chance to speak.

One participant utilised an iPad in order to multi-task to get her work done in a day by reading emails during meetings:

P39:35 (146:146)

Well at this stage my iPad is part of me because I mean even sitting in meetings where you sort of not completely hundred per cent involved, I do my emails. And it does help, even if I just forward them on to certain people or ask people to assist – that's a huge tool.

It was interesting to note that the participant appeared to attend meetings where her involvement was not fully required. This linked up to the routine of meetings being an important routine at the university but not particularly a popular routine with the middle managers. Perhaps one of the reasons for the unpopularity of meetings is that the middle managers are involved in too many meetings or that the meetings do not actually require their participation or they find the discussions unproductive. A recent study (Davis, 2013), focused on middle managers' strategising practices, similarly found that meetings were not always considered valuable or productive, and usually provided an opportunity to catch up on work and/or to attend to email. A potential recommendation would be to review the purpose or mandate of meetings, in terms of participants, a clear agenda and proper preparation to ensure meetings are efficient and productive.

It emerged that informal face-to-face communication was a preferred method of communication for the middle managers in the research study and was either used together with email or as a stand-alone practice.

P42:52 (186:186)

I was lucky enough that my division is small enough that I could really have one-on-one contact, which were the majority of contacts that I had.

P43:61 (201:205)

Well, I start with talking – just explaining what needs to be done – face to face, explain what needs to be done and then followed by, if it's an instruction that is clear coming out on an email, detailing what needs to be done, I would summarise that and engage face to face, then forward the email. Sometimes, yes, you need to send the email but then I will follow that up with a face-to-face interaction.

P44:59 (116:116)

For me, my personality is one on ones, so therefore I speak to my senior staff on a daily basis to find out where they are with whatever.

P54:54 (186:186)

It's easier than writing an email you know! So it's quicker – face-to-face communication I prefer. The rest, if it has to be minuted and if it has to be recorded, I would obviously use [the] email system.

This routine of regular meetings or other engagements ties in with the formal strategic role of communicating as well as the practice of collaborating discussed earlier on in this chapter (see 8.3.1.3.). It seemed that in certain instances, meetings and engagements were seen as beneficial as per quotes below:

P44:60 (116:116)

If I have a meeting, it would mean it's a much larger group of people that I need to address and I can't do it one on one, or there is responsibility that has not been fully clarified and the responsibility lies with a number of people then I would rather have a meeting with the whole group.

P51:98 and 51:99 (425:425)

To keep my staff updated on everything that is happening. I think I did well there.
(Translated)

To have that communication was a huge privilege as it also keeps people's morale high; if [people] know what is going on and they are not unsure about things.
(Translated)

P54:37 (130:130)

We have stakeholder meetings scheduled well in advance, to understand their scope and needs and thereafter formulate the user requirements and take it further into development.

The routine of meetings, although not popular in the current study, appeared to play a role in important strategic outcomes and shaping stability as reasoned by Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008), especially during a strategic change process.

8.3.2.3. Work routines

An interesting finding was that the middle managers did not seem to have clear work routines as a result of the constant changes both internal and external to the university. The context as discussed in Chapter 7 had a noteworthy influence. It appeared that the ongoing disruptions during the OSS strategic change

initiative resulted in a lack of well-defined work routines or even no work routines for most of the middle managers. Findings also suggested that work routines were not clarified due to uncertainty regarding the new roles and responsibilities.

P42:37 (146:146) and 42:34 (142:142)

I try to build in some structure, it never works out that way. Again, because of the outside constraints and outside events and that's very ... I almost want to use the word 'infuriating', because it messes with your own schedule, it messes with the way that you want to do your own planning.

I don't think there was a real routine, apart from the really administrative functions, like checking emails, keeping the wolf from the door. It was to a large extent ad hoc. It was a learning process, it was something that I certainly myself picked up as I went along, and as the process changed, the routine or the daily actions also changed.

P50:44 (274:274) and 50:45 (286:286)

I don't really have a routine now. (Translated)

I think it's because everything is muddled up and nobody knows exactly what he [or she] must do, because my direct [line report] is also new in the role and many of the things that are being given to him, but he's new in it so he gives to me, so then I do some of his stuff. (Translated)

P45:50 (144:144) and 45:51 (148:148)

No, definitely not a set routine.

You know, I wouldn't want to work in that manner. I often wonder because I don't have a set routine – what am I going to forget, what am I going to forget you know? But no.

Again, it is important to consider the lack of support and leadership from senior management during the intense context of internal and external change. Participant 5 acknowledged that her direct line report was also new in his position thereby exacerbating the circumstances. A filed note recorded the frustration pertaining to the leadership and senior management:

P49:47 (81:81)

She [middle manager] said management seems to think that miracles can be performed overnight and that system changes can be done in an instant. She feels

they have no idea of the operational realities and what it takes to make certain things work on the ground. The decisions that are coming out of the senior management team are not feasible; yet, she is expected to make it operational.

The findings suggest that the middle managers may be experiencing role conflict due to the various interpretations of environmental cues (both internal and external) and unpredictable and at times conflicting expectations from management (see Wooldridge et al., 2008). This aspect is addressed in more detail in section 9.2.

The skills required to strengthen the middle managers' practices are discussed next.

8.4. Practical skills

This theme refers to the middle managers' practical skills, knowledge and experience that they use in their daily work while strategising and effecting change. A total of 23 codes were generated and grouped into five sub-themes. Thirty-eight quotations were identified during the inductive approach.

The identified five sub-themes are:

- creativity skills
- organisational skills
- behavioural and emotive skills
- leadership skills
- technical skills and experience

Each sub-theme is confirmed by selected relevant example quotes to substantiate the findings reported in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 Practical skills: Sub-themes and example quotes

Sub-theme	Relevant example quotes
Creativity skills	
P38:137 (251:251)	I think out of the box. It counts in your favour sometimes when you have to solve problems that's novel.
P44:90 (155:155)	

I'm a visionary in many sense[s], I can sometimes see the problems you know, arising quickly.

Organisational skills

P41:76 (235:235)

I can organise. I think I'm a good organiser.

P50:62 (392:392)

I am very task-orientated and I think I am very organised. If someone wants to know something, they come to me because I keep everything in a file.
(Translated)

Behavioural and emotive skills

P38:103 (251:251)

I have this ability to be able to remove myself emotionally from the situation.

P41:76 (235:235)

I'm very disciplined, I like to get things done.

P44:91 (155:155)

There's also a sense of calmness, I just figured that out the other day, but I can get quite stressed sometimes and not communicate as much as I should be, but a sense of calmness under pressure.

P39:69 (375:375)

I think just from my side the fact that I'm self-motivated.

Leadership skills

P42:71 (214:214)

And then in general I would say people skills because especially in an IT environment you have a very wide range of people types and it's really difficult to keep a coherent team going.

P43:67 (225:225)

Both, but then I'll lean more towards more people-orientated. Why I say both – I'm an operations guy, so before I can say it can be done, I need to understand that the staff that I work with can do it, because it doesn't help saying to me that 'look, we can do it' but I know that the staff will struggle. But then I also believe that for the staff to see value in what we do, they need that support; they also need that information sharing. So, I will say I'm more inclined to be people-orientated but with all the operations on top.

Technical skills and experience

P38:41 (80:80)

I had the right background and training.

P40:98 (171:171)

I think I did have the necessary skills and institutional knowledge – so all that, you know, made it easy for me.

P42:69 (214:214) and 42:70 (214:214)

First of all, to some extent, functional knowledge, systemic knowledge of the organisation and the division that I'm in.

There has to be some technical skills that you need. The way the systems work, the way the underlying architecture works, that not only makes it easier to understand your job, but it also makes it easier to see what other people – especially from other departments and I'm talking about IT here, specifically – that you're able to understand what they are doing, or what they are not doing and they can't just give you a random reason why something is not possible.

P43:65 (221:221)

That will be operational, operations and logistics, and then also customer service, customer service and marketing because you really need to sell the concept – talking about the concept and ending there doesn't really drive the message home.

P51:63 (219:219)

I am very, very, very computer-literate. You cannot not be computer-literate.
(Translated)

The findings that creative skills are indeed important refer to the middle managers' ability to respond to emerging changes, and technical skills to help in responding to new technology are aligned with the study by Costanzo and Tzoumpa's (2008). However, it was interesting to note that political skills (Whitchurch, 2008b) were not mentioned or implied, and it will become evident in section 9.5 why this was the case.

All participants responded to this sub-theme and indicated at least one skill or more that they have acquired. Technical skills and experience were inferred most with nine out of 11 participants mentioning that they possessed these skills. Leadership followed with seven out of 11 participants referring to this skill. This finding seems reasonable as professional middle managers have more than likely acquired the relevant technical skills, experience and relevant qualifications in their past in order to have been promoted to middle management level, usually having a specialist background. It was also interesting to note that the majority of skills mentioned were soft skills (or skills that were underpinned by soft skills), which are usually self-taught and require self-development, such as emotional and leadership skills. This aligns with the practice of adapting as discussed in section 8.3.1.1. A quote to demonstrate the importance of skills is reflected below:

P50:81 (554:554)

I cannot do my work without the skills and knowledge. (Translated)

Interestingly, skills the middle managers have acquired as revealed in the transcripts but which were not specifically mentioned are discursive skills and conflict resolution skills. The middle managers did not acknowledge these skills explicitly but they were implied through their informal interactions with staff and key stakeholders as they did their daily work (refer to the practices of effecting change, collaborating and peacekeeping in section 8.3.1.). Through these informal interactions, middle managers were able to influence the outcomes of emergent change (Balogun & Johnson, 2005) by adjusting and adapting their plans and activities. This aligns with Roleau's (2013) argument that strategic skills have less to do with formal roles than with informal activities of networking, influencing and making sense of changes. As a result of the changes in the internal and external environment, the middle managers were required to adapt to new roles and responsibilities, and therefore had to acquire new skills, such as coaching, facilitation and communication through self-learning. Whittington et al. (2011) argue that these process skills are far more crucial than analytical skills. The onus however did not just rest on the middle managers, but senior management had a role to play in ensuring that middle managers received the required training, coaching and mentoring (Rahim, 2016).

8.5. Tools

This theme refers to all the tools used by middle managers in their daily work while strategising. The tools were identified and defined by the middle managers. Tools observed by the middle managers, namely meetings and stakeholder collaboration, were noted but have been addressed in more relevant sections (8.3.2.2. and 8.3.1.3. respectively) to prevent repetition. Forty-six codes were generated following an inductive approach and then grouped into six sub-themes. A total of 57 quotes were found.

The identified six sub-themes are:

- policies and procedures;
- conventional tools;

- strategic plans;
- analytical tools;
- information technology tools; and
- digital communication tools.

Table 8.3 Tools: Sub-themes and example quotes

Sub-theme	Relevant quotes
Policies and procedures	
P38:42 (148:148)	I'm expected to create policy, I'm expected to look at the regulations and the rules – so it's easy to use that and to put it forward and to get it through senate and it becomes a rule.
P44:64 (120:120)	And then I wouldn't be able to do this work without the relevant policies, procedures and frameworks in place as well, and those things play a critical, critical role, especially with legal implications and certain agreements that's made. So, without the relevant policies, procedures in place we wouldn't be able to do that.
Conventional tools	
P41:53 (171:171)	We use training, obviously a lot of training, specially for the consultants. It's been a lot of training and that's on an ongoing basis. They have their weekly trainings and then they have a one-on-one training because they had to upskill so much.
P42:41 (150:150)	The boring administrative tools, just getting something on paper, doing spreadsheets, doing calculations, doing things like that.
P43:48 (169:169)	I also go to subject literature, go to the books, go to the library to see what says the books, what says the authors about certain aspects that relates to my job.
P45:56 (152:152)	I've become very reliant on the whiteboard because I can just quickly glance and that I know [when] people are, when they are going on leave.

Strategic plans

P40:43 (97:97)

There is the guidance of the strategic plan or a departmental plan.

P41:49 (171:171)

I got plans. I draw plans.

P41:55 (175:175)

I have a strategy planned on where we need to get to.

Analytical tools

P40:42 (93:93)

For me, strategy is always you know, you need to get focus from the old perspective of SWOT analysis, you must always have that in mind. What opportunities are there, what weaknesses exist, what strengths is available?

P42:49 (178:178)

Then also by mapping what the division actually was initially, was responsible for and then to try and do that disconnect between what they were supposed to do and what they [...] those functions that they were not supposed to do.

P43:33 (103:111)

I realised that talking really doesn't address the questions. Then I went visual. That's the history as you know it, that's the processes as you know it – this is the new process. And then from that visual elements they could see where the differences were and then they were keen to follow the new way of doing things. So using mapping – so that they can see exactly where the change is and then what the outcomes should be.

Information technology tools

P50:46 (290:290)

I work daily on the [ERP*] system, I can't do my work if the [ERP] system does not work." (Translated).

P39:36 (155:155)

Really just the [ERP] system, that I'm working on and obviously the SMS** system, that's it.

P54:46 (134:134)

I also use the ERS system – enterprise resource system – I've been trained on

that to approve the change requests.

Digital communication tools

P42:40 (150:150)

The main communication tools like email, instant messaging these days, that actually is becoming a lot more important, especially because we're working in a, we're forced to work in a much more distributed environment and also very much after hours.

P43:64 (213:213)

There is a WhatsApp group where some of the communication goes through and some of the engagements work there, some of the 'meetings' takes place in WhatsApp.

P44:61, 62 and 63 (120:120)

For me it would be the telephone and emails.

And then I mean WhatsApp and those type of things and SMSs – it's instant communication – doesn't mean the person needs to respond quickly but I know they've got it or when they've seen it and that's in recent years.

Previously, you could have had meetings a week from now or two weeks from now. Nowadays it's much easier to quickly do a WhatsApp group and share three or four things we've clarified off the group again.

P45:58 (156:156)

We have a group, we have a WhatsApp group and especially when I get a message from management I would forward that message to them. So, when they come here the next day they not unaware of what has happened, then they are aware because I was very aware of rumours and that kind of thing so then they know exactly this is the state of play at the university.

P54:43 (134:134)

Skype is the most used between myself and the other [service provider], in-house within South Africa. Skype, Google Talk.

Note: * ERP = enterprise resource planning; ** SMS = short message service

All participants responded to the 'Tools' sub-theme and they indicated utilising at least two or more tools each as shown in Table 8.3. The digital communication tools were found to be the most used tools with nine out of 11 participants mentioning this sub-theme. The IT tools were implied by six out of 11

participants. It was not surprising that the digital communication tools and IT tools were popular amongst the middle managers in today's times due as a result of the convenience and benefits associated with these tools. It has been reasoned that IT plays an important role in strategy and strategising and can be used to managerial advantage (Whittington et al., 2011). Davis (2013) similarly found that middle managers made use of technology-enabled tools and, amongst others, analytical tools, as found in this study. The traditional analytical tools (such as SWOT analysis and PESTL) however were not a prominent feature of this study nor of the study by Davis (2013). Burgelman et al., (2018: 550) mentioned that with the "increasing prominence of information technology tools, information technology can be expected to play an increasingly important role" in strategy making.

Gunn and Williams (2007) argue that it is important not only to understand which tools are being used in strategy work but more importantly also how and why the tools are used. Participating middle managers suggested that digital communication tools and IT tools kept them connected after hours and assisted in a distributed environment (such as across the various campuses). It appears that these tools allow for access anytime, anywhere, and the middle managers acknowledged this as favourable. The digital communication tools and IT tools provide the middle managers with immediate connectivity to staff and other stakeholders, which seemed to be especially helpful during the constant disruptions as a result of the protests. In addition, these tools allowed the middle managers to manage communication flow quickly, and they assisted in the prevention of gossip and rumours. It seemed these tools might have alleviated some of the uncertainties arising in the work environment. Finally, it was implied that these tools may have relieved the requirement for frequent meetings as information sharing could take place immediately, co-ordination and planning of group or individual activities could take place instantly, and these tools enabled quick decision-making. The tools therefore assisted and facilitated middle managers' strategising on a daily basis. It can consequently be argued that these tools as artefacts are utilised as part of a socially interactive process and they

facilitate the execution of strategic initiatives across organisational boundaries (Kaplan & Jarzabkowski, 2006).

When a participant was asked which tools she used during her daily strategising, she responded quizzically as follows:

P41:48 (167:167)

Apart from email and Internet?

This seemed to suggest that these tools are almost a given nowadays and their use goes without saying. These findings support the concept of mass production of material artefacts and mass participation as raised by Whittington (2015) as reported in section 4.4.2.3. These material artefacts, namely mobile phones, laptops, iPads and social media are now commonly used by the middle managers during daily strategising thereby opening up strategy to numerous employees across multiple sites.

8.6.Hindsight: DO

The middle managers revealed what they would DO differently or what they would retain if they had the opportunity to go back in time. The following quotations were provided:

P38:123 (356:356) and 38:101 (235:235)

I would have wanted to be more involved with my staff. I would have not wanted to be so caught up in operational demands.

I would want to eventually be in a position where I'm not so holed up with the operations so I could really start to become a proper leader.

P41:107 (387:387) and 41:108 (391:391)

I suppose you could always talk more to your staff. That would always be a good thing. I know sometimes I tend to not always explain myself 'cause I'm in a hurry to get somewhere, so for myself in terms of management, I need to always remember to give the full picture to whomever I'm talking to so that they understand where I'm coming from. So, for myself I think that's something I need to always remind myself of.

I think getting staff to work out new plans, 'cause that empowers them. So, if they can come up with a solution that works better they all feel very good about it and they reorganise the whole thing to suit themselves but then to improve it in the process. So, that's the sort of thing I think one should, if you can, do more of.

P42:95 (310:310)

I know it sounds very conceited but I really wouldn't have done anything different. In each and every specific situation I probably would do exactly the same thing now, should I have to re-do it.

P43:89 (337:337)

The placement of certain staff, not in all areas, the placement of certain staff, the process of matching – maybe we underestimated the jobs. We looked at it and said, [name withheld] can work in that particular space – without giving [name withheld] the job specifications. So I would have changed that and say OK, let's expose the staff to the actual jobs that they're going to be doing. I would have changed that process.

P51:95 (413:413)

Yes, I should of spent more time with my staff. (Translated)

P39:76 (395:395)

Maybe I would have applied for another job, No! From my side, not really, everything's there and again I think we can still go do wonderful things in our new role, do the nice things. I'm very excited about it. So, I don't think so, really.

Interestingly, five participants acknowledged that they would not do anything differently and three participants revealed that they would have wanted to be more involved with their staff. Although one participant did agree that she communicated well with her staff and would repeat that communicating role. It seemed surprising that the new experiences and learning required in terms of adapting to the new structure, new roles and new responsibilities amidst the intense external climate did not warrant the need for the five middle managers to want to have done something differently. The perception was created that they were confident in their choices, actions and behaviour.

8.7. Conclusion

This chapter focused on how participating middle managers went about the DO-ing of strategy work during a strategic change initiative. The middle managers' formal strategic roles, practices, routines, practical skills and tools in use were explored and key insights per theme or sub-theme were presented.

Three of the formal strategic roles were found to be demonstrated amongst all 11 middle managers, namely implementing strategies, interpreting and communicating information, and downward supporting. This was followed by facilitating adaptability (10 out of 11) and upward influencing (eight out of 11). The strategising activities associated with these roles performed by all middle managers were: resourcing, communicating, downward sensegiving, and upward sensegiving. Crafting change as a strategising activity was performed by 10 participants; creating continuity by nine and influencing strategic issues by eight middle managers.

Within the context of change, it was not surprising that priority was given to the strategising activities of resourcing and ensuring shared meaning was created through ongoing communication and sensegiving. The middle managers were occupied with the operational demands placed on them due to the ongoing disruptions and protests while still adapting to their new roles and responsibilities. This may have led to the focus on the more traditional roles of middle managers, such as implementing strategies and communicating with and providing support to their staff. It is however also clear that the middle managers identified with the activities of crafting changes and influencing senior management when they had the opportunity to do so.

An interesting split between the middle managers was found in that six indicated that they are included in strategy formulation. It was interesting to note that four (out of the six) middle managers were employed at middle management level before the OSS initiative with two promoted during the change process and therefore new to the role. Of the five who indicated they are excluded from the strategy formulation process, three were new to the middle management level.

However all middle managers, regardless of prior experience, took on new portfolios and responsibilities. It was established that there was a lack of clarity regarding the middle managers' roles, and participants indicated that their responsibilities seemed unclear. This might have been a result of the lack of senior management support and leadership during the change process as well as their interference in operational issues. The implication was that the middle managers required additional support and development, not just in terms of self-learning and on-the-job training, but also in terms of mentoring and coaching.

The role of the senior managers in providing leadership and support to the middle managers during a strategic change process is a potential area for future research.

A central contribution of this study is the identification of six key practices through an inductive approach, which allowed for rich detail and in-depth accounts of the middle managers to be revealed, thereby exposing the less obvious practices. Six emergent practices were found, namely adapting, effecting change, collaborating, mobilising, peacekeeping and overseeing. All 11 middle managers demonstrated the adapting, peacekeeping and overseeing practices, 10 indicated effecting change and collaborating practices, whereas eight showed the mobilising practice.

Two routines were established, namely the administration of email and the participation of meetings and other engagements. All middle managers acknowledged these routines, and it appeared as if they found some stability or security amidst the uncertainty as these two routines did not change. Furthermore, the middle managers identified email and informal face-to-face engagements as preferred methods of communication as opposed to formal meetings. The middle managers did not have clearly defined work routines and even reported having no work routines as a possible result of the context of change. This ties in with the lack of clearly defined responsibilities established earlier.

Five practical skills, namely creativity skills, analytical skills, behavioural and emotive skills, leadership skills, and technical skills and experience were found. The latter skills (i.e. leadership skills as well as technical skills and experience) were mentioned most by the middle managers indicating that these skills were the most widely utilised. These soft skills are often not included in formal training and may require self-development and possibly mentoring. There is alignment between the requirement of self-development and the practice of adapting.

Lastly, the tools in use were established and classified into six sub-themes, namely policies and procedures, conventional tools, strategic plans, analytical tools, IT, and digital communication tools. The digital communication tools were used most widely with nine of the middle managers referring to these tools. In a distributed environment undergoing constant change, the middle managers revealed that the digital technology tools kept them connected without having to meet formally. Participating middle managers were therefore able to collaborate and engage with stakeholders and colleagues in a quick convenient manner, which linked to the identified collaborating practice.

A framework to represent the interconnectedness between the practical skills, practices and formal strategic roles is presented in Figure 8.3.



Figure 8.3 Interconnection between middle manager DO themes

Source: Own compilation

In order for middle managers to fulfil their formal strategic roles they use practices to enable them to achieve their objectives. In other words, participating middle managers' practices underpinned and strengthened the formal strategic roles. Furthermore, the practical skills supported the middle managers' ability to enable their regular practices. Through training, self-development, mentoring and coaching, the enrichment of the practical skills will enhance middle managers' competencies to fulfil their formal strategic roles.

Key insights were highlighted in this chapter providing interpretations as well as linkages back to the literature review. A framework was presented to demonstrate the interconnectedness between practical skills, practices and formal strategic roles.

The next chapter will focus on the middle managers' cognitive processes in terms of the THINK research theme.

9.THINK: Middle manager lens

9.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided a comprehensive account of how middle managers go about the 'doing' of their strategy work. The five formal strategic roles as found in the literature review were confirmed to be relevant and important roles for the middle managers employed at the university. Key practices and routines were identified that enabled the middle managers' formal strategic roles. Practical skills were acknowledged that further underpin the practices and roles thereby demonstrating the interconnectedness between these elements. Lastly, the tools in use as revealed by the middle managers were also discussed.

The focus of Chapter 9 is the middle managers' cognitive abilities as they go about their strategy work during a strategic change initiative. Four main themes were established through an inductive approach, and this chapter will provide rich in-depth accounts of how the middle managers go about their THINK-ing while strategising.

Figure 9.1 provides the framework of the research study with the focus on THINK.



Figure 9.1 Framework of the research study: THINK

Source: Own compilation

The themes will detail the middle managers' perceptions and experiences in terms of their role expectations, as well as their thought processes regarding the alignment of their KPIs with their daily responsibilities. The theme 'Authority, accountability and autonomy' will reveal the middle managers' observations regarding their mandate. Furthermore, the middle managers' thoughts on the role that politics played during the strategic change initiative will be presented. Key insights will be provided at the end of each section and linked back to the literature review as detailed in Chapter 4.

Figure 9.2 provides an outline for this chapter. A similar format will be followed as in Chapter 8 and relevant example quotations will be used to demonstrate the middle managers' THINK-ing per theme. The method of showing and demonstrating the middle managers' perceptions and experiences will again be followed as opposed to a telling approach.



Figure 9.2 Chapter 9 outline

Table 9.1 provides the themes for this chapter and the associated descriptions.

Table 9.1 Middle managers' THINK themes

Theme	Description
Role expectations	The theme refers to the middle managers' thoughts regarding their expectations of their own roles and the clarity of these roles during the three phases of the OSS strategic change initiative while strategising.
KPI alignment	The theme refers to the middle managers' perceptions of their alignment between the KPIs (or job descriptions) and their actual daily activities, responsibilities and role.
Authority and accountability	The theme refers to the middle managers' insights pertaining to their authority and accountability to fulfil their roles within their work environment.
Role of organisational politics	The theme refers to the middle managers' views, experiences and understandings of the role that politics played during the OSS initiative.

9.2.Role expectations

Fifteen quotations were identified during the inductive approach. The theme refers to the perceptions of how the middle managers understood their role and what was expected of them.

Relevant quotes to support this theme are presented:

P38:130 (211:211)

During the different phases, it was different. I would say during the design phase it was clear for me, during the implementation phase I was not – as an agent – I was not part of the process so then it wasn't so clear. Now in the maintenance it's clear for me.

P41:61 (195:195)

Initially, it was more vague for me but maybe it was also because of the role I was fulfilling at the time was very specific and did not have so many cross-cutting areas as my later role.

P42:47 (174:174)

I had a broad idea of what was expected of me. [...] I don't think as far as the way I understood the OSS project – that it was a very well-defined role. There was a broad goal, which I agreed with, there were broad guidelines, which I also agreed with, but the details were to be worked out as we went along.

P43:45 (160:160) and 43:54 (181:181)

I haven't yet clarified what my exact daily role looks like because as I said, you get side-tracked and then you need to come back now and think, 'where was I?'

P44:70 (131:131)

No, during the OSS process where we actually discussed the roles, we workshop the roles, the objectives, the functions of the roles were discussed, so it wasn't new and when I got the position – the one position I have currently – that wasn't new as well. I think the biggest challenge is for me [...] it's a learning curve about how does these things fit together because you don't understand everything most times. So yes, I knew what the role, the position entailed, what functions and who would be reporting.

Based on the above quotations, it can be summarised that the middle managers had varied opinions and perceptions regarding their role expectations and clarity,

with at least seven middle managers acknowledging or implying that their roles were not entirely clarified. This, despite the engagement sessions during the OSS initiative to clarify the roles and finalise the job descriptions as mentioned by participant 7 above and shown in the OSS documentation excerpts.

P25:9 (19:19)

Job descriptions will be finalised with key stakeholders to ensure input is received from parties who will be affected.

P26:6 (8:8)

Concept draft job descriptions have also been distributed for input from team members and feedback is required.

P32:14 (37:37)

Concept draft job descriptions were discussed [during the OSS workshops]

This theme supports earlier findings (reported in section 8.3.2.3.) that the middle managers' roles lacked clarity and their responsibilities were not entirely or clearly defined. It appeared that the middle managers did not completely understand their role or that they had a vague and broad idea only. This theme ties in closely with the next two sections (9.3. and 9.4.) and therefore the interpretations and discussion will be addressed in section 9.4. to prevent repetition.

9.3.KPI alignment

Twenty-one quotations were identified during the inductive approach. This theme refers to the alignment between the middle managers' KPIs and their actual daily activities and/or roles during their daily work while strategising. Relevant quotes are presented below:

P38:91 (156:156)

I think its worlds apart. I don't think they're related at all. The current KPIs measure not nearly what I'm doing at the moment. No.

P40:90 (113:113)

In any ... in any process of change, you can't be tied down by your KPIs.

P42:29 (118:118)

I think, especially at the moment, I very much work outside of my annual KPIs, specifically because of outside influences and events.

P50:18 (122:122)

[T]his year I wasn't very involved as a result of the whole political situation of the students. We were so busy putting out other fires, and at the moment I am doing completely different things to what my actual responsibilities are. (Translated)

The participants had different opinions ranging from trivial to close alignment. The majority (10) suggested that their daily activities and roles were not entirely aligned with their specified KPIs or job descriptions. The participants explicitly revealed that, as a result of the external climate that directly affected their work environment, they found themselves giving attention to activities outside of their usual KPIs or job descriptions since the changes in the environment demanded this of them. This theme may provide a possible explanation as to why the middle managers' roles lacked clarity and why their responsibilities were not clearly defined despite these being clarified during the OSS engagement sessions as demonstrated in section 9.2. It appeared that the middle managers were not working wholly according to their job descriptions and associated KPIs due to the influence of the external climate and possibly the ambiguity of the new roles and functions pertaining to the restructuring; therefore, the uncertainty and lack of clarity arose.

It is also noteworthy to observe participant's 3 response.

P41: Interview3_data cleaned.docx – 41:40 (139:139) and 41:41 (143:143)

An important part of my KPIs is change management, so no, I wouldn't say I work outside it. It's part of management that I have to do, it's to take care of change and help people deal with it.

She acknowledged that the role of management and change management encompassed virtually all aspects and therefore she did not feel she was working outside of her KPIs. She accepted that management and leadership were broad responsibilities so most aspects were covered under those roles. This appeared to be a mature comment from an experienced middle manager who

acknowledged that her role as a middle manager was inherently wide-ranging. However, without demarcated boundaries or agreed-upon limitations, middle managers could easily suffer from job burnout and emotional fatigue, which may affect work performance. Furthermore, without the necessary senior management support and leadership, role conflict might result (Han et al., 2014; Wooldridge et al., 2008). Well-defined and applicable KPIs and job descriptions should be consulted with each middle manager, and senior management should ensure that the accountability assigned to each middle manager is indeed aligned with the required mandate and authority levels.

This theme aligns with sections 9.2. and 9.4., and therefore the interpretations and discussion will be addressed in section 9.4. to prevent repetition.

9.4. Authority and accountability

Twenty-nine quotations were identified during the inductive approach. This theme is divided into two sections, namely –

- the middle managers' perceptions that they were accountable without full authority; and
- the middle managers' perception that they had full or limited authority.

9.4.1. Accountable without full authority

The middle managers assigned to this sub-theme recognised that they were expected to be fully accountable for certain responsibilities within their portfolio yet they were of the opinion that they were without the full authority to ensure that it happened. The following quotations support this notion:

P38:94 (168:168) and 38:95 (172:172)

I think they're a little misaligned at times, where I would not necessarily have the full mandate – I would have 70 per cent mandate but I would have 100 per cent accountability. That's real, that's true.

I'm not the owner of the process but I'll be accountable if it doesn't work.

P42:32 (126:126) and 42:33 (130:130)

I cannot, I can never have full autonomy [...] I have to actually at least temper or moderate my expectations and what I need to do in light of their aims and goals. I

must say that the same actually has to happen from their side as well; it's a two-way street but it's not full autonomy.

I still remain accountable for everything although I don't have control over everything.

P44:53 (98:104)

There is an instance where you are accountable but you don't have full authority – and then I escalate.

P51:56 (227:227)

It's sad that we as [middle managers] of student [services] can't have an observation role in the senate, because we don't know what is discussed there and we don't get the minutes, yet we must apply it. It's our work to apply it, but we are not privy. We are not privy there. That is one thing I want to amend.

9.4.2.Full or limited authority

The middle managers assigned to this sub-theme believed that they had full authority or at least limited authority for their portfolio. The quotations demonstrate this view:

P41:42 (147:147) and 41:43 (151:155)

Yes, I mean with freedom comes responsibility they say. So, I can make the decisions but I must also take the flack if it doesn't work out.

I've been lucky, I think I've been given quite a bit of freedom in terms of what I think should happen, so there are certain things that I need to check with my manager – which I do – but I've had good support and I take responsibility for the decisions in my domain. And if somebody wants to fight about it they are very welcome, but, I've actually been lucky in that way.

P42:31 (126:126)

I have full autonomy and authority up to a functional level to and that's a fairly low level because it's my division. [My division] is not acting in a vacuum – we have to cooperate with many people and departments on various levels.

P45:69 (216:216) and 43:39 (143:143)

Definitely, yes, the freedom is there and the authority is there for me to do it.

On an operational level, I'm able to take and make those decisions.

The middle managers had varying responses to this theme as demonstrated by the selected quotes. Based on the recurring findings from previous sections (8.3.1.2., 8.3.1.4, 8.3.2.3., 9.2., 9.3.) it has been established that the middle managers did not fully understand their responsibilities and lacked role clarity. It was therefore not surprising that they experienced misalignment between their actual roles and their KPIs. This resulted in some participants questioning the balance between accountability and authority. For those middle managers who did perceive that they had authority, it became clear that authority was within a functional or operational level only within their unit or division.

The participants operated in a complex and multifaceted work environment. The challenge was therefore to demarcate their domain of contribution and to align this with the required authority to manage their performance areas successfully.

The role ambiguity places needless demands on the middle managers as they transition into their role (see Currie & Procter, 2005). Han et al. (2014) argue that role conflict is usually found in roles that are boundary-spanning in organisations, such as the roles of middle managers, and is a common work stressor. Role conflict can result in self-esteem issues, depletion of resources in terms of energy and time, and may hinder the accomplishment of goals. Organisations, and by implication senior management, are able to support middle managers to maintain healthy psychological well-being by reducing role conflict. There are several ways to achieve this, such as to provide middle managers with the required autonomy and skills training (addressed in section 8.4.) and to formulate clear roles, responsibilities and goals, i.e. role clarity. Coaching and mentoring have already been mentioned as support mechanisms that senior management could utilise to assist middle managers who are new in their roles to adapt and adjust. Currie and Procter (2005) refer to a process of socialisation, whereby senior management helps middle managers socialise into their new roles and provides interventions that cultivate their capabilities to make a strategic contribution. It was evident from this study that this process was not followed and the middle managers were left to rely on their own abilities and competencies without a support structure. Hence, the practice of adapting (section 8.3.1.1.) is key as this

practice enabled middle managers to self-learn and self-develop in order to adapt and transition into their new roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore, it was found that, although mentoring was stated in the OSS documentation, only one participant declared that he received mentoring. The excerpt and quote below refer to this:

P 4:13 (1:3270–1:3433)

Training, mentoring and shadowing will take place as far as possible to ensure that staff transitioning into a new role in 2016 are adequately equipped to do so.

P44:25 (45:45)

There was also a mentoring period. I didn't like the mentoring period. I can tell you why, because in a large part I would like to figure things out for myself – I don't like people telling me what to do, or thinking they know more than what I do, even though it's reality. I'm not saying that – it's just my personality and especially if it's a new task. So, I didn't like the mentoring part but the way it was explained and the way we worked over some of the difficulties and the issues with the mentor opened my eyes to a much bigger reality, so again just realising, 'wait a minute, this is a learning process, I've never had this job before, so why do I think I know everything?'

Although participant 7 felt very challenged by his mentoring period, he acknowledged that it was a learning process and that he felt empowered when he saw the bigger picture and realised he did not have to know it all as it was a new role. It would appear that the mentoring process added value and it might be that this practice could have been used more extensively thereby assisting all the middle managers in gaining role clarity and a more comprehensive understanding of what is fully expected of them in their new portfolios. As an insider to this study, I can further confirm that no other middle manager who was interviewed received mentoring or coaching. It would appear that the senior management level did not provide the needed leadership and support during the change process.

9.5. Role of organisational politics

An inductive approach was followed, and 33 quotations were identified. The theme refers to the middle managers' perceptions, experiences and understandings of the role that politics played during the OSS initiative.

P38:117 (324:324) and 38:143 (328:328)

Definitely, maybe more on the levels above me.

Significantly, because structural lines and reporting lines were changed and that had a significant impact on the department.

P40:104 and 105 (251:251)

Politics is where there's some disguised personal interest.

I can say yes, there were one or two individuals more focused from a political perspective – self-interest then – I've completely ignored it and focused on what had to be done.

P41:95 (339:339)

For sure. I think the fact that we had a strategy implementation office helped because it sort of removed a lot of those politics out of the unit and [they were] a bit more independent, so I think that helped a lot. I'm not always sure about the politics from other stakeholders on campus and what they had to say about it but there's, I think, there's always a lot of politics involved in this sort of thing – depending on how you define politics, but self-interest in a way.

P42:86 (282:282)

It had to, I mean you cannot have an organisation of this size – or of any size I suppose – without having politics. The moment you have a hierarchy of people with various aims and from various backgrounds, you have [...] you have politics. I don't think, however, that politics played an unduly large role – it played the role that was expected – that was to be expected I think.

P43:82 (289:293)

Power games did come through. I remember in one meeting where the project sponsor [name withheld] was giving feedback and a high-level staff member comes and says, 'but that is not what I heard from executive'. And I said to myself, 'wait a minute, now you're saying to me that he [name withheld] doesn't know anything, up to a point where the very said person came to me and said, 'forget it, this is not happening'. 'Now what are you trying to do?' 'I'm trying to influence you to be on my

side.' Well, unfortunately the person exited the university but then definitely there was – at least for what I've seen in a public forum – name throwing to say, no, but I think there's some political issues here which are not being addressed', but in the entire process itself was not political.

P51:83 (373:373)

If it was, then I was too stupid to notice it. I don't notice politics. I think, I don't know, I can't see politics. I'm probably too stupid.(Translated)

P39:68 (363:363)

I don't really think so – not that I've had experienced.

P54:65 (257:257) and 54:66 (261:261)

I think there may be some kind of mind-set [that] might have developed [in] my line manager at that stage which led us to [be] excluded, because people might want to protect themselves and then if the results were negative – it clearly plays a role in these things you know – the politics.

Yes, because people can at that level, they can influence things – where the decisions happens and they have to act on the best interest of the division of the organisation but I do believe that if you are being targeted you start to defend yourselves you know, and especially with the restructure or if the department is devolving into separate entities my [manager] might have felt threatened at the time, and which maybe she may be purely focused on her functional role rather than the other things that's happening, that may become secondary priority to the line manager.

Politics was defined by two participants as personal or vested self-interests, manifesting in the informal processes of the organisation (Janczak, 2005). Politics definitely played a role to varying degrees during the OSS strategic change initiative, as observed by nine of the participants. However, the middle managers did not acknowledge themselves as political players but rather referred to incidences of political play by 'others' in a detached manner. The middle managers were exposed to politics but did not participate. Mueller et al. (2013) indicate that politics can be used as a device to exclude or accuse. However, in this instance, it appeared the middle managers distanced themselves, but were forthcoming in noting the part of other stakeholders in politics. Two participants indicated that they did not detect or experience politics. This is an interesting

observation as politics usually manifests in large hierarchical organisations, such as a university setting (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008), particularly during structurally complex decision-making (Pettigrew, 1990b), as experienced during a strategic change process. The quote below refers to the hierarchical culture at the institution:

P45:17 (64:64)

[Y]ou had to be very aware of a hierarchy, you had to be very aware you don't speak out of turn, that's why I'm talking about culture – it's a very hierarchical kind of culture here.

It may be that both these middle managers had been sheltered or protected from the political arena either due to geographical location or by their reporting lines. It may also be ignorance or a level of disengagement from the process. Davis (2013) found that middle managers were exposed to politics but perceived that they could not influence it and therefore felt disempowered.

A field note and relevant quote pertain to the above:

P49:96 (141:141)

She was put in a situation where it was now expected of her and her team to execute the decision made even when she strongly disagreed. The power play at the meeting was obvious, middle managers against the senior managers with little input from the more operational staff. In the end the senior managers pulled rank.

P44:97 (179:179)

I see there's two kinds of people in the world: those that follow the rules and regulations to win and those that use their personality to win. And for me, I could see that, because in this process it's for me those that used their personality because the rules didn't apply the same manner. It was always typical because changing rules and regulations and those kinds of things – it wouldn't have worked, so those individuals which were strong as power players in terms of 'what I say goes, this is where we're heading, this is what needs to be done, figure it out as we go along'. That's for me where the politics comes in and I'm not saying it's bad or good, but I see those individuals are the ones that rise during that crisis period. Those that follow the rules are a bit stuck because we can't follow those rules anymore. I'm not talking legal, illegal here, just follow rules, and that's where I saw those personalities

influences and it was also a question of those people that were closest to the decision-maker, which in this case I think is [name withheld], they were empowered to get this thing done. If you were quite far from [name withheld], which is the point of the decision-maker, you would have been, you couldn't follow, you couldn't write your proposal to change that direction. And that for me was just interesting.

The quotation by participant 7 sums up the process of political influence at the university. From this quote, it is clear the middle manager was aware of the political influences taking place but it was observed he felt 'outside' of this process. He described himself as a rule follower and therefore felt 'stuck'. In addition, he observed he was not close to the decision-makers and therefore it can be said he felt disempowered. Although he therefore had an awareness of the political play under way and understood the implications, he was not part of it. An interesting area for future research may be to pay attention to how middle managers mobilise political support and establish political impact, if any.

9.6. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the middle managers' THINK research theme. Four main themes were identified during an inductive approach in order to answer the research question as to how middle managers make use of their cognitive abilities as they go about strategising during a strategic change initiative. Key insights per theme are presented in this section.

Based on the findings and supporting quotations it appears that the middle managers lacked in-depth understanding of what was expected of them in their role. In certain instances, the middle managers had a broad notion or high-level understanding but at least seven middle managers did not have role clarity. This finding is interesting as the OSS documentation stated that the middle managers (working group team members) were included in the workshops, and provided input into the finalisation of the job descriptions. Despite participating in the change process, these middle managers still did not fully comprehend their role. There appeared to have been some level of disengagement or detachment from the process.

It was found that mentoring was beneficial, and it may be that this practice could have been replicated thereby supporting all the middle managers in gaining role clarity.

To elaborate further on the above findings, it was discovered that the middle managers' daily activities and responsibilities were not entirely aligned with their KPIs or job descriptions. The most significant reason for this, as revealed by the middle managers, was the influence of the external climate on their work environment. It may therefore be deduced that the uncertainty and lack of role clarity as a result of the external climate may have caused the middle managers to go off script and abandon their KPIs and job descriptions in order to get things done during the crisis period. The HR constraints as stated in the OSS documentation may also have added extra pressure to the middle managers, compelling them to take on additional responsibilities due to the external and internal work pressures and therefore did not have enough time to focus on their own new role.

It was established in various sections that participants did not fully understand their responsibilities and lacked role clarity. This was further supported by the perceived misalignment between accountability and authority of participants. In some instances, the middle managers acknowledged that they had the accountability but no authority, and in instances where they did have authority, this was limited to the functional or operational unit or division. This hampered a cross-functional, boundary-spanning and integrated approach required for client-centric environments, as the middle managers were not empowered to have full authority over a complete process as their influence was limited to their own functional portfolios. The hierarchical culture of the university no doubt also had an effect.

To varying degrees, politics was found by the middle managers to play a role. Most of the middle managers spoke of it as a detached concept almost dispassionate, referring to how 'others' dealt with it or what they perceived from an impersonal viewpoint. Not one middle manager acknowledged or implied that

they perceived themselves as political players or as having political influence. This was an interesting finding as middle managers would need to know how to manage and deal with politics in a proactive manner.

Chapter 10 will discuss the middle managers' self-perceived feelings and emotions as experienced during the OSS strategic change initiative. The research theme FEEL will therefore be addressed.

10.FEEL: Middle manager lens

10.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research theme of how middle managers THINK during their daily strategising while effecting change was discussed. The middle managers' understanding of what was expected of them as well as their perceptions of the alignment between their KPIs and their daily activities was investigated. Furthermore, middle managers' opinions regarding their accountability, authority and autonomy were scrutinised. The role of politics was also considered.

Chapter 10 deals with the middle managers' emotions as they go about their strategy work during a strategic change initiative. Four main themes were identified through an inductive approach, and this chapter will provide rich in-depth accounts of how the middle managers reported FEEL-ing. Figure 10.1 graphically highlights the framework of the research study with a focus on FEEL.



Figure 10.1 Framework for research study: FEEL

Source: Own compilation

The themes that were identified, uncovered the middle managers' perceptions and experiences relating to their emotions during the OSS strategic change initiative. The influence of these emotions on the middle managers' motivation levels and productivity will be revealed. Furthermore, the experiences and observations regarding their change orientation will be discussed. I will follow the format of the previous chapters and present key insights and provide linkages back to the literature review as detailed in Chapter 4.

An outline for this chapter is depicted in Figure 10.2. Example participant quotations will again be shown to validate how the middle managers were FEEL-ing.

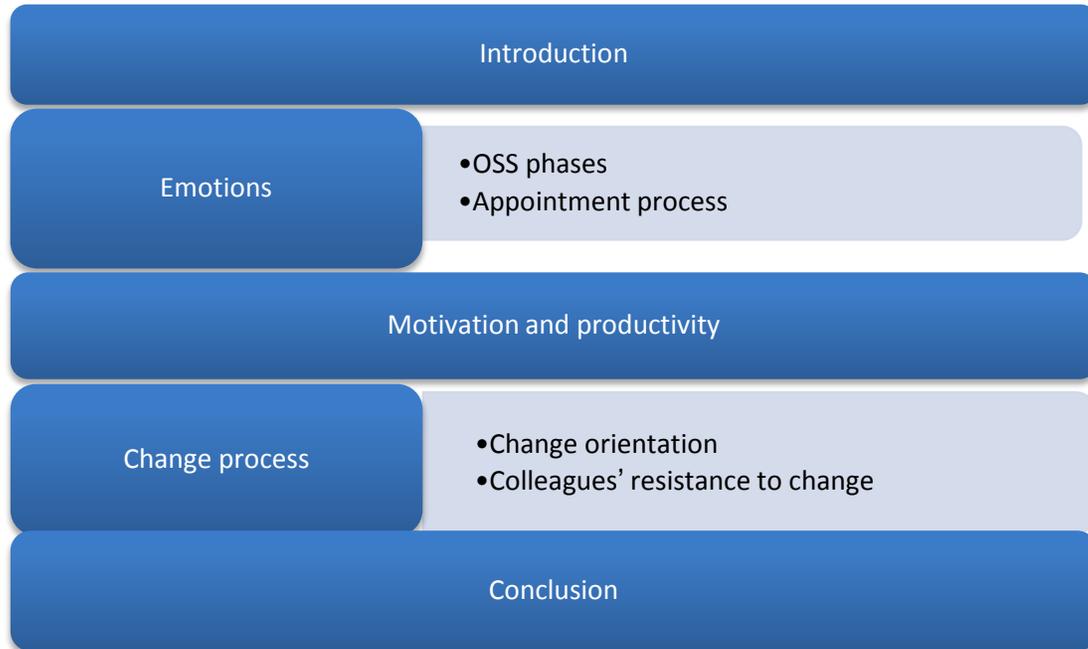


Figure 10.2 Chapter 10 outline

The four main FEEL themes and associated descriptions are summarised in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1 Middle managers' FEEL themes

Theme	Description
Emotions: OSS phases	The theme refers to the middle managers' emotions as experienced during the three main phases of the OSS strategic change initiative, i.e. the investigation phase, implementation phase and the maintenance phase.
Emotions: Appointment process	The theme refers to the middle managers' emotions when they were required to apply for positions, to the point where they were appointed during the OSS strategic change initiative.
Motivation and productivity	The theme refers to the influence of the middle managers' emotions on their motivation and productivity.
Change process	The theme refers to the middle managers' emotions and experiences of the entire change process in terms of their change orientation as well as their observations of colleagues' resistance to change.

10.2.1.OSS phases

During the interviews, participants were asked to select an emoticon from a sheet (Annexure C), which best represented their emotions during a specific phase of the OSS and to provide an explanation for why the selected emoticon was symbolic of their feelings and emotions. The emoticons did not have any expressed or pre-defined meanings or definitions and could therefore represent whatever the participant perceived it to be. The participants' associated quotations and selected emoticons per OSS phase are depicted in Annexure G. However, a summary of the emotions and emoticons per phase is provided in Table 10.2. The participants enjoyed the process and the resultant findings provided rich descriptions.

Table 10.2 Participants' emotions: OSS phases

Participant	Investigation	Implementation	Maintenance
Participant 1	 Receptive	 Uncertainty	 Content
Participant 2	 Excited	 Amazed	 Bored
Participant 3	 Uncertainty	 Difficult	 Happy

Participant	Investigation	Implementation	Maintenance
Participant 4			
	Joy	Happy and frustrated	Tedious
Participant 5			
	Whoa (disbelief)	Grateful	Disheartened
Participant 6			
	Perplexed	Hopeful	Bruised
Participant 7			
	Angry	Hopeful	Smiling and amazed
Participant 8	N/A		
		Uncertainty	Comfortable

Participant	Investigation	Implementation	Maintenance
Participant 9	 Excited	 Weary	 Exhausted
Participant 10	 Content	 Content	 Difficult
Participant 11	N/A	 Uncertainty	 Unhappy

During the investigation phase, it was interesting to note that the middle managers expressed slightly more positive emotions than negative emotions. Two middle managers were not involved in this phase and therefore did not respond. However, five middle managers were receptive, excited, joyful and ready to embrace the change. Four middle managers were uncertain, perplexed and displayed disbelief and anger.

All middle managers reacted to the implementation phase with six displaying positive emotions of amazement, happiness, gratefulness, hope and contentment. Five middle managers however revealed emotions of uncertainty, difficulty dealing with change, and weariness. A quotation from participant 7 sums up his account of the implementation phase:

P44:18 and 44:26 (45:45)

[W]hen it was actually implementation time, now it was no longer jokes, there's no longer consultation, there's no longer talking nice, it's now actual harsh implementation. And why I say the word 'harsh', because that was actually a bit of a shock and it's my first time that I go through something like that which is restructuring and all these kinds of things – where I was quite – how can I say, surprised and shocked at how quickly and how harsh an institution can work. Why I say 'harsh' is when you follow process and procedure irrespective of how you feel about a matter, and if you're not on board you are pushed aside, very simply, very easily. This is where we're heading, you either agree with this or you make a different decision. So that for me was a very important I think, [a] learning curve about how institutions could work. I'm not saying it's good or bad in a way – I'm just saying the experience.

The last phase, known as the maintenance phase, coincided with the turbulent external environment and this had a direct and indirect influence on the middle managers as reflected in their quotations. Only four middle managers expressed contentment, happiness, amazement and a state of being comfortable. An excerpt from my field notes demonstrates this:

P49:68 (113:113)

She [middle manager] seemed upbeat and positive. She was telling me about the new function she is now responsible for and the great ideas and plans they have for this unit. She said it was fun working on a strategic initiative [...] She has called her team together and they are working on some innovative ideas that can be implemented next year.

One middle manager expressed boredom during the maintenance phase as, according to him, the implementation phase went so well that the maintenance phase was not needed. The other six revealed that they were exhausted and tired, disheartened and bruised, and they experienced difficulty and unhappiness. The middle managers disclosed that they felt the most negative emotions during the maintenance phase when compared to the two other phases. This may suggest that the external environment did indeed affect their emotions negatively. This is demonstrated in the quotes below as well as in the field notes recorded during the maintenance phase:

P41:100 (355:355)

The whole protest business that's been really complicating things.

P49:109 (165:165)

Her [middle manager] manner and disposition changed quickly to one of seriousness and concern. The manager felt extremely desponded when we spoke. She felt disempowered and was full of despair. This was after a very stressful year filled with crisis management and constant putting out of fires. The manager felt all her decision-making power and ability had been taken away and she felt that she could not go on as is.

P49:64 (108:108)

It seems that even the staff's personal lives are impacted by the knock-on effects of the protests.

Not one middle manager expressed that they were consistently positive or consistently negative over the three phases, which implied that all middle managers experienced a wide range of emotions as shown in the word clouds (Figures 10.4 and 10.5). This aligns with the literature on the importance of the role of emotions during strategising (Huy, 2012; Liu & Maitlis, 2014). Liu and Maitlis (2014) maintain that strategising is a highly emotional process, comprising negative and positive emotions as demonstrated by the middle managers in Table 10.2. On average, the emotions expressed during the three phases were almost a 50/50 split in terms of positive versus negative emotions. The finding that the maintenance phase was perceived by the middle managers as the most negative phase, despite it being the stabilising period of the OSS strategic change initiative aligns with findings by Harbour and Kisfalvi (2014) that intense emotions appear to linger after a strategic change. The six practices identified in section 8.3.1. were closely associated with the middle managers' emotional states in how these practices were utilised (Mantere, 2005). In addition, the emotions influenced the middle managers' behaviour and cognition (Huy, 2012). It was therefore important for participating middle managers to attain a level of emotional self-awareness in order to enhance performance. The quote below highlights this point:

P38:78 (299:299) and 38:75 (259:259)

I try to remove the emotions from it so even if it is a happy or sad one, I try and put it aside.

So it's also a question of whether you can see yourself in the third person, or if you are in a leadership position you need to be able to elevate yourself out of yourself and see yourself from a third perspective – it's critical to do that.

The practice of adapting may therefore assist middle managers in this self-development and self-learning process in order to gain the required behaviour and emotive skills as identified in section 8.4.

10.2.2.Appointment process

The feelings and emotions experienced by the middle managers pertaining to their appointment process during the OSS strategic change initiative are presented in this section. All middle managers' positions were advertised internally and staff were expected to apply for these positions, regardless of whether they were already middle managers or not. In the majority of instances, middle managers had to compete for their own positions. This was a highly emotionally charged process as depicted in the quotations:

P38:113 and 114 (303:303)

I think there was a lot of excitement. There was some uncertainties and also some doubt in some senses because it was a new position.

I thought I would stand a good chance, but there were no guarantees. So, and it's humbling really to go through a process like that, and I think it's quite important because then you own it.

P41:92 (315:315)

It's not nice, it's uncomfortable, because you know what it's always like in that situation, you don't know how other people value you or how they see you. It's unsure, I don't think anybody enjoys that. It's not nice.

P43:75 and 76 (265:265)

I was very excited, so much so excited that I was not looking at the pay grade but then I was looking at the opportunity to be able to contribute more on a leadership managerial level. So it excited me a lot.

I only got scared when I realised, 'wait a minute, you are out of a position! So you need to reapply'. But then the comfort came from the fact that look, nobody's going to be fired.

P44:100 (195:195) and 44:19 (45:45)

Negative, it was forced. Remember, it's different when you apply for a position because you tried – now you're preparing your CV and everything with certain intention. This is forced. Even that for me was not a nice experience and I don't think it was the intention, it wasn't a nice experience, it was something that had to be done for the institution. So, but doing it forced me to look at it differently as well so yes, and as I said, I've done it, I've done it as honestly as I could. It wasn't a nice experience.

So I went through that process, I participated and also applied for a position so it's not like I removed myself from the process. So I applied for one of the vacant positions, one of the [middle manager] positions in the new structure and I was appointed. So that resolved that issue. Phew! And that in itself was scary.

P45:77 (164:164)

It was a shock to my system, because it pulled me in terms of saying to me, 'this is now something you've never thought about and because I wasn't sure about where I am right now, about the fact that people who'd been managing me would now be, would have to be part of my team because I'd been in a group and I'd now have to manage them – how?'.

P54:61 (230:230)

[I]t affects my emotional feelings and my commitment towards the work ... it also leaves me with the uncertainty – what tasks I must do, what I mustn't do ... the person who I may report to might not have the same skillset and experience as me and maybe he tends to make decisions which have the weight that will lead to a lot of frustrations ... So yes, ... it clearly derails me.

Varying emotions were expressed by all middle managers as they went through the advertising, selection and appointment process. It is clear that the appointment process was an emotionally intense period for the middle managers and resulted in both positive as well as negative feelings. According to Huy (2012), groups of individuals (such as the case of these 11 middle managers) may share comparable or collective emotions during strategic change, which was indeed the case. These emotional responses may have affected the middle

managers' motivational and productivity levels, as will be discussed in section 10.3. Despite the negativity associated with the appointment process, it is worth noting that the middle managers did indeed apply for the advertised positions and took part in the process. This implies a sense of hope and optimism, which the middle managers experienced throughout the process, displaying tenacity and resilience, despite the negative feelings of uncertainty, discomfort and fear. A field note demonstrates this aspect:

P49:101 (150:150)

So she [middle manager] has gone through extreme emotions throughout the year. Yet, she feels that she has managed to deal with whatever came her way – she is 'still here'.

This again demonstrates the middle managers' ability to adapt to changing circumstances and complexity regardless of emotions as discussed in section 8.3.1.1. Whilst taking part in the change process and vying for a middle manager position, they too were effecting change through their behaviour (8.3.2.1.). As an insider, I can attest to the fact that six middle managers were re-appointed as middle managers and the other five were newly appointed to middle management level. All 11 appointed middle managers took on new roles and responsibilities. Not one middle manager taking part in the study was left without a position. It is interesting to note that the five new middle management level appointments experienced the appointment process with more positive emotions than the other six. It may be that the six existing middle managers had more to lose and felt more uncertainty and doubt about having to reapply for a middle management position than the newcomers.

A word cloud was generated by making use of the codes for the theme 'Emotions' that were all positive in nature. The word cloud is depicted in Figure 10.4. This word cloud was created as a graphic representation to show all the codes associated with positive emotions.



Figure 10.4 Emotions theme word cloud: Positivity

Source: Own compilation

Similarly, a word cloud was generated by making use of the codes for the theme 'Emotions' that were all negative in nature. This word cloud is depicted in Figure 10.5. This word cloud was created as an illustrative representation to show all the codes associated with negative emotions.

P41:80 (263:263)

Well, if you feel negatively, you don't have energy and you don't want to do anything but I'm fortunately blessed with a very sort of positive personality. You know, life is always good so I have a lot of energy. I've always had a lot of energy so I'm lucky in that sense because I know some people who are just not inclined that way, so as I say, I'm lucky but it would certainly, if you're not feeling on top of the world, it would have a negative impact, but mostly I arrive at work ready to crack the whip.

P50:68 (442:442)

I'm not like that, despite what they say, I'm now going to plan A and plan B and plan C, which is probably the right thing, I'm just like, 'you know what? Now I'm just doing nothing', that's how I feel now. (Translated)

P43:79 (277:277)

Not at all. We were in a phase in the second part of the year having to prepare for the 2016 academic year and you had to participate there, you still had to continue with your work and you still needed to make sure that the 2016 academic year starts off, as the 2015 academic year has started – even though you knew come March all of this that you've done moves into another department. It didn't impact at all, at least for me.

P44:92 (163:163)

Yes, it did, my motivational levels were probably at their lowest right at the beginning, if we take the three-year period. In the beginning of the three-year period, and partly because of – not necessarily just the OSS but also of conflicts I think, between my then manager and the environment that I was in at that point in time. So it wasn't a OSS-induced low, if I can call it like that, or restructuring low, so that low with my current manager, that point in time coupled with the OSS restructuring meant there was very little people that I could confide in about what's going on and yes, I have contemplated going to other institutions and I have contemplated how, why do I do this – what's the purpose for being here – so that was the lowest of the low.

P44:93 and 94 (163:163)

Since that time it has, my level of motivation has increased because there's now a new purpose, it's not the same thing over and over.

Now I'm in a new job and there's quite a number of new challenges so I'm very grateful at the end of the day.

P45:9 (35:35)

“I question a lot but you come to a stage when you don't get answers, you retract or you withdraw and you just think, 'you carry on, I'll do my own thing on this side' – you know?”

P39:60 (307:307), 39:61 (311:311) and 39:62 (319:319)

I don't think, doesn't matter how tired you are, you still got to deliver, you got your tasks. Maybe more on [the] family side, they might be struggling a little bit more, unfortunately, I have to admit that you get home and you are tired and unfortunately it does seem to impact there a little bit but workwise generally not.

Sometimes it does become overwhelming and you are really, really thrown closed. Typically, a day like today where you stuck in meetings and you're falling behind, you got to go home and instead of spending time with your family you got to work.

Ok, in the work [aspect], do I every now and again, do I crack under pressure? Yes, but also in a home environment, so my colleagues won't know where you're at, you're still the strong person who can get this done. But it definitely took a toll, I mean you know this year. Well, for me it was a different emotional year ... but I think at this stage everybody's tired and irritated, you find people slacking off and you need them now. So, it's a frustration and then sometimes perhaps where I'm never irritable with them, they'll notice.

Nine of the participants mentioned or implied that negative emotions did indeed affect their motivation and productivity levels. Participants also revealed that the converse was true, and being positive resulted in them having more energy to get work done. The quotes also demonstrate the participants' resilience and determination despite the challenges. It can therefore be surmised that the participants were of the view that their emotional states affected their work-related behaviour. The findings therefore support the research that emotions and motivations do indeed shape strategy and strategy work (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009).

10.4.Change process

The next section focuses on the middle managers' emotions and observations regarding the entire change process during the OSS strategic change initiative. The middle managers' change orientation will be discussed as well as their

opinions about their colleagues' resistance to change. A total of 48 quotations were identified during the inductive approach.

10.4.1. Change orientation

The middle managers' feelings and experiences pertaining to change resistance or acceptance during the OSS strategic change initiative were also reviewed. Relevant quotations are presented to demonstrate the middle managers' feelings towards change. It should be noted that change acceptance and resistance are not mutually exclusive concepts as participants may have experienced both at different stages of the change process or during the various phases of the OSS initiative.

P38:129 (203:203)

Reactively, the environment would force us to change and there's no ... when you're in such a volatile environment the best thing you can be is at least reactive as opposed to resisting the change.

P40:78 (76:76)

I was very positive for change.

P41:94 (327:331)

No, I actually like change, I actually like, yes, I like new stuff. Yes, that is good for me.

P42:85 (278:278)

I'm not resistant to change, in fact I, I thrive on it.

P50:23 (138:138) and 50:24 (142:142)

There was a lot of uncertainty and my people were very negative and I think I was also negative. So, I didn't really positively say to them, 'look here, see the broader picture, see this, see this, see this', but I think the problem with me is that I've worked at the university for too long and I was caught up in an old way of working that according to me worked, at that moment it worked better than it does now.

I'm a person who's quite resistant to change.

P43:50 (173:173) and 43:51 (177:177)

I took it up, I took it with open arms. I'm the person that believes that look, come what may, change is there. So, it did not worry me to such an extent that when my

role came up for discussion I said, 'come on guys, let's do it'. So I embraced the change.

Now I'm embracing the change throughout the process.

P44:73 (135:135) and 44:101 (199:199)

During the implementation phase, it was very touch and go, because now it's positions, it's posts, it's job descriptions, it's all these kinds of things, so people were very uncertain and would think, 'oh, should we look for other jobs', whatever the case may be, the unions involved but, still there was momentum and it was fluid and it was moving.

I personally am very hesitant when it comes to change and when things took over, so for me I felt a certain kind of resistance but also I knew this had to be done.

P45:70 (208:208)

No, personally I know that change happens but you need to be taken along in the process.

P51:82 (369:369)

I like change. (Translated)

P39:39 (167:167)

Ready for change, I can't even say, I won't say I was positive or negative, it was just something's going to happen that's going to be put in place and we just take it in its stride.

P54:63(245:245)

If it is a constructive change with proper reasoning I wouldn't object.

Nine of the 11 participants indicated that they accepted change or welcomed change as opposed to two who admitted that they resisted change. This finding is interesting as it does not correspond with the secondary data from the staff opinion survey results in section 6.3.3. The survey showed that the middle managers experienced more resistance to change than their staff. However, according to the quotations, the impression was created that the middle managers were not resistant to change. The field notes that were recorded support the staff opinion survey, and indicated that middle managers were resistant to change despite them believing otherwise:

P49:93 (136:136)

She [middle manager] said she is struggling to let go of her 'old' work and wants to do it herself in addition to her new responsibilities.

P49:123 (188:188)

He was of the opinion that it would have been a complete disaster and would not work and he was very pleasantly surprised that it was working so well. He went on to say that the process and workflow that was set up on the off-site campus should actually now be mimicked on main campus. The fact that all role players were so close and decisions could be made quickly ensured that the flow was streamlined and effective.

P49:100 (148:148)

She [middle manager] continued to say she reached the highest high point and the lowest low point. She then eventually acknowledged it was actually the worst year of her entire life. ... She felt like it was never-ending.

P49:110 (165:165)

The manager was almost defiant as she spoke to me and repeatedly said she would just walk away ... I knew she was just venting, letting off steam but I can tell the year has been very hard on her. [...] She was referring to the decisions that have been made [by senior management] that was out of her control but which she felt very strongly against.

The differences between the middle managers' perceptions of this study and the staff opinion survey may be that the survey included a broader population of middle managers.

10.4.2. Colleagues' resistance to change

This aspect refers to the middle managers' observations of colleagues who they felt were being resistant to change during the OSS strategic change initiative.

P40:127 (85:85)

Even if it was necessary, you know, to get certain people disengaged with the process where resistance was ... take on ... the form of sabotage – and that couldn't be tolerated you know, so there were one or two of those cases.

P41:88 (299:299) and 41:99 (355:355)

Staff are unhappy because they now crossing the line here between what they used to do and what used to be somebody else's domain, so new lines [were] drawn and that people are very possessive about their roles.

I don't know if you want to call it a constraint, but staff attitudes is always difficult. The whole protest business that's been really complicating things. Resistance to change from staff, also learning new roles for the staff is difficult. Taking on additional responsibilities, you know, they look at each other and they make sure the other one doesn't do more than the other – those sort of things. But I think we're beyond that now. But those were the difficulties I'd say.

P42:55 (190:190)

But some of the more – let's call them senior staff – with very vested interest with very sort of rigid ways of doing things with many years of service at the university were slightly more negative.

P44:71 (135:135)

For me obviously it started out negative – negative uncertainty. Some of my staff went through some of these processes before so they knew it was tough, it is difficult, people get hurt in between it and many times those things aren't resolved afterwards. So some of my staff went through previous restructuring from the institution, so in general I would say I had two staff components or two sections, two divisions – the one was much more negative than the other one.

P51:8 (37:37) and 51:27 (103:103)

Because the moment you start looking at people, it becomes very difficult. You have to be a little work-oriented and process-oriented and not people-oriented. Because obviously, any change impacts on people, impacts on the spirit of people, the soul, the emotions, the heart, because not everyone necessarily always thinks with their heads. (Translated)

It was found that eight middle managers felt that their colleagues were resistant to change. It appeared that the middle managers were able to recognise the change resistance in others but their own resistance to change was not so obvious to them.

Interesting enough, even though it was declared up front that no staff member would lose his or her job according to the OSS documentation (section 6.2.1.), participant 7 revealed that staff were uncertain about keeping their jobs. This

appeared to be related to trust issues and that, despite a clear statement and communication to staff, they still felt uncertain and had an element of scepticism.

The apparent colleagues' resistance to change demonstrates the additional complexity in the work environment with which the middle managers had to deal and manage. Not only did they have to manage and cope with their own emotions but they also had to support their staff emotionally through the process. This aligns with the formal strategic role of downward supporting (section 8.2.4.) as well as the practice of overseeing (section 8.3.1.6.).

P49:114 (172:172)

He [middle manager] was prepared to make the sacrifice to be at work when others [staff] were on leave but it seemed he was disappointed that it was not reciprocated.

P49:116 (177:177)

She [middle manager] commented that key staff and managers were not available to assist during that crucial time period and even her colleagues were nowhere to be seen. [...] She was disappointed and frustrated by that.

It can be surmised that the OSS strategic change initiative was indeed an emotionally intense process and that the associated resistance to change was influenced by emotions (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016). In order for the middle managers to overcome the emotional exhaustion they experienced it would have been appropriate for senior management to provide training programmes and coaching to assist them during the strategic change process, especially those who showed signs of severe resistance to change (Turgut et al., 2016). In addition, according to Balogun (2007), it is wise for senior management to provide additional resources during the transitional process as the middle managers acquaint themselves with new roles and responsibilities, since change tends to generate additional work. This additional support was not provided, in fact, additional workloads were assigned due to the external climate, thereby exposing the middle managers to increased stress and emotional fatigue. The freezing of posts and resource constraints may have further aggravated the emotional effect on the middle managers. The composite effect of all the emotional aspects, i.e. the 'little things' did indeed add up, not only affecting the

middle managers' motivation and productivity but also their strategising behaviours (Suddaby et al., 2013).

10.5. Conclusion

The middle managers' emotions were observed in this chapter with a specific focus on their self-perceived emotions during the three OSS phases, the appointment process and the change process. It was demonstrated that during the three OSS phases, the appointment and change processes, intense emotions resulted as reflected in the relevant quotations in this chapter.

It was interesting to note that the last OSS phase, the maintenance phase, elicited the most negative emotions as perceived by the middle managers. This may seem surprising as the maintenance phase was the stabilising period after all the changes had taken place during the implementation phase. It was however found to be a result of the instability in external climate, which overlapped this period. The persistent and ongoing protests affected the middle managers' strategy work and resulted in crisis management and operational interventions. The middle managers were in the process of adapting to their new roles and responsibilities and combined with these added pressures and stresses, culminated in an intensely emotion-laden journey.

Although the middle managers experienced varying degrees of emotions associated with the appointment process, it is interesting to note that the middle managers indeed did take part voluntarily in the appointment process. The middle managers' ability to adapt to these demanding circumstances regardless of emotions demonstrates their adapting practice as discussed in section 8.3.1.1. At the same time, the middle managers demonstrated how they were able to effect change through their behaviour by competing for a middle manager position and moving forward. Section 8.3.2.1. discussed the practice of effecting change.

The middle managers' emotions were also shown to affect motivation and productivity, both negatively and positively.

The aspect of change orientation was raised, and participants' attitude towards changes as well as their opinions of their colleagues' resistance to change was reviewed. Middle managers may have experienced both change acceptance or resistance at different stages and/or during the various phases of the OSS strategic change initiative. The majority of middle managers found change easy to accept, and the resistance was expressed as uncertainty, distrust, weariness and difficulties as articulated by the middle managers during the three OSS phases.

Chapter 11 will conclude with the middle managers' reflections on the strategic change initiative. The chapter will focus on how the middle managers REFLECT-ed in an attempt to create an in-depth understanding of the middle managers' personal journeys through their self-reflection assessments.

11. Conclusion and recommendations

11.1. Introduction

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 focused on addressing the research question and research themes of how professional middle managers strategise to effect change during a strategic change initiative in terms of DO, THINK and FEEL. The findings and interpretations for these three research themes were discussed and presented. A comprehensive account of the middle manager as strategy practitioner has therefore been explored.

This chapter focuses on how the participating middle managers went about reflecting within the context as detailed in Chapter 8. A discussion of the participants' self-reflection assessments is presented in this chapter and relevant quotes will be integrated and interwoven with the concluding summary of the research study. The key insights per research theme will be presented. The main contributions by the study to theory development will be highlighted and practical recommendations for the university management are proposed. Potential areas for future research will also be specified. This chapter provides the conclusion to the research study.

Figure 11.1 is an illustrative perspective of the framework of the research study with an emphasis on REFLECT.



Figure 11.1 Framework of the research study: REFLECT

Source: Own compilation

Corresponding to the previous chapters, selected example quotations from the participants' self-reflection assessments will be used to demonstrate the REFLECT theme. Figure 11.2 provides an outline for the final chapter.

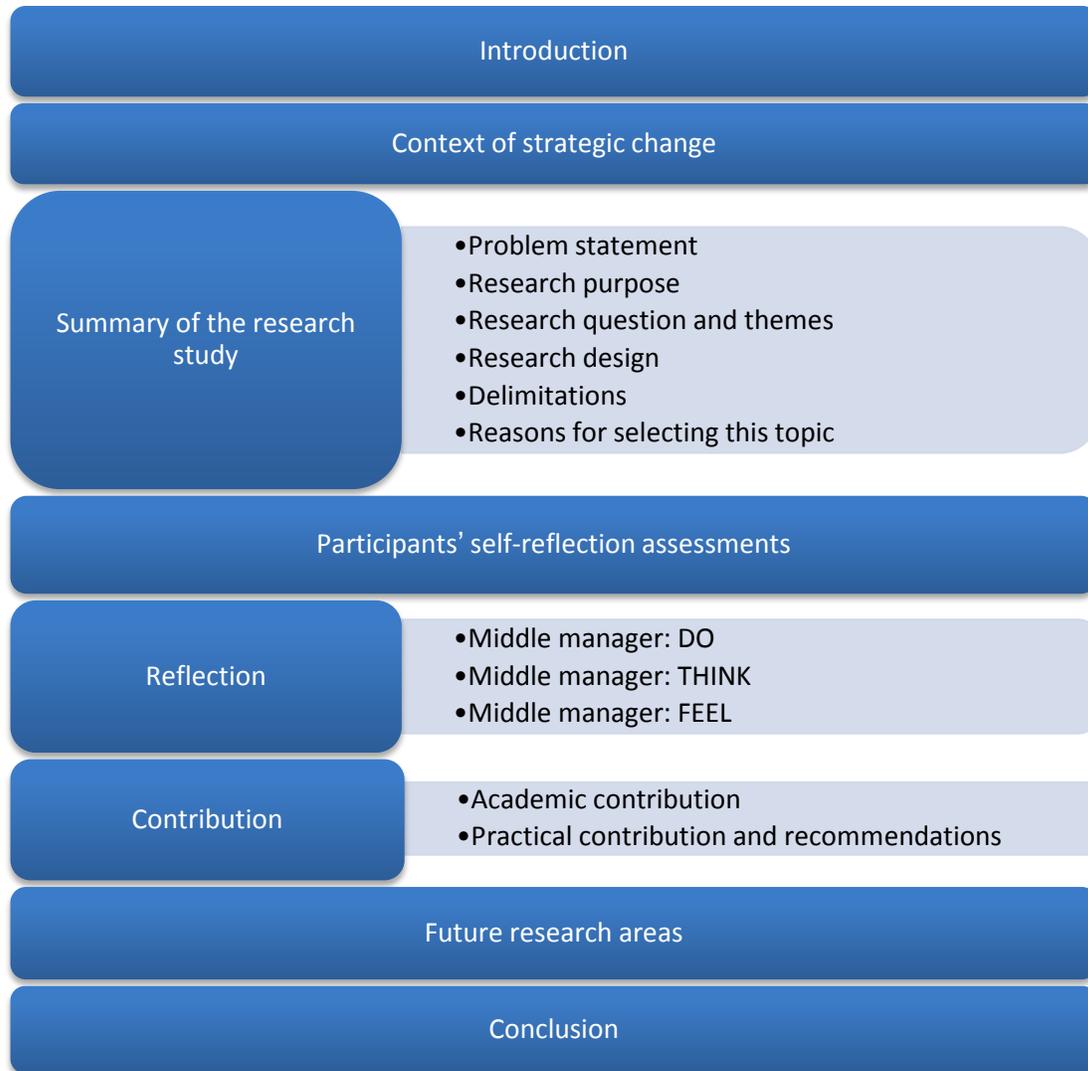


Figure 11.2 Chapter 11 outline

11.2.Context of strategic change

The university, as a single-case study, undertook a strategic change initiative over a period of three years, with a specific focus on the student services delivery model. The purpose of the restructuring process was to enhance service delivery and increase the competitive positioning of the university within the HE landscape. Coinciding with the latter part of the OSS strategic change initiative was a period of intense turbulent protests taking place in the external environment. The unabated protests were a result of socio-economic and political challenges in the HE landscape. The demand for access to quality higher education that is affordable for all South Africans was at the centre of the volatile and violent protests.

During this period of significant change, both within the university and the external climate, immense pressure was placed on the staff, specifically the support services functions. In order for the OSS strategic change initiative to become operational, as sanctioned by senior management, the professional (non-academic) middle managers were mobilised to provide input and ensure the initiative was implemented successfully. The professional middle managers not only had to navigate the environmental, structural and HR change processes on a personal and institutional level but also had to provide support and encouragement to their staff during this period. The unit of analysis for the current research study was therefore identified as professional middle managers.

Professional middle managers were expected to manage both deliberate and emerging strategies during the OSS strategic change initiative. They further had to navigate the demands placed on them as a result of the external turbulent environmental changes. The formal strategic roles and responsibilities of the professional middle managers were found to be lacking in terms of alignment with the complex operational realities and organisational response requirements. Therefore, a situation was created where their level of accountability was not matched with the required authority during their daily strategy work.

The findings of the current study suggest that, although strategy is regarded as important, the middle managers were inclined to focus on operational requirements and give this precedence over strategic objectives during this period of immense strategic change. Research findings indicate that six middle managers agreed that they were indeed included in strategy formulation while five declared that they were excluded.

The agreement and acceptance by the professional middle managers regarding the OSS strategic change initiative appeared to be questionable with the repetitive use of “I think” and “they” which may denote uncertainty, disengagement or detachment to the process. Conversely, the middle managers frequently made use of “we” when discussing their staff or division, which may indicate cohesiveness and unity within their team. This close camaraderie between the middle managers and their teams may have developed a sense of internal independence and a lack of full integration as a result of the ongoing changes. Furthermore, the professional middle managers concurred towards the end of the change process that the OSS strategic change initiative was more or less successful as potential future benefits are still to be realised.

The research findings established that the internal strategic changes as well as the changes in the external climate, particularly the protests and unrests, affected the middle managers’ daily strategising, not only from an operational or job perspective but also at psychological, physical, behavioural and emotional level.

A participant raised a reflective question posed to himself (Figure 11.3). This is a very pertinent question pertaining to the ability to respond to a dynamic changing world. He acknowledged that in the 21st century, the world is constantly changing and there is an abundance of knowledge sharing and information flow that is spread easily and quickly through social media. The image he selected, during the self-reflection assessment, depicted the concept of differing perspectives, with neither perspective being right or wrong:

Over the last three years, I have been trying to catch up on what is correct, relevant and useful information that one needs to source in order to respond correctly to the constantly changing environment and knowledge economy.

The #FeesMustFall movement touched him personally and highlighted the relevance of the image he selected. One perspective of this movement was that free higher education is possible and another is that it is not possible. According to him, both perspectives might be correct.

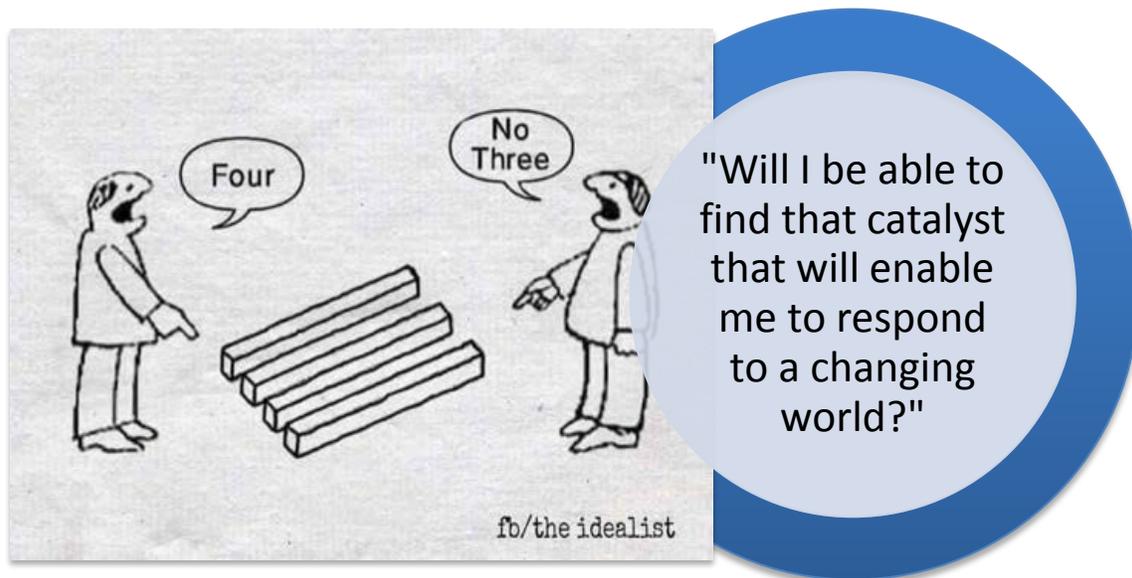


Figure 11.3 Participant self-reflection: Catalyst for change

Source: <https://goo.gl/images/Vkmzot>

Within the context of strategic change as discussed above, and based on the detailed literature review in Chapters 3 and 4, the problem statement, research question and associated themes were defined and will be summarised in the next section.

11.3. Summary of the research study

The research study was positioned within the existing literature making use of a wide range of disciplines, such as strategy, leadership, psychology, organisational behaviour and change. The SAP perspective was deemed to be a suitable lens with the focus on the middle managers' strategising activities and

underpinned by two key theoretical frameworks, namely organisational and practice theory.

11.3.1. Problem statement

To recap, the problem statement of this study as defined in Chapter 1 was as follows:

The strategic roles and responsibilities of professional middle managers (at a South African university) are not aligned with the accountability and authority required while strategising to effect strategic change.

11.3.2. Research purpose

The purpose of the research using the single-case study was therefore to explore and interpret the strategising of professional (non-academic) middle managers during a strategic change initiative at a South African HEI. The study sought to discover the emerging themes relating to the middle managers' strategising roles, practices and behaviours during a strategic change initiative and to develop new and emergent insights taking a wide range of disciplines into account as well as to postulate practical applications and recommendations for management.

11.3.3. Research question and themes

In general, an inductive approach was followed (except for the formal strategic roles whereby a deductive approach was used). Only one research question was posed with corresponding research themes to be explored, allowing the data to speak and emerging themes to evolve.

The research question and associated research themes as initially presented in Chapter 1 are presented here for convenience.

Research question:

How do professional middle managers strategise to effect change during a strategic change initiative?

Major research themes:

DO: Formal strategic roles, practices, routines, practical skills and tools

THINK: Cognitive aspects, role of politics

FEEL: Emotions, motivations and productivity, change resistance

REFLECT: Reflections of the middle managers' experiences and journeys

11.3.4. Research design

A qualitative research methodology was applied in this empirical research study. A single-case study, namely a university, was deemed appropriate as a complex contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context was researched (Yin, 1981). Furthermore, single-case research has a valid history in practice-related studies as demonstrated in section 5.5 and has proved appropriate for strategy-related research. The single case allowed for rich, in-depth insight and holistic understanding to emerge taking the contextual environment into account.

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was conducted with the purpose to explore the in-depth rich experiences of the participants and the way they make sense of their personal journey during the strategic change initiative (Smith & Osborn, 2007). IPA aligned well with the interpretivist theoretical paradigm, the purpose of the study, i.e. exploratory and interpretive, the predominantly inductive research approach, as well as the research methodology and strategy of the study.

The university was selected as the single case due to its prominence as a leading research institution within the HE sector in South Africa. The university undertook a significant strategic change initiative, which was an infrequent event, allowing for an interesting context. Furthermore, the coincidental protests in the national landscape and associated disruptions resulted in unusual circumstances compounding the complexity of the context allowing for a captivating research study. As I was employed at the university at the time of the changes, I had access to the middle managers, documentation, secondary data, and I also had insider knowledge and the experience of the institution, which made the selection appropriate.

The research design as formulated in Chapter 5 was adhered to. Figure 5.2 highlighted the research design components and Figure 5.3 presented the high-level research process that was followed. Figure 5.4 presented an overview of the data gathering methods that were used. Lastly, Table 5.4 provided the iterative stages of data exploration that were followed.

In total, 11 interviews took place with data saturation attained at interview 8. However, as the remaining interviews had already been arranged, I continued with the interviews. After each interview, a reflexivity journal entry was captured and therefore 11 journal entries were available for interpretation. Ten self-reflection assessments were received from the participants. A further 37 field notes were recorded over a six-month period, and the documentation reflected in Annexure E was analysed.

To ensure quality qualitative research, eight key markers were addressed in the research study as detailed in Table 5.5, namely worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010). The ethical considerations as discussed in section 5.12 were fully adhered to.

The detailed IPA process of the 11 transcripts and associated documentation was extremely time-consuming. As a result of the small participant pool, as is the situation in case research, general claims cannot be made (Smith & Osborn, 2007). As a result of the small sample size as well as it being an exploratory single case research study no generalisations have been made. An additional limitation of the study was its exploratory, inductive and subjective nature, as it was possible for researcher as well as subject biases to influence the data gathering and analysis (Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014). This was addressed through the use of the reflexivity journal, field notes and the participants' self-reflection assessments as well as a second coder to verify the quality of the coding process. The research adhered to the concept of crystallisation through the data gathering and analysis of multiple data types and sources, at various points in

time thereby enhancing the credibility of the research and constructing a more complex multifaceted picture of the context (Tracy, 2013).

The intention of the single-case study was twofold: to build theory (Mouton, 2015) and to identify themes in the areas of interest in order to provide insights and practical knowledge and to encourage further debate as opposed to generalising the findings (Cassell et al., 2009).

11.3.5.Delimitations

The study focused on professional middle managers permanently employed at the study university within the student support services functions who participated during the OSS strategic change initiative. Therefore, external consultants, other colleagues, academics and further management levels were excluded from this study. The reasoning was that the professional middle managers were directly affected and involved during the OSS strategic change initiative. The strategising roles, practices and behaviours of these professional middle managers during this strategic change were empirically researched.

11.3.6.Reasons for selecting this topic

My interest in the topic is based on my qualifications (MBA, MA: Research Psychology) and on my knowledge and experience as a middle manager employed at the study university. I am passionate about the notion that middle managers are strategy formulators and implementers and that these two roles are not mutually exclusive. I am also fully aware of the challenges faced by middle managers during their daily strategising and the lack of authority or formal assigned mandate, in order for them to achieve their goals and objectives effectively. The violent external climate that coincidentally arose during the introduction of the OSS strategic change initiatives provided a unique event and rare context for the research study. Based on my participation and role during the OSS strategic change initiative as well as the close collaboration with the affected middle managers, this topic seemed fitting, significant and fascinating for me to pursue.

The research themes DO, THINK, FEEL and REFLECT categorised key findings and interpretations and are summarised in the relevant sections of this chapter. The participants' reflections, as provided in their self-assessments, will be integrated into the summary to provide a holistic view. The order in which the participants' feedback will be discussed in this chapter has been mixed-up purposefully to provide further confidentiality for the participants. Some of the photographs or images may provide clues about who the participants were and I therefore did not want the photographs or images to correspond to previous discussions. Therefore, participants' self-assessments are not identified by their reference numbers.

The next section will firstly focus on the analysis and findings of the participant self-reflection assessments.

11.4. Participant self-reflection assessments

Each participant was requested to submit a self-reflection assessment, detailing his or her personal journey and his or her experiences during the OSS strategic change initiative. Each participant provided an image or photo metaphorically representing his or her journey over the OSS period, as well as a written explanation.

The middle managers' self-reflections of their personal and work journey during the OSS strategic change initiative were inductively coded and 40 quotations were identified.

Three themes emerged during the review of the assessments. The themes and descriptions are provided in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 Middle managers' REFLECT themes

Theme	Description
Adapting and growth	This theme refers to the middle managers' ability to adapt and grow as managers as they interact with their environment. This includes self-awareness, adjusting to the changing environment and persevering despite challenges.
Challenges faced	This theme refers to the middle managers' perceived challenges, which they encountered along their journey during the OSS strategic change initiative. This aspect includes emotional, psychological and physical

difficulties that had to be overcome or endured.

Work environment This theme refers to the middle managers' reflections pertaining to all aspects relating to the work environment.

Table 11.2 highlights the counts of the themes and their relevance per participant. Adapting and growth as well as challenges faced were the two most prominent aspects raised by the participants (seven out of ten and six out of ten respectively). Participant 11 did not submit a self-reflection assessment, despite two reminders.

Table 11.2 Participant self-reflection assessments: Counts of sub-themes

Themes	Participants										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Adapting and growth	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			N/A
Challenges faced				X	X	X	X	X	X		N/A
Work environment	X								X	X	N/A

The dominant theme, adapting and growth, aligned seamlessly with the adapting practice inductively found and reported in section 8.3.1.1. This provides further support that the middle managers undeniably considered the aspect of adapting and growth as key components while strategising.

The extracts below from the field notes demonstrate how the middle managers adapted, grew and developed during the research study as well as the challenges they faced.

a) Adaptation and growth:

P49:129 (193:193)

She [middle manager] seemed more energised and involved in her team and the planning that needs to be done this year. She is adaptable and flexible to changing needs.

P49:71 (113:113)

Although she [middle manager] feels the pressure of the new role and the impact of the external environment she seems content within herself and satisfied with the progress within her division. She is not a very emotional person and takes most situations in her stride. I can also see she is becoming more confident within her new role.

P49:77 (125:125)

He [middle manager] seemed very positive about his new role and said although it is still a very steep learning curve he feels confident and satisfied with his new role. He said he initially found the new role very challenging and overwhelming. Certain aspects of the role he feels comfortable with but the new additions are something he is still learning.

b) Challenges:

P49:152 (223:223)

I am constantly reminded about the frustrations they [middle managers] deal with while managing their staff and dealing with instructions from above that they are not entirely in agreement with. Mostly these decisions are not participatory and the managers feel disempowered. But again what strikes me is their ability to be resilient and to persevere and make things work despite being asked to do things that fall way outside of what should be expected of them.

P49:51 (88:88)

Her [middle manager] mood seemed agitated and had a sense of urgency. I can tell that she is taking a lot of strain. She is usually very controlled but seems she is finding herself in an uncontrollable situation. Pressures are being placed on her, which do not belong in her portfolio.

11.5.Reflect

Extracts from the participants' self-reflections and the associated interpretations are integrated and woven into the remainder of the chapter to correspond with the middle managers' DO, THINK and FEEL themes.

11.5.1. Reflect: Middle manager DO

The middle managers' DO theme focused on the 'doing' of strategy. This theme discussed the middle managers' formal strategic roles, practices, routines, practical skills and tools. The key insights that emerged for each theme are emphasised as per the findings and interpretations in Chapter 8.

Five formal strategic roles from the interviews with the middle managers were confirmed to be relevant as identified in the literature review. It was found that all middle managers perceived their formal roles as those of strategy implementers, communicators and interpreters of information as well as providing downward support to their staff. The middle managers therefore related with all the so-called 'traditional' strategic roles as defined in the literature review (see 4.4.1.). The facilitating adaptability role, and specifically the crafting change strategising activity, was shown to be applicable to 10 of the 11 middle managers. However, only eight middle managers denoted the upward influencing role, and in particular the strategising activity of 'influencing strategic issues'. It can therefore be concluded that the formal strategic roles as identified in the recent literature (see Table 4.2) were confirmed as relevant in this research study. This demonstrates that the middle managers took on various formal strategic roles while going about their strategy work during a strategic change initiative. Besides the 'traditional' roles, the middle managers were indeed taking on more 'non-traditional' roles in order to meet the demands of a changing and dynamic environment as well as dealing with expectations of staff and senior management.

As previously mentioned, these formal strategic roles are directly linked to strategy work and were initially identified in a related survey study following a deductive approach (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014). However the practices, routines, skills and tools in this research study have been identified inductively and therefore are considerably richer in detail due to the data gathering method chosen. The inductive approach permitted for the less obvious data to be revealed. This allowed for the discovery of emergent themes, which is true to the interpretivist perspective.

The low detailed level, less obvious practices and routines as revealed by the middle managers emerged during the inductive research process and therefore were considered a main contribution to this study.

Six unique practices emerged, namely adapting, effecting change, collaborating, mobilising, peacekeeping and overseeing. All middle managers revealed the adapting, peacekeeping and overseeing practices. Thereafter, 10 middle managers demonstrated the effecting change and collaborating practices, followed by eight who noted the practice of mobilising.

These practices drew on the middle managers' behavioural, cognitive, psychological and emotional resources while they strategised and further enabled the formal strategic roles.

Two participants depicted their OSS journey and experiences with a photo of flora. Metaphorically, the plant symbolises growth, and both participants commented that their journey was a process of growth and development. This process of growth and development aligned well with the practice of adapting. One participant further explained that, despite the obstacles as represented by the thorns of the plant, it is the thorns that protect the plant and fortifies it (Figure 11.4).



Figure 11.4 Participant's self-reflection: Obstacles yet growth

Source: Photo taken by participant

The second participant mentioned that the plant in his photo was relocated from Limpopo to the study university's botanical gardens (Figure 11.5). He explained that, despite the displacement, the plant is strong and thriving, which metaphorically represents his redeployment during the OSS initiative and the resulting achievements within his new role. This again demonstrates this participant's resilience and ability to adapt to changing circumstances.



Encephalartos Eugene Maraisii, originally from the Waterberge in Limpopo. Located to the botanical gardens at the University of Pretoria. "It represents strength and growth despite being displaced."

Figure 11.5 Participant's self-reflection: Strength despite displacement

Source: Photo taken by participant

The following participant quote (Figure 11.6) demonstrates the adapting, mobilising and overseeing practices.

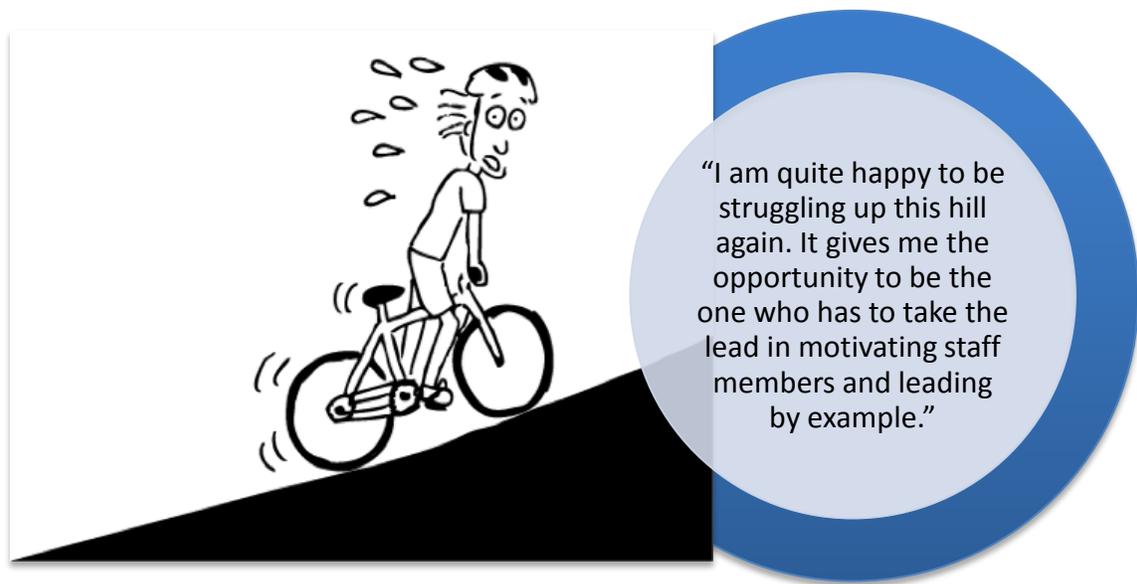


Figure 11.6 Participant's self-reflection: Moving upwards

Source: <http://www.stuartmcmillen.com/blog/creative-thinking-the-power-of-cartoons-and-games/>

Clearly, the person in the sketch is struggling as can be determined from the facial expression and drops of perspiration. She went on to explain the significance of the image.

Throughout my life I have had so many uphill battles relating to my personal circumstances. Constantly being in this uphill battle makes you feel quite despondent at times. As I journeyed along, I have come to discover that it is okay to be struggling uphill, as throughout life, as you journey along, you experience so many life lessons and grow older and wiser.

She went on to clarify the other options that were open to her.

However, if you do reach the top of the hill then there is a possibility for complacency to set in. It becomes so very easy, not to learn new things any longer, just to accept everything, not to innovate or be creative – riding downhill becomes so much easier and you can easily find yourself in a comfort zone, from which you do not move or do anything differently. This is not where I want to be.

She explained that her new position (as a result of the OSS) might require increased effort in terms of leadership, supporting and motivating staff. This may not always be easy but she feels this is the best position to be in – in order to “innovate”, “learn”, “adapt or adjust”.

Two main routines were identified by all middle managers, namely attending to emails on a daily basis as well as the attendance of or participation in meetings and other informal engagements. It was revealed that attending to email every day was the one constant routine amongst all middle managers and they expressed their preference for email as a communication method. Meetings were less popular amongst the middle managers; however, informal engagements were another preferred method of communication. During a period of strategic change and especially when there are extra stressors, such as a turbulent external climate, the importance of communication is evident as discussed in the literature review. The ability to communicate effectively is therefore crucial and the middle managers revealed that email and informal engagements as methods of communication were working for them and should therefore be exploited.

It emerged during the study that the participating middle managers had no clear work routines established. It may be that the ongoing disruptions during the OSS strategic change initiative as well as the unstable external climate might have resulted in a lack of well-defined work routines or no work routines for most of the middle managers.

Five practical skills emerged from the data as skills that the middle managers possessed, specifically creativity skills, organisational skills, behavioural and emotive skills, leadership skills, technical skills and experience. All participants indicated that they had acquired at least one or more skills. Technical skills and experience as well as leadership were mentioned most by the middle managers.

Figure 8.3 highlights the interconnectivity between the formal strategic roles, practices and practical skills. The practical skills facilitated the middle managers to go about their regular practices as well as to enhance the middle managers’

competencies to fulfil their formal strategic roles. The middle managers' practices in turn underpinned and strengthened the formal strategic roles.

All middle managers indicated that they utilised at least two or more tools during strategising. The following tools were mentioned: policies and procedures, conventional tools, strategic plans, analytical tools, IT tools, and digital communication tools.

The digital communication tools and the IT tools were referred to most by the middle managers. These tools appeared to be popular amongst the middle managers due to the convenience and benefits associated with these tools. This included the ability to be connected regardless of time or location, direct access, rapid method of communicating, as well as eradicating the need to meet physically therefore saving time and effort. These tools therefore facilitated socially interactive processes as well as enabled the implementation of strategic initiatives.

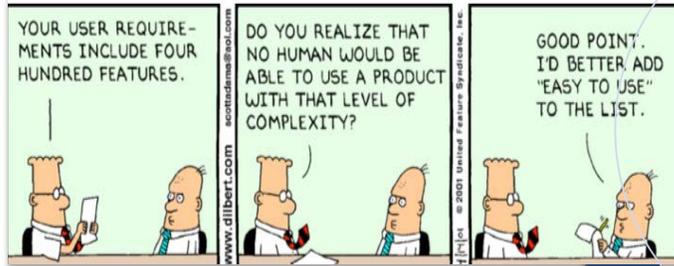
11.5.2.Reflect: Middle manager THINK

The middle managers' THINK theme focused on the cognitive aspects pertaining to strategising. The following aspects were identified:

- the middle managers' role expectations;
- the alignment between actual work and defined KPIs;
- authority, accountability and autonomy; and
- the role of politics.

The majority of middle managers revealed that they did not have clear role expectations or only a vague notion of what was expected. This finding is put into context when considering that five middle managers were newly appointed to the middle management level, and those who were already middle managers had their roles and responsibilities changed. The lack of well-defined roles may also explain the lack of clear work routines.

A male participant identified a cartoon, depicted in Figure 11.7, which he said best summed up his OSS experiences.



“One of the biggest challenges of the OSS project was to merge enthusiasm and expectations on the one hand, with realism and practical limitations on the other.”

Figure 11.7 Participant’s self-reflection: Enthusiasm versus realism

Source:

<http://www.detechter.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Capture1Dilbert1.png>

This quote relates well to the role expectations theme. For this participant, the main challenge was to try to find the balance between what is expected of him in his new role versus what is practically possible, given the limitations of reality.

Apart from there being a lack of clarity pertaining to the middle managers’ role expectations, it was also found that the majority implied that their daily activities and responsibilities were not entirely aligned with their specified KPIs or job descriptions. The external climate may have played a role as suggested by the middle managers. They found themselves focusing on activities not contained in their KPIs or job descriptions due to the operational demands placed on them during this period of change.

It was therefore no surprise that some of the middle managers experienced a misalignment between their accountability and authority. Those middle managers who did sense that they had full or limited authority, expressed this was only a functional or operational level within their own unit or division.

The resultant compounded effect of the lack of clear roles expectations, misaligned KPIs and limited or no authority to fulfil their roles, placed the middle managers in an extremely complex and challenging work environment. At the time of this research, middle managers were expected to strategise in boundary-spanning roles; yet, their authority levels were restricted despite them having been accountable for performance outcomes over which they had very little control.

Lastly, the role of politics under the THINK theme was explored, and it was found that, although the middle managers were exposed to politics and could identify others engaging in political play, they did not actively participate themselves. Politics therefore played a role in the sense that other stakeholders, such as senior management, were influencing and persuading via the informal network but the middle managers appeared not to have the political understanding or skills to alter outcomes.

11.5.3.Reflect: Middle manager FEEL

The middle managers' FEEL theme focused on the middle managers' emotions while strategising. The emotions as experienced by the middle managers during the three phases of the OSS strategic change initiative as well as the appointment process were explored. In addition, the change process pertaining to change acceptance or resistance was examined.

The middle managers expressed a wide range of emotions during the three phases of the OSS strategic change initiative. It was found that the maintenance phase seemed to be the most negative phase as experienced by the middle managers. It appeared that the external climate played a role in this negativity due to the additional operational and emotional demands placed on the middle managers.

A participant likened her OSS journey and experiences to that of a roller-coaster ride (Figure 11.8). She went on to describe the previous three years as an emotional journey filled with highs and lows – both in her personal life and work capacity. The roller-coaster ride represented those ups and downs that were

sometimes sudden and unexpected, taking her out of her comfort zone and forcing her to either enjoy the ride or protest against it.

At first I was very negative about the OSS project. For someone like me, who battles with change and who lives in a black and white world, the project was very difficult to adopt and I suffered a lot.

The participant went on to explain that she had to “learn to think out of the box” and she had to adapt to “new ideas and structures” that “should replace older ways of thinking”.

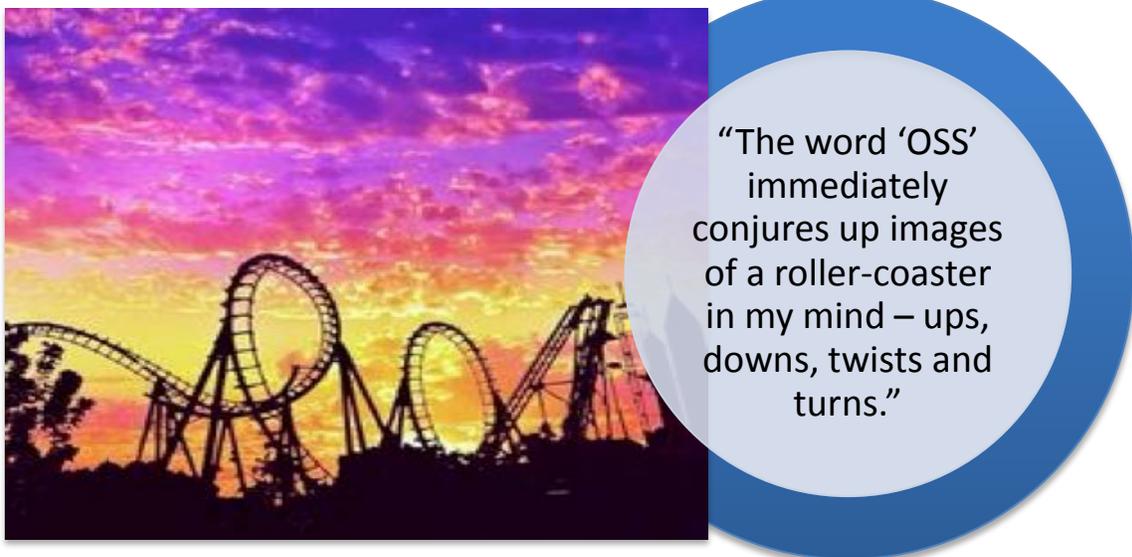


Figure 11.8 Participant's self-reflection: Emotional roller-coaster

Source: <https://za.pinterest.com/pin/131730357829268474/>

Widespread emotions were also experienced by all the middle managers during the appointment process. The five new middle management-level appointees experienced a more positive appointment process as opposed to the middle managers who had to reapply for their own positions. Having to reapply for a middle management position may have resulted in them experiencing increased uncertainty.

The majority of middle managers also believed that negative emotions affected their motivation and productivity levels and that the opposite was also true, i.e.

positive emotions improved their motivation and productivity levels. It can therefore be summarised that the participants were of the view that their emotional states influenced work-related behaviour and therefore affected their ability to strategise.

The next participant was much more reserved in her opinion regarding her OSS journey. She was captious yet optimistic in her outlook (Figure 11.9). Her perspective of the OSS experiences was that it was a leap of faith as symbolised by the gold fish leaping from the crowded fish bowl to an empty bowl. She went on to explain that the OSS “still has a way to go to be a complete success”. The participant emphasised there was much work to be done before it could be described as an accomplishment. The outcome was not entirely known – just as the fish, leaping out the fish bowl, does not yet know its full fate. However, action is a key ingredient for success.



Figure 11.9 Participant's self-reflection: Leap of faith

Source: <https://karyoberbrunner.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/fish-bowl.jpg>

The majority of the middle managers revealed that they were not resistant to change; however, they felt that their staff were. This finding is contradictory to the

secondary data obtained from the staff opinion survey results, which showed that the middle managers experienced more resistance to change than their staff.

It could be that the middle managers were able to acknowledge the others experiencing change resistance but their own resistance to change was less obvious to them. This variance emphasises the importance of crystallisation and the benefit of the multiple data gathering methods of the study. The additional stressor of staff change resistance highlighted the additional complexity in the work environment that the middle managers had to manage. The middle managers were not only recipients of change but also change agents who emotionally supported their staff through the change process.

A participant depicted her OSS journey with the image of a wet cat with very large eyes looking anxious and worried, seen in Figure 11.10. Initially, she did not think the OSS initiative would affect her or her staff, and she was taken by surprise when she realised that it would have a profound influence on her. As a manager appointed within her new portfolio, she found her new role overwhelming at times.

All my staff have opted for new job descriptions which resulted in lots of internal training. One staff member is not coping at all.

Her view of the OSS turned out to be positive and optimistic as she saw the initiative as an opportunity to improve the operations and communication within her new portfolio. As she and her staff journeyed along, they have reached a point where they were happier, were coping better and felt secure in their new roles.



“As manager of the office, I am sometimes overwhelmed and stressed out. My managers are still learning.”

Figure 11.10 Participant’s self-reflection: Overwhelmed

Source: <http://i.imgur.com/ouFrZnQ.jpg>

The composite effect of all the emotional aspects, i.e. the “little things” did indeed add up, not only affecting the middle managers’ motivation and productivity but also their strategising behaviours (see Suddaby et al., 2013).

11.6.Academic contribution

In response to the planned contributions proposed in section 4.8, the following summary of academic contributions can be confirmed.

- The research findings contribute to the contemporary organisational and practice theory development as the focus of the study was on professional middle managers’ strategising activities to effect change during a strategic change initiative within an HEI in a South African context. Aspects included in the study pertinent to these theories were strategy, strategising, organisational structure, organisational change, organisational behaviour, environment uncertainty, politics, motivations, emotions, roles and responsibilities, to name a few.

- The study contributes towards identifying a unique data gathering method, which involved the participants taking photographs or selecting images symbolising their personal journey over the OSS strategic change initiative. The participants also had to provide a written narrative explaining why the photograph or image was representative of and relevant to their journey (participants' self-reflection assessments). This allowed the participants the opportunity to reflect after the interview and provide written confirmation of their experiences. These reflections were used to conclude their overall experience, and the interpretation thereof uncovered rich accounts to describe all research themes.
- The findings and interpretations contributed to the SAP perspective relating to practitioners, their formal strategic roles, practices, routines and tools while strategising, thereby addressing the SAP research agenda. The IPA provided a holistic perspective to describe the research themes. The approach confirmed that strategising was the result of not only actions but was also influenced by cognitive, rational and emotional experiences. The depth and scope of the investigation thus contribute further to the SAP perspective. The research study adds value to theory by expanding the body of knowledge related to the middle manager perspective. The middle managers participating in this study were employed within a university context forming part of the support services or professional staff complement and thus provided a unique viewpoint.
- The research further contributed to the development of organisational change theories as the context of the study reflected a strategic change initiative at a university within a developing country.
- Finally, the research findings identified new emergent insights within the selected theories and theoretical perspectives pertaining to the middle managers' DO, THINK and FEEL themes within a university context.

The details of the academic contributions are provided in Tables 11.3–11.6.

11.6.1.Middle manager: Context

The identified research gaps and the associated findings with regard to the research study's context are presented in Table 11.3.

Table 11.3 Research gaps and findings: Context

Research gap	Research study findings
Strategising within the context of developing countries like South Africa (Davis, 2013; Davis et al., 2016).	Research study took place within the HE sector in a South African context.
Middle managers within a university context who are non-academic, i.e. support service staff (Davis, 2013).	The unit of analysis for this research study was the professional middle managers, employed at the study university, within the student support services departments.
Middle managers' activities of strategy work at universities (Davis, 2013; Davis et al., 2016).	The research study focused on the professional middle managers' strategising during a strategic change initiative (restructuring) at the study university.

11.6.2.Middle manager: DO

The identified research gaps and the associated findings with regard to the research theme DO are presented in Table 11.4.

Table 11.4 Research gaps and findings: Middle manager DO

Research gaps	Research study findings
Middle manager practices with a specific focus on the identified roles and an improved understanding of how these strategic roles were perceived by middle managers (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014).	Five formal strategic roles were confirmed as being applicable following a deductive approach, namely – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing strategies; • interpreting and communicating information; • facilitating adaptability;

Research gaps	Research study findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • downward supporting; and • upward supporting. <p>Findings suggest that the middle managers mostly associated themselves with the more traditional strategic roles, such as those of strategy implementers, communicators, and providing support to staff. However, all five roles were demonstrated.</p>
<p>Strategic actors other than top managers, which would include a focus on middle managers (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).</p>	<p>The research study focused on the professional middle managers as the unit of analysis.</p>
<p>Identification of who a strategist is, and the experiences that these actors bring to the role of strategising with particular reference to the nexus between practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).</p>	<p>The research study focused on the professional middle manager as a strategic actor, and the research themes of DO, THINK, FEEL and REFLECT were explored. As part of the DO theme, the middle managers' formal strategic roles were confirmed and six unique practices were identified. The practices were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adapting; • effecting change; • collaborating; • mobilising; • peacekeeping; • overseeing; and • offering a unique contribution to theory development. <p>These practices drew on the middle managers' behavioural, cognitive, psychological and emotional resources while they strategised and further enabled the formal strategic roles.</p>
<p>Better understanding of the middle managers' skills, particularly discursive skills, that are drawn upon when performing their role as translators across organisational boundaries (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013).</p>	<p>Five practical skills were identified making use of an inductive approach, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creativity skills; • organisational skills; • behavioural and emotive skills; • leadership skills; and • technical skills and experience. <p>Discursive skills were not explicitly mentioned by the middle</p>

Research gaps	Research study findings
<p>“Not only the taken-for-granted assumptions but also the taken-for-granted practices and the way they condition organisational change research and practices” (Jansson 2013: 1014), the “taken-for-granted aspects of social practices” (Vaara & Whittington, 2012: 324).</p>	<p>managers but were implied through their informal interactions with others as they went about their daily work. The middle managers’ collaborating practices and their formal strategic role of communicating and interpreting information further support this finding.</p> <p>The taken-for-granted practices identified in this study directly affected the middle managers’ strategising competencies during a strategic change initiative.</p>

11.6.3. Middle manager: THINK

The identified research gaps and the associated findings with regard to the research theme THINK are presented in Table 11.5.

Table 11.5 Research gaps and findings: Middle manager THINK

Research gap	Research study findings
<p>Issues of power and politics (Mueller et al., 2013).</p>	<p>The research study findings suggest that the professional middle managers were exposed to politics but did not participate actively. The middle managers revealed that they could not influence the political processes and distanced themselves from it.</p>
<p>Understanding –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “how leaders actually go about reviewing and revising their mental models in the midst of change”; – “how leaders’ approaches to change evolve with time and experience”; and – “how leaders tackle a wider range of situations” (Lawrence, 	<p>The research study focused on the middle managers’ DO, THINK, FEEL and REFLECT research themes during a strategic change initiative. The personal journeys of the middle managers were revealed through their self-reflection assessments and direct transcript quotes demonstrating how they addressed a wide range of situations amidst strategic change.</p>

Research gap	Research study findings
2015: 251).	

11.6.4.Middle manager: FEEL

The identified research gaps and the associated findings with regard to the research theme FEEL are presented in Table 11.6.

Table 11.6 Research gaps and findings: Middle manager FEEL

Research gaps	Research study findings
Middle managers' role "in perceiving and managing their own as well as others' emotions and developing emotional capability, remain to be investigated more thoroughly" (Huy, 2012: 244–245)	The FEEL theme identified the professional middle managers' self-perceived emotions during the three OSS strategic change initiative phases, the appointment process as well as the change process. In addition, their ability to manage their emotions and those of their staff were interwoven in the middle managers' practical skills, practices and formal strategic roles.
Factors that enable and constrain middle managers "to perceive and manage the collective emotions" of diverse strategic events such as restructuring within an organisation context (Huy, 2012: 245).	The research study identified factors that enabled and constrained the professional middle managers in dealing and managing collective emotions during the strategic change initiative within a university context (a restructuring event). The external climate and associated HR constraints, such as freezing of posts, influenced collective emotions and posed significantly constrains. The practical skills, practices and formal strategic roles enabled the middle managers during this process.
The link between displayed emotions and strategising practices (Huy, 2012; Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Suddaby et al., 2013).	The professional middle managers' practices clearly demonstrated the link to emotional aspects, such as the peacekeeping and overseeing practices.
"How individual emotions are influenced by the reactions of their surroundings – and how this influence affects sensemaking" (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016: 912).	The external context of the study relating to the turbulent environment, ongoing protests and continuous disruptions influenced the middle managers' emotions and behaviour as found in the research themes DO, THINK, FEEL and REFLECT.

Research gaps

Sensemaking during organisational change and the responses of middle managers to different stages of a change initiative (Helpap & Bekmeier-Feuerhahn, 2016).

Research study findings

The research study focused on the professional middle managers' strategising during a strategic change initiative spread over three phases. The THINK and REFLECT research themes demonstrated the middle managers' cognitive processes and reflections as they made sense of the change initiative. In addition, the formal strategic role of communicating also addressed the sensemaking strategising activity.

11.7. Practical contribution and recommendations

The unstable external climate had an effect on the middle managers' daily strategising, not only at operational or job level but also at psychological, physical, behavioural and emotional level. The following recommendations or proposals have been identified for senior management's consideration. These may provide deep insights and learning opportunities going forward:

- Universities cannot afford to neglect the value of professional middle managers (Duncan, 2014).
- Middle managers are exposed to role conflict, i.e. lack of role clarity and ambiguous responsibilities. Senior management could assist by clarifying strategic goals, providing clear informational support, providing autonomy, decreasing incongruent role expectations thereby increasing role clarity (Han et al., 2014). It was found that the mentoring process added value, and it may be that this practice could be used more extensively thereby assisting middle managers in gaining role clarity and a more comprehensive understanding of what is fully expected of them in their new portfolios.
- Investment in a process of socialisation and the offering of interventions that cultivate middle managers' capabilities to make a strategic contribution, facilitated by senior management may assist these middle managers to socialise into their new roles and responsibilities (see Currie & Procter, 2005).
- Without established boundaries or agreed-upon responsibilities, middle managers may suffer from job burnout and emotional fatigue, which may affect work performance. Furthermore, without the necessary senior management support and leadership, role conflict may result (Han et al., 2014; Wooldridge et al., 2008). Well-defined and applicable KPIs and job descriptions should be discussed with each middle manager and senior management should ensure that the accountability assigned is indeed aligned with the required mandate and authority levels.

- Senior management should consider providing additional resources during future strategic change initiatives as middle managers transition and acquaint themselves with their new roles and responsibilities, since change tends to generate additional work (Balogun, 2007).
- Management should consider reviewing the purpose or mandate of meetings, in terms of who should attend due to the contribution they can make, a clear agenda that is followed and meeting preparation by all participants to ensure meetings are efficient, productive and kept to a minimum.
- Middle managers are required to learn new skills not only associated with new roles and responsibilities but also to keep abreast of the changing environment (Olsen & Stensaker, 2014). Senior management could provide the required individually tailored training programmes (Floyd, 2016), but more importantly provide the required coaching and mentoring. A strategic approach to leadership development within the HE sector for middle managers is therefore required (Floyd, 2016).
- Middle managers require a broad range of organisational, development and strategy skills, especially process skills, such as coaching, facilitation and communication skills to enable them to carry out their strategy work (Whittington et al., 2011). Senior management should include these aspects when providing developmental paths for middle managers, as these types of skills are not generally offered in management programmes or considered during personal development.
- Politics plays a crucial role during strategy making and strategic choices (Carter et al., 2010), and middle managers require the necessary political skills (Whitchurch, 2008b) in order to navigate the political arena during strategic change. Senior management could provide the required coaching and mentoring as these skills cannot be taught in a classroom.

- Senior management has a key role to play in equipping middle managers with conflict resolution skills. Conflict management competencies may assist with work burnout and work performance issues (Rahim, 2016).
- Emotional fatigue has been related positively to dispositional change resistance, and senior management is encouraged to provide the necessary coaching and training programmes to support middle managers during strategic organisational change (Turgut et al., 2016).
- Emotions influence middle managers' behaviour and cognition (Huy, 2012). It is therefore important for middle managers to attain a level of emotional self-awareness in order to enhance performance.

The findings therefore contribute to the pragmatic body of knowledge relating to the middle manager perspective focused on middle managers' strategising during strategic change within a university context.

11.8.Future research areas

Based on the findings and suggested recommendations, it appears that the senior management level did not provide clear direction during the strategic change initiative and that the required support to middle managers was lacking. A potential area for future research may therefore be to consider how senior management supports middle managers during a strategic change process and which type of support is required.

It was also found that the participating middle managers engaged in certain techniques to influence strategic issues, such as a questioning approach whereby proposed solutions are embedded in the questions. An interesting avenue for future research may be to explore the tactics or techniques (learnt or intuitive) used by middle managers in order to influence strategic issues.

Furthermore, the lack of political confidence amongst the middle managers was an unforeseen finding, and it would be worthwhile to explore how middle managers mobilise political support and establish political influence, if any, and if not, which skills are required to facilitate them in navigating the political

landscape during a strategic change. Further on the topic of skills, it would be interesting to investigate how middle managers develop the required soft skills in order to cope during strategic change.

11.9. Conclusion

This chapter provided a conclusion to the research study and integrated the middle managers' reflections of the OSS strategic change initiative with the key findings and contributions of the study. The chapter recapped the research problem, the research question and the themes together with the closing remarks regarding the key findings related to the middle managers' DO, THINK and FEEL themes.

The chapter reported on the participants' self-reflection assessments to highlight their personal journeys and experiences. The participant self-reflection assessments revealed three themes, namely adapting and growth, challenges faced, and work environment. The middle managers revealed that they were adaptive in terms of their changing circumstances despite the challenges faced from both the internal and external environment. The ability to adapt and grow despite the significant strategic changes and challenges in the environment was an important theme occurring throughout the study, and was closely linked with the adapting practice described in section 8.3.1.1.

One participant's journey was personal in nature, and she selected the brand and logo of the new department (shown in Figure 11.12) as the image that best depicted her OSS journey.

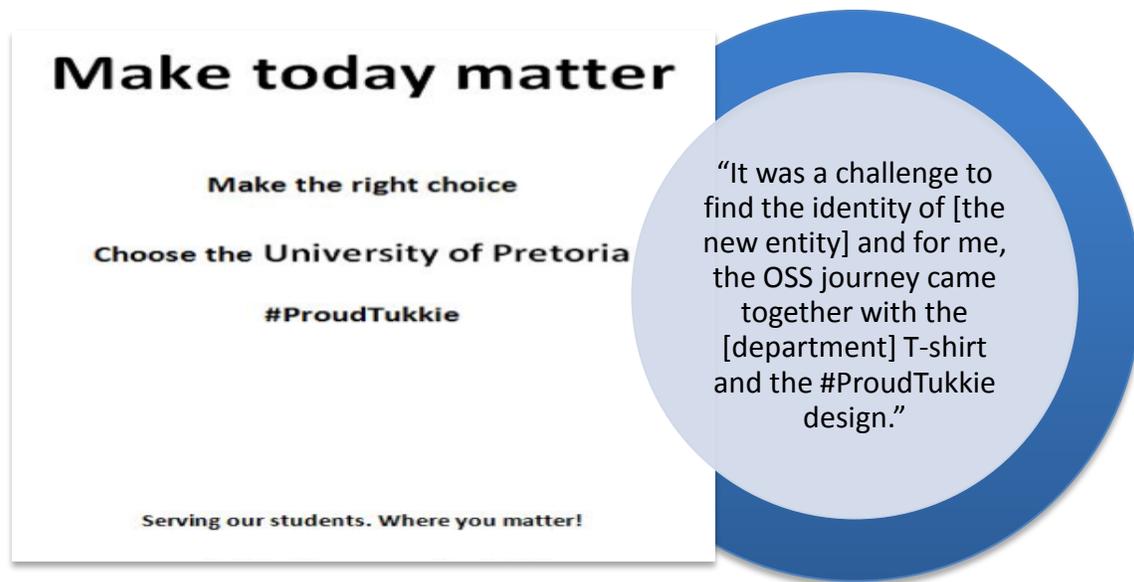


Figure 11.11 Participant's self-reflection: Challenged yet empowered

Source: Image designed by participant

She mentioned that she felt challenged by the task at hand, but despite this, she was able to produce a design of which she was proud.

I felt proud to be part of the new structure, and even more proud to be able to shape and be empowered in creating the identity of the department.

The research problem defined in Chapter 1 was confirmed as an accurate account, in that the professional middle managers' strategic roles and responsibilities as explored in this study were indeed misaligned with the accountability and authority bestowed upon them. This misalignment had a direct influence on the middle managers' strategising as they navigated the strategic change and external climate. The research question as to how middle managers strategise to effect change during a strategic change initiative was answered by addressing the three main research themes of DO, THINK and FEEL. The formal strategic roles, practices, routines, practical skills and tools were found to represent the DO theme. The cognitive aspects relating to the middle managers' role expectations and KPI alignment together with the role of organisational

politics were discussed under the THINK theme. Finally, the middle managers' emotional aspects, motivations and productivity and issues relating to the change process were presented under the FEEL theme.

This research study therefore achieved its purpose by exploring and interpreting the strategising of professional (non-academic) middle managers during a strategic change initiative at a South African higher education institution. The study provided in-depth, rich findings and interpretations and also found emerging patterns and themes relating to the middle managers' strategising roles, practices and behaviours during strategic change. New emergent insights were generated making a unique contribution to academic theory development, and practical recommendations were put forward. Finally, potential areas for future research were provided.

In conclusion, the final self-assessment by a participating middle manager comprised the depiction of a man looking out over a stormy sea depicted in Figure 11.13.

As OSS started, it was very turbulent times, rough seas ahead, brace yourselves. I do not like the sea at all, but do have great respect and appreciation for it, and if need be will swim in it. The implementation of the decisions were like being tossed on the rough seas.



“I feel that the stormy sea has subsided and a sense of calmness and new direction is now evident. [...] Change is not a comfortable process, but it is very necessary.”

Figure 11.12 Participant’s self-reflection: Stormy sea

Source:

<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/photo/african-american-businessman-standing-at-helm-of-royalty-free-image/106911747>

The participant experienced an emotional journey as he embarked on the OSS initiative. However, looking back, he realised he had been in a “comfort zone”, “a place of stagnation”. He was forced to make certain decisions and relied heavily on his faith to persevere through the rough seas. He is now looking forward to a new era in the new department. He mentioned:

[H]aving to learn new things and having to build new relationships with new people was challenging, but good.

He acknowledged that the rough seas served a greater purpose and that he was “stronger for it”. He has learnt that this will not be the last change process through which he will have to go.

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Annexure A: Participant information sheet and consent form template

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

November/December 2016

Dear Participant

I, Ms Kirstin van Niekerk, am conducting research with my supervisor, Prof Mari Jansen van Rensburg, a Professor/Academic Director, at the School of Business Leadership towards a DBL at the University of South Africa. I am requesting your participation in my research study at the University of Pretoria, in a study provisionally entitled “Strategising during strategic change: A middle manager perspective”.

WHAT IS THE AIM/PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The aim of the study is to explore and interpret the strategising of non-academic middle managers during strategic change at a South African higher education institution, namely, the University of Pretoria, as a case study. The study will seek to discover emerging patterns and themes relating to the middle managers’ strategising roles, practices and behaviours and to form new emergent theories taking a wide range of disciplines into account.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been selected to participate in this study as you meet the criteria as identified in the research project. The unit of analysis criteria for the research study is defined as follows:

- Middle managers (Directors, Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors);
- Employed (permanent appointment) at the University of Pretoria;
- Within the ‘Student Administration and Services’ functions (support functions/non-academic);
- Impacted by the Optimising Students Services initiative phases.

As an ‘insider’ researcher I believe you are an ideal participant to interview based on your designation, skills, and experiences over the past year and a half. I will be attempting to interview approximately 10–12 participants.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY/WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH INVOLVE?

The study will entail an empirical qualitative research methodology. The primary data collection technique will be face-to-face interviews. Identified managers, like yourself, will be requested to participate in a voluntary, semi-structured interview of approximately 1 – 1.5 hour(s). The interview will be digitally recorded to ensure accuracy and validity during the analysis phase. Secondary document data, such as presentations and minutes, will also be analysed. The study is exploratory in nature and will follow an inductive approach.

The interview questions will be focused on your role as a manager in effecting change and 'doing' strategy during a strategic change initiative, against the backdrop of the recent national unrest. Questions pertaining to your strategising roles, practices and behaviours will be asked. Your confidentiality and privacy will be at all times protected. A time convenient to you will be scheduled in your diary should you be willing to participate.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

The benefits of this study are as follows:

- The findings will contribute to the pragmatic body of knowledge of strategy practices and strategising that takes place within a university;
- Practical knowledge and phronesis (practical wisdom) about middle managers' perspective at a university will be expanded upon and the micro-level strategising activities that take place will be identified, due to the rich, in-depth data gathering techniques.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS?

There will be no anticipated risks involved in taking part in this research. Your responses will be dealt with extreme confidentiality and anonymity.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

A 1 – 1.5 hour(s) interview is all that will be required of you.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality of information provided will be maintained, e.g. your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a code number and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

People responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and my supervisor, may review your responses. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to myself, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

The anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc., but your privacy will remain in place. *A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.*

HOW WILL INFORMATION BE STORED?

Electronic copies of your responses will be stored for a period of five years for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

No incentives will be offered to participate and it is not foreseen that you will incur any costs by participating in the study.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Committee. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact me kirstin@up.ac.za. Should you require any further information or want to contact me about any aspect of this study, please feel free to email me.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Researcher: Ms Kirstin van Niekerk

kirstin@up.ac.za

082 371 8404

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____, confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name and Surname :

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name and Surname: Ms Kirstin Van Niekerk

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

Annexure B: Interview guide

Interview Guide

1) *Guide participants through the participant information sheet and consent form sign off*

The interview will take 1 – 1.5 hours. Refer to Annexure A.

2) *Provide context*

The questions are to be answered within the context of the Optimising Student Services (OSS) strategic initiative at the University of Pretoria. I am interested in your everyday lived experiences as a manager during this time period, specifically relating to your strategy work (strategising) and organisational change. I would like to explore your involvement in strategy work and effecting change with a specific focus on your roles, practices and behaviours. In other words, I would like to hear your story or personal journey as a manager “doing strategy work” and “effecting change” at UP over the past three years. Please provide specific examples to support your responses.

<i>Themes Questions</i>	Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps	Link to literature/theory development
A. Introduction		
1. What is your understanding of the OSS initiative and how do you think the OSS contributes towards UP's objectives? Probing question: Do you think the	Related to the strategic change initiative	

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Themes</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Questions</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Link to literature/theory development</p>
<p><i>organisational objectives of the OSS initiative was/were achieved or not?</i></p>		
<p>2. <i>What role did the external consultants play during the OSS investigation phase?</i> Probing questions: <i>Did you engage directly with the consultants? Did you read their reports and findings and if so, did you concur with their findings?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Related to the strategic change initiative and the role of the external consultants</p>	
<p>B. Theme: Roles</p>	<p>Gap: Future research on middle manager practices with specific focus on the identified roles and an improved understanding of how these strategic roles are perceived by middle managers (Jansen Van Rensburg et al., 2014) Gap: Identification of who is a strategist and the experiences that these actors bring to the role of strategising with particular reference to the nexus between practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007)</p>	
<p>3. <i>What was your role and responsibilities during the OSS initiative?</i> Probing question: <i>What was/is your role in 'doing strategy'?</i></p> <p>4. <i>What was/is your contribution or role in effecting change?</i> Probing question: <i>How do you see your role pertaining to your team during the OSS initiative?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle manager's strategising roles</p>	<p>Roles of implementing, facilitating adaptability, synthesising information and championing alternatives (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Mantere, 2008).</p> <p>Strategic roles of implementing strategies, interpreting and communicating information, facilitating adaptability, supporting downward and influencing upward (Jansen van Rensburg</p>

<p><i>Themes</i></p> <p><i>Questions</i></p>	<p>Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps</p>	<p>Link to literature/theory development</p>
		<p>et al., 2014)</p>
<p>5. <i>How do you deal with conflicting roles, e.g. when you do not agree with a specific strategy, but have to sell it to your staff?</i></p> <p>Probing question: <i>How do you go about interpreting the strategy to your team when you are conflicted?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle manager's strategising roles</p> <p>Linked to cognition and emotions</p>	<p>Strategic roles of interpreting and communicating information, facilitating adaptability, supporting downward and influencing upward (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014)</p>
<p>6. <i>Do you feel included or excluded in the strategy formulation process discussions at the university? Explain.</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle manager's strategising roles</p>	<p>Strategic roles of facilitating adaptability and influencing upward (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014)</p>
<p>7. <i>Do you perceive your role to be that of influencing other people? If so, whom and how?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle manager's strategising roles</p>	<p>Strategic roles of facilitating adaptability and influencing upward (Jansen van Rensburg et al., 2014)</p>
<p>8. <i>Is there a direct relationship between your annual KPIs (performance outcomes) and your daily role or do you work outside of your KPIs in order to deal with environmental or emergent change?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle manager's strategising roles</p>	<p>Linked to research purpose</p>
<p>9. <i>To what extent do you have full autonomy and authority to fulfil your role? How is this aligned with the accountability expectation associated with your position?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle manager's strategising roles</p>	<p>Linked to research purpose</p>

<p><i>Themes</i></p> <p><i>Questions</i></p>	<p>Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps</p>	<p>Link to literature/theory development</p>
<p>C. Theme: Practices and tools</p>	<p>Gap: Identification of who is a strategist and the experiences that these actors bring to the role of strategising with particular reference to the nexus between practices and practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007)</p>	
<p>10. <i>What are your daily work routines during the duration of the OSS initiative?</i></p> <p>11. <i>What tools do you frequently make use of during the OSS initiative? (e.g. email, cell-phone, S/W applications)</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle manager's strategising practices and materiality</p>	<p>Strategic planning (Giraudeau, 2008; Hendry et al., 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Ocasio & Joseph, 2008)</p> <p>Analytical practices (Belmondo & Sargis-Roussel, 2015; Cuccurullo & Lega, 2013; Jarratt & Stiles, 2010)</p> <p>Socio-material practices (Dameron et al., 2015; Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008; Jarzabkowski et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2010; Kaplan, 2011)</p> <p>Discursive practices (Balogun et al., 2014; Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Teulier & Rouleau, 2013; Vaara et al., 2010)</p>

<p><i>Themes</i></p> <p><i>Questions</i></p>	<p>Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps</p>	<p>Link to literature/theory development</p>
<p>D. Theme: Behaviour (Cognitive and Emotive)</p>	<p>Gap: The link between displayed emotions and strategising practices is a further opportunity for research (Huy, 2012; Liu & Maitlis, 2014; Suddaby et al., 2013)</p> <p>Gap: Middle managers' role in perceiving and managing their own as well as others' emotions and developing emotional capability, remain to be investigated more thoroughly (Huy, 2012)</p> <p>Gap: Future research calls for better understanding of the middle managers' skills, particularly discursive skills, that are drawn upon when performing their role as translators (Teulier & Rouleau, 2013)</p> <p>Gap: Identification of who is a strategist (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007)</p>	
<p>12. <i>What were your initial reactions to the OSS initiative and did you understand what was expected of you or did it seem vague? If vague, did you do anything to get more information? Probing question: Did the newsletters, presentations, colleagues or consultants assist you in gaining a better understanding?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' strategising behaviour – cognitive skills and practical skills</p> <p>Sensemaking</p>	<p>Managers sensemaking and sensegiving activities (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Davis, 2013; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Sonenshein, 2010)</p>
<p>13. <i>How did/do you engage with your staff during the OSS initiative?</i></p> <p>14. <i>What were your staff members' reactions and did their attitudes or behaviour change as the OSS initiative progressed? If so,</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' strategising behaviour – cognitive skills and practical skills</p> <p>Sensegiving</p>	<p>Cognition a key focus area pursuing to understand the social cognitive (meaning-making) processes, particularly during organisational change (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Kaplan, 2008; Rouleau &</p>

<p><i>Themes</i></p> <p><i>Questions</i></p>	<p>Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps</p>	<p>Link to literature/theory development</p>
<p><i>what caused the changes?</i></p>	<p>Also linked to roles</p>	<p>Balogun, 2011; Suddaby et al., 2013)</p> <p>Managers sensemaking and sensegiving activities (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Davis, 2013; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Sonenshein, 2010)</p> <p>Language and communication within organisational processes play a constitutive role (Cooren et al., 2014)</p>
<p><i>15. How did/do you deal with conflict situations? (Emotional, cognitive and practical level)</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' strategising behaviour – cognitive skills and practical skills</p> <p>Theme: Middle managers' emotions and motivations during strategising</p>	<p>Interrelationship between cognition, emotion and action in strategising (Jensen et al., 2015)</p> <p>Managers sensemaking and sensegiving activities (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Davis, 2013; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Sonenshein, 2010)</p>
<p><i>16. What practical skills did/do you draw upon during the OSS initiative?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' strategising behaviour – cognitive skills and practical skills</p>	<p>Interrelationship between cognition, emotion and action in strategising (Jensen et al., 2015)</p> <p>Language and communication within organisational processes play a constitutive role (Cooren et al., 2014)</p>
<p><i>17. How do you go about communicating</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' strategising</p>	<p>Managers sensemaking and sensegiving</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Themes</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Questions</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Link to literature/theory development</p>
<p><i>laterally, upward and downward?</i></p>	<p>behaviour – cognitive skills and practical skills</p> <p>Also linked to roles</p>	<p>activities (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Davis, 2013; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011; Sonenshein, 2010)</p> <p>Language and communication within organisational processes play a constitutive role (Cooren et al., 2014)</p>
<p>18. <i>How do you deal with issues when things don't go according to the planned or intended strategy? Probing question: How do you approach/manage new emergent strategies that may arise and may be more relevant than the initial intended strategies?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' strategising behaviour – cognitive skills and practical skills</p> <p>Theme: Middle managers' emotions and motivations during strategising</p>	<p>Interrelationship between cognition, emotion and action in strategising (Jensen et al., 2015)</p> <p>Strategising can be a highly emotional process involving a variety of different emotions, both positive and negative (Liu & Maitlis, 2009)</p> <p>Emotions are able to influence both individual human behaviour and cognition strongly (Huy, 2012)</p>
<p>19. <i>What emotions did/do you experience during the different phases of the OSS strategic initiative, namely investigation, implementation and maintenance phases? Select an emoticon (Annexure C) for each phase. Explain your selection.</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' emotions and motivations during strategising</p>	<p>Interrelationship between cognition, emotion and action in strategising (Jensen et al., 2015)</p> <p>Strategising can be a highly emotional process involving a variety of different emotions, both positive and negative (Liu</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Themes</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Questions</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Link to literature/theory development</p>
<p><i>Probing questions: How did/does this impact your work? What emotions did the consultants evoke? How did you feel when you had to apply for a management position?</i></p>		<p>& Maitlis, 2009)</p> <p>Emotions are able to influence both individual human behaviour and cognition strongly (Huy, 2012)</p>
<p>20. <i>Did you experience any resistance to change and/or negative effects such as uncertainty, stress, and frustration, during the OSS initiative? Probing questions: If so, what impact did this have on you and your work? How did you go about dealing with these effects?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' emotions and motivations during strategising</p>	<p>Organisational changes are associated with significant risks of negative stress (Dahl, 2011)</p> <p>Change is difficult for everyone (Olson, 2010)</p> <p>Strategising can be a highly emotional process involving a variety of different emotions, both positive and negative (Liu & Maitlis, 2009)</p>
<p>21. <i>Did you experience positive effects such as creativity, innovation, relief, and excitement during the OSS initiative? Probing questions: If so what impact did this have on you and your work? How did you go about dealing with these effects?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' emotions and motivations during strategising</p>	<p>Strategising can be a highly emotional process involving a variety of different emotions, both positive and negative (Liu & Maitlis, 2009)</p>
<p>22. <i>In your opinion did/does politics or power games play a role during the OSS initiative</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' emotions and motivations during strategising</p>	<p>Politics due to self-interest and defence of turf are realities of change (Balogun,</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Themes</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Questions</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Link to literature/theory development</p>
<p><i>and if so, how does/did it impact you?</i></p>		<p>2007)</p>
<p>E. Theme: Strategising Enablers and Constraints</p>	<p>Gap: Enabling and constraining factors of middle managers to perceive and manage the collective emotions of diverse strategic events such as restructuring within an organisation context is a productive avenue for research (Huy, 2012)</p>	
<p>23. <i>What enablers and constraints did/do you deal with while carrying out strategy work during the OSS initiative?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' strategising behaviour – cognitive skills and practical skills</p> <p>Theme: Middle managers' emotions and motivations during strategising</p> <p>Linked to practices</p>	<p>It is important for strategy makers to understand that strategy tools can act as enablers or as constraints in strategy making (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015)</p> <p>Strategy practices are enablers which not only assist with decision making, but have the potential to shape and change the view of the organisation itself (Vaara & Whittington, 2012)</p> <p>Politics due to self-interest and defence of turf are realities of change (Balogun, 2007)</p>
<p>24. <i>Has any external impediments or factors impacted on your ability to fulfil your role and did/do these factors or events change your focus? If so, how?</i></p> <p>25. <i>What would you have done differently and what would you have repeated?</i></p>	<p>Theme: Middle managers' strategising behaviour – cognitive skills and practical skills</p> <p>Theme: Middle managers' emotions and</p>	

<i>Themes</i> <i>Questions</i>	Link to research study's themes and identified research gaps	Link to literature/theory development
	motivations during strategising Linked to practices	

3) Self-reflection assignment:

Please take a photograph of an image that depicts your journey over the past three years. It can be literal, abstract or metaphorical. Provide a short explanation as to why the photo represents your experiences, emotions and journey. Once sent, please delete the photo so that you cannot be identified.

Annexure C: Interview guide question 19 – Emoticon list

	A	B	C
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Annexure D: Online staff opinion survey

OSS Project Survey 2016 Questionnaire

As a staff member impacted by the OSS initiative, you are invited to take part in an opinion survey. We would like to determine what your opinions and experiences are relating to the project. The survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete. Please note the survey is anonymous and participants will not be able to be identified as personal related information will not be collected other than your post level (for categorisation purposes only). The survey results will be made available to participants. Findings will be used for management information and may be used for future research purposes.

Consider each of the following statements pertaining to the OSS initiative and indicate your agreement/disagreement with each statement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
1. The objectives of the OSS project, namely integration, alignment and optimisation of processes and services was achieved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The objective of the OSS project, namely improved decision making due to a single line report was achieved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The objective of the OSS project, namely ensuring the correct functions are grouped together, was achieved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The objective of the OSS project, namely the improvement and enhancement of the student experience, was achieved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The OSS project outcomes in my opinion was a success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The OSS project was a challenging experience for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I experienced mostly positive emotions during the project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I was informed frequently about the project developments from my manager.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly Agree (4)
9. I was involved in the OSS project and provided input.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. My manager was mostly positive towards the OSS project and outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. My colleagues were mostly positive towards the OSS project and outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. The OSS project resulted in intense emotional situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I looked forward to the new opportunities that arose from the project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I am satisfied with my position and role resulting from the project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Conflict situations were dealt with satisfactory by my manager.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Communication of project progress was satisfactory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. I am satisfied with the management team appointment in terms of experience and skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. During the OSS project my productivity was unaffected.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. During the OSS project my motivational levels remained satisfactory.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. My manager encouraged me to participate in the OSS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

project and processes.				
21. I did not experience resistance to change.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. My team supported me during the OSS project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. My manager supported me during the OSS project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. I have adjusted to the changes well and feel confident about the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Looking back the OSS project was a positive step forward for UP.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select your applicable post level range:

- Pl 3, 4, 5 and 6 (1)
- Pl 7 and 8 (2)
- Pl 9 and 10 (3)
- Pl 11 and 12 (4)
- Pl 13 - 14 (5)

Annexure E: List of documents analysed (number of codes per document)

Communications to staff

P1: Comm 2014-05-05_OSS Comms I to UP management_vFinal.pdf (9)

P2: Comm 2014-08-18_OSS Comms II to UP Management_vFinal.pdf (7)

P3: Comm 2015-08-20 Letter OSS VC draft1.docx (14)

P4: Comm OSS Newsletter November 2015.pdf (13)

P5: Comm OSS Newsletter October 2015.docx (22)

P6: Comm OSS Project Update Communication June 2015.docx (23)

Senior management minutes

P7: Exec Item 6.3 Rt 259-15 OSS Project Proposal_2.pdf (66)

P8: Exec Item 6.3 Rt 310-15 Subm OSS Project proposal - revised18092015.pdf (8)

P9: Exec Item 6.4 Rt 395-15 30 October 2015 Proposal OSS Proje.pdf (14)

P11: Exec OSS Project proposal - ITS posts Par 6.3 of Rt 296-15 22 September 2015; Rt 310-15.doc (2)

P12: Exec OSS Project recommendation - Strategic enrolment capability_1 Par 6.3 of Rt 254-15, 11 August 2015, Rt 259-15.doc ((10)

P13: Exec OSS Project recommendation - Strategic enrolment capability_2 Par 4.1 of Rt 263-15 18 August 2015.doc (17)

P14: Exec OSS project recommendation - strategic support capability for pg and int.doc (4)

Organogram

P15: OSS organogram detailed structures version 1.pdf (1)

P16: OSS Organogram INITIAL Director Strategic Enrolment 18.05.2015.docx (1)

Reports

P18: Report CLOSURE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OSS PROJECT.docx (45)

P10: Report-All Projects Report (Final).pdf (13)

P19: Report DeL Optimising Student Services Final Report_vFinal.pdf (34)

P20: Report MAINTENANCE ON THE OSS PROJECT June to August 2016.docx (25)

P21: Report MAINTENANCE ON THE OSS PROJECT March to May 2016.docx (22)

P22: Report OSS Risks July 2016.docx (11)

Working group minutes

P23: WorkGroup1 Session 1 1 June 2015 Minutes.docx (3)

P24: WorkGroup1 Session 2 8 June 2015 Minutes.docx (10)

P25: WorkGroup1 Session 3 13 July 2015 Minutes.docx (12)

P26: WorkGroup1 Session 4 20 July 2015 Minutes ver2.docx (8)

P27: WorkGroup2 Session1 3 June 2015 Minutes.docx (8)

P28: WorkGroup2 Session2 10 June 2015 Minutes.docx (15)

P29: WorkGroup2 Session3 15 July 2015 Minutes.docx (13)

P30: WorkGroup3 Session1 5 June 2015 Minutes.docx (5)

P31: WorkGroup3 Session2 12 June 2015 Minutes.docx (14)

P32: WorkGroup3 Session3 17 July 2015 Minutes.docx (19)

Presentations

P33: OSS Project Presentation Exec Proposals 11 August 2015.pdf (10)

P34: OSS Project Presentation to Quarterly Review 24 July 2015 Final Revised.pdf (48)

P35: OSS Project Presentation to Staff 21 September 2015.pdf (14)

P36: OSS Project Presentation to Unions 6 July 2015 Final.pdf (32)

P37: OSS Project Presentation to Unions 6 May.pdf (27)

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews (transcribed and data cleaned)

P38: Interview1_data cleaned.docx (147)

P40: Interview2_data cleaned.docx (137)

P41: Interview3_data cleaned.docx (109)

P42: Interview4_data cleaning.docx (95)

P50: Interview5_data cleaned.docx (94)

P43: Interview6_data cleaned.docx (96)

P44: Interview7_data cleaned.docx (108)

P45: Interview8_data cleaned.docx (84)

P51: Interview9_data cleaned.docx (100)

P39: Interview10_data cleaned.docx (82)

P54: Interview11_data cleaned.docx (83)

Reflexivity journal entries

P46: Reflexivity journal.docx (205)

Self-reflection assessments

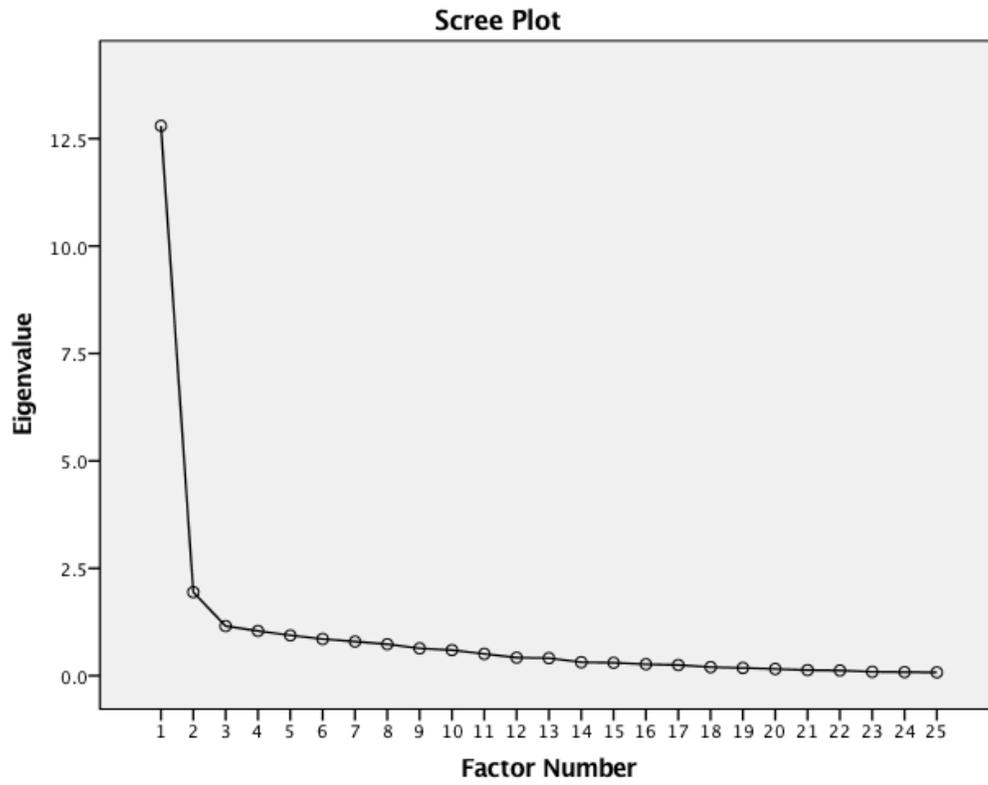
P47: Self-reflective assessments.docx (40)

Field notes

P49: Field notes (2).docx (114)

Annexure F: Secondary data analysis

Annexure F-1: Scree plot



Annexure F-2: Rotated factor patterns from exploratory factor analysis

Pattern matrix ^a				
	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Q2_1	.925			
Q2_2	.920			
Q2_25	.842			
Q2_5	.824			
Q2_3	.823			
Q2_16	.725			
Q2_4	.662			
Q2_13	.654			
Q2_15	.538	.355		
Q2_17	.503	.366		
Q2_24	.501			
Q2_8	.414			
Q2_9	.351			
Q2_20		.654		
Q2_23		.608		
Q2_12		.425		
Q2_22		.422		
Q2_21		.412		
Q2_18	.381		.431	
Q2_6				
Q2_11				.815
Q2_7				.675
Q2_10				.431
Q2_19			.415	.418
Q2_14			.362	.362

Annexure F-3: Final communality estimates from exploratory factor analysis

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Q2_1	.778	.764
Q2_2	.778	.722
Q2_3	.762	.697
Q2_4	.777	.626
Q2_5	.798	.748
Q2_6	.282	.132
Q2_7	.654	.646
Q2_8	.696	.575
Q2_9	.579	.464
Q2_10	.541	.390
Q2_11	.644	.664
Q2_12	.356	.176
Q2_13	.738	.583
Q2_14	.842	.755
Q2_15	.819	.756
Q2_16	.732	.640
Q2_17	.861	.812
Q2_18	.814	.660
Q2_19	.875	.829
Q2_20	.728	.647
Q2_21	.596	.460
Q2_22	.532	.440
Q2_23	.719	.697
Q2_24	.752	.644
Q2_25	.811	.792

Annexure F-4: Total variance explained

Total variance explained							
Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings			Rotation sums of squared loadings ^a
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	12.799	51.194	51.194	12.478	49.910	49.910	11.577
2	1.945	7.780	58.974	1.458	5.830	55.740	4.756
3	1.155	4.619	63.592	.768	3.072	58.813	2.758
4	1.041	4.165	67.758	.614	2.456	61.268	8.379
5	.939	3.755	71.513				
6	.854	3.416	74.929				
7	.795	3.179	78.108				
8	.733	2.932	81.040				
9	.636	2.542	83.582				
10	.597	2.388	85.970				
11	.508	2.031	88.001				
12	.421	1.682	89.683				
13	.408	1.634	91.317				
14	.314	1.256	92.573				
15	.301	1.202	93.775				
16	.267	1.067	94.842				
17	.250	.998	95.840				
18	.200	.799	96.639				
19	.180	.721	97.359				
20	.156	.624	97.983				
21	.131	.523	98.507				
22	.122	.487	98.994				
23	.090	.361	99.355				
24	.083	.333	99.688				
25	.078	.312	100.000				

Annexure F-5: Cronbach's alpha for the four variables

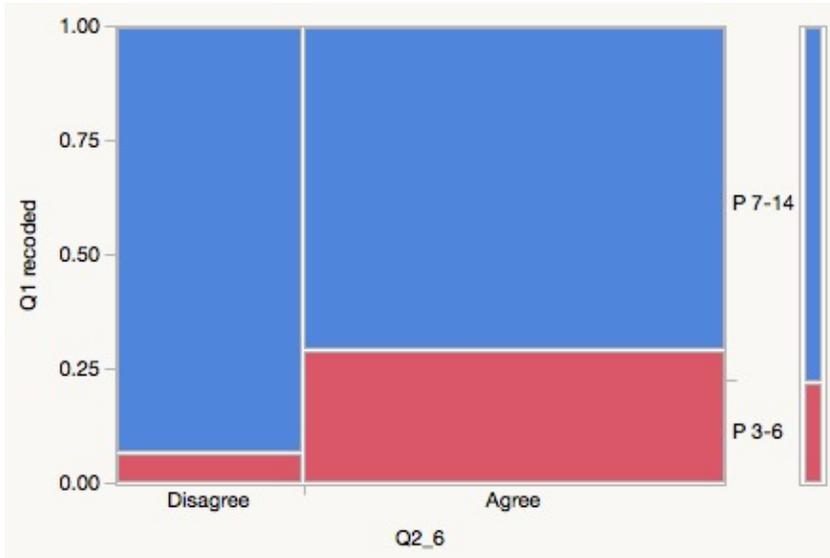
Variables	Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach alpha	Reliability
Factor 1: Strategic outcome and outlook	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 17, 24, 25	31.81	8.292	0.953	*Good
Support and personal experience	12, 20, 21, 22, 23	13.27	3.106	0.747	Acceptable
Productivity and motivation	18, 19	5.05	1.851	0.904	Good
Positivity	7, 11, 10	6.75	2.120	0.708	Acceptable

Note: No items removed

Annexure F-6: Contingency analysis (Q2-6)

Contingency analysis of Q1 recoded by Q2_6

Mosaic plot



Contingency table

Q2_6 By Q1 recoded

Count	P3-6	P7-14	Total
Total %			
Col %			
Row %			
Disagree	2	27	29
	2.13	28.72	30.85
	9.52	36.99	
	6.90	93.10	
Agree	19	46	65
	20.21	48.94	69.15
	90.48	63.01	
	29.23	70.77	
Total	21	73	94

	22.34	77.66	
--	-------	-------	--

Tests

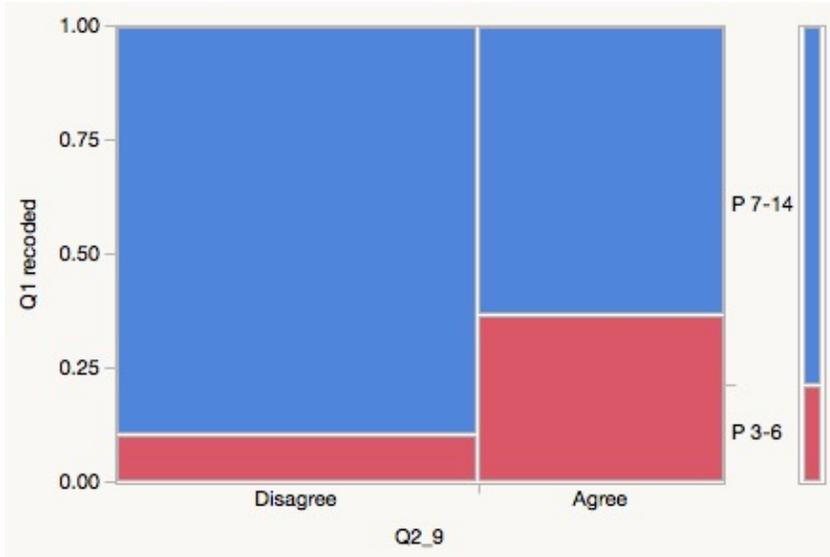
N	DF	-LogLike	R-square (U)
94	1	3.3801821	0.0677

Test	Chi-square	Prob > Chi-sq
Likelihood ratio	6.760	0.0093*
Pearson	5.766	0.0163*

Annexure F-7: Contingency analysis (Q2-9)

Contingency analysis of Q1 recoded by Q2_9

Mosaic plot



Contingency table

Q2_9 By Q1 recoded

Count	P3-6	P7-14	Total
Total %			
Col %			
Row %			
Disagree	6	50	56
	6.38	53.19	59.57
	30.00	67.57	
	10.71	89.29	
Agree	14	24	38
	14.89	25.53	40.43
	70.00	32.43	
	36.84	63.16	

Total	20	74	94
	21.28	78.72	

Tests

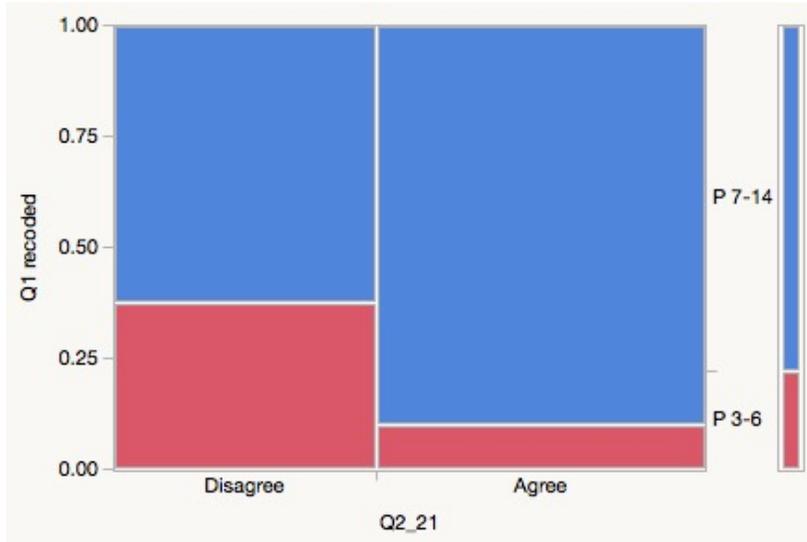
N	DF	-LogLike	R-square (U)
94	1	4.5780800	0.0941

Test	Chi-square	Prob > Chis-sq
Likelihood ratio	9.156	0.0025*
Pearson	9.227	0.0024*

Annexure F-8: Contingency analysis (Q2-21)

Contingency analysis of Q1 recoded by Q2_21

Mosaic plot



Contingency table

Q2_21 By Q1 recoded

Count	P3-6	P7-14	Total
Total %			
Col %			
Row %			
Disagree	15	25	40
	16.67	27.78	44.44
	75.00	35.71	
	37.50	62.50	
Agree	5	45	50
	5.56	50.00	55.56
	25.00	64.29	
	10.00	90.00	

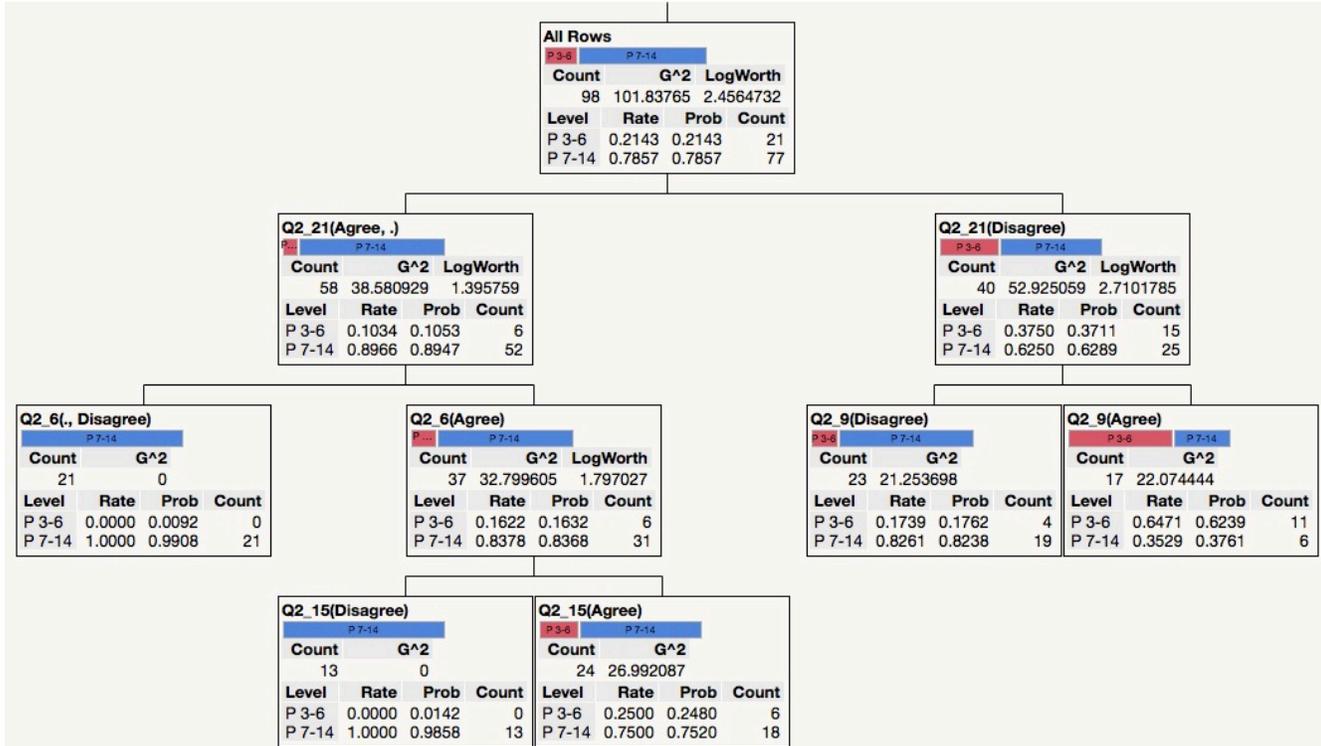
Total	20	70	90
	22.22	77.78	

Tests

N	DF	-LogLike	R-square (U)
90	1	4.9568797	0.1040

Test	Chi-square	Prob > Chi-sq
Likelihood ratio	9.914	0.0016*
Pearson	9.723	0.0018*

Annexure F-9: Decision tree per post level group



Annexure F-10: Measures of fit

Measures of fit

Cross-validation

k-fold	-2LogLike	R-square
5 Folded	77.6073049	0.2379
Overall	70.3202288	0.3016

Fit details

Measure	Training Definition
Entropy R-square	0.3016 $1 - \text{Loglike}(\text{model}) / \text{Loglike}(0)$
Generalised R-square	0.4163 $(1 - (L(0)/L(\text{model}))^{2/n}) / (1 - L(0)^{2/n})$
Mean -log p	0.3629 $\sum -\text{Log}(p_{ij})/n$
RMSE	0.3455 $\sqrt{\sum (y_{ij} - p_{ij})^2/n}$
Mean abs dev	0.2437 $\sum y_{ij} - p_{ij} /n$
Misclassification rate	0.1633 $\sum (p_{ij} \neq p_{\text{Max}})/n$
N	98 n

Annexure G: Interview context and observations (reflexivity journal)

Participant 1

Setting:	The interview was scheduled off campus, after working hours, at a restaurant. It was during the week, so the restaurant was empty, which was ideal for the recording of the interview. Background music was playing, but it did not affect the recording quality. The participant put her phone on silent so as not to be interrupted.
Atmosphere:	The atmosphere was relaxed, friendly and informal.
Mood and behaviour:	The participant was comfortable and she did not display any anxiety or stress before or during the interview. Her body language was relaxed and she was fully focused on the questions being asked. She made good eye contact. I felt calm and comfortable around her. I thought that even if I made mistakes she would understand, as she was the first person to be interviewed. She appeared positive during the whole process and did not disengage at any stage.
Relationship:	The participant and I have known each other for more than seven years. We are close work colleagues and the relationship is now considered to be a friendship. There is a trust relationship built on loyalty and honesty.
Process:	The interview process went reasonably well, considering it was the first interview. She understood the questions, except one pertaining to the tools that are used in doing strategy work. Apart from the interruptions from the waiter the conversation was laid-back and constructive.
Responses:	The participant answered me clearly and concisely. She tended to answer in general and gave the big picture as opposed to more detailed examples. I had to probe for specific examples. I think she was open and honest in answering and she did not shy away from self-reflection.
Improvements and reflexivity:	<p>Perhaps a restaurant is not the ideal venue for an interview. Although the right atmosphere was created the interruptions did impact the process, although to a lesser degree. This may have slightly interrupted the flow of conversation.</p> <p>The flow of the interview can improve. I think I tended to be too fixated on the structure of the interview guide as opposed to letting the conversation flow and be free.</p> <p>I was constantly aware in the back of my mind that I should not ask leading questions and only probe. This may have also restricted the flow of conversation to some extent.</p> <p>I noticed some questions are very similar in nature. I must fix this before the next interview. The order of the</p>

questions should be reviewed as well.

The participant recommended that I should scramble the emoticons for the following interviews so as not to create a specific theme per row e.g. happy, unsure, exhausted, etc. This is a valid comment that I will implement it.

I noticed that after the interview she looked at her phone and mentioned she had three missed calls, all work related. She seemed irritated by this and said that she had been given a responsibility that was not hers.

General:

I was excited for this interview. It was my first and I wanted to see how understandable the questions would be. My overall impression is that the interview went well. There are some great quotes I can use without giving the participants identity away.

The participant experienced the interview in a positive light and she told me afterwards that she liked the structure of the interview. She thought the questions were interesting and good questions.

Participant 2

Setting:

The interview took place in the participant's office. A "Do not disturb" sign was put on the door so that no one could interrupt the interview. This sign was initiated and put up by the participant himself. The environment was quiet and very suitable for an interview.

Atmosphere:

The atmosphere was relaxed, comfortable and informal. Prior to the interview we had a cup of coffee and chatted in general. There was neither stress nor anxiety present on either of our parts.

Mood and behaviour:

The participant seemed keen and eager to participate in the interview. His attitude seemed very positive and he was very engaging throughout the process. He made very good eye contact and at one stage reclined in his chair with his hands behind his head. He seemed calm and focused on the interview and my questions. He made use of hand gestures throughout the interview and was amused at the emoticons presented. I felt relaxed throughout the interview.

Relationship:

The participant and I have worked closely together during the past four years. We have a good working relationship built on open, honest and trusting engagements. We have the ability to communicate freely with each other regarding all issues and the relationship is comfortable and friendly.

Process:

The process flowed very well during the interview. The interview guide was used, but I made an effort to

ensure the conversation flowed and was not interrupted by sticking too rigidly to the questions. I asked probing questions that were not always on the interview guide, but found it worked well. I also had to skip some probing questions as the participant answered comprehensively and provided much detail and context covering many aspects in the guide. In one or two instances I asked a question which he in fact already had answered earlier on.

Responses:

The conversation flowed easily from one question to the next. At some points he thought a while before answering a question, but the silence was not uncomfortable. The responses were comprehensive and very detailed; he provided many examples and used metaphors to explain himself. He answered very generally, provided context and then moved to detail and specific examples. As his answers were all-inclusive, most probing questions did not need to be asked. I think he attended to each question with focus. He asked for clarity once and it was the question pertaining to work routines and practices. He was very truthful and honest and did not shy away from sensitive issues. The participant expresses himself well and in detail even though English is not his first language.

Improvements and reflexivity:

I will have to revise the interview guide again, especially with regard to the questions pertaining to work routines and practices. This did not appear to be clear to the participant. Again, I picked up one or two repeat questions that I can eliminate, with specific reference to the influencing role and conflict questions.

Overall this interview went very well. The flow was meaningfully improved due to a more conversational approach that I consciously chose to use.

The participant needed time to familiarise himself with the emoticons. I think I should allow some time for future participants to review the emoticon sheet before asking questions. He seemed to enjoy this activity.

I forgot to inform the participant about the self-reflection assignment. I will add a note to the interview guide to ensure that I do not forget in future. I will ask the participant for this photo and short description when I see him again.

General:

No disruptions took place.

After the interview he said the questions were interesting. He perceived the interview as 'excellent' and had no critical feedback. He said I conducted the interview well and I appeared relaxed and confident. I think this was as a result of me knowing him well and us working closely together over the past few years.

Participant 3

Setting:	The interview took place in my office. This was to ensure a quiet space without interruptions. My phone did ring at one stage, but we ignored the ringing and continued with the interview. My office is suitable for interviews as it removed the participant from her normal office interruptions that may occur.
Atmosphere:	The atmosphere was tranquil and relaxed. The atmosphere was also comfortable, informal and conversational. We each had a cup of coffee that we sipped during the interview.
Mood and behaviour:	The participant appeared to be in a relaxed mood. She was positive towards being interviewed and very laid back. The formalities of the interview seemed to be unnecessary for her as she is very easy going. She at once stage waved her hand saying she is not concerned with people identifying what she has to say. Her attitude was very positive. She was engaging, made great eye contact, made a few jokes throughout the interview and laughed every now and then. She also made use of hand motions and played with her glasses that were on the table. She was focused on what I had to say and when she was not sure she felt quite comfortable asking for clarification of the questions.
Relationship:	The participant and I have known of each for three years, but we never worked with each other until the OSS initiative. A trust relationship has built up over the past year and we now feel comfortable around each other. We both speak openly and freely about issues specifically related to the work environment. She is also uncomplicated and a mature person with which to work.
Process:	The interview flowed very well and I asked probing questions when I required more detail. She generally understood the questions and asked for clarity when she was unsure. She answered concisely, but did provide rich detail and examples regarding her specific work environment. She did not hesitate to answer or say what was on her mind. I had to skip some questions specifically relating to the external consultants, as she could not recall their involvement. In some instances her responses were comprehensive, so I did not need to ask some of the questions.
Responses:	She answered well without hesitation. She provided great illustrations and went into detail and depth providing context and examples. She was not wary to say what she felt and her responses in general were positive. I included probing questions in certain instances to gain more information.
Improvements and reflexivity:	In future, if the interview takes place in my office, I should put my office phone on voice mail so that any calls will not interrupt the interview. I felt that this interview so far was the best. It flowed well and seemed more conversational than the others. I seemed to have resolved all issues pertaining to the question order and repeats. In addition, the rephrasing of

the questions relating to practices or work routines seemed to have worked well creating a better understanding.

I resisted in a few instances when I wanted to lead as oppose to probe, but I was aware of this and am glad I could restrain myself. It is sometimes difficult when you see a situation a certain way and want to impose that on the participant. I must continue keeping this in mind with my future interviews. I need to continue to allow the participant's voice through regardless of my voice.

I was more focused on the responses than on the interview guide. I think this is a turning point for me and I look forward to the other interviews now that I have sorted out some of the teething issues.

General:

Besides the telephone call to my office landline no other disruptions took place.

After the interview we chatted informally and spoke about her portfolio and other work issues.

Participant 4**Setting:**

The interview took place in my office. As the previous interview went so well I decided that it is the ideal location. There were no distractions or disruptions and this contributed to a smoothly flowing interview. The space is quiet and there is very little activity in and around the office making it a great setting. He put his phone on silent to ensure we were not disrupted.

Atmosphere:

The atmosphere was comfortable and relaxed. We sat at my conference table facing each other and it was conversational and informal.

Mood and behaviour:

The participant was in a relaxed mood and did not appear nervous or stressed. He made jokes as he always does and seemed positive and engaging. I felt relaxed and calm and even more confident due to having done my 'homework' in the previous interviews. His attitude was participatory and positive. He reclined in his chair and at times folded one leg over the other leg. He made good eye contact and used hand gestures during the interview. I perceived the interview as extremely constructive and upbeat. He was honest and open and did not hesitate to share his opinions or feelings. I was aware that I made use of facial expressions and nodding as opposed to speaking, allowing the participant the chance to speak and tell his full story without me interrupting.

Relationship:

The participant and I have known each other for more than six years, initially in a work capacity, but at this stage I would consider him a friend. We often share experiences and frustrations with each other and joke

about various situations. He has a good dry sense of humour and I enjoy his company. The relationship is trusting and supportive. The participant was open and transparent on all issues.

Process: The interview process went smoothly without distractions. I think, so far this can be considered one of the most successful interviews. I used all the previous identified improvements to enhance this interview. The interview flowed well and the questions were understood without me having to provide further clarification. I probed when requiring more information. I made one mistake of assuming, but quickly clarified myself. This however did not lead him in any way and he answered true to himself. I also skipped one or two questions as he answered them in previous questions.

Responses: The responses were direct, honest and open. It was the first time I felt I did not have to explain or clarify the questions, as he understood what was being asked. He tended to answer more on the general and high level, than in specifics, but he provided rich descriptions and detail none the less. The participant made a couple of jokes during the interview, which is in line with his personality.

Improvements and reflexivity: I must be more aware not to assume. I did fix the mistake during the interview, but I must be more vigilant in future when posing a question.

I felt very relaxed throughout the interview, began to enjoy the responses and felt I was becoming more engaging and less focused on the interview guide. It felt more like a conversation than an interview.

I noticed my use of facial expressions works well to reinforce the participant that I was listening as opposed to actually using words. I think this is a great tool, as it does not disrupt the conversation. A “yes”, “hmmm”, “oh”, or “I see” or “I understand” starts feeling contrived after a while, but the use of facial expressions and body movements display encouragement and allow for engagement without using words. Eye contact, facial gestures, nodding, and raising an eyebrow and hand gestures can all be used in a positive manner.

General: N/A

Participant 5

Setting: The interview was held in my office at my conference table. However, we had three brief disruptions when colleagues popped in to see why my door was shut. One colleague even brought us coffee during the

interview, which was kind and thoughtful, but it was a slight disruption to the flow of the interview.

Atmosphere:

The atmosphere was relatively calm. However, she seemed slightly anxious about answering 'correctly'. I had to reassure her that there were no right or wrong answers. I told her she is welcome to answer in Afrikaans, as I know she feels more relaxed using her home language. She took me up on the offer and answered most of the questions in Afrikaans. I mixed my languages as I sometimes got tongue-tied using Afrikaans. However it worked, as we both understand English and Afrikaans.

Mood and behaviour:

The mood started off with some tension and anxiety on the participant's side, but it soon passed. The participant was careful and hesitant at times. She started off with brief answers, but later on she felt more at ease and shared more detail. I provided reassurance throughout the process. I encouraged her through positive reinforcement (eye contact, head nodding, some hand gestures) when required and did not rush into the next question. I realised she took some time to formulate her answer and so, by giving her the time, she spoke more freely. She made good eye contact and often demonstrated with her arms and hands. Her attitude towards the interview was constructive. However, she was negative about many aspects when answering the questions.

Relationship:

The participant and I have developed a good relationship over the last two years. Before that we were merely work colleagues without much interaction. She is reserved in nature and it took a while before we interacted. We are able to share and be honest and open with one another. We have developed a trusting relationship and are able to share confidential chats with each other.

Process:

The interview process was not seamless. I felt like I ended up speaking more than I should to compensate for the hesitation on the participant's side. She also needed a considerable amount of probing compared to the other interviews. However, she tried her best and wanted to answer all the questions even if she initially was cautious to answer.

Responses:

The responses as mentioned were initially brief and hesitant. However, she seemed to loosen up and provided more detail as the interview proceeded. She spoke in Afrikaans, which made her feel more comfortable. She at times initially did not want to answer a question and then changed her mind and provided an answer. She seemed unsure at times and I needed to provide reassurance that there is no right or wrong answers. The conversation flow was stilted at times.

Improvements and reflexivity:

I need to put a notice on my door, as we did have three brief interruptions.

This interview felt slightly strained. The participant's answers to questions was generally more negative than positive and this may be a reflection of the pressure she is experiencing, not just at work, but in her personal

life as well. It was a difficult year for her. She also seems very resistant to change and she even confirmed this during the interview. I experienced her as apprehensive, yet very willing to try.

I felt I needed to reassure her often, which I did not have to do in any previous interviews.

Comparing the flow of conversation to the other interviews this interview did not flow as well. I felt relieved when the interview was over.

General: N/A

Participant 6

Setting: The interview took place in my office as it has been established as a good venue with minimal distractions. There were no distractions or disruptions during this interview and this contributed to a smoothly flowing interview.

Atmosphere: The atmosphere was relaxed and informal. The participant and I both felt at ease. We sat at my conference table facing each other and it was conversational and easy-going.

Mood and behaviour: The participant seemed calm, accommodating, and comfortable. He showed no stress or anxiety. He was positive throughout the process, made good eye contact and spoke easily and unrestricted. I too felt relaxed throughout the interview. I enjoyed this interview and the free-flowing conversation and relaxed energetic interaction was a good experience.

Relationship: The participant and I have a close working relationship and the trust level is high. We have known each other for approximately five years. We speak freely with each other in an open, frank and honest manner. The participant has an excellent work ethic and great people skills. I have a great degree of respect for him and am delighted in his career development and promotion.

Process: The interview went very well and flowed seamlessly. He understood my questions and was able to answer with minimal probing. He felt at ease to ask questions when he did not understand something or wanted clarity. I did explain or provide examples in a few instances. However as a whole he participated enthusiastically and articulated himself clearly. He did not rush into answering and often thought before providing an answer in a calm, unhurried manner.

Responses: The responses were honest and encompassing. He provided great, detail-rich examples throughout the interview. He was also very specific in some of the answers using detailed illustrations to provide clarity. He

did not hesitate to reveal specifics and this demonstrates the trust relationship that exists.

Improvements and reflexivity:

I have now learnt to wait a few seconds before asking the following question, as the silence seems to encourage further contributions from the participant. This is a useful technique that I can use in the upcoming interviews. The less hurried I approach the interview, the more willing the participant seemed to provide more detail.

General:

The interview was a positive experience and I enjoyed hearing what he had to say. He has great insight.

Participant 7

Setting:

The setting was a large boardroom close to the participant's office. It was a rather impersonal setting and we did experience two disruptions. Initially, I wanted to have the interview in my office but the participant was very busy and to save time we agreed to hold it in the boardroom. The participant showed up late due to an urgent interruption in his day. We were also interrupted during the interview. A colleague opened the door and walked into the boardroom to ask the participant something. However, as soon as she saw the tape recorder she left without saying anything. There was an awareness of the time constraints. However, I think the interview took its course with no rushing.

Atmosphere:

The atmosphere started with some slight apprehension on my side. However, this soon passed when the interview commenced. The atmosphere was quiet, relaxed and we both felt at ease after two to three minutes.

Mood and behaviour:

The mood was relaxed and conversational. He was very present, made great eye contact and used gestures and arm/hand movements to make his point during the interview. He sat up straight and was focused and engaging. I enjoyed listening to his perspective and openness.

Relationship:

The participant and I have been colleagues for nine years. The initial relationship was strained and we were wary of each other for some time. Both of us are reserved and it took time for us to find each other. Only within the last three years that we have grown closer and learnt to trust one another. Our relationship has developed slowly, but I think we are now on a good footing where we can share and open up with one another. This was evident from his honest and straight forward, no pretence responses.

Process:

The process went well besides the two interruptions and late start. The interview felt like a normal informal chat. He articulated himself well and spoke in a manner that was unrushed, despite the time constraints he was under. The participant understood the questions and enthusiastically participated in a conversational

tone.

Responses: The participant spoke clearly and answered comprehensively. He spoke freely and was very honest and truthful. He took his time to think before answering and did not need much probing. He revealed a great deal about his journey and experiences. He did not hold anything back. He spoke well and formulated his thoughts clearly and provided great, rich examples. He seems very positive and grateful for where he is now and frequently referred to this throughout the interview.

Improvements and reflexivity: Perhaps due to our initial relationship I was slightly apprehensive when I started the interview. However, my nerves calmed down quickly as soon as the interview began.

I was surprised by his straightforward answers. This just highlighted to me how far we have come and how the trust relationship has developed over the years.

The change of venue was not a great idea, but I had to be flexible to compensate for his time constraints.

General: The first interview date had to be rescheduled, as it did not suit him.

Participant 8

Setting: The interview took place in the participant's office upon her request. She was under time constraints, but agreed to meet. We sat at her small conference table. She faced me by turning her chair outward. The interview was not interrupted and the venue proved successful.

Atmosphere: The atmosphere was light, relaxed and she was very accommodating. She was friendly yet firm on her opinions and thoughts.

Mood and behaviour: As I do not know the participant well, I was not sure what to expect. I was not nervous or uneasy, but was wondering how the interview would turn out as we have neither worked together nor known each other. The participant seemed engaging and positive. She was slightly curious in the beginning and maybe even suspicious. However, this soon passed as I asked the questions. She opened up and the mood was relaxed and easy going. She faced me throughout the interview and used body language and gestures as she spoke.

Relationship: The participant and I have met a few times in passing or at meetings, but we do not know each other. I have heard about her work ethic through colleagues, but we have not had a direct conversation with each other. It has usually been acknowledgement of each other in passing.

Process:	The process went really well considering we do not know each other. She was open and straightforward. She made no pretences and she was direct and to the point. She seemed to enjoy talking about her experiences and spoke freely without much prompting.
Responses:	The participant would often appear to go off track before coming back to answer the question. She would create context before answering. She seemed to enjoy the interview and sharing her thoughts and experiences. She was very honest and did not hold back. The conversation flowed easily and at times, I had to bring her back to the topic. She provided great, detailed examples and in-depth explanations. The interview was the longest I have had and it was interesting to me that an 'almost stranger' can be so engaged and open. She articulated herself well.
Improvements and reflexivity:	I should have been clearer upfront as to why I wanted to interview managers from diverse backgrounds. She initially misunderstood and said she did not want to be put in a box. I had to think on my feet quickly and explain I wanted to speak to a diverse group, not to colour code or make assumptions based on colour, but to ensure the richness and in-depth responses and experiences of participants with different backgrounds.
General:	This interview was my longest interview so far (and turned out to be longest overall).

Participant 9

Setting:	The interview took place in my office in the afternoon. It was very quiet and the colleagues in nearby offices were out. There were no disruptions or distractions during the interview. I did not need to close my door and it was a good thing as it was extremely hot. We sat at my conference table in a relaxed and comfortable manner.
Atmosphere:	We were both at ease with each other and no anxiousness or stress was evident. It was a relaxed conversational atmosphere.
Mood and behaviour:	The participant was in a good and energetic mood as always. She loves to talk and this made for an easy interview to have in the sense that she shared easily and was not afraid to express her opinions and thoughts. She was positive towards the interview, made good eye contact and was very demonstrative in her body language. She used her hands and arms to gesture frequently. She would often tap the table or point at the table to get her point across. She used various voice tones and pitches to emphasise important aspects.
Relationship:	The participant and I have known each other in a working capacity for more than eight years. We have not worked closely, but during meetings and events we have crossed paths. We have developed a good

relationship and I perceive her as open, honest and innovative in her ideas and thinking. We have developed mutual respect for one another and during the OSS initiative we did interact more frequently. She is an enjoyable person to be around and I do not find her heavy or difficult.

Process: The interview process flowed very well. She was open and spoke easily about her experiences and journey. She offered a unique perspective, as she is currently placed at an outside faculty. We made jokes throughout the interview and it felt more like an informal chat between two colleagues than an interview.

Responses: She expanded on her responses and offered rich detail and great specific examples. She spoke her mind and shared thoughts without hesitation and it was engaging speaking with her. She often would go off topic for a while only eventually to return to the actual answer to the question, but the information she provided was all pertinent and insightful. She spoke with ease and did not need much probing. I enjoyed her responses that showed depth and a big-picture perspective.

Improvements and reflexivity: The interview went well. I have been slightly taken aback by how well the interviews have gone and how free, honest and open the responses have been. I think the trust relationship I have with my colleagues has worked in my favour and I believe this interview was a good example of transparent engagement.

I think the familiarity and insider perspective that I have has allowed me to gain access to insights that I doubt an outsider would have had access to. This refers not just to access to the participants, but emotional and psychological access as well.

General: She was willing to travel from her campus to come to the interview and she was very willing to participate. We struggled to find a suitable date and time for the interview, but she was very accommodating with her time and traveling.

Participant 10

Setting: The interview took place in my office. There were no walk-in interruptions. However, my office phone did ring twice during the interview. The participant put her phone on silent at the beginning of the interview, but it did vibrate during the interview and she looked to see who called. However, she quickly put it down again (upside down).

Atmosphere: The atmosphere was friendly and amicable. The participant appeared relaxed, yet distant, and I sensed that she had a lot on her mind. Initially I was calm and relaxed, but as the interview commenced my disposition

changed.

Mood and behaviour:

The mood was light and her attitude was participatory. She made good eye contact. She did not gesture much when speaking, but I know her to be reserved in her behaviour.

Relationship:

The participant and I have known each other for around six years. We get along well in informal settings and maintain a professional working relationship. She is friendly and her mood is very even tempered. I cannot say I have ever seen her angry. She keeps her emotions in check.

Process:

I began the interview with good expectations, but as the interview progressed I began to feel disheartened by the responses and her inability to answer comprehensively. I may have over compensated by asking more probing questions than I would have liked. I tried to maintain a positive flow and attempted to simplify the questions. The interview process felt disjointed. At times I wondered if she understood the questions or was struggling to articulate herself. She is normally not much of a conversationalist, but I have never perceived her to have difficulty in speaking. Another possibility is that she may have been more nervous and anxious than she let on. I struggled to keep the conversation flowing and eventually went completely off script to try and encourage more comprehensive answers.

Responses:

In previous interviews the participants did most of the talking, but during this interview it felt like I had to share the platform. Her responses were brief, often disjointed and she frequently did not complete her sentences. She regularly started a new thought midsentence. Her responses were lacking depth and she answered on a superficial level. I probed a lot and tried to ask different questions to elicit more information. I will have to listen to her responses again, as I think I may have developed a tainted perception during the interview and may have missed some relevant and useful responses.

Improvements and reflexivity:

I found this interview very challenging to facilitate. It was the most difficult interview in terms of trying to get information out of the participant. It was a strain mentally. Her answers were brief and she spoke in a very fragmented manner. I think she struggled with sharing information or expressing herself. I attempted to make the conversation more organic and flowing, but it seemed no matter what or how I asked the questions her answers were brief, not very descriptive, nor rich in depth, and very limited in terms of application. She did not complete sentences. Perhaps she was nervous or anxious although she did not display any physical or non-verbal signs to this effect.

After the interview I wondered if she was really ready for her new role and position. She seems to be lacking the needed skill set and experience to move out of a very functional silo mind-set to a big-picture and integrated approach.

General:	She is very busy at the moment dealing with another crisis and we had to reschedule the interview. Due to work pressures it was difficult to get an opening in her diary. On the day of the interview she did not take notice that the interview was scheduled at my office and then called to reschedule for later in the day.
Participant 11	
Setting:	The interview took place in my office, but unfortunately I had an interruption from an external provider and my phone rang twice for quite some time. This was distracting. In addition the interview started late because I had to finalise my performance appraisal with my line manager, as it was my last day of work. I was aware of feeling under tight deadlines, as it was my last day and I had to wrap up a few issues. In addition a senior manager member wanted to see me and I did not want to cancel the interview.
Atmosphere:	The atmosphere was friendly and informal. Due to the time constraints on my side, the interview felt pressurised. I do not think, however, that he experienced it as such, but in my mind I was thinking of a hundred things. I should have been more present.
Mood and behaviour:	The participant's attitude was positive and engaging. He sat facing me and seemed relaxed and comfortable. He made good eye contact. He seemed present and keen on telling his story. I could sense the emotional responses relating to some of the questions and he was real, honest and open.
Relationship:	The participant and I have known each other for more than five years. We worked closely together on previous projects and we have a solid working relationship. There is a good level of respect and trust. He has always been very open and honest with me and was very eager to help with the interview.
Process:	The process was slightly tense from my side, due to the time constraints on my side. I decided to ask the most crucial and relevant questions upfront to ensure I at least get the essential information in case I needed to end the interview early. Fortunately, I did not need to do so. The interview did not seem as flowing or conversational as I had hoped. However, he spoke freely and provided good examples. He felt comfortable to ask for clarity when he did not understand.
Responses:	The responses were frank and honest. He did not hesitate to answer each question and provided ample information and detailed examples sometimes going off track before actually answering the question. He did 'hmmm' and paused often, but this is his manner of speaking.
Improvements and	I am aware that my focus was not entirely on the interview. I made good eye contact and used gestures to

reflexivity:	show interest, but I felt very pressurised and wanted to finish the interview without losing vital information. He was honest and open and attempted all questions in a calm manner. My inner thoughts did not seem to perturb him. Even though I felt pressured the interview turned out well, with rich detailed responses.
General:	N/A

Annexure H: Emoticons and quotes per participant per phase

Emotions participant 1

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 	P38: Interview1_data cleaned.docx – 38:107 (283:283) “This guy is receptive“	
Implementation 	P38: Interview1_data cleaned.docx – 38:108 (283:283) “In the implementation phase, it’s for me, it’s extra difficult because I was involved in the design and I also had to consciously be removed from it. I couldn’t be a referee and a player.” “A little bit of uncertainty and I had to ... I had to stand back and say ‘Okay’.”	
Maintenance 	P38: Interview1_data cleaned.docx – 38:109 (287:287) and 38:110 (295:295) “Now, with the management and the maintenance ... it’s not fear and it’s not scared; there’s a lot of faith and prayer.” “I’m relatively content given the situation that we are in and relatively content. There’s no fear, I’m not sad, I’m not unhappy about the structure or the OSS.”	

Emotions participant 2

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 	P40: Interview2_data cleaned.docx – 40:101 (208:208)	“I was very excited about ... you know ... proceedings.”
Implementation 	P40: Interview2_data cleaned.docx – 40:102 (220:220)	“I think because sometimes I was amazed at how people come forward with very good ideas and other times, like I could just laugh for ignorance.”
Maintenance 	P40: Interview2_data cleaned.docx – 40:103 (236:236)	“Yes! Bored. It could be different, but I think a good job was done and that’s the reason. It might be different if it didn’t happen as positive, but that is what I experienced.”

Emotions participant 3

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 	P41: Interview3_data cleaned.docx – 41:85 (283:287)	“There’s a bit of uncertainty, yes, of what is now actually happening and is it going to work? And how’s it actually going to impact on us, and so there’s a ... it was a bit vague in the beginning.”
Implementation 	P41: Interview3_data cleaned.docx – 41:86 (291:291)	“Then I’d say the second phase was like ‘biting on your teeth’ and learning new things which would be, I don’t know, ‘cause it’s not really negative, it was just a lot of change.” (Partially translated)
Maintenance 	P41: Interview3_data cleaned.docx – 41:89 (303:303)	“And now I’d say we’re happy.”

Emotions participant 4

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 	P42: Interview4_data cleaning.docx – 42:80 (246:246)	“The investigation phase was ... basically joy. I welcomed it, as I said, as I told you before, I think it’s something that needed to be done so I was happy about it.”
Implementation 	P42: Interview4_data cleaning.docx – 42:81 (254:254)	“To me it was, I was still, I was fairly happy about it ... but, I mean it was a lot of work, some of it quite frustrating at the time.”
Maintenance 	P42: Interview4_data cleaning.docx – 42:82 (258:258)	“This year, and it’s difficult to separate the maintenance phase from outside influences, and I think we should probably for this. I think it still, it’s just a ... to some extent a tedious task but it is something that has to be done. And we just push through and implement.”

Emotions participant 5

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 	P50: Interview5_data cleaned.docx – 50:72 (482:482)	“I’ll say this one, for me it’s like whoa! Do you know what a huge thing you are undertaking here?” (Translated)
Implementation 	P50: Interview5_data cleaned.docx – 50:73 (502:502)	“Because I was really grateful for the job that I got and I really felt I am the suitable candidate and I really felt, wow this! I’m so grateful and I’m going to make it an incredibly huge success.” (Translated)
Maintenance 	P50: Interview5_data cleaned.docx – 50:74 (506:506)	“Yes, because no it can’t be something else, no it can’t be something else going wrong. Yes.” (Translated)

Emotions participant 6

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 	P43: Interview6_data cleaned.docx – 43:72 (253:253)	“Is, ‘why are you doing this at such a high level? Why are you not engaging with the people that are doing the job?’”
Implementation 	P43: Interview6_data cleaned.docx – 43:73 (257:257)	“Represent seeing the big picture and also praying that we all see the big picture, that is what it represents for me, because now this plan is now shared and it needs to be executed and you are given the opportunity to be the planner and the executioner ... that was to me like OK! That is what we need to do, please let it work.”
Maintenance 	P43: Interview6_data cleaned.docx – 43:74 (261:261)	“You are bruised, but yet you still have the eye on the ball, you still want to see this thing working.”

Emotions participant 7

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 	P44: Interview7_data cleaned.docx – 44:97 (179:179)	<p>“At the start of the process, you know it’s like, ‘what’s going on here, conspiracy theories, angry a bit ‘ah really’, these people. What do they think, we’re stupid? We can clearly see through them, we don’t trust in them’ so that would be at the beginning and during!”</p>
Implementation 	P44: Interview7_data cleaned.docx – 44:98 (183:183)	<p>“Would be during because you’re hoping and praying that this thing will work out the way you hope it will work out, you’re hoping, really, that please, this will be better ... this will be better at the end of the day.”</p>
Maintenance 	P44: Interview7_data cleaned.docx – 44:99 (191:191)	<p>“Which is while we went through this very, very difficult process and the truth will be a little on the other side of that process, and I’m smiling okay, I’m smiling, just reflecting on this three-year process, but again I’m saying where we are now is for me personally an amazing space to be in, so yes.”</p>

Emotions participant 8

Participant 8 was only involved during two phases of the OSS strategic change initiative.

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation		
Implementation		P45: Interview8_data cleaned.docx – 45:73 (188:188)
		“[T]here was a continuous asking of questions you know, continuously not knowing, the fear of what's going to happen and how things are going to change, you don't know and, like I said, even though there were two meetings held in the senate hall, two or three meetings, it was very general, you cannot expect such a big group of people to take in and understand really.”
Maintenance		P45: Interview8_data cleaned.docx – 45:71 (192:192)
		“I feel comfortable. I feel that I understand. I don't have a problem coming to work, you know that you think, 'Oh! Must I get up again? Must I go to this horrible place?', I don't have that.”

Emotions participant 9

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 	P51: Interview9_data cleaned.docx – 51:68 (313:313) and 51:69 (317:317)	<p>“Okay, the first year when they said they’re going to rethink these things, think about them from scratch, I was quite excited about it. I was excited.”</p> <p>“Yay, we’re going to look at these things again.” (Translated)</p>
Implementation 	P51: Interview9_data cleaned.docx – 51:70 (329:329)	<p>“Let’s check out these things and then we’ll see where we’re headed.” (Translated)</p>
Maintenance 	P51: Interview9_data cleaned.docx – 51:71 (337:337)	<p>“I’m a little bit exhausted. I’m trying to tell myself is it because it’s the end of the year and things are starting to wind down now, and a person has to feel as if you’re tired, or am I really very tired? So, I said to him, ‘I think I’m just really very tired’. But I am still very excited, because you know what, we moved mountains this year, and I say, ‘we’, not ‘me’, ‘we’. My staff, my [managers], we really moved mountains this year. So I am very excited about it. That’s why I feel this way.” (Translated)</p>

Emotions participant 10

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Investigation 		P39: Interview10_data cleaned.docx – 39:57 [(279:279) “I think the first year ... I was ready to embrace change and I was content, that’s not a happy face but it’s just content.”
Implementation 		P39: Interview10_data cleaned.docx – 39:58 (291:291) “Second year we were a little bit more involved ... look at that stage I was in a very ... I was being bounced around between certain stuff, but I was fine. I won’t say I was ... I wasn’t exactly happy and smiling, but I mean I wasn’t upset so maybe, it’s just content”
Maintenance 		P39: Interview10_data cleaned.docx – 39:59 (299:299) “I think because of all of the extra, not to do with OSS, you see it’s difficult now, OSS project ... no fine, but I think the ... with the personnel, the freezing of the posts and the stuff like that, caused us ending up there unfortunately.”

Emotions participant 11

Participant 11 was only involved during two phases.

OSS phase:	Emotion	Example quotes:
Implementation 	P54: Interview11_data cleaned.docx – 54:55 (202:202) and 54:56 (206:206)	“Because I didn’t know what’s happening until executive made a mass meeting ... So after the mass meeting I think we had a meeting here about me taking the [function] ... and about the proposed changes, moving stuff around that you know. Lot of uncertainty.”
Maintenance 	P54: Interview11_data cleaned.docx – 54:58 (222:222) and 54:59 (226:226)	“Yes, because the way the new restructuring [<u>not</u> related to the OSS] was handled, was terrible, I must say. We’ve just been presented with the new organogram ... I don’t know, to my knowledge the [manager] was not involved and you can’t just restructure a department if you’re not working with the people in the department, you can’t just bring an external person to come look at other universities and come do this restructuring to this department. That’s what happened and it was really terrible and now I’m in a conflict mood with the management. Yes, so, I’m not happy at all.”