

**CORRELATION BETWEEN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONAL PLANS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE
DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS**

R.C. HARDING

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DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS**

by

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DISSERTATION DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my three children Richard, Martin, Reinhardt and my parents. Their unremitting support and love provided a fertile source of motivation and inspiration during my study period.

DECLARATION

Student number: 414-619-0

I declare that “CORRELATION BETWEEN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONAL PLANS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS” is my own work and that all the resources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

(Mr R.C. Harding)

DATE

SUMMARY

The major focus and question emanating from the research is: to what extent do the operational action plans, policies, functions, procedures and activities as well as their implementation within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations correlate with the strategic objectives of the University of South Africa (Unisa)? In alignment with the above, the major challenge of the study was to identify adequate and appropriate approaches to ensure appropriate correlation levels between strategic objectives and their successful implementation relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

The challenge of every Departmental Head is to turn theory into practice; to make something happen and to translate strategic plans into real business results. This will be accomplished only when there is synergy or connectivity between strategic and operational planning towards effective implementation.

Various literature reviews and research topics on strategic management focus either on strategic planning or strategic implementation as separate identities. Few publications address the challenge of connecting the pursuit of strategic objectives with operational plans. Even fewer literature reviews indicate the relationship or correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans of an organisation; the desirable or appropriate level thereof, to ensure the effective pursuit of strategic objectives. The outcomes of this study could contribute to the identification of an appropriate approach and measurement criteria to ensure connectivity/alignment between specific strategic objectives and operational plans relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. By doing this, the strategic objectives are effectively and efficiently promoted to those responsible for carrying out the execution plan.

The researcher has adopted a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-process-management-approach as part of the standardised operational plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations so as to ensure more effective and efficient (appropriate) correlation levels in respect of specific strategic objectives relevant to the

Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations due to a lack of correlation in some instances.

The above approach represents a total view of an organisation's strategic management and control systems and consists of the strategic planning, operational plans and results-management plans. The mentioned approach will also consist of a measurement criterion which identifies critical enablers, dependencies and drivers to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment in respect of original planning (the *what* and *why*) with the implementation plans (*when*, *how* and by *whom*).

The integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach enforces the timely availability of major enablers, dependencies and drivers necessary to support the execution of activities, related to specific strategic objectives. It also identifies the possible lack thereof prior to the implementation of strategic plans. Specific alternatives or workarounds can be identified to ensure continuity in respect of the implementation processes related to specific strategic objectives. In this way, the above approach will enhance the effective and efficient management and coordination of an organisation to drive intended strategic outcomes within a specific process, taking into account project management-driven principles within a specific sequence of activities (grouping together what belongs together). The latter will involve all roleplayers in the work situation accountable for the implementation process (creating ownership). By doing this, duplication and overlapping of activities will be eliminated and connectivity/alignment between specific strategic objectives and their implementation will be enforced. The focus falls on the entire key/core process and cycle, producing outcomes of success in respect of the implementation of objectives (the right people will be doing the right things at the right time).

The outcomes of this study will contribute to the identification of measures, mechanisms, processes and approaches to ensure connectivity (appropriate correlation levels) between the strategic objectives and operational plans of Unisa specifically relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. A comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-approach was adopted as part of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' standardised operational plans, to enable more effective

and efficient correlation levels in respect of specific strategic objectives of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' implementation plans.

KEY TERMS

Appropriate

Alignment (vertical/horizontal)

Connectivity

Comprehensive integrated process

Correlation levels

Dependencies

Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations

Enablers

Effective/efficient

Measurement

Operational plans

Ownership

Strategic management

Strategic planning

Strategic objectives

Strategy implementation

University of South Africa

Workarounds

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study will be on the achievement of the University of South Africa's (Unisa's) strategic objectives (2015), and more specifically, on the correlation between its strategic objectives and operational plans to ensure the effective and efficient achievement of these strategic objectives. The current correlation levels of the strategic objectives and operational plans of Unisa will be compared and measured – as reflected in the Unisa 2015 strategic plans and the 2009/10/11 institutional operational plans – more specifically the plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

Outcomes and achievement (results) will be matched against initial intent and plans (aims). Through this study, the researcher will attempt to determine what the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans are; what they should be and how acceptable and desirable correlation levels can be created to ensure the effective and efficient execution of operational and strategic plans at this institution. Various strategic planning and strategic management approaches and models towards the achievement of strategic objectives will be investigated, analysed and described to determine their role in creating the most suitable (not necessarily the highest) correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans (see section 1.9.4.2). These include customer-driven, specific-driven, and comprehensively integrated approaches.

This introductory chapter provides a background to and rationale for the study, explaining the ongoing problem of organisations when striving to achieve their strategic objectives effectively and efficiently. Subsequently the significance of the study is addressed. The problem statement, aim and objectives, research questions as well as a hypothesis, are also provided. The approach to the study is

set out briefly and to clarify this approach, it is necessary to explain the research method. In the conclusion, an overview of this study will be provided.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Can non-profit organisations, such as colleges and universities, effectively utilise a potentially powerful and promising function such as strategic planning and development? According to Rowley, Lujan and Dolence (1997: 60), if they engage in effective strategic planning processes, these will ultimately lead to an increase in the effectiveness of strategic management. However, the challenge is to execute strategic intent, and therefore strategic decisions must influence actions at all appropriate levels.

Rowley *et al.* (1997) continue: “There is nothing as constant as change. The possibilities for reacting to change vary widely as organisations scramble to cope. Many hope that change will cease and that the good old days will once again return. That just is not going to happen. Could the resistance to change be one of the major factors leading to poor execution? Our own experience has demonstrated that at least in the settings of higher education, where we have conducted strategy planning, top-down planning has not been successful and *participative planning* has proven to be much more effective” (Rowley *et al.* 1997 : 60).

Investigation into the South African transformation process confirms the global experience: public sector transformation is a complicated process requiring more than just the generation of creative ideas and their formalisation in policy documents or strategic planning scenarios. Transformation requires an expert, skilful and dedicated workforce which is able to *operationalise* ideas. Currently, however, the requirements are not only transformation from apartheid rule to democratic principles and a representative public sector, but rather transformation and renewal as a shift from the mere existence of representative public institutions to centres delivering *quality* public services. It is time for real reform, which means adjustments that will enhance efficiency, effectiveness and productivity. “The *Batho Pele* principles (The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery in South Africa, 1997: 18-20) emphasise this as they were developed by Government to

consult with the wider community including the public sector, non-governmental and community-based organisations, *academic institutions* and citizens themselves in order to improve service delivery. Issues such as service standards, courtesy, openness and transparency, better value for money and *consultation* were highlighted” (Kroukamp, 2001: 22-37).

Unisa has released its strategic plan, with 2015 set as target date, to accomplish its strategic destination. Among others, it was clearly stated by the (then) Principal, Prof Pityana, that the Unisa workforce needs to *change* the way things have been done until now; that Unisa should aim at becoming *the* university in Africa, and that Unisa should approach its obligations as a *business* operating within a competitive environment.

Prof Pityana stated further that “in interrogating our performance in relation to the objectives set in the 2006 operational plan of Unisa, it becomes evident that there may be a disjunctive between operational planning and the strategic objectives (2015). Consequently an increased emphasis has been placed this year (2007) on *integration* and connectivity between operational planning and strategic planning” (Unisa 2007 Operational Plan, 2007: 3). Furthermore it is stated that the Unisa 2015 strategic plan is permeated by a discourse of *change* and transformation. It will continue to liberate Unisa’s capacities and redirect its resources to address the most pressing challenges confronting society. The challenges faced in closing the gap between strategic objectives and operational plans must receive high priority. The result was that during 2006, the first year of the actual implementation of the Unisa 2015 operational plans, the need to close the gap between strategy and operations was confirmed (Unisa 2007 Operational Plan, 2007: 3).

This lack of correlation (also referred to as the alignment gap) between intent (the what) and the accomplishments (the how), or strategic objectives and operational implementation plans, is often the result of many complex factors. Some of these relate to the dynamics of individual and group behaviour as well as to organisational systems/processes and the remainder relate to the very nature of the implementation process itself. “Public institutions often have multiple objectives that are both vague and conflicting. There is no bottom line that can be used as a proxy

measure of success. Instead, the demands of interest groups and manipulation of important stakeholders create a complex and confusing set of expectations” (Nutt & Backoff, 1992: 44).

A lack or absence of proper correlation levels between operational plans and strategic objectives may increase the risks and the ineffective management of the implementation of operational plans. It slows down the execution of institutional strategy. Ultimately, the institution may be unable to introduce timely change management and enhancement to processes and systems. All role players within a specific process must work in concert, thereby moving in the same direction towards the collective implementation of identified strategic objectives. During the past 27 years as an employee of Unisa and the past 15 years as executive official accountable for one of the core support functional departments at Unisa, namely the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, the researcher’s experience has shown that within a constant changing environment, the *lack* of effective and efficient process identification and management by results becomes evident. The lack of a clear communication plan in respect of the introduction of the strategic objectives to the relevant role players responsible for the achievement of strategic objectives within a specific process was also evident (specifically during various Unisa strategic information sessions held by a variety of members of Top Management).

At strategic planning level, for instance, important workshops and planning sessions were conducted without the involvement of key roleplayers accountable for the execution process (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations’ Strategic Planning Sessions and Workshops 2009 – 2010). Draft plans in respect of operational objectives and eventual final strategic objectives for implementation were finalised and circulated for execution purposes. Further, based on the researcher’s observations, the same flawed processes unfold in the determination of operational plans where the involvement of all roleplayers, specifically those at *strategic level* is lacking. Split ownership, duplication and overlapping occurs which results in vague and misaligned execution exercises and poorly formulated policies and procedures.

Efficient and effective operationalisation of strategic objectives becomes extremely difficult and sometimes impossible in such circumstances.

Against this background, various departments and units (administrative and academic) embarked on alignment exercises to streamline their operations following the merger between the former Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) and Unisa and to support the Unisa business strategy during 2006.

Emanating from the above, it has become evident that the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations of which the role and impact of service delivery will be explained in detail in Chapter 4, should embark on a process of aligning its specific business strategy and operations with that of the new strategic objectives of Unisa to enable the possible improvement of service delivery. Once the alignment has been properly attended to, it should serve as foundation for sound business systems and knowledge management and to enable the introduction of operational plans for effective implementation and execution towards the achievement of set strategic objectives.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

“Organisations often fail to execute their strategy – failure rates may range as high as 60 to 90 percent” (Kaplan & Norton, 2005: 2 - 4). These writers posit that it is impossible to manage what one cannot measure and one cannot measure what one cannot describe.

“Strategic decisions are those that align an organisation with its changing environment. To be effective, strategic decision must influence action at *all* appropriate levels” (Rowley *et al.* 1997: 40).

From the above statements and the researcher’s own observation it becomes clear that strategic planners often look for a planning event that will recognise change or meet the challenge of re-orienting the institution in some way and then allow it to return to “business as usual”.

Various literature reviews and research topics on strategic management focus either on strategic planning or strategic implementation as two separate processes. These include the works of inter alia Pierce and Robinson (1994); Rowley, Lujan and Dolence (1997); Smit and Cronje (1993); Bryson (1989); Hussey (1998); Van der Waldt and Du Toit (1999) and Griffin (1993). Literature focusing on Strategy Implementation are, inter alia, Purth (2003); Labovitz and Rosansky (1997); Dolence (1996); Brache and Bodley (2006) and Van der Waldt and Knipe (1998). Usually the *what* (intent), or the *how* (accomplishments) are clearly defined, within separate contexts.

However, a few publications such as Barry (1994); Mintzberg (1994); David (1989); Morrissey, Below and Acomb (1988); Ehlers and Lazenby (2007) and Judson (1996), address the challenge of connecting the pursuit of strategic objectives with operational plans to ensure successful implementation and execution of these plans. Even fewer literature reviews (referred to in the present literature study) either indicate the relationship or correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans of an organisation, or indicate the desirable level which will ensure the effective pursuit of strategic objectives. The researcher hopes that this study will contribute to determine the most appropriate and proper correlation levels between strategic objectives and implementation action plans. The outcomes of this study should further contribute to the identification of measures, mechanisms, processes and models to ensure connectivity and alignment between intent (the *what*) and accomplishment (the *how*) of an institution as *one* integrated process – thus, management by results (see section 2.3.4.4). More specifically, will the contribution of an improved process management model at the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations ensure the effective achievement of the strategic objectives of Unisa? A strategic plan is unlikely to have much impact without a supporting operational plan to serve as an implementation vehicle. “Strategy and more specifically strategic objectives only point an institution in a direction, it is implementation through strategic initiatives that provides the forward movement – it is all about results” (Brache & Bodley, 2006 : viii).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The first question that arises and that forms the *core* focus of this study, is *to what extent do the operational action plans of Unisa's student administrative functions, activities and procedures as well as their implementation correlate with the strategic objectives of Unisa?* In other words, what is the current contribution of the function of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations towards the achievement of the strategic objectives of Unisa?

A study of literature, for example (Wilson, 1992, Hardy, 1990 in Rowley *et al.* 1997: 259 – 261). indicating what theorists and case writers have said about *implementation*, shows that there is a general lack of specific tactical substance that gives adequate *methods* and *advice* to those who actually attempt to implement the *results* of strategic planning (Rowley *et al.* 1997: 259 - 261). The following paragraph from “The Power of Alignment” by Labovitz and Rosansky (1997: X) endorses this statement:

“Our research and experience have convinced us that growth and profit are ultimately the result of *adjustment* between people, customers, strategy and processes”. Further, these authors state:

“Alignment gives managers at every level of the organisation the ability to:

- Rapidly deploy the coherent business strategy;
- Be totally customer-focused;
- Develop world-class people; and
- Continuously improve business processes – at all times”.

In his published article “Does your operational plan *complement* your company's strategic plan” Balovich (2005: 16) writes:

“As 2005 draws to a close many professionals are preparing or analysing the goals and objectives for the coming year. All too often these operational goals fall short for one simple reason. They fail to *complement* the organisation's strategic plan: most companies repeatedly fail to motivate their people to work together to achieve

the corporate objectives. Too often they struggle to translate the *strategy* into *action plans* that enable their strategy to be a success”.

“Strategic planners must worry about implementation at the very beginning of the planning process” (Rowley *et al.* 1997: 260). He elaborates further: “Process involvement is a bridge that educates those involved in planning about *how* to *link* planning with actual governance and decision-making to solve real implementation problems”. Labovitz *et al.* (1997: 13) emphasises this by stating “*alignment* is not about the management of quality, it is about the quality of management”.

However, in contrast, low efficient and low effective correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans will result in people doing the wrong things right, since there will be no alignment in respect of policies, procedures and processes within a specific execution process. Very often a number of tasks will be executed very efficiently, but will lack a sense of direction. So, in order to be effective, the identification of relevant prioritised goals and tasks that will ensure direction towards the implementation of strategic objectives should come first. If planners fail to *prioritise* the right things to support execution at the beginning of planning, they may fail (See explanation of *dependencies* in section 1.9.6).

The second question (sub-problem) which arises and which forms a further important focus of this study is whether the reasons for the poor execution of strategic objectives/plans at Unisa are bad strategy or merely the poor implementation of the strategy. In other words, are action plans ineffective and is insufficient *emphasis* placed on the *what is to be done and how is it to be done*? In view of this, the question may be asked: What is the *ideal and proper correlation or alignment* level to ensure that strategic objectives (*the what*) are effectively promoted to those responsible for carrying out the plan (*the how*)? (See definitions of *effective and efficient correlation levels* in section 1.9.4.1 and 1.9.4.2: Terminology). Could an improved process management model at the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations ensure the effective achievement of some strategic objectives at Unisa?

The *major problem or challenge* in this research, however, remains to identify adequate processes/models, sequences of events, measures and tactics to ensure proper/appropriate correlation levels to keep the implementation process alive and in alignment with strategic objectives – i.e. to *match outcomes* and *achievements* with intent and strategic plans. Overcoming these challenges is, however, subject to a clear explanation of *effective* and *efficient* correlation levels (see section 1.9.4.1 and 1.9.4.2).

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In view of the problem statement, the aim and focus of this study will be to *reflect on, observe, analyse, compare, measure and describe* the *correlation* between *strategic objectives* and *operational plans* of Unisa and more specifically within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. The focus, therefore, will be on comparing and measuring outcomes and achievements with initial intent and plans.

Possible outcomes in respect of this approach could determine the most appropriate correlation levels between intent (strategic objectives) on the one hand and implementation and execution of action plans on the other. It could further contribute to more effective and efficient pursuit of strategic objectives as well as the measures, mechanisms, sequence of events, processes and model to ensure connectivity between strategic plans (intent, i.e. the *what*) and the execution of the plans (i.e. the *how* - accomplishment).

In order to achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives of the research will be pursued:

- To identify key concepts and approaches involved in strategic management towards the achievement of strategic objectives;
- To identify and explain effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans;

- To identify a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach to ensure effective and efficient correlation between strategic objectives and operational plans;
- To introduce and explain the importance of an aligned standardised administrative framework to support the achievement of the strategic objectives of Unisa in respect of the operational implementation plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations; and
- To introduce and explain the benchmarking findings in respect of the accomplishments of strategic objectives specifically as far as the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is concerned.

Within the scope of this research and in alignment with *Chapter 3* the researcher's point of departure will be to assume that the University's other administrative directorates will adopt a similar standardised framework/structure (as indicated in Chapter 3) to ensure legitimate ownership and acceptable functionality and uniformity within specific processes for the implementation of the strategic plans of the institution. This process will ensure alignment across those directorates which are identified roleplayers in the pursuit of specific objectives in one process by using the same key performance indicators, measures and enablers. The abovementioned standardised administrative structure is of crucial importance to enable the process of comparison and measurement in respect of the correlation levels and alignment of activities between units accountable for the execution of tasks within the same process.

"Turning strategy into action by linking identified *performance factors* with strategic initiatives and *projects* designed to develop and optimise departmental and individual activities are essential enablers toward effective execution. The real need here is to creatively bring strategy to life by creating operational plans/goals and objectives that are designed to not only meet the strategic plan, but also complement all other units' goals and objectives as well" (Balovich, 2005: 16).

In conclusion, Balovich (2005 : 18) confirms that the challenge of every departmental head is to turn theory into practice, make something happen and translate strategic plans into real business results. This will be accomplished only

when there is *synergy or connectivity* between *strategic and operational planning*. The present research will focus specifically on possible solutions to address this.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Since the focus of the study will be on how to measure correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans and more specifically the identification of effective/efficient correlation levels in respect of the above to ensure successful pursuit of strategic objectives, it is imperative to explain the concepts *effective and efficient correlation levels* (see section 1.9.4.1 – 1.9.4.2). Emanating from this, the following questions are relevant to this study:

- Should there be ineffective correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans, will this be the result of shortcomings in the processes, systems, strategic planning (the *what*) or the execution process of plans (the *how*)?
- Is there a lack of connectivity between strategic planning and operational planning, i.e. is there a lack in respect of vertical and horizontal alignment? (See section 1.9.1).
- Is it likely that the application of a process management model for the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations will contribute towards the achievement of the strategic objectives of Unisa – in view of the current lack of any clearly defined implementation model / procedures?

The above are the key questions concerning the effective and efficient implementation and execution of operational plans that need to be clarified and are closely related to the problem statement of the study.

1.7 HYPOTHESIS

A *hypothesis* consists either of a suggested explanation for a phenomenon or of a reasoned proposal suggesting a possible *correlation* between phenomena. Scientific methods require one to test a scientific hypothesis. Scientists generally base such hypotheses on previous observations or an extension of scientific

theories. Further, a hypothesis is a prediction or proposed solution to a problem, based on prior knowledge or information gathered. It is an educated guess about the outcome of the experiment and it must be possible to test a hypothesis. (Wiki/hypothesis, 2009: 1).

In correlation with the above statement (hypothesis) the following hypothesis has been formulated for this study:

There is a low or weak level of correlation between strategic objectives and operational action plans within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations at Unisa.

The *hypothesis* is in alignment with the aim of the study namely to determine whether correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans are determining factors (interdependencies) to ensure successful implementation and execution of the plans by matching accomplishments (results) with initial intent (strategic plans).

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (2006: 993) defines research as “careful search or enquiry after or for; the endeavour to discover new facts by scientific study of a subject course; critical investigation”. This definition focuses on two aspects of the concept: the *process* (search enquiry, endeavour, scientific study, critical investigation) and the *goal* (discovery) of new facts and principles (Wessels & Pauw, 1999: 363). Mouton elaborates on the goal of research: the “predominant purpose of all research is to arrive at results that are as close to the truth as possible i.e. the most valid findings possible” (Mouton, 1996: 28; Wessels & Pauw, 1999: 363).

The research for this study will be carried out mainly through a (i) *literature survey pertaining to strategic management approaches towards the achievement of strategic objectives*, (ii) *an analysis of official documents*, (iii) *observation*, (iv) *personal interviews*, (v) *group discussions during strategic sessions as well as* (vi)

descriptive research. A participation action research model, therefore a *qualitative approach* will be followed where the focus will be on participation and observation to understand and describe relationships between variables (correlation levels). Qualitative research acts on inductive logic with no specific and predetermined conceptual framework and *aims* at a better *understanding* of human behaviour (Mouton 1996 in Garbers 1996: 186 - 187, 291; Mouton & Marais, 1992: 164).

Action research is a model of enquiry and provides a practical framework for qualitative investigations aiming at solving shortcomings in educational activities (Gabel, 1995: 1 - 2). Critical reflection and forward thinking in respect of the above approaches, specifically observation and participation, also form an important part of the research.

To determine the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans, as much evidence/data as possible will be collected by conducting group discussions, participant observations and reading and noticing of events. Specific target areas will be:

- Human behaviour and characteristics:
 - Executive officers.
 - Senior managers, supervisors and task team convenors.
 - *Narratives* and case studies.
- Products of human behaviour:
 - Policy and strategic documents and more specifically the Unisa 2015 Strategic Plan and Unisa Operational Plan 2010/11.
 - Strategic documents for example business plans, self assessment plans and implementation strategy of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations which will be matched and benchmarked against Unisa's strategic and operational plans to determine existing correlation levels.
 - Outcomes of strategic sessions, workshops and meetings.

The outcomes of the above processes will be categorised into specific tendencies in respect of views, interpretation, perceptions, thinking/reflections, findings, suggestions, solutions/proposals and experiences to determine the most

appropriate and proper correlation/alignment levels between intent (strategic objectives) and execution processes (operational plans). Proposals made could contribute to the more effective and efficient correlation between strategic objectives and operational plans through, among others, the identification of measures, mechanisms, processes and models to enhance connectivity/alignment between strategic plans (intent/the what) and execution (accomplishments/the how).

1.9 TERMINOLOGY

Comprehensive conceptual clarifications of terms specific to this research appear in the appropriate chapters. However, to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity in the interpretation of concepts, terms utilised throughout this dissertation are concisely defined below.

1.9.1 Alignment

Alignment strategies should enable the investigator to look beyond simply providing descriptions of the objectives of organisations. They should enable him/her to *analyse* the information that is necessary for the *workforce* to meet those objectives: the *how* and the *what* of workforce alignment (Harvey, 2006: 1). *Alignment* is the continuous process of mobilising institutional resources to *effectively achieve objectives*; in other words a process in which key components of an institution are linked and made compatible with each other in order to address joint responsibilities. It relates to a situation where all those responsible for a specific execution process *pull together in the same direction*.

1.9.1.1 Vertical alignment

Vertical alignment comprises the rapid movement of an institutional strategy through the organisation, turning intentions into actual work. Vertical alignment energises people, provides direction and offers opportunity for

involvement, thereby aligning activities with intentions (Labovitz *et al.* 1997: 27, 74).

1.9.1.2 Horizontal alignment

Because processes generally cut across various functions in an institution, they are called “horizontal”. Horizontal alignment links an institution’s actions with customer needs in ways that delight and create loyalty. It aligns processes with customer expectations (Labovitz *et al.* 1997: 32).

1.9.2 Barriers

Barriers usually block progress or forward movement. Barriers are formations or structures which prevent or hinder movement or action (Konsult/Strategy/Barriers, 2010: 1; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 304-307).

1.9.3 Continuous improvement plans

These are plans originating from the monitoring and evaluation of current performance outcomes which enable managers to reorganise and respond immediately to situational variables as they arise (i.e. forward-thinking and proactive reaction) (Unisa 2008 to 2010 Operational Planning Manual, 2007: 4).

1.9.4 Correlation

Correlation is a measurement of the strength of the relationship between strategic objectives and operational plans (achievement of strategic objectives) (Kaplan & Norton, 2004: 72 – 80). The higher the correlation levels, the greater the connectivity between strategic objectives and their successful achievement.

Effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational action plans could be described as follows (Kaplan & Norton, 2004: 72 – 80).

1.9.4.1 Effective correlation levels

Effective correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans will result in people doing *the right things* at the right time with the right resources and relates directly to effective leadership involvement, establishing direction, aligning people, involving people and eventually producing change and productivity (which will lead to results) (Kaplan and Norton, 2004: 1 – 4; Barry, 1994: 48 – 49).

1.9.4.2 Efficient correlation levels

Efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans will result in people doing the right things right and relates directly to management responsibilities. It refers to process and system involvement in respect of planning and budgeting, organising and staffing control and problem-solving and producing order and predictability (Kaplan and Norton, 2004: 1 – 4; Barry, 1994: 48 – 49).

The integration/utilisation of both effectiveness and efficiency (i.e. leadership and management skills) in respect of the creation of proper correlation levels will eventually ensure successful strategy implementation. A results-driven process may ensure connectivity and alignment between strategic objectives and action plans (researcher's observation).

1.9.5 Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan

This is a plan that specifies details regarding how aligned prioritised objectives are to be achieved, with specific reference to tactics, actions, performance measures, targets and timelines. It also indicates the responsible people as well as supportive tools/resources. The intent is to identify specific actions aligned with strategic objectives for execution, within a specific process (Unisa 2008 to 2010 Operational Planning Manual, 2007: 4).

1.9.6 Dependencies

A dependency refers to the relation between activities, to the extent that one requires input from the other. A dependency is defined as an activity that is likely to impact on a project during its lifecycle. It also refers to the logical relationships between tasks (University of Kansas: 1).

1.9.7 Enablers

An enabler can be defined as the means, knowledge, opportunity and tools to activate or enable action or operational activity successfully. It could also comprise policies, rules and decisions to ensure a supportive platform for implementing plans (researcher's observation).

1.9.8 Focus area

Focus areas are those areas which are intended to guide the definition of an institution's vision and create an awareness of how to realise the vision by aligning operational objectives with the focus areas in a specific timeframe (Unisa 2008 to 2010 Operational Planning Manual, 2007: 4).

1.9.9 Organisation

An organisation is the result of an official legitimate organised infrastructure of an institution, through which individuals cooperate systematically to perform activities or to pursue certain collective goals. An organisation is characterised by having a formal set of rules/policies that is hierarchical and a well-defined division of labour (McNamara, 1999: 1).

1.9.10 Performance measurement

This refers to a particular criterion used to measure the extent of achievement of, or progress towards, a strategic and operational objective, which may be expressed in a qualitative or quantitative way (Unisa 2008-2010 Operational Planning Manual, 2007: 4).

1.9.11 Process

A process is the organisation of people (utilising procedures, mechanisms and materials) into work activities needed to produce a specified end result (work product). It is a sequence of activities characterised as having measurable input(s), value-adding activities, measurable output(s) and repeatable activities (Barry, 1994: 39).

1.9.12 Project

A project can be defined as an unrepeated activity. A project is objective-oriented and it brings about change.

A **project** can also be defined as a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service. Despite the temporary or “single-pass” nature of projects themselves, project management processes recur repetitively throughout the life cycle of each project (Johnson, Joyner & Martin, 2010: 1 - 2; Van der Waldt, 2004: 59).

1.9.13 Public sector

The public sector is a collective term which refers to the public service as well as to local government, statutory bodies, quasi-government institutions, parastatals and similar bodies (Clapper, 2000: 18).

1.9.14 Public service

Within public administration there is a public service which should be functional and be structured in terms of national legislation and which should scrupulously execute the lawful policies of the government of the day (Government Gazette, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

1.9.15 Strategic intent

Strategic intent is the process of creating a priority through the setting of an overarching, ambitious goal that stretches the organisation and focuses on winning in the long run (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 65).

1.9.16 Strategic issues

A strategic issue is defined as a trend or event arising inside or outside an organisation that can have an important influence on the organisation's ability to reach its desired objectives (Ambler, 2009: 1).

1.9.17 Strategic management

Strategic management can be defined as the process whereby all the organisational functions and resources are integrated and coordinated to implement formulated strategies which are *aligned* with the environment, in order to achieve the objectives of the organisation and therefore add value for stakeholders (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 2-5). The strategic management process involves five distinct but related tasks, namely mission development, goal setting, strategy development and selection, strategy implementation and evaluation, review and adjustment.

1.9.18 Strategic objectives

A strategic objective is a concrete statement describing what an institution aims to achieve over a specific timeframe through a particular action. A well-formulated objective will be specific, measurable, attainable, achievable, realistic and time bound – therefore smart (Unisa 2008 to 2010 Operational Planning Manual, 2007: 4).

1.9.19 Strategic operational plan

This is a medium-term rolling plan that sets out prioritised institutional objectives in support of the overall strategic vision of an institution, which comprises operational objectives, action and performance measures, and targets and indicates the people responsible and the deployment/utilisation of resources – i.e. operational plans (wiki/operational planning, 2009: 2).

The relationship between strategic planning, operational plans and strategic operational plans can be defined as the specific sequence of events within different levels to create connectivity within an implementation process and to ensure effective and efficient execution of the strategic objectives of an organisation (researcher's observation). Chapter 5 of this dissertation indicates the specific sequence of events (see section 5.3), the 2015 Strategic Plans of Unisa, par 5.5, the 2010 Operational Plans of Unisa and lastly par 5.6 of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Strategic Operational Framework.

Smit and Cronje (1997: 123) identify strategic planning as a plan that typically states the organisation's mission and describes a set of goals to move an organisation into the future. Operational planning, according to Smit and Cronje (1997: 123) focuses on short term achievements and is specific. Operational planning translates the broad concepts of the strategic plan into clear numbers, specific steps and measurable objectives.

1.9.19.1 Strategy implementation

Strategy implementation can be defined as the process that turns strategic operational plans into a series of action tasks, and ensures that these tasks are executed in such a way that the objectives of the strategic plans are achieved (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 212).

1.9.20 Strategic planning

“Strategic thinking requires commitments to concentrate the use of resources and to focus on priorities in their use” (Rowley *et al.* 1997). “Strategic planning is a formal process designed to help an organisation identify and maintain optimal *alignment* with the most important elements of its environment” (Rowley *et al.* 1997).

The main purpose of strategic planning is to improve the productivity and effectiveness of institutional objectives and to identify steps to achieve these objectives. Strategic planning is the process that develops strategic management (Bryson, 1989: 123).

1.9.21 Strategy

Swanepoel, Erasmus, van Wyk & Schenk (2003: 209) indicate that a strategy has the following characteristics: it is longterm and future-oriented; it focuses on matching or creating the necessary *fit* between the internal and external environments of the organisation (which is competitive and constantly changing) and it is concerned with the mission and *objectives* of the organisation as a *whole* and therefore with its success within this environment of competition and change.

For the purpose of this study the researcher embraces the above definition of strategy by Swanepoel *et al.*

1.9.22 The concept “what”

“The first, or the **what**, is called declarative knowledge”. Declarative knowledge is knowledge of what the strategy or goals are and what they are meant to do. “Declarative knowledge of a strategy begins with awareness of it (ReadingQuest. 2007: 2).

1.9.23 The concept “how”

“Knowing **how** the strategy works or is implemented is called procedural knowledge. What are the steps, the process, the procedure? What does one do first, then next, then subsequently?” Knowing that a strategy exists is meaningless if one does not know how to implement it (ReadingQuest. 2007: 2).

For the purpose of this study the above definitions are subscribed to by the researcher, specifically in relation to the successful implementation of Unisa’s strategic objectives.

1.9.24 Universities as institutions

“A University can be defined as a diverse organisation of higher learning created to educate for life and for a profession and to grant degrees” (Wiki/university, 2009: 1).

Universities are largely value-driven, meaning that their activities should be judged as much by the values they uphold as by the ends they produce. Given that fundamental values are imbued with emotion, institutions of higher education tend to be more tradition-bound than economic organisations are. Greater care is needed, therefore, to adapt strategic planning to the culture and traditions of educational institutions. In applying strategic planning to higher education, one should be wary of standards formulated, and only loosely adopted ideas and practices from the management arena: the

formulation of policies and procedures for implementation without the consent/involvement of responsible individuals. The planning process should generate a reasonable level of consensus on direction, emphasis and priorities, even though there may be considerable disagreement on specifics or details. “The fundamental point is that the “bottoms up” feature of strategic planning is more important in a university than elsewhere”. (Unisa Management Committee, 2006: 1; Wiki/University, 2009: 1).

1.9.25 University of South Africa (Unisa)

On 1 January 2004, the University of South Africa (Unisa) merged with Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) to become the new comprehensive University of South Africa. On 2 January of that year, the new university incorporated the distance education campus of Vista University (Vudec) to become the only dedicated public distance education institution in South Africa. The merger and incorporation took place as a result of a new vision for the higher education landscape envisaged in the National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE 2001). The merger created a comprehensive higher education institution that is a combination of technikon and university approaches and programmes. At the time of the merger, the University had 1239 academic employees, 2046 administrative and professional staff, and 145 043 students; in addition, it had a nationwide regional infrastructure which offered contact tutorials for students. At the time of writing (2010) a number of 316 201 students are registered at Unisa (Unisa 2015 Operational plans, 2010: 4 – 6).

1.10 DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study will not attempt to establish competencies of top management at Unisa over the entire spectrum of strategic management. In addition the study will not attempt to cover all areas of the spectrum of strategic planning and strategic management. This study will focus on the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans and more specifically to measure and to propose processes that should create a more appropriate and higher correlation level or

connectivity between strategic objectives and operational plans. It aims at ensuring the possible achievement of these by introducing integrated comprehensive-specific process-management by means of a results-driven model. The study will therefore be limited within the parameters of the above rationale and to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

The focus of the analyses and research will cover the period 2003 to 2011. During this period the former Technikon Southern Africa (TSA) and former University of South Africa (Unisa) underwent a merger process. Various documents and processes pertaining to transformation, realignment, restructuring, strategic objectives and operational plans are available to support the research scope.

1.11 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 serves as an orientation and background study to the dissertation. It includes the background to, rationale for and significance of the study. The problem statement and questions, research aim and objectives, hypothesis, research methodology and sequence of this study are provided. Finally, the chapter concludes with a terminology section and overview of each chapter of the dissertation, delimitations and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 deals mainly with the literature review based on opinions and views from various sources, and from different researchers and authors whose works are significant in this particular research field. In this way, various models, key concepts and definitions, as well as theories that can be used to determine the effective and efficient (most adequate and appropriate) correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans are dealt with.

Chapter 3 deals with the analysis and explanation of relevant institutional and literature review documents for the possible identification of primary and supporting approaches, processes or models that could bridge/narrow or enhance the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational action plans: i.e. to connect/link intent (strategic objectives) with accomplishment (execution). A

specific model that could enable possible alignment between intent and execution within a specific process is explained.

Chapter 4 focuses on the importance of the activities, functions and operational action plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations in alignment with the strategic objectives of Unisa. The impact, value contributions and ripple effect of the activities and operations of the Directorate on the achievement of Unisa's strategic objectives within a specific process are analysed and described.

Chapter 5 focuses on the importance of an aligned standardised administrative framework to support a more effective achievement of strategic objectives of Unisa within a specific process. Key strategic objectives of Unisa, specific to the Directorate: Student Administration, are identified and aligned with the operational action plans of Unisa, which will again be matched and aligned with the operational action plans of the Directorate (the sequence of events or value chain of activities within a specific process). The benchmarking of accomplishments with strategic objectives are analysed using vertical and horizontal alignment criteria and the primary findings and perceptions in respect of the accomplishments of strategic objectives are emphasised.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter of this dissertation. It relates specifically to the research questions, the problem statement, the aim and objectives of the study and the hypothesis on which the dissertation is founded. It provides conclusions that relate specifically to the hypothesis. In particular, a summary, conclusions and some proposals as well as a topic for possible further research arising from the dissertation, are the subject of this concluding chapter.

1.12 SUMMARY

In Chapter 1 the researcher provides an introduction to the main concepts and context of this study. The problem statement, research aims and objectives as well as an outline of the research methodology are provided. The researcher also provides a synopsis of the significance of the study and an exposition of the chapters that will constitute this research dissertation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW – A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT APPROACHES TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

“Better a first-class implementation procedure for a second-class strategy than vice versa. Strategies will not exist unless the organisation’s managers have thought through what needs to be done, when and by whom, using which resources, to achieve what objectives” (Anon 1982 in Okumus & Roper, A., 1999: 21 - 39). “However, despite the importance of the strategic execution process, far more research has been carried out into strategy formulation than into strategy implementation. The reasons why strategic researchers have paid less attention to this area may be because they have viewed strategy implementation as a mere detail of the planning process” (Alexander, 1991: 1).

This Chapter will deal mainly with a literature review based on opinions and views from various resources and from different researchers and authors whose works are significant in this particular research field. In this way, various models, key concepts and definitions, and theories which will be used to understand the aim of this study (to measure the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans) are dealt with. Comparisons and descriptions of various strategic management approaches and processes are analysed to determine the correlation between strategic objectives and their execution. Key concepts and approaches involved in strategic management and achievement of strategic objectives are analysed in an attempt to determine the most appropriate method to measure correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans.

Specific reference will be made to the customer-driven approach, specific management-driven approaches and a comprehensively-integrated process-management approach. The Chapter ends by summarising the key findings of the review and also gives further information about the most appropriate model and the reasons for this choice.

2.2 STRATEGIC PLANNING VERSUS STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN RESPECT OF THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

It should be emphasised that the purpose of this study is not to attempt to cover all areas of the spectrum of strategic planning and strategic management, but to focus on how to determine the most appropriate level of correlation between strategic objectives and operational plans to ensure its possible achievement /implementation, with specific reference to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations at Unisa.

Mintzberg and Quinn (1996) argues that conceptualising the strategic management process as one in which analysis is followed by optimal decisions and their subsequent meticulous implementation neither describes the strategic management process accurately nor prescribes ideal practice. In his view the business environment is far from predictable, thereby limiting the ability for analysis. Further, decisions in an organisation are seldom based on optimal rationality alone given the political processes that occur in all organisations (Mintzberg in Dess, Lumpkin & Taylor, 2005: 1).

Few strategies are implemented entirely in the form in which they were formulated. Similarly, the reasons for success when analysed retrospectively may be different from what was expected initially. Part of a strategy may therefore be the recognition of the patterns that seem to have led to success even if those patterns arose by chance rather than as a result of planned actions (Macmillan & Tampoe, 2000: 24).

These multiple aspects of strategy are separable but not usually contradictory. Several attempts have been made to classify existent literature on strategic

management. Two of the best classifications are by Whittington (2001: 117 - 120) and Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lanpel (1998: 67 - 75).

According to Macmillan and Tampoe (2000: 24 – 25), Whittington defines four distinct schools, namely the classical, evolutionary, systematic and procedural, differentiated by their stances on two axes.

The first axis separates those who believe that leaders and managers are able to determine what their strategies should be by a deliberate process of thinking. The opposite view is that managers have a very limited ability to determine outcomes and that strategy emerges as events unfold. This axis distinguishes between a deterministic view and an emergent view of strategy.

The second axis differentiates between those who see strategy-seeking as a single goal (usually a financial goal in business) and those who see organisations as having conflict of internal policies. This axis therefore distinguishes between those who take a single dimensional view of purpose (satisfying the needs of society) and those who place greater emphasis on complexity and politics in the reality of business. The two directions of each of the two axes lead to the four schools. Whittington postulated that each of the four schools tended to be derived from different thinking about strategic management based on different disciplines. He stated further, that each school had tended to be dominant, at least among academic writers, in a particular decade. “Writing in 1993, Whittington saw sociology as having an increasingly important role in thinking about strategic management. It might be possible to defend this point of view in a debate but it is certainly not true that economic pressures (particularly the search for shareholder value) nor the importance of people and their psychology have in any way reduced in importance during the 1990s. The four schools therefore may be more usefully seen as complementary perspectives rather than evolving truth” (Macmillan & Tampoe, 2000: 24 - 25).

Table 2.1: Whittington's four schools of strategy

Whittington's four schools of strategy compared				
Characteristics	Classical	Processual	Evolutionary	Systemic
Deterministic/ emergent	Deterministic	Deterministic	Emergent	Emergent
Single goal/pluralistic	Single	Plural	Single	Plural
Strategy style	Formal	Crafted	Efficiency	Embedded
Influences	Economics/military	Psychology	Economics/ Biology	Sociology
Decade of influence	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
<i>Source: Macmillan & Tampoe, (2000: 25)</i>				

More recently, Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998: 67 – 75) outlined three prescriptive and seven descriptive schools of strategic thought, which differ according to their premises and the nature of the strategy process. The characteristics of the schools are summarised in the table below (Macmillan & Tampoe, 2000: 25 - 27).

Table 2.2: Three prescriptive schools

Three prescriptive schools of thought		
School	Nature of process	Principal relevance
Design	Conception	Emphasis on chief executive's responsibility and overall simplicity of successful strategies.
Planning	Formal planning	Currently blamed for the failure of formal strategic planning departments.
Positioning	Analysis	Particularly strong in large companies and where management consultants have an analytical role.

Seven Descriptive Schools		
Entrepreneurial	Vision	Emphasis on vision for the future. Relevance for business start-ups, turnarounds, or whether there is a charismatic leader.
Cognitive	Mental process	Examines the mental processes and maps of leaders. Examines the flashes of insight from which strategy may originate.
Learning	Emergent	Sees planning as leading to learning. An organisation which can learn and adapt may succeed in an uncertain world.
Power	Negotiation	Examines the processes of power and negotiation by which strategies are formed in organisations.
Cultural	Collective process	Strategies derive from a collective process and the culture of the organisation which may be unique and hence a source of advantage.
Environmental	Reactive process	Organisations cluster in distinct ecological niches until resources become scarce or conditions hostile. Then they die.
Configuration	Transformational process	Organisations exist in stable configurations for considerable periods but then have to transform themselves.
<i>Source: Adapted from Mintzberg et al. (1998: 66 - 75)</i>		

2.2.1 Planning

Planning in organisations is the organisational process of creating and maintaining a plan and the psychological process of thinking about activities required to create a desired goal on some scale. As such, it is a fundamental property of intelligent behaviour. This process is essential to the creation and refinement of a plan or integration of it with other plans, i.e. it combines forecasting of developments with the preparation of scenarios of how to react to them (wiki/planning, 2009: 1). Planning could have different meanings depending on the political or economic context. Two attitudes to planning need to be held in tandem. On the one hand one should be prepared for what may lie ahead, which may mean contingencies and

flexible processes. On the other hand, one's future is shaped by consequences of one's own planning and actions (wiki/planning, 2009: 2).

A plan / planning serves the following three critical functions:

- It helps management to clarify, focus and research its organisation's development and prospects.
- It provides a considered and logical framework within which an organisation can develop and pursue strategies over the next three to five years and it offers a benchmark against which actual performance can be measured and reviewed. In this way, planning bridges between where one is and where one wants to go.
- Planning is a process for accomplishing purpose. It helps in determining objectives both in quantitative and qualitative terms. (wiki/planning, 2009: 2; Hailey, Barnes & Ryan, 1990: 1 – 4).

2.2.2 Strategic management

Strategic management can be defined as the process whereby all organisational functions and resources are integrated and coordinated to implement formulated strategies which are supposed to be *aligned* with the environment, in order to achieve the objectives of the organisation and thereby adding value for stakeholders (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 2-5). These writers state further that the strategic management process involves five distinct but related tasks namely: *mission development, goal setting, strategy development and selection, strategy implementation and evaluation, review and adjustment*. The effectiveness of an organisation's strategic management can critically impact upon its viability and there are many reasons why the strategic management process may fail. Some of these are failure to:

- Think critically and creatively about the likely effects of plans and decisions;
- Obtain external / internal participation and commitment; and
- Co-ordinate and control resources.

2.2.3 Strategic planning

“Strategic thinking requires commitments to concentrate the use of resources and to focus on priorities in their use. Strategic planning is a formal process designed to help an organisation identify and maintain optimal *alignment* with the most important elements of its environment” (Dolence, Rowley & Lujan, 1997: 13 – 14). In order for the process to be effective, strategic planning must be followed by strategic management and by strategic operational thinking (strategic decisions and actions), i.e. where one is now / where one wants to go / how one will get there (researcher’s observation). Van der Walldt and Du Toit (1999: 285) state that strategic planning enables public managers to evaluate, select and implement alternatives for rendering effective services. The main purpose of strategic planning is to improve the productivity and effectiveness of institutional activities in order to achieve these objectives.

Strategic planning relates to learning and creativity with the recognition that *college and university* leaders need to challenge assumptions and consider radically changing existing structures and processes. “A strategy is the pattern of a plan which *integrates* organisations’ major goals, policies and *action sequences* into a cohesive whole”, taking into account its internal competencies and shortcomings, anticipated changes in the environment and social demands. Strategic planning, to put it simply, is *what* to do, *why* it should be done, *how* it should be done and *who* should do it (Quinn, 1980: 1; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1996: 18 - 26).

In conclusion, the researcher offers the following summary of the relationship between strategic management and strategic planning:

Strategic management is a comprehensive term encompassing the total management of the institution. Strategic management entails the implementation of strategies developed to give new direction to an institution that is in the midst of change or a transitional process. It enables the institution to fulfil its responsibilities in a rapidly changing environment (Mercer, 1991: 20). Strategic management refers to the overall process, which includes not only strategic planning, but also organising, leading, controlling and related decisions and actions in an institution.

Strategic planning is a tool of strategic management and forms an important component of it. Strategic planning enables public managers to evaluate, select and implement alternatives for rendering effective service (Mercer, 1991: 20). Therefore, effective application of strategic planning and management causes better utilisation of the state's resources.

2.2.4 Operational planning

An operational plan in the context of this dissertation is an implementation management-level plan that provides a compass to an institution as a whole on the key operational priorities. Moreover, it is the central frame of reference for allocating resources, focusing effort and measuring individual and institutional performance (Unisa 2009 Operational Plan, 2009: 3).

Operational planning is the “how do we get there” and should form an integrated part of the institutional strategic plan. An operational plan is therefore a subset of a strategic work plan. It describes a work plan. It describes short term ways of achieving strategic goals/milestones and explains how or what portion of a strategic plan will be put into operation during a given operational period. An operational plan is the basis for, and justification of, an annual operation request.

Operational plans should establish the activities and budgets for each part of the organisation for the following one to three years. They link/align the strategic plan with the activities the organisation will deliver and the resources required to deliver them. Like a strategic plan, an operational plan addresses four questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?
- How do we measure our progress?

Operational plans should be prepared by those people who will be involved in the implementation. There is often a need for significant cross-departmental dialogue

as plans created by one part of the organisation inevitably have implications for other parts during execution (wiki/operational planning, 2009: 1).

Operational planning should contain:

- Clear objectives;
- Activities to be delivered;
- Quality standards;
- Desired outcomes;
- Staffing and resource requirements;
- Implementation timetables;
- A process for monitoring;
- Measuring progress;
- A budget; and
- Ownership.

(wiki/operational planning, 2009: 1).

2.2.5 Strategic alignment

Alignment strategies should look beyond simply providing descriptions of the objectives of organisations. They should *analyse* the information that is necessary for the workforce to meet those objectives – the *how* and the *what* of workforce alignment (Harvey, 2007: 1). Strategic alignment is the continuous process of mobilising institutional resources to effectively achieve objectives, in other words a process where key components of an institution are linked and made compatible with each other to address joint responsibilities. It relates to a situation where everyone responsible for a specific execution process pulls together in the same direction (Harvey, 2007: 1). Vertical alignment is the rapid movement of an institution's strategy through the organisation, turning intentions into actual work. Vertical alignment energises people, provides direction and offers opportunities for involvement, thereby aligning activities with intentions (Labovitz *et al.* 1997: 27, 24).

As work processes generally cut across a variety of functions of an institution, alignment can also be horizontal. Horizontal alignment links an institution's actions with customer needs in ways that delight and create loyalty, thereby aligning processes with customer expectations (Labovitz *et al.* 1997: 32).

In conclusion, Balovich (2005: 16) confirms that the challenge of every departmental head is to turn theory into practice, to make something happen and to translate strategic plans into real business results. This will be accomplished only when there is alignment between *strategic and operational planning*.

2.3 APPROACHES TO STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

2.3.1 Background

General overarching strategic management approaches can be categorised into two main approaches, namely the Industrial Organisational Approach (also see par 2.2), which is aligned to the value members of society get for their tax money (economics-related) and the Sociological Approach (also see par 2.2) where greater emphasis falls on the sociological perspective.

The Industrial Organisational Approach is based on economic theory and deals with issues such as competitive rivalry, resource allocation and economies of scale. The Sociological Approach primarily deals with human interactions in respect of service delivery (wiki/strategic management, 2009: 1).

As far as strategy implementation in particular is concerned, the following diverse views have emerged from the literature study.

The *first* group emphasises the significance of planning to achieve clear objectives and the common terminology used by scholars in this group appears to reflect the *planning or rational approach*. In the *second* group, the emphasised theme is that strategy development and implementation are a learning and *incremental* process

(or *emergent approach* to strategic management). The main theme of the *third* group is that there is no one best way to develop and implement strategy and that the most appropriate strategic management process will depend on the situation; this approach is referred to as *contingency theory*.

Meanwhile, scholars such as Mintzberg (1994), Johnson and Scholes (1993) and Richardson (1989) have attempted to combine these *three* schools of thought under one single dimension entitled the *configurational or comprehensive* school of thought. However, Mintzberg and Quinn (1996) and Stacey (1996) claim that even this view has limitations and they propose that one should look beyond configurations and evaluate the complexities and dynamics of the strategic process. They label this *final* approach beyond configuration (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1996) or the *chaos and complexity* (Stacey, 1996) school of thought.

From the above-mentioned approaches derived from the literary study the researcher will attempt to categorise various approaches within three specific overarching approaches, namely the *customer-driven approach*, *specific-driven approach* and lastly *the comprehensive-integrated-management-process-approach*.

2.3.2 The customer-driven approach (external factors)

The customer-driven approach focuses on the needs/requirements of external customers to enable alignment with the internal factors, thereby ensuring the delivery of services that will add value to the external environment (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 122 – 123). The external customer environment will eventually drive the internal organisational environment. According to Ehlers and Lazenby (2007: 135), strategy is about positioning the organisation for a longterm competitive advantage. To be successful, organisations must ensure that their strategies are related to their structures and systems (see section 2.3.2.3) as well as to the demands of the environment and operating context.

Implementing a customer-driven strategic management process is of critical importance. The strategy will help to “mistake-proof” the decision-making process. The strategy will lead the institution into intelligent selection regarding which

technologies to pursue in which sequence so that customer satisfaction can be increased rapidly without overloading people. Because of competitive threats, domestic and otherwise, this needs to be done quickly (Wallace, 1992: 218; Pearce & Robinson, 2000: 98 - 106).

Key elements indicative of customer- service-driven organisations are the following:

- A mission statement or sense of mission which makes customer service a priority;
- Customer service standards which are clearly defined;
- Client satisfaction levels which are constantly measured; and
- Customer service goals which have an impact on organisational action.

Barry (1994: 32) is of the opinion that customer expectations are created by the organisation and they are driven by strategic planning. He further elaborates that customers not only demand knowledge of the organisation's strategic process for excellence; they also want their ideas incorporated. "The external customer environment will drive the internal organisational environment" (Barry, 1994: 32).

When the management of an organisation is able to develop a profile of present and prospective customers, it improves the ability of the organisation to successfully plan for the needs of the market/social environment.

Identifying an organisation's main customers and producing the products and services they want is, therefore, a key factor affecting the organisation's success. It is also important to realise that all the aspects of the market environment and especially of customer behaviour are directly influenced by different variables in the macro-environment. For example, demographic trends, a social environmental issue, affect the number of customers while inflation and interest rates as economic environmental aspects determine their disposable income (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 122-123).

2.3.2.1 Adapt to the changing political, economical, social and technological factors (PEST)

The strategic environment is the long-term internal (micro) and external (macro) environment in which the organisation will exist. The internal environment comprises conditions that exist within the organisation and the external environment comprises those conditions outside the organisation. Environmental changes depend on many factors outside the organisation's control. However, if current conditions are closely researched and understood, one can project a strategic environment. Again, it is not "blue-sky" it is strategic thinking. Current environments and knowledge can be used in combination with some forecasting trends to develop a good feel for future environments (Barry, 1994, 30 – 31).

From the above it is, however, important to bring about some degree of balance amongst the seemingly never-ending stakeholders/external demands in order to ensure that the institution's core business does not become secondary to its core purpose and that the institution does not eventually become a mere place of employment (researcher's observation).

The internal and external organisational environment will be a key factor in organisational design. It will become one of the major driving forces behind decisions that will determine the structure of the future organisation (Barry, 1994: 31). Labovitz and Rosansky (1997: 109 - 111) are of the opinion that horizontally aligned companies use the customer's voice as a beacon and a driver for the way the company thinks, works and is managed.

From the above the assumption could be made that the external customer environment will eventually drive the internal organisational environment. Therefore, the key to the success of this accomplishment will be the ability to forecast the environment and become proactive instead of reactive.

Ehlers and Lazenby (2007: 102) indicate that the external environmental analysis focuses its attention on identifying and evaluating trends and events beyond the control of a single organisation and also reveals key

opportunities and threats confronting the organisation which could have a major influence on the organisation's strategic actions.

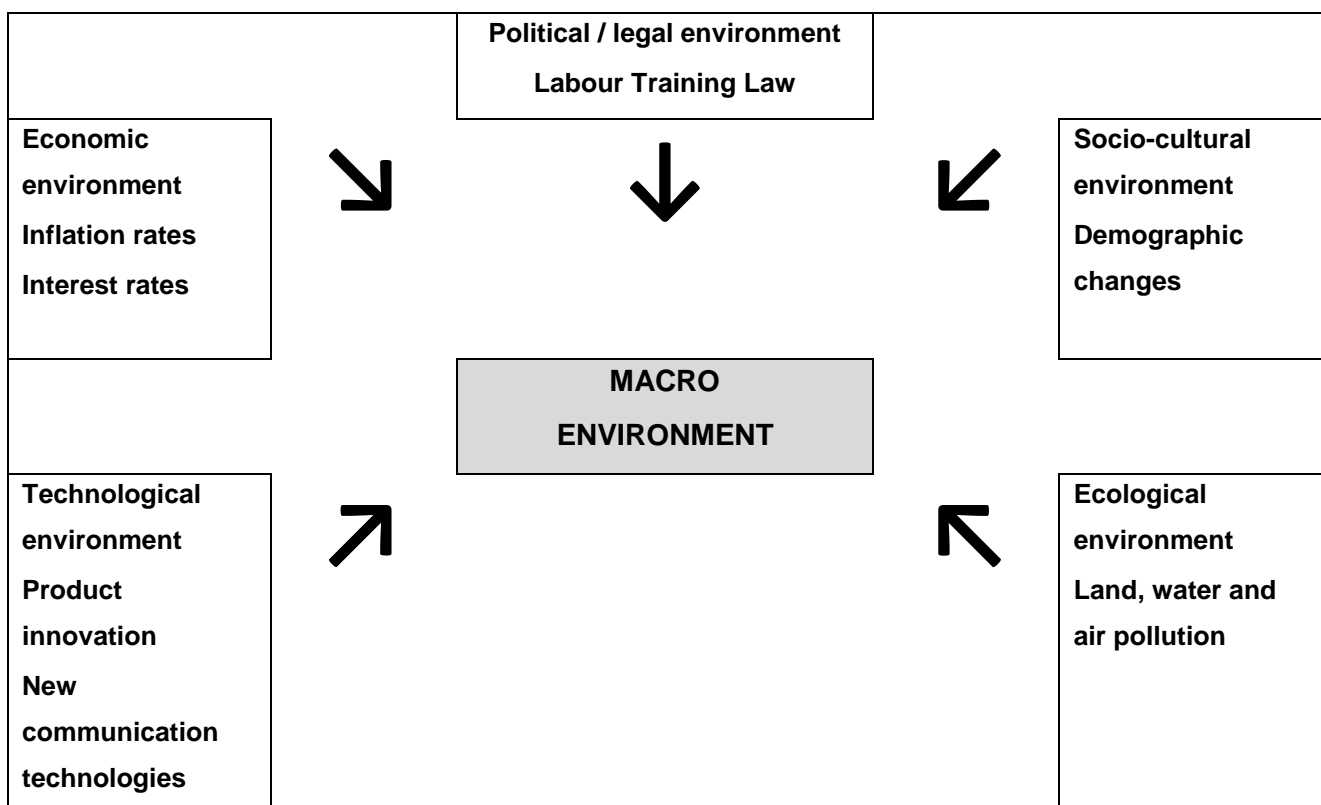
Varying dimensions in the macro-environment are grouped into *five* environmental segments:

- Political, governmental and legal forces;
- Economic forces;
- Social, cultural and demographic forces;
- Technological forces; and
- Ecological forces.

(Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 106).

Examples of the elements that should be analysed in these different environments are the following (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 : Elements of the macro environment



A continuous process of external environmental analysis is, however, important and includes four interrelated activities, namely scanning, monitoring, forecasting and assessing (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 102).

2.3.2.2 Best practices / the competitive environment

“Strategy is about positioning organisations for long-term competitive advantage. Successful firms are careful to ensure that their strategies are related to their structures and to the demands of the environment and operating context” (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 135).

According to Porter (1980: 35 – 40), competitive strategy refers to those activities an organisation undertakes to gain a *competitive advantage in a particular industry*. The competitive advantage should elevate the organisation above its competition. This competitive advantage should fulfil the following criteria. It must:

- Relate to an attribute with value and relevance to the targeted customer segment;
- Be perceived by the customer as a competitive advantage; and
- Be sustainable i.e not easily imitated by competitors (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 138 – 139).

Consequently, the competitive advantage that an organisation selects should be based on its resources, strengths or distinctive competencies, relative to competitors, but must also be perceived as such by its customers (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 138).

In order to achieve long-term strategic success and a competitive advantage, organisations should perform all strategic management activities within the context of continuous improvement. Organisations can achieve continuous improvement through the adoption of practices such as *benchmarking*, total quality management and re-engineering. Total quality management is

continuous improvement and requires the organisation and its members to improve on something every day – improvement is never-ending. Total quality management focuses on designing and delivering quality products to customers and can dramatically improve organisational performance. Re-engineering and total quality management are interrelated and complementary. Once business processes have been re-engineered, total quality management principles can be used to continuously improve the new processes and find better/improved ways to manage tasks and roles. Ehlers and Lazenby (2007: 285), state that *benchmarking* is the comparison of selected performance measures or operational processes against some challenging yardsticks.

These yardsticks could be comparisons with the organisation's own history; against key competitors or against best-in-class performers. Subsequently these best practices should be incorporated into strategy implementations and strategic control systems.

2.3.2.3 Change management

Models for organisational change are usually distinguishable based on methodology and approach, processes, focus areas for change and the extent of change required. The *systems* approach as an important factor of the customer-driven approach, requires that the essential properties of the organisation be taken as a whole, assuming that each element in the system has an effect on the behaviour of the whole system.

Therefore, when a system is taken apart it loses its essential properties. The *planned change process* type of models are characterised by a thoroughly planned process and a transparent communication strategy which are managed by authorised and empowered persons within the organisation (Geldenhuys, Naude & Veldsman, 2003: 53 – 64). Problems within the organisation are jointly identified and solutions developed based on consensus during consultative working sessions. The focus on the *unfreezing - change - refreezing approach* is primarily on the preparation of

the organisation for change, the implementation of change, and finally the stabilisation and reinforcement of change. The *survey-guided approach* requires surveys to be carried out to assess the current state of organisational functioning and the effectiveness of the activities used to adjust and correct processes (Geldenhuys *et al.* 2003: 53 – 64).

Based on the abovementioned, one can conclude that change management models consist of phases dealing with:

- Preparation and awakening, which involves the establishment of a competent leadership team and an acknowledgement of the need for change;
- Mobilisation, which entails the gearing up for the change journey in terms of a more detailed intention, indicating the involvement of people and the required abilities and resources;
- Conversation, which deals with assessing alternative strategic choices, formulating change actions for implementation and evaluating support systems. Strong emphasis is placed on the continuous management of the process together with transparent and ongoing communication; and
- Stabilisation, which involves institutionalising change (Geldenhuys *et al.* 2003: 53 – 64).

2.3.3 Specific driven approach (internal factors)

A specific driven approach focuses on what and how an organisation can implement its core objectives in alignment with the benchmarking (outcomes) of needs and requirements from external customers to ensure timely change management as well as the development of resources, structures, processes, capabilities and operational plans towards the effective and efficient execution of strategic objectives (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 80, 83, 91).

The rapid developments and changes in the components of the external environment make it difficult for organisations to keep up their competitive

advantage and reputation if they do not also understand the internal environment of the organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 80).

Ehlers and Lazenby (2007: 85 - 87) further indicate that an organisation cannot decide on a specific strategic direction to follow if it does not know what it can and cannot do and which assets it has and does not have. When an organisation is able to match what it can do with what it might do, this allows the organisation to develop its vision or strategic intent, to pursue its strategic mission and to select and implement its strategies. It is however, important to stress that the link between the organisation's vision of what it wants to become and the internal environmental situation cannot be overlooked. The outcome resulting from an internal analysis will determine what an organisation can do, while the outcome of an external environmental analysis will identify what the organisation may choose to do. The task of identifying, developing and deploying resources, capabilities and core competencies is essential before any strategic management decision can be taken.

2.3.3.1 Strengths and weaknesses (internal / micro factors)

According to Macmillan and Tampoe (2000: 92) the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) diagram is one technique that cannot be omitted from a textbook on strategy. The internal analysis tends to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. External analysis tends to reveal opportunities and threats. It should be noted that in many cases the same external change may represent both a threat and an opportunity. An appropriate response can change a threat into an opportunity.

One particular contribution of the SWOT diagram is that it may highlight the relationships of strategic intent and strategic choice to strategic assessment. Strengths and weaknesses are not only related to competitors but also to where the organisation wants to go and how it intends to get there. An ideal strategy would use its strengths to exploit opportunities while at the same time defending against threats and hiding weaknesses. In practice, it is rarely so simple (Macmillan & Tampoe, 2000: 90-92).

The SWOT analysis includes both external and internal environments. While the strengths and weaknesses relate to the internal or micro-environment, the opportunities and threats are the identified external factors in the market, in industry and in the macro-environment. Although managers rely on SWOT analyses to stimulate discussions about how to improve their organisations and position them for success, they have their limitations. The SWOT analysis is a static approach and is also sometimes focused only on a single dimension. SWOT analyses cannot show the organisation how to achieve a competitive advantage. In order to achieve this, greater in-depth analysis is needed. SWOT is a good starting point, but because of some inherent limitations, it must be complemented by other approaches such as a resourced-based view (organisational capabilities, competencies and resources) and the value chain analysis (chain of activities through which inputs are transferred into outputs). A SWOT analysis cannot therefore be an end in itself – it actually only stimulates self-perception and the discussion about important issues in the organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 80-83).

2.3.3.2 Management for objectives (MFO)

A majority of organisations use some type of management by objectives (MBO) system. Barry (1994: 47) recommends management for objectives (MFO). The focus should be to manage the process, not the outcome. If management performance and reward systems are built based on process management (MFO), key processes identification steps in the performance system can be incorporated. The organisation should drive its performance measurement based on process management while watching the outcome. The type of thinking that will be required on a strategic basis, however, is MFO. The focus is on managing the entire key process cycle and producing an outcome of success.

The level and type of success or objective will be defined by the uniqueness of that specific public or private sector organisation (Barry, 1994: 47). Management by objectives, therefore, is operational thinking while

management for objectives is strategic thinking. Creating organisational environments for quality is an outcome of strategic planning.

The principle behind MFO is to make sure that everybody within the organisation has a clear understanding of the aims/objectives of the organisation as well as an awareness of his or her own role and responsibilities in achieving those aims.

2.3.3.3 Balanced Scorecard

Several years ago, Kaplan and Norton (1996) published an article in the *Harvard Business Review* indicating what managers should measure entitled “The Balanced Scorecard: Measures that drive performance”. Their article affirmed what successful executives have told us (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997: 151): Measures should tie back to the company’s main thing, in Kaplan and Norton’s words the company’s “vision and strategy”. With the vision and strategy in mind, they counsel executives to create measures that answer four key questions:

- How do customers see us?
- What must we excel at?
- Can we continue to improve and create value?
- How do we look to shareholders? (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997: 151).

The Balanced Scorecard can be introduced as a framework according to which strategic or long-term goals could be set. The Balanced Scorecard further provides a guideline for setting short-term objectives for each of these long-term goals. Furthermore, the Balanced Scorecard, in the form of initiatives, also lightly links functional tactics to short-term objectives and to strategic objectives in each perspective. The Balanced Scorecard closes the gap between long-term plans and short-term actions, thereby aiding the strategy implementation process (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 160).

A Balanced Scorecard approach generally has four perspectives (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 160):

- Financial;
- Internal business processes;
- Learning and growth; and
- Customer.

Each of these four perspectives is inter-dependent – improvement in just one is not necessarily a recipe for success in the other areas. A Balanced Scorecard should eventually result in:

- Improved processes;
- Motivated / educated employees;
- Enhanced information systems;
- Monitored progress;
- Greater customer satisfaction; and
- Increased financial usage.

(Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 280 - 283).

However, even those executives who deploy balanced scorecards intelligently tend to look at the instrument panels that reflect the ongoing operation only in areas such as on-time delivery, customer retention, safety and employee satisfaction. Rarely do these dashboards provide insights into the return on the increasingly large investment in initiatives (Brache & Bodley, 2006: 135).

2.3.3.4 Six Sigma approach

First launched by Motorola in the late 1980s, the Six Sigma approach has been hailed as the new TQM (Total Quality Management). At the core of the Six Sigma approach is a methodology and framework for linking improvement to profitability (efficiency and effectiveness), irrespective of the functional area. The Six Sigma approach comprises five steps namely *define, measure, analyse, improve and control* (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007:

286). Pearce and Robinson (2000 : 376) describe Six Sigma as a highly rigorous and analytical approach to quality and continuous improvement with an objective to improving profits (efficiency and effectiveness) through defect reduction, yield improvement, improved customer satisfaction and best-in-class performance. Six Sigma complements TQM by focusing on management leadership, continuous education, customers and statistics.

The Six Sigma scorecards have been developed and can be linked to the organisation's overall strategic goals and vision by linking the Six Sigma scorecard to the Balanced Scorecard (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 286).

2.3.3.5 Performance and rewards

Probably one of the more important items to include in any alignment audit is the assessment of whether or not the performance appraisal and/or organisational reward system are tied to the mission statement in a clear, systematic way. Should management want everyone to focus on the customer service mission, it should ensure that all policies and procedures/processes are in complete alignment with the mission. The concept of aligning everything that the organisation does with its mission seems simple and obvious, but is surprisingly difficult to execute. A casual review of any organisation shows how many policies, procedures and systems get in the way of the mission instead of remaining focused on the goal.

If the organisation must rely on its employees to ensure that it meets its mission, managers should spend the time and make the effort to audit everything that they do to ensure that they all send the same message to their employees and customers (Crotts, Dickson & Ford, 2005: 3).

Execution will suffer if people are rewarded for doing the wrong things. Execution will fail when no one has a stake in the game. Feedback on performance is also needed for the organisation and employees to evaluate whether the right things are indeed being accomplished in the strategy-execution process. In essence, what is required for successful strategy

implementation is the careful development of incentives and controls as an important factor to create the right connectivity between strategic objectives and implementation.

On the one hand, incentives/rewards motivate or guide performance. On the other, controls provide feedback about whether desired performance outcomes are being attained. Control allows for the revision of incentives and other execution-related factors if desired goals are not being met. Incentives/rewards support key aspects of the strategy-execution model. They must reinforce the “right” things if implementation is to succeed. Controls, in turn, must provide timely and valid feedback when needed about organisational performance so that change and adaptation become part and parcel of the implementation effort (Hrebiniak, 2006: 12 – 31).

A key success factor is motivating managers and employees to give their commitment to the implementation of a chosen strategy. Rewards as a driver for strategy implementation can be defined as the umbrella term for the various components considered in performance evaluation and the assignment of monetary and non-monetary rewards to them. Reward systems should be created in such a way that they are tightly *linked* to the strategy, that they encourage a change in behaviour to support strategy implementation, and that they reward managers and employees for performance in the long-term. In addition, reward systems should be tied to achieving the specific outcomes necessary to make the new strategy work and should emphasise rewarding people for accomplishing results, not just for dutifully performing assigned tasks. In order to be an effective motivator for strategy implementation, reward systems should extend to middle and lower levels of management and should apply to the entire workforce (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 229 – 230).

2.3.4 A comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach

The comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach represents a total view of an organisation's strategic management and control system and consists of the strategic plan, operational plan and results management, thus an implementation plan. The challenge is to group together what belongs together within specific processes to ensure alignment and connectivity of the sequence of events towards a more appropriate correlation level between strategic objectives and the operational plans of an organisation (Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 7 – 11).

The overall process goals should serve as the basis for the establishment of sub-goals throughout the process. Once process sub-goals have been established, functional goals can be developed. Any strategic and operational goals established should be modified, if necessary, to reflect maximum functional contributions to the process goals and sub-goals. Since the purpose of a function is to support processes, it should be measured against the degree to which it serves those processes. When one establishes functional goals that bolster processes, one ensures that each department meets the needs of its internal and external customers (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 53).

Rummler and Brache (1990: 62) state further that the critical process management questions are:

- Have appropriate process sub-goals been set?
- Is process performance managed?
- Are sufficient resources allocated to each process?
- Are the interfaces between process steps being managed?

Work gets done in an organisation through its customer and administrative processes. If one is to understand the way work is done, to improve the way work is done, and to manage the way work is done, processes should be the focus of one's attention and actions (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 76 – 79).

2.3.4.1 Vertical and horizontal alignment

Vertical alignment rapidly moves an institution's strategy through the organisation, turning intentions into actual work. Vertical alignment energises people, provides direction and offers opportunity for involvement, thereby aligning activities with intentions (Labovitz and Rosansky, 1997: 27, 74). When vertical alignment is reached, employees understand organisation-wide goals and their roles in achieving them.

Because processes generally cut across the various functions of an organisation, they are referred to as horizontal: Horizontal alignment links are an organisation's actions with customer needs in ways that delight and create loyalty, thereby aligning processes with customer expectations (Labovitz and Rosansky, 1997: 32). Horizontally aligned organisations are so "hardwired" to customer requirements that the needs of their customers resonate with employees and influence the organisation's strategy, processes and behaviour.

Despite the growing understanding of processes, many organisations continue to review activities individually and try to improve them in isolation. Process thinking and improvement are essential ingredients of horizontal alignment (Labovitz and Rosansky, 1997: 127 – 130).

Vertical and horizontal alignment should be brought into alignment with each other. Neither a great strategy nor the full commitment of managers and employees will have the right result if an organisation's processes for creating and delivering value have targeted the wrong customers – or worse, if they have targeted the right customers with the wrong product. Nor will the organisation that is fully aligned on the horizontal dimension succeed if its strategy or implementation is flawed. When alignment is achieved in both dimensions, a dynamic relationship exists between four elements: strategy → people → processes → customers. With both the vertical and horizontal dimensions aligned, the strategy and employees are synchronized with

customer focus and process capabilities (Labovitz and Rosansky, 1997: 35-37).

The above statement could be a possible approach to ensure a more appropriate/stronger correlation level between an organisation's strategy objectives and operational plans (see section 1.4, problem statement).

2.3.4.2 Prioritise (sequence of events)

A process is a series of activities, often repeated over and over with the basic flow of transforming inputs into outputs. The activities that make up the process are not the same. Some activities add value to a process and others fail to add value. Therefore, one way to regard "process improvement" is to think in terms of removing non-value-adding activities. One of the more common practices for improving a process is to reduce the number of hands-off or transfers that take place (i.e. to shift the accountability of activities in the same process, to other units/departments in the organisation). This is usually accomplished by mapping out the process using a flowchart to streamline the process (Sifri, 2003: 3 - 7).

Process-mapping is regularly used to depict the flow of major activities within a process (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 48 – 53). A process map ranges from simple block diagrams to more elaborate swim-type diagrams showing the "connectivity" flows to and from major functional or organisational units that play a role within a process. In order to flowchart or map a process, one will need to understand the activities; what **triggers** the activity (inputs); who is involved; the sequential steps and the outputs associated with the step. Process maps allow one to see the big picture, clarifying sub-processes, **sequences** and activities. Process maps should be prepared showing critical information flows and where possible, the various players involved. It is useful to document cycle times in different steps, especially wait times. Critical questions can be asked in this regard:

- Can one eliminate or reduce certain activities?

- Can one complete the process in less time by changing the process?
- Can one improve the meeting of customer requirements by changing the process?

Finally, if one is unsure about which processes to map, one should start with those processes which have high impact in terms of costs, time, resources consumed or waste. Core processes are sometimes easier to map due to the existing documentation and easy access to the internal players as opposed the external players (Evans, s.a.: 1, Rummler & Brache, 1990: 48 – 55).

2.3.4.3 Workforce involvement / commitment

In order to steer strategy implementation efforts in the right direction, organisations make use of several implementation drivers (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 216 – 217):

- Leadership;
- Organisational culture;
- Reward systems;
- Organisational structure;
- Resource allocation; and
- Training / performance management.

The first three drivers, leadership, organisational culture and reward systems are critical to the contemporary organisation as they concern the people of the organisation. Since the 1990s the environment has been increasingly characterised by uncertainty, rapid change and turbulence. Strategic change requires strong leadership and adaptive organisational cultures. Managers and employees must be motivated to accomplish strategy implementation goals (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 216 - 217).

2.3.4.4 **Strategic-process-management-by-results approach (create connectivity)**

Strategic management by results closes the loop on the total planning process. It provides management with ongoing mechanisms for executing and monitoring the implementation and results of both the strategic and operational plans (Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 7 - 10). Results management is concerned primarily with plan execution. In order to ensure that planning is a continuous dynamic process within an organisation, particular attention and emphasis must be paid to results management. Another important ingredient in the process is the active involvement and commitment of people within the organisation. As those people who need to make the organisation more successful become better informed and more actively involved in various planning steps, their commitment to significant **results** will become increasingly substantial.

The purpose of planning is not only to produce plans; its main purpose is to produce results, thereby ensuring that strategic objectives will eventually be implemented successfully by creating effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans. The primary role of the operational plan is to identify short-term results and actions needed to carry out the organisation's needs (Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 7-10).

Morrisey *et al.* (1988: 116) refer to Management by Objectives and Results (MOR) to be primarily directed at individual managerial efforts rather than those of the total organisation. Although a manager is held responsible for the results of a unit in the organisation, there are certain key result areas (key managerial responsibilities) such as people development and organisational relationships that the manager should pay attention to, in order to ensure that employees will be inspired to align their activities with the strategic objectives of the organisation. It is also useful as a basis for performance appraisal.

An ongoing assessment of organisational process needs should direct the process management priorities. In addition, a cornerstone of process management is the monitoring and improvement of the job-performer level. To manage the performance of a process, one must manage the performance of the people who work within the process. To manage people's contributions to process effectiveness, one must manage the variables of the human performance system – performance specifications, task interference, consequences, feedback, skills and knowledge and individual capacity (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 38 – 139).

2.3.4.5 Process and project-driven management

A **project** can be defined as a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service. Despite the temporary or “single-pass” nature of projects themselves, project management processes recur repetitively throughout the life cycle of each project. A **process** is a repeatable series of actions, changes or functions with the aim of bringing about a result. The key to success for any project management is effective management of the numerous processes that are woven through the life cycles of various projects. To be effective, a process should be well understood by project stakeholders and consistently enforced by management (Johnson, Joyner & Martin, 2010: 1).

An organisation should drive its performance measurement based on process management while watching the outcome. The focus is on managing the entire key process cycle and producing an outcome of success (Barry, 1994: 47 – 48).

All strategic decisions in process and project management have the following characteristics (Grünig & Kühn, 2005: 85 – 87):

- They deal with complex relationships.
- They occur at irregular intervals.

- They are always unique in their scope, in their questions and in the framework of preconditions to be met.
- They have a long-term influence on the fate of the organisation.

This description of strategic decision-making highlights features which are typically used to characterise projects. Approaching strategy development as a project is an obvious step to take first of all because of the good fit of these characteristics, since the approach could categorise priorities and timelines, costs as well as persons accountable for the possible execution of specific goals and objectives (Grúnig & Kúhn, 2005: 85).

Managing organisations through project and process-portfolio programmes is gaining popularity. Process and project management is an implementation tool that delivers organisational benefits resulting from aligned corporate, business unit and operational strategies. It facilitates the coordinated and integrated management of portfolios of projects, tasks and processes that bring about strategic transformation, innovative continuous improvement and customer service excellence in organisations. Process-portfolio management in organisations is operational in character and focuses on improved internal and external customer service, guided by strategic initiatives from executive leadership (Rosemann, 2006: 1 - 2; Barry, 1994: 47 - 49; Rummler & Brache, 1990: 25-39).

2.4 THE CORRELATION (RELATIONSHIP / INTERDEPENDENCY) BETWEEN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONAL PLANS

Top Management at Unisa is aware of the importance of aligning strategic objectives and operational plans. “Consequently an increased emphasis has been placed this year (2007) on *integration* and *connectivity* between operational planning and the strategic planning” (Unisa 2007 Operational Plan 2007: 3).

In an attempt to find literature pertaining to the correlation between strategic objectives and the operational plans of an organisation, the researcher observed

that very few, if any, works of literature examined the above challenge. However, much time and effort was spent in analysing strategic plans as well as implementation plans, without a clear indication as to how to create connectivity between the two to ensure proper alignment and correlation in the effective and efficient execution.

The lack of correlation or the alignment between intent (the what) and the accomplishment (the how) of strategic objectives and operational implementation plans is often the result of many complex factors, for example:

- Dynamics of individual and group behaviour;
- Organisational systems and processes;
- The nature of the implementation process itself; and
- Manipulation of important stakeholders.

(Nutt & Backoff, 1992: 44).

2.4.1 Effective correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans

Effective correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans will result in people doing the right things at the right time with the right resources and relates directly to effective leadership involvement, establishing direction, aligning people, involving people and eventually producing change and productivity which will lead to results (Barry, 1994: 48).

Effective means achieving the desired result. Once the desired result is defined, the tasks leading to the result can be focused on (Drucker, 2006: 1 - 3).

2.4.2 Efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans

Efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans will result in people doing things right. Effective correlation levels should directly feed into management responsibilities: process and system involvement in respect of planning and budgeting, organising, staffing, control, problem-solving and producing order and predictability. In this way, the fewest possible resources are utilised to produce the required output at the minimum cost possible, while maintaining effectiveness (Barry, 1994: 48).

Efficient is defined as working without waste or using a minimum of time, effort and expense. Officials can be very efficient at what they are doing but still not get to where they want to be because they are not doing the right things (i.e. being effective)(Drucker, 2006: 1 – 3).

2.4.3 Effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans

The integration of the management of both effectiveness and efficiency as well as a vertical and horizontal alignment process (see Figure 3.1 and sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2) should result in the creation of proper correlation levels between strategy and implementation of the strategy, thereby ensuring successful strategy implementation or management by results (specific process-driven management) (see section 2.3.4.4) and can also ensure connectivity and alignment between strategic objectives and action plans. Effective and efficient correlation levels will prevent people from doing the wrong things right. “Doing the right things” is the ability to identify critical issues and opportunities that can change and develop an organisation for the better – strategies that energize and maximise a strategic plan. “Doing things right” is important for maintaining and sustaining that growth. Being effective and efficient are not just words. They are identifiable actions that are integrated into a plan that ultimately elevates the performance of individuals and organisations, i.e. doing the right things right with the right people at the right time, which are measurable (Barry, 1994: 48).

2.4.4 Interdependency between strategic objectives and operational plans

Simply speaking, success is a function of two factors: the quality of the strategy that is guiding the organisation and the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of that strategy (Brache & Bodley, 2006: 15).

Many organisations do not believe in strategic management as an essential tool for future success. The reason for this mistrust can be attributed to risks of strategic management. Organisations should guard against these risks, because if strategic management is executed in the wrong way, the damage can be far-reaching and to the detriment of the organisation's culture and employees' attitudes towards future strategic management processes. Some potential risks are:

- Time wastage;
- Unrealistic expectations from managers and employees;
- The uncertain chain of implementation;
- Negative perceptions of strategic management;
- No specific objectives and measurable outcomes; and
- Culture of change (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 8-10).

The gap between intent and accomplishment is the result of many complex factors. Some of these have to do with how plans are formulated, others are associated with the dynamics of individual and group behaviour and of organisational systems, and the remainder have to do with the very nature of the implementation process itself. In order to improve the probability that plans will be implemented effectively, one must first understand the forces that determine or undermine success (Judson, 1996: vii). These will be dealt with in the next section.

2.4.4.1 Enablers

Enablers can be defined as the means, knowledge, opportunity and tools to activate or enable action or operational activity successfully. They could also

include policies, decisions and rules to ensure a supportive platform for implementation plans (Judson, 1996: 215 - 217).

Operational plans are oriented primarily to the organisation's internal environment. A useful operating plan lays out in considerable detail the work required to change **how** things are done within the organisation in order to support the achievement of strategic objectives. The strategic plan provides the rationale and priorities for the operating plan (Judson, 1996: 73).

According to Judson (1996: 215 – 217) there are three major requirements (enablers) for the successful execution of any strategy:

- The quality of plans, both strategic and operational.
- The processes employed to formulate the strategic and operating plans (to what extent were the “right” people involved?).
- Accountability for processes employed to drive organisational learning; to revise and update the plan in order to keep it relevant and on course; and performance measures to monitor implementation success.

The relationship between strategic planning (objectives) and implementing the strategic plans suggests two critical points (dependencies):

- Successful strategic outcomes are best achieved when those responsible for implementation are also part of the planning or formulation process. The greater the interaction between “doers” and “planners”, the higher the probability of success.
- Strategic success demands a simultaneous view of planning and implementation. Managers must be thinking about execution even while they are formulating plans. Execution or implementation is not a concern which can come later. Formulating and executing are parts of an **integrated** strategic management approach which demands a simultaneous view (University of Kansas, 2009: 1 – 3).

2.4.4.2 Process identification

A process is the organisation of people (utilising procedures, mechanisms and materials) into work activities needed to produce a specified result (work product). It is a sequence of activities characterised as having measurable input(s), value-adding activities, measurable output(s) and repeatable activities (Barry, 1994: 39). The outcome of a well-designed process is increased effectiveness and efficiency.

“Process improvement” means making things better, not just fighting fires or managing crises. It means setting aside the customary practice of blaming people for problems or failures. It is a way of looking at how one can do one’s work better. However, when one engages in true process improvement, one seeks to learn what causes things to happen in a process and to use this knowledge to reduce variation, remove activities that contribute no value to the product or service produced and improve customer satisfaction (Barry, 1994: 38-40).

A recent article (Roseman, 2006: 1) states that most organisations use a structured process assessment and improvement methodology to enable organisations to streamline their operations. This methodology is ideally:

- A quality-driven process based on an integrated set of deliverables that build on each other incrementally to deliver solutions quickly and is flexible enough to consider each client’s specifics without sacrificing a rigorous quality framework;
- Based on the notion that a process is the collection of activities that transform inputs into outputs to achieve organisational objectives;
- Based on the recognition that there are two types of processes: core processes that deliver value directly to key customers or stakeholders and support processes that support the core processes; and
- Focused on the key components of assessing and improving a process namely, define, measure, analyse, improve and control.

2.4.4.3 Sequence of events

This specific enabler plays a critical role in determining the priority of activities within a specific process and a detailed discussion was given in section 2.3.4.2. Under sequential change, there is a chain of activities or steps, with movement to the next step being determined by analysis or outputs at a prior step in the process. When investigating the interrelationship between business processes, it is essential that the flow of information should be determined. In essence, business processes are no more than an extension of the flow of information through the organisation. Determining the flow of information will enable strategists to assess the flow and exchange of knowledge, for example crucial information needed to establish interrelationships and dependencies between institutional functions and processes (Judson, 1996: 1; Van der Merwe 1997: 10 – 16).

2.4.4.4 Risks/ barriers

The main obstacles/barriers to strategy execution have been identified in two surveys, namely the Wharton-Gartner Survey and Wharton Executive Education Survey and are:

- The inability to manage change effectively and overcome resistance to change;
 - Poor or vague strategy;
 - Not having guidelines or a model to guide strategy implementation efforts;
 - Poor or inadequate information-sharing among individuals/units responsible for strategy execution;
 - Trying to execute a strategy that conflicts with the existing power structure; and
 - Unclear responsibility or accountability for implementation of decisions.
- (Hrebiniak, 2006: 12 – 31).

2.4.4.5 Workarounds

Workarounds are activities or alternative implementation plans resulting from enablers and dependencies unavailable on demand which were indicated in the original strategic implementation plans.

The first step in confronting implementation obstacles is to develop guidelines to lead and support the implementation process. Continuous monitoring of performance against strategic and short-term objectives is necessary. So too are remedial actions when activities are not performed according to stipulated plans. Nutt and Backoff (1992: 23 - 24) argue that strategy implementation requires an organisational structure that supports projects. Project management processes for planning, executing and controlling are essential to ensure that strategies are implemented effectively and efficiently. A project and process selection and priority system is required to ensure strong linkages between projects and the strategic plan and to support the organisational mission and strategy.

2.4.4.6 Drivers

Noble (1999: 19 – 27) website unknown, is of the opinion that a strategy implementation framework is organised around four major stages of the implementation effort, namely pre-implementation, organising the implementation effort, managing the implementation process and maximising cross-functional performance (vertical and horizontal alignment). There are five managerial levers for the implementation phases, namely goals, organisational structure, leadership, communication and incentives. Considering these factors in combination with each major stage provides a useful heuristic to improve strategy implementation.

Successful implementation requires active and premeditated actions that include the coordination of multiple actors and activities and other actions of a transient and complex kind (enablers and dependencies). Several studies such as Olsen. Tse and West (1998: 12 - 16), Pearce and Robinson (1982:

38 - 46) Hrebiniak and Joyce (1984: 30 - 36) and Galbraith and Kazanjian (1986: 6 - 13) have focused on aspects of the organisation that may influence the success of strategy implementation. The following aspects (drivers) have received particular attention in this regard:

- Information systems (vertical / horizontal communication);
- Learning (knowledge / skills management);
- Allocation of resources (optimise human resources);
- Formal organisational structures and control systems;
- Personnel management;
- Political factors; and
- Organisational culture (cognitive systems and behavioural patterns) (Olsen, *et al.* 1998: 8-21; Daum, 2002: 1-5).

2.4.4.7 Key performance areas

According to Geldenhuys *et al.* (2003: 53 – 64) there are eleven key performance areas that will have an integrated and holistic impact on the management, functioning and service delivery of an organisation. These key performance areas that require consideration are:

- Financial resources (budgets, assets, utilisation and costs);
- People capacity (provision and development, empowerment of human resources, performance and rewards);
- Communication (political acceptance, public satisfaction and internal/external communication);
- Information management (information technology, knowledge management and management / operational information (specific procedures and methods));
- Organisational culture (political, social and administrative cultures and ideologies and paradigms);
- Organisational structure (delegation, relationship and linkages with national / provincial and other external stakeholders);

- Leadership and general management (strategies, networking, competencies and management functions);
- Clients (markets);
- Design systems;
- Facilities; and
- Technology (knowledge and innovation).

The above key performance areas should be organised in a specific sequence of events (chain of activities) to ensure connectivity between strategic objectives and operational plans for implementation.

2.4.4.8 Measurements

It is impossible to manage what one cannot measure and one cannot measure what one cannot describe (Kaplan & Norton, 2005: 1). The selection of measures and related goals is an important determiner of an organisation's effectiveness as a system. Without measures it is difficult to obtain the desired performance. With the wrong measures, one lacks effective and efficient organisational performance. Managers will have no consistent feedback mechanism for:

- Specifically, the communication of performance expectations to subordinates;
- Knowing what is occurring in their organisations;
- Identifying performance gaps that should be analysed and eliminated;
- Providing feedback that compares performance to standard;
- Identifying performance that should be awarded; and
- Effectively making and supporting decisions regarding resources, plans, policies, schedules and structure.

Without measures, employees at all levels will not know what is expected of them in implementing specific objectives; the *what*, the *how* and the *when* will be absent (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 142 – 244).

Performance measures are either:

- Internal (process time and cost) which are not directly perceived by the customer, but critical to the organisation's ultimate success; or
- External (quality and delivery) which is important to the organisation's customer (Judson, 1996: 200).

Input measures show the amount of resources, either financial or otherwise, used for a specific service or program. Input measures include labour, materials, equipment and supplies. Demand for governmental services may also be considered an input indicator.

Output measures include the amount of products or services provided, the number of customers served and the level of activity to provide services.

Outcome measures show the results of the services provided. Outcome measures assess program impact and effectiveness and show whether expected results are achieved.

Efficiency measures reflect the cost per unit or outcome.

(Drucker, 2006: 1; Judson, 1996: 198 – 200).

A project should have a single goal, but may have several objectives, provided they are SMART (also see section 5.7.1.2):

- Specific;
- Measurable;
- Achievable;
- Realistic; and
- Timely.

2.4.4.9 **An integrated operational implementation plan aligned with strategic objectives**

Strategic planning (objectives) guides the directions in which the organisation seeks to move and concerns the planned allocations of managerial, financial and physical resources over future specified periods of time. Operational planning on the other hand focuses on the ways and means by which each of the individual functions may be programmed so that optimum progress may be made toward the attainment of strategic objectives. In this way, strategic planning is restricted by the practical limitations under which operational planning operates (Paine & Anderson cited in Maddron: s.a.).

Successful implementation of strategies often requires fundamental changes in the behaviour of the existing organisation or its operating system. In a well-conceived strategic and operating plan, the changes required of an operating system to implement a particular strategy are outlined in the form of a **sequence** of action steps. Each action step specifies the scope of work to be done, the nature of the “deliverable” when the work has been completed, the resources required including the key individuals who will carry out the task, the person accountable for meeting the commitment, and the date of completion. Implementation of an action program (and by implication, the strategy) is monitored and measured by relating actual progress against the completion of the tasks in the action program (Judson, 1996: 64 – 66).

Judson (1996: 68 – 70) further states that five key success factors are important towards effective strategy execution, namely:

- Those involved in execution should understand the needs of their customers, what is to be achieved, why and what constitutes the timetable (understanding).
- How strong the commitment is (initial and ongoing).
- Resources required for implementation (including tools, funds, skills and time).

- How systematic the process is which has been instituted for tracking implementation progress (measuring).
- How consistently and credibly a climate of accountability is maintained throughout the implementation period.

If management is to achieve these five key success factors, it should begin doing so at the very outset of the planning process, both in developing the strategy and in formulating more detailed operating plans. A useful operating plan lays out in considerable detail the work required to support the achievement of the organisation's strategic objectives.

According to Barry (1994: 6) strategic plans should never include a specific recognition or achievement as an end. If recognition or achievement has been the ultimate objective of the strategic plan, quality burnout will occur. The prevention of quality burnout accompanies strategic planning. During the strategic planning phase, the long-term goals and objectives of the organisation should be established. Operational programmes supporting the strategic plan may be some specific achievement from a recognition point of view. However, the recognition achievement does not drive the strategic plan. It supports it as all operational plans should. Prevention is having other operational programs in place to continue the organisational emphasis on quality. The organisation must develop specific operational programs that will tie together the entire model, from beginning to end. The operational plans should be developed to be action- and results-oriented. Therefore, strategic and implementation plans are a process. A process organises people, procedures, tools and resources into work activities needed to produce a specific and specified result. Strategic and implementation plans, in other words, are a sequence of events / activities characterised by the following:

- Measurable input(s);
- Value-added activities;
- Measurable output(s); and
- Repeatability (Barry 1994: 6 – 9).

2.4.4.10 Performance management

Before performance of any level can be managed, the expectations for that performance need to be clearly established and communicated. Without the guidance of a clear strategy, one cannot be sure that one is allocating resources appropriately, managing critical institutional processes and rewarding the right job performance. The right things are those activities that are in concert with a viable, comprehensive and clearly activated strategy (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 79 – 91).

Performance management can improve service delivery through effective management of human resources and the establishment of a shared understanding of the delivery plans which state what is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved and by what standards. Performance management is therefore aimed at achieving the desired customer focused results and overall success for both the individual workers and the organisation. It involves providing visionary leadership to the organisation, planning for performance, managing performance, reviewing and rewarding performance. Performance management lays the emphasis on overall results, measuring results, focused and ongoing feedback about results and development plans to improve results (Hrebiniak, 2006: 12 - 31).

2.5 SUMMARY

In Chapter two, namely a literature review in respect of strategic management approaches towards the achievement of strategic objectives, the researcher attempted to interpret opinions and views from various sources and different researchers from a specific research field. It has become clear that there is no one perfect strategic management approach for organisations. Each organisation ultimately develops its own unique or appropriate model of strategic management approach towards the achievement of strategic objectives. Traditionally the focus has been on organisational structures and systems, based on external environmental influences (core customer-driven). A second tendency focused to a

larger degree on internal factors and operations and emphasised the communication and cultural aspects (change management and results management) in strategy implementation.

The researcher noticed further that tremendous time and efforts were spent in analysing strategic thinking (intent), planning and long-term strategic objectives and much less effort was spent on analysing the operational implementation of strategic objectives.

The researcher also observed that there are very few studies which have examined the inter-relationship/correlation/alignment of functional implementation and strategic objectives. Though this was considered to be of major importance, no specific model/approach was analysed resulting in no specific actions to be taken to ensure alignment or connectivity between strategic objectives and their implementation.

With regard to strategy implementation there was an emphasis on individual factors such as strategy formulation, strategy executors (managers/employees), organisational structure, communication activities, commitment consensus, tactics and administrative systems. There was also an emphasis on single major factors (models) in respect of strategising and planning in combination with other factors, depending on the specific strategy that was implemented.

CHAPTER 3

A COMPREHENSIVELY-INTEGRATED-ALIGNED-STRATEGIC-MANAGEMENT-PROCESS-APPROACH TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT CORRELATION BETWEEN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONAL PLANS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, various approaches and models to ensure adequate correlation levels between strategic objectives and their implementation, were discussed. In this chapter a further explanation of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach (see section 2.3.4), will be discussed. As part of the above approach, a specific overarching model, consisting of different phases will be proposed, to be used as a mechanism/approach that could ensure a more effective correlation level between strategic objectives and operational plans. Measurement criteria will also be included to measure the correlation levels in respect of the execution of strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see sections 2.4 and 2.4.4). This model will unfold and be discussed in Chapter 5.

The comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach will consist of various steps with important drivers, enablers and dependencies (see sections 1.3 and 2.3.4) within a specific sequence of activities. The researcher hopes that this approach will create alignment with the strategic objectives of an institution to enable a more effective and efficient implementation of strategic objectives.

The importance of the alignment and measuring of correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans will be discussed as well as a process identification to ensure a more effective execution of strategic objectives (also see section 2.3.4.4 in this regard).

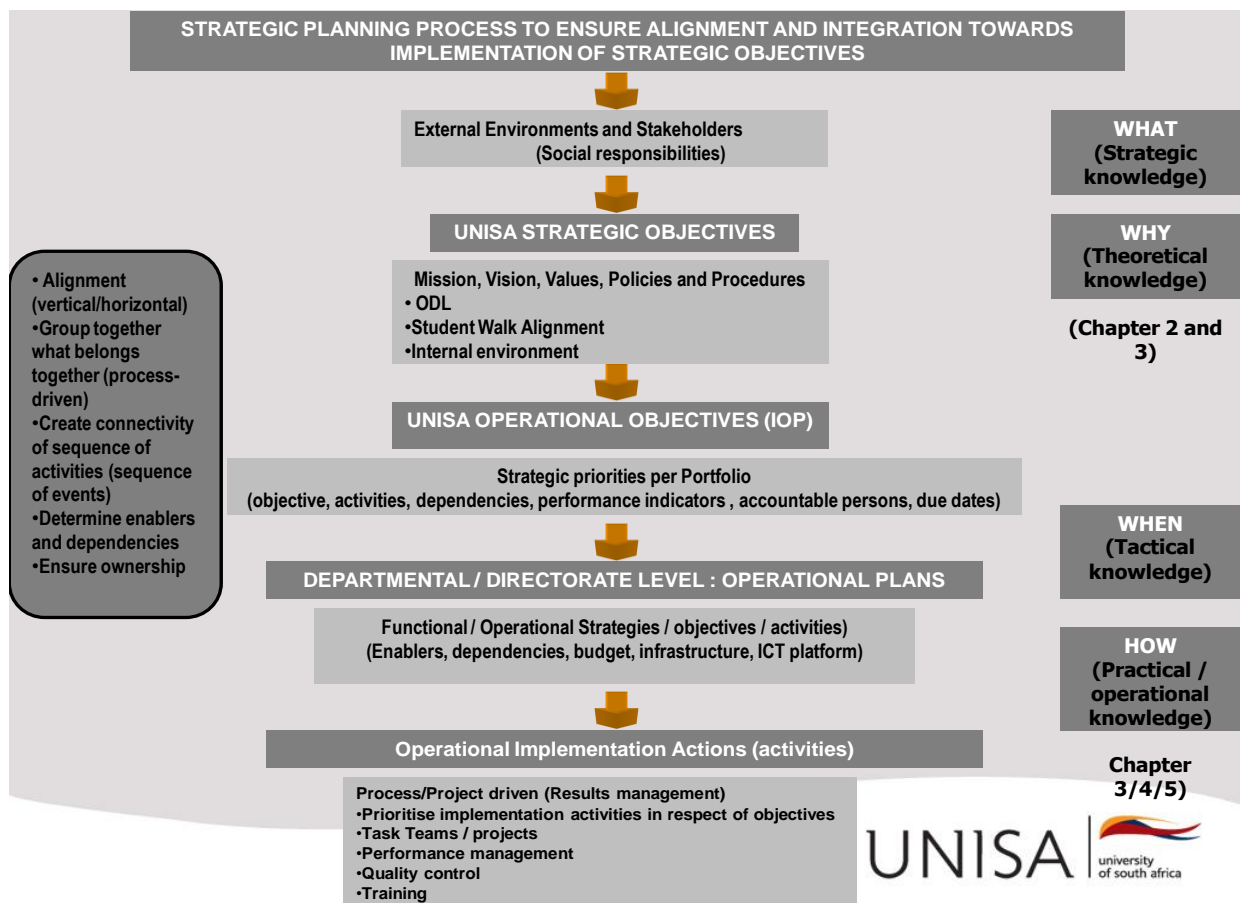
As part of the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach that will enable the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations to implement strategic objectives more effectively, the specific operational plans of this directorate will be analysed and discussed to ensure further connectivity between strategic objectives and their successful implementation (see section 3.2).

The focus in Chapter 3 will also be on identifying a more practical and operational implementation approach as an addition to the more theoretical comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-approach (see section 2.3.4). By doing this, the emphasis will be on a specific process and project-driven management process in a specific sequence of activities as part of the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach. In other words, the focus will fall on grouping together what belongs together and involving all roleplayers in the work situation in order to create ownership and accountability and connectivity between intent and implementation, from the very start of the strategic planning process (see section 2.3.4.4 and figure 3.1).

3.2 OVERARCHING COMPREHENSIVELY-INTEGRATED-ALIGNED-STRATEGIC-MANAGEMENT-PROCESS-APPROACH

“An organisation should drive its performance measurement based on process and project management principles, while watching the outcomes. The focus is on managing the entire key/core processes cycle and producing outcomes of success” (Barry, 1994: 47 – 48)(also see sections 2.3.4.4 and 3.2.1).

Figure 3.1: Comprehensive-integrated-aligned-strategic-management model



(Unisa, Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, Operational Plan 2010 : 3)

To ensure the effective and efficient implementation and utilisation of the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management model (see Figure 3.1) the following specific sequence of steps should be adhered to in establishing the model:

- Identify during the initial strategic planning process (what and why) the specific objectives towards implementation (see sections 1.9.18, 2.4.4.9, 3.2.1 and 3.3).
- Determine the specific execution process (inputs-operations-outcomes) and units/directorates and people accountable for the implementation of specific objectives (see sections 2.3.4.2, 2.3.4.3 and 2.4.4.2 and 3.4.1).

- Involve all roleplayers from strategic level, operational level and implementation level, thereby ensuring vertical and horizontal alignment of intent versus implementation (see sections 2.3.4.1 and 3.5).
- Group together what belongs together, thereby determining the sequence of activities within the implementation process/sub-processes (inputs-operations-outputs)(see sections 2.3.4.2, 2.3.4.5, 2.4.4.3, 3.3.2 and 3.4.2).
- Identify the supportive mechanisms, i.e. enablers and dependencies, to enable the identified accountable people to drive implementation towards due dates (see sections 1.9.6, 1.9.7, 2.4.4 and 2.4.4.1).
- Identify cross-functional roleplayers who will be involved in the execution of the chain of activities and develop service level agreements SLAs (see sections 3.3.3 and 3.4.3).

The above steps will eliminate duplication and overlap and will ensure ownership within a specific implementation process (see sections 2.3.4, 3.5.3, 3.5.4 and Table 3.1).

The above-mentioned approach should be holistically introduced and implemented from the very start of the initial strategic planning process (intent). This action will probably ensure appropriate execution plans, thereby connecting all roleplayers from top management level to execution level (people responsible for the achievement of specific strategic objectives within a specific implementation process). The introduction of this approach will also enable effective coordination and the successful achievement of specific strategic objectives, since all roleplayers will be involved and have determined the enablers and dependencies necessary to support the implementation process in time, as and when needed (see sections 2.4.4.9, 3.3.1, 3.4.1 and Table 3.2). The connectivity of all actions will therefore flow from input to outcome, thereby moving all people responsible for the achievement of specific strategic objectives in harmony towards the successful implementation of activities.

3.2.1 Measurement criteria

Without measures it is difficult to achieve the desired performance. With the wrong measures, one will lack effective and efficient organisational performance as well as the enforcement of effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans (see section 2.4.3). Without measurement criteria, employees at all levels will not know what is expected of them concerning specific objectives; the *what*, *how* and *when* will be absent (see sections 2.4.4.8 and 2.4.4.9).

In a systematic effort and attempt to determine and to introduce the most appropriate mechanism/model to ensure more effective and efficient correlation levels and to measure the level of correlation between strategic objectives and operational plans, with specific reference to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, the earlier mentioned comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach and measurement criteria will be consolidated into one holistic measurement tool (see sections 2.3.4.1, 3.2, 3.2.1 and figures 3.1, 3.2).

Table 3.1 : Measurement criteria model

	Factors (1 – 7)	Availability and completeness	Maximum percentage allocation
1	Comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach model (template)(Figure 3.1) to ensure proper correlation levels (connectivity)(section 3.2).		10%
2	Identification of specific objectives (smart) (what/why).		20%
3	Specific execution process (inputs-operations-outcomes).		15%
4	Create ownership (involve all roleplayers)(vertical/horizontal alignment).		15%
5	Determine sequence of activities (group together what belongs together).		10%
6	Determine enablers and dependencies to support execution.		20%
7	Project management-driven execution and performance management-monitoring.		10%

(Judson, 1996: 279 – 283; Nutt & Backoff, 1992: 274 – 179)(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, Performance Agreement, 2010: 3, 7 – 25; Performance Assessment, 2011: 1 – 5; Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan, 2010: 1 – 11)

The measurement criteria model (Table 3.1) should be used as a possible outcome evaluation tool to determine the implementation possibilities of strategic objectives based on the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans at the time of the execution process. The pre-requisite will be the comprehensively-

integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach (Figure 3.1 and section 3.2).

Should factors 1-7 (Table 3.1) amount to 100%, i.e. should all requirements and supportive enablers/dependencies be available and completed on time, the changes will almost certainly implement 100% of the specific objectives successfully. This is dependent on no changes occurring during the implementation process (Judson, 1996: 118 – 120 and 279 – 283).

However, the fewer the enablers/dependencies (see factors 1 – 7), the smaller the percentage of change required to achieve specific objectives successfully. The lack of each individual factor or its unavailability will result in the reduction of the percentage allocated to it. This will enforce workarounds or alternative methods/tactics which could delay or derail the original operational planning in respect of the implementation process. So, the higher the percentage total, the higher the implementation success rate. The above relationship will also enforce higher or more effective/appropriate alignment and correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans (see sections 2.4.3, 2.4.4, 2.4.4.8, 2.4.4.9, 2.3.4.1, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5.3) (Judson, 1996: 118 – 120; Nutt & Backoff, 1992: 274 – 279).

The level of evaluation appropriate for a strategy depends on how well-established the approach is (Judson, 1996: 119). For new strategies and objectives, it is important to have a thorough and detailed evaluation/measurement to measure adequate progress towards goals and outcomes (see section 3.3). Based on the researcher's own experience and evidence, the above measurement tool has proven adequate measurement ability and capacity to predict and measure current and short-term successful implementation possibilities. The specific measurement criteria were implemented and utilised during the introduction and execution of the new technology-driven registration process during the periods 2008 – 2010. Factors 1 – 7 were critical supportive platforms (enablers/dependencies) at that point and time, therefore critical important enablers towards the successful implementation of specific objectives. The early identification of the lack of the above (enablers and dependencies), has enabled the accountable persons for the

implementation process to identify suitable workarounds or alternatives to continue with the implementation of specific plans (see Tables 3.2, 4.1, 4.7 (increase in registered student numbers) and section 5.7, Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan, 2010 : 1 – 21). The fully-fledged technology-driven registration system was successfully introduced during 2008/9. Therefore, this model will be used in Chapter 5 to benchmark and measure intent versus accomplishment of successes or failures of achieving specific strategic objectives of Unisa relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 1.2).

3.3 THE NECESSITY OF ASSESSING THE CORRELATION LEVELS BETWEEN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONAL PLANS

The lack of proper correlation between intent and the accomplishment of strategic objectives and operational implementation plans is often the result of many complex factors (see section 2.4). At its simplest level, success is a function of two factors: the quality of the strategy that is guiding the organisation and the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of that strategy (Brache & Bodley, 2006: 15).

Assessing the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans is of critical importance to ensure connectivity within a specific process of events such as mission, vision, values, goals with its policies, guidelines, procedures, structures, sub-processes/systems, competencies and individual behaviours as well as performance management towards effective implementation. "Achieving and sustaining alignment demands focusing on maximizing the enablers and minimizing the inhibitors that cultivate alignment" (Luftman, 2001: 1).

In most instances, successful implementation of plans requires a coordinated and cohesive effort throughout the organisation. Unfortunately, strategic intent often fails to translate into the measurement and information capabilities needed to enhance operational performance. Moreover, the lack of correlation between strategic intent and both measurement information capability and operational success, potentially explains the marginal performance results of so many highly publicised management endeavours (which was also evident in Chapter 2). "The

disconnection between expressed priorities and measurement also explains some of the cynicism that prevails in many organisations that consistently adopt new management programmes designed to enhance competitiveness” (Fawcett, Smith & Cooper, 1997: 409-421). To overcome these challenges, strategy and measurements must be aligned so that they both promote desired improvements in operational performance. Expanded, more comprehensive programmes of measurement that make accurate, detailed, relevant and timely information accessible to managers for strategic planning and daily decision-making, will further help organisations select and implement winning value-added capabilities. Ideally, these measurement systems will promote greater levels of process management and supply-chain integration. Ultimately, the fact that there are significant gaps between strategic intent and both operational measurement and operational performance, points to a need to rethink corporate strategy and its implementation (Fawcett *et al.* 1997: 409-421).

3.3.1 To operationalise strategic objectives

“In order for any strategy to be implemented successfully in organisations, the lofty generalisations so characteristic of the strategies formulated by topmost executives, must be translated into concrete descriptions of the work to be done at the operating level. One way to combine operational and strategic planning is to begin an action-planning advocacy process as soon as preliminary agreement on strategic options has been reached. An inter-functional task group is set up for each strategic option – with strong representation from middle management. They can then rough out the major action steps or pieces of work necessary to resolve each issue and then implement strategy” (Judson, 1996: 32 – 33).

According to Judson (1996: 33 – 34), only after the planning team has heard, debated, modified and validated each of the proposed action programs, do they deal with time frame, risk analysis, allocation of responsibility, resource requirements, organisational obstacles, performance measurement and monitoring devices. In mapping out and testing strategic options, managers begin to think explicitly about assumptions, alternatives, contingencies and what competitive

reactions to expect. Failure to come to grips with these details can undermine the execution of the strategy.

Top management knows the direction; those below know the terrain. Not only is lower-level participation essential to working out practical steps, but it is also highly desirable. Through such participation, managers and supervisors generate the kind of understanding, ownership, commitment and motivation necessary for successful implementation (Judson, 1996: 33).

From the view of strategy implementation, strategy maps are an attempt to bridge the gap between strategy formulation and strategy implementation by, for example visualising the connection between an organisation's strategic objectives and operative ones. A key issue in strategy implementation is to be able to guide the actions of the whole organisation towards the same strategic objectives. This includes the guidance of employees operating at different organisational levels (Kaplan & Norton, 2004: 2 - 4).

In summary, several important factors that positively contribute towards implementing strategic plans in service organisations are the following:

- Strategic planning requires the integration of strategy formulation with strategy implementation.
- Effective execution is a key attribute of successful organisations.
- Provide focused leadership by the right people.
- Create highly visible management systems to communicate widely and consistently.
- Use project management techniques to deploy the strategic plan (Cocks, 2009: 1 – 2).

3.3.2 To ensure a results-oriented process

Results management is primarily concerned with planned execution. Strategic management by results closes the loop on the total planning process (see section 2.3.3.4).

In addition, a cornerstone of process and results management is the monitoring and improvement of activities at operational level. To manage the performance of a process, one must manage the performance of the people who work within the process (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 38 – 39).

Organisation outputs are produced through processes. Processes, in turn, are performed and managed by individuals doing various jobs. The performance variables that must be managed at job performance level include hiring and promotion, job responsibilities and standards, feedback, rewards and training. These jobs must be linked to the requirements of the key processes and strategic objectives (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 24 – 26).

The operational plan concentrates on how to implement the strategic plan and produce short-term results. The results management component is concerned with comparing performance with the plans (both strategic and operational) and ensuring the achievement of results. Results management is one of the outputs/outcomes of the strategic and operational plans and entails:

- Control systems;
- Management reports;
- Organisational results;
- Unit results;
- Individual results (performance management);
- Corrective action; and
- Reward systems.

Results management closes the loop on the total planning process. It provides management with an ongoing mechanism for executing and monitoring the implementation and results of both strategic and operational plans (Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 7 – 10).

3.3.3 To ensure measures in respect of the fulfilment of objectives

Kaplan and Norton in Rummler and Brache (1990: 142 – 144) state that it is impossible to manage what one cannot measure and one cannot measure what one cannot describe (see section 2.4.4.8). “Without measures employees at all levels will not know what is expected of them”. (Rummler & Brache, 1990: 142 – 144).

Efficiency is doing things right, effectiveness is doing the right things. This statement emphasises the importance of selecting the right objectives. There are two important elements designed to ensure that objectives are correctly based on the right drivers:

- Key results/performance areas (KPA) which help identify specific categories within which the most important organisational results must be achieved; and
- Indicators of performance which assist in ensuring that what is being measured in the objectives presents the most important results (Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 44 – 46).

Morrisey *et al.* (1988: 46) state further that indicators of performance have at least four uses in the planning process:

- Identifying a list of potential measurable factors in each key result area;
- Selecting those measurable factors on which objectives should be set;
- Establishing specific action steps for accomplishing those objectives; and
- Tracking performance related to objectives and action plans.

So, the primary purpose of identifying key result areas and indicators of performance is to enable an organisation's management to establish the right objectives at the right time.

3.4 A PROCESS AND PROJECT STRATEGIC-MANAGEMENT-BY-RESULTS DRIVEN MODEL TO ENSURE MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ACHIEVEMENT OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Managing organisations through project and process portfolio programmes is gaining popularity. Process and project management is an implementation tool that delivers organisational benefits resulting from aligned corporate business units and operational strategies. It facilitates the coordinated and integrated management of portfolios of projects, tasks and processes that bring about strategic transformation, innovative continuous improvement and customer-service excellence in organisations. Process-portfolio management in organisations is operational in character and focuses on improved internal and external customer service, guided by strategic initiatives from executive leadership (Roseman, 2006: 1 – 3) (also see section 2.3.4.5).

Based on research at United States based companies and Hong Kong organisations, "Strategic planning and implementation" was not seen as an independent exercise, but as part of a system of processes constituting the management function of an organisation. Consequently, the planning system and the implementation process were not designed in isolation but as part of a mutually supportive integrated set of processes such as the capital budgeting process, human resources development process and the management information and control processes. The range of staff functions (finance, quality, human resources, management information, control) involved in the development and implementation of plans attest to the integrated approach adopted by organisations (Beal, 2000: 1).

Once action plans are specified, the next step is to project the gains expected from successful implementation and to determine how these gains will be measured (Judson, 1996: 79 – 80).

3.4.1 The identification of a specific process at the beginning of the strategic planning process to ensure alignment with specifically identified strategic objectives

The outcome of a well-designed process is increased effectiveness and efficiency. It is a sequence of activities characterised as having measurable input(s), value-adding activities, measurable output(s) and repeatable activities (Barry, 1994: 39 – 40) (see section 2.4.4.2 for a process definition).

Process management is the concept of defining macro- and micro-processes, assigning ownership and creating the responsibilities of the owners. Process-management facilitates strategically aligned bottoms-up measures that can be used to provide valuable information to management on functional performance against goals / objectives (Roseman, 2006: 1 – 3; Anon, 1996: 2 – 4).

According to Judson (1996: 42 - 44), implementation must be addressed at the very outset of the strategic planning process, not later. Failure to pay early attention to implementation issues greatly increases the risk that the strategic plan (objectives) is good in theory, but quite impractical in reality. Involving the doers/implementors and gaining understanding and commitment so crucial to successful implementation, is far easier than trying to convince managers who have not been involved in the processes. Furthermore, their collective contribution to the analysis and choice of options will improve the quality and credibility of the plan itself. This is because each functional unit relevant to the institution's strategy and operational plan will be able to make inputs considering how both the operating system as a whole and its constituent functions will be affected, before making the final choice of option (Judson, 1996: 66 – 69).

By following the above process, the critical issues, namely understanding, commitment, resources, measuring and accountability, will be addressed within a specific process of activities to ensure the effective implementation of plans for achieving specific strategic objectives.

Process thinking and improvement is an essential ingredient of vertical and horizontal alignment. The goal is to eliminate unnecessary boundaries or connections between different activities and by doing this, “reduce the loss”. Attempts should be made to link as many discrete activities as possible into simple and seamless operations contributing towards the achievement of strategic objectives (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997: 130 – 136).

Most organisations develop action plans, consider organisational structure, look at human resources, fund their strategies and develop, monitor and control tactics. Yet they still fail to successfully implement those strategies identified. The reason, most often, is they lack linkage/alignment or connectivity. As mentioned earlier, linkage is simply tying together what belongs together of all the activities – to ensure that all organisational resources are “rowing in the same direction”. Strategies require linkage both vertically and horizontally. Vertical linkages establish coordination and support between corporate, divisional and departmental plans. Linkages which are horizontal require coordination and cooperation, to enable all organisational units to play in harmony (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997: 130 – 136; Birnbaum, 2009: 2 – 4) (also see section 1.9.1 in respect of alignment).

In general, cross-functional teams/representatives are not a substitute for process management. Simplistically, functions tend to be vertical in nature and processes horizontal, with stakeholder interest at both ends. To make a transition away from managing procedures towards process management, an organisation must answer whether it has:

- Clearly defined what its objectives are and how it will measure and review the success of achieving those objectives;
- Evaluated the impact of those objectives on the interested parties and stakeholders;
- Designed the critical, end-to-end processes necessary to deliver the objectives; and
- Assessed and provided the resources, skills and competence to make the processes work (Anon, 1996: 2 – 4; Birnbaum, 2009: 2 - 4).

3.4.2 Group together what belongs together

“To identify the potential high-leverage targets of opportunity, the planning group must first define and describe the internal operating system that supports implementation of the business strategy. Once the boundaries of this operating system are clear (which organisational functions, workflows, processes, procedures and activities are included), the planning group must analyse how it actually works in a systematic and comprehensive way. This is to identify which causal factors contribute most to those operating problems most likely to block or undermine the achievement of the desired strategic business outcomes – streamline the process” (Judson, 1996: 78 – 79).

Labovitz and Rosansky (1997: 164 – 165) identified the following crucial factors as drivers towards a self-aligning organisation:

- Start with the main/core driver of the organisation or organisational unit.
- Create a specific set of indicators.
- Make sure that everyone understands the organisation’s measures and how they tie into the main driver (core objectives).
- Link measures and activities with rewards and recognition.
- Give people the training they need to do the job right.
- Create goals for everyone.
- Review performance on a regular basis.

To bridge the gap between strategy and employees’ day-to-day execution of that strategy, a company’s executives must succeed in four areas. They must motivate employees towards strategic objectives by communicating those goals in a way that is relevant to all, within a specific process. They must manage operational programmes in a way that empowers individuals to take ownership of the strategic objectives. They must proactively monitor the organisation’s progress toward incremental milestones and alert stakeholders to unexpected outcomes, and they must measure operational performance in a way that clearly identifies both problems and areas for growth (Becher, 1991: 1).

It is the duty of each leader to master not only the individual processes but to understand how they link together. This is central to strategy conception and execution (Becher, 1991: 1).

Everything in an organisation's internal and external "ecosystems" is connected. To improve organisational and individual performance, these connections (flow of processes/activities) must be understood. These connections or levels are the organisational level, process level and job/performer level (Becher, 1991: 1).

An organisation is only as good as its processes. One must ensure that processes are installed to meet customers' needs, and that process goals and measures are driven by the customers' and the organisation's requirements. Like the anatomy of the human body which consists of a skeletal system, a muscular system and a central nervous system, the three levels within an organisation represent an anatomy of performance. Since all the sub-systems are critical and interdependent, a failure in one sub-system affects the ability of the body or institution to perform effectively (Rummler & Branche, 1990: 15 – 24). Each of the three levels requires management practices to ensure that goals are current and are being achieved.

It is therefore crucial to create ownership by involving the "doers" (people responsible for execution within all three levels) from the beginning of the strategic planning process, and also to ensure that all relevant activities in respect of the implementation of specific plans are within the same process (Rummler & Branche, 1990: 15 – 24).

Rummler and Branche (1990: 24 – 27) state further that organisational and process levels may be beautifully wired in terms of goals, design and management. However, "the electricity will flow" only if the needs of the people who make or break the organisation and utilise process performance, are addressed. If processes are the vehicle through which an organisation produces its inputs, people are the vehicle through which processes function.

3.4.3 Introduce service level agreements to enhance connectivity

Service level agreements (SLAs) have been claimed to be an excellent vehicle for organisational improvement where there is a substantial degree of departmental autonomy. Such a situation is likely to exist in departments because of the differentiated nature of the work performed by each unit, with varying degrees of specialisation and professionalism, use of technology and different cost bases but also because of the interdependence of the direct services to the support services (core units). SLAs can be used to promote improved integration between departments and quality assurance and also to provide a framework for cost transfer changing (Julyan, 1990: 1 - 4).

SLA's are formally defined and negotiated agreements of the services to be provided to the client or as part of the internal chain of events/activities. The adherence to this agreement (SLA) helps to align the requirements of the end user with the aspects of the service, including objectives, range, quantity, quality, access, pricing, escalation, review, complaints and arbitration procedures. SLAs promote formalised dealings with roleplayers in respect of various responsibilities, chain of activities, procedures and performance management towards the achievement of objectives. SLAs provide the focus for measuring quality and quantity through the following aims:

- Improving relationships and good working practice across all directorates and departments;
- Providing accountability through an agreed framework of negotiation;
- Ensuring "value for money" through defining the cost of service and the associated activity levels; and
- Provide a mechanism for linking the different parts of a system/process towards the accomplishment of an organisation's overall purpose (objectives).

3.5 CREATION OF VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT

An organisation is aligned when:

- All staff have a shared purpose;
- All staff are aware of how their contribution drives the core strategies of the organisation toward the accomplishment of its purpose;
- Work, processes and actions are executed toward the accomplishment of the purpose; and
- Priorities become simple and clear.

3.5.1 Vertical alignment (aligning activities with intention)

Vertical alignment in an organisation entails the following:

- Links business strategy and staff (teams);
- Energises people, provides direction and offers opportunity for engagement; and
- Promotes the rapid deployment of business strategy.

Through vertical alignment staff know the goals/objectives and their roles in achieving them as well as having knowledge of the broader strategy and how their work is connected to that strategy. Vertical alignment energises people, provides direction and offers opportunity for involvement, thereby aligning activities with intention (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997: 27 – 29).

3.5.2 Horizontal alignment (aligning processes with customers' expectations)

Horizontal alignment is reached when the organisation connects with customers. In the same way that vertical alignment ensures that organisational strategy is reflected in the behaviour of every employee, horizontal alignment infuses the concerns of the customer into everything the organisation does. Horizontal

alignment links an organisation's action with customer needs in ways that delight and create loyalty (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997: 108 – 110).

Process thinking and improvement is an essential ingredient of horizontal alignment. The goal is to eliminate unnecessary boundaries or connections between various activities and, by doing this, reduce unnecessary activities. Horizontally aligned institutions are so “hardwired” to customer requirements that the needs of their customers resonate with employees and influence the institution's strategy, processes and behaviour (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997: 32 – 34 and 127 - 130).

3.5.3 Stay aligned (focus on the core process)

When alignment is achieved in both dimensions (vertical/horizontal), a dynamic relationship exists between four elements, namely strategy → people → processes → customers. With both vertical and horizontal dimensions aligned, strategy and people are synchronized with customer focus and process capabilities (Labovitz & Rosansky, 1997: 35 – 37).

According to Labovitz and Rosansky (1997: 149 – 165) measurement in respect of the progress towards the achievement of objectives is absolutely necessary but before measurement can be implemented, managers and employees must have a clear sense of how their efforts contribute to the achievement of objectives. Aligning organisational strategy, processes, people and customers to the core focus of the institution is the management task which ensures success and prosperity. Alignment is that optimal state in which strategy, employees, customers and key processes work in concert to propel growth and optimal needs satisfaction.

Labovitz and Rosansky (1997: 180) state further that alignment encompasses many facets of the organisation, including strategy, structure, processes, people and technology. Alignment in an organisation is defined as a process which focuses on completing the right work the right way with the right people at the right time. The right work relates to activities to meet the current mission/vision and customer requirements, to transform the organisation and deliver on future-oriented work

associated with the vision and strategic objectives. The right way includes the processes, resources and tools by which the work is completed and managed. The right people encompass issues such as knowledge, experience and skills from a process and structure perspective, and the alignment of operations with the budget. Alignment is derived from understanding how people are organised to complete the work and the tools they use. The right time relates to the proper timing of doing the work to meet short-term work requirements and short-term actions to ensure long-term success. “An alignment methodology should help management understand the organisational system, identify process interactions across the organisation, identify trends in the organisation, provide focus and prioritise work, obtain management buy-in and identify which processes are important for organisational success” (McInrath & Kotnour, 2007: 1 – 2).

From the abovementioned scenario one can assume that a more appropriate correlation level between strategy objectives and operational plans can be reached, since more effective and efficient connectivity between the main processes and activities toward the implementation of objectives are possible if both vertical and horizontal alignment can be created.

3.5.4 A comprehensively-aligned-strategic-management-by-results example / template within a specific process

Strategic management by results closes the loop on the total planning process. It provides management with an ongoing mechanism for executing and monitoring the implementation and results of both strategic and operational plans. Another important ingredient in the process is the involvement and commitment of people within the organisation. Remember, the purpose of planning is not to produce plans, it is to produce results (Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 7 – 10).

An organisation should drive its performance measurement based on process management while constantly watching the outcome. The focus is on managing the entire key process cycle and producing an outcome of success (Barry, 1994: 47 – 48).

The operational template below is an example of Unisa's specific core objective for the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. Only the specific strategic objective is indicated with specific measures and dependencies. From this information, a comprehensive implementation plan (results management plan, to create ownership of the process and implementation plan) within a specific process and sequence of activities as well as relevant measurements, must be reflected to ensure effective and efficient execution and outcomes (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Aligned operational implementation plan

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	IOP	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TARGETS AND / OR STANDARDS	PROGRESS	DEPENDENCIES (To be managed jointly by incumbent and process owner)
Quality of leadership and guidance in terms of setting norms and standards, assigning targets via the delegation process, allocating resources and ensuring regular reporting and appropriate corrective action to achieve the targets below:						
<u>Ensure the achievement of Directorate deliverables in Departmental Operational Plan (DOP)</u>	The following will be a generic performance requirement for all deliverables: "Quality and timely responses to informational, planning, delivery and reporting requirements with 90% adherence to due dates".					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New structures were submitted and were approved; Generic job descriptions per structural level were compiled and evaluated; New performance contracts are in place; All job descriptions (KPA's) are aligned with the objectives of Unisa and the Department; The Directorate's 2010 operational plan (objectives) are completed and aligned with the strategic objectives 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client satisfaction rating; Compliance with policies; Report back; Quality control student system audits; Budget; Management directions; Staff versus student ratio; Capacity requirements Output measures; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage increase annually; Optimise resources; Meeting due dates; Correctness of administrative activities \pm 85%; Less complaints; Positive feedback; Clear action plans; Assessments; Knowledge system management. 	Task Teams' progress report Milestones 60% completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PQM; ICT platform 100% functional Timely Mancom decisions; Knowledge Management; Senate decisions; Fees/examination rosters available in time; Staff capacity; Effective organisational structures; Infrastructure; Budget; Training (knowledge management); Accessible

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	IOP	PERFORMANCE MEASURES	TARGETS AND / OR STANDARDS	PROGRESS	DEPENDENCIES (To be managed jointly by incumbent and process owner)
	<p>of the Registrar's Portfolio.</p> <p><u>Linkage of the new Registration Model to the Institutional Operational Plan (IOP)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The registration plan falls within the purview of the Institutional Operational Plan - Theme iii namely, "Enabling Mechanisms and Resources". It reflects specially on Objective 7: - "Offer effective student services to enhance the total student experience." 7.2 states: - "To have in place a fully functional technology driven registration administration system in accordance with a simplified PQM". 		<p>Project task teams;</p> <p>Signing-off tasks in respect of task team activities;</p> <p>Correctness of information;</p> <p>Turnaround time;</p> <p>Feedback: clients internal/external;</p> <p>Statistics</p>	<p>Compliance with approved action / implementation plan at Directorate level,</p>		<p>technology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplified curricula ICT platform

(Unisa, Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, 2010 : 1)

Successful implementation of strategies often requires fundamental changes in the organisation's operating system. In a well-conceived strategic or operating plan,

the changes required in an operating system to implement a particular strategy are outlined in the form of a sequence of action steps (activities). Each activity specifies the scope of work to be done and the nature of the deliverable. The resources required which include the key individuals who will be working on the task towards the achievement of specific objectives and the date of completion are also indicated. Also included are measures (see section 3.2.1) to monitor the actual progress against the program (tasks)(Judson, 1996: 64 – 66).

Strategic and implementation plans therefore constitute a process: a process of organising people, procedures/tools and resources into work-related activities which are needed to produce a specific and specified end result. The process is a sequence of events/activities and is characterised by (Barry, 1994: 6 – 9):

- Measurable input(s);
- Value-adding activities;
- Measurable output(s);
- Repeatability; and
- Control.

3.6 INTEGRATED PLANNING PROCESS

According to Morrissey *et al.* (1988: 105 – 106), operational plan development refers to the actual creation of the operational plan. It also includes the documentation of the plan, thus specific objectives, measurements, criteria, sequence of activities and due dates towards achievement of objectives (see Figure 3.1 and section 3.3.1). Operational plan implementation refers to communication of the total plan throughout the organisation, the development of organisational unit plans as well as the actual execution of the plan. In reviewing the current planning process, one needs to answer three basic questions to determine the enhancements or changes which are needed:

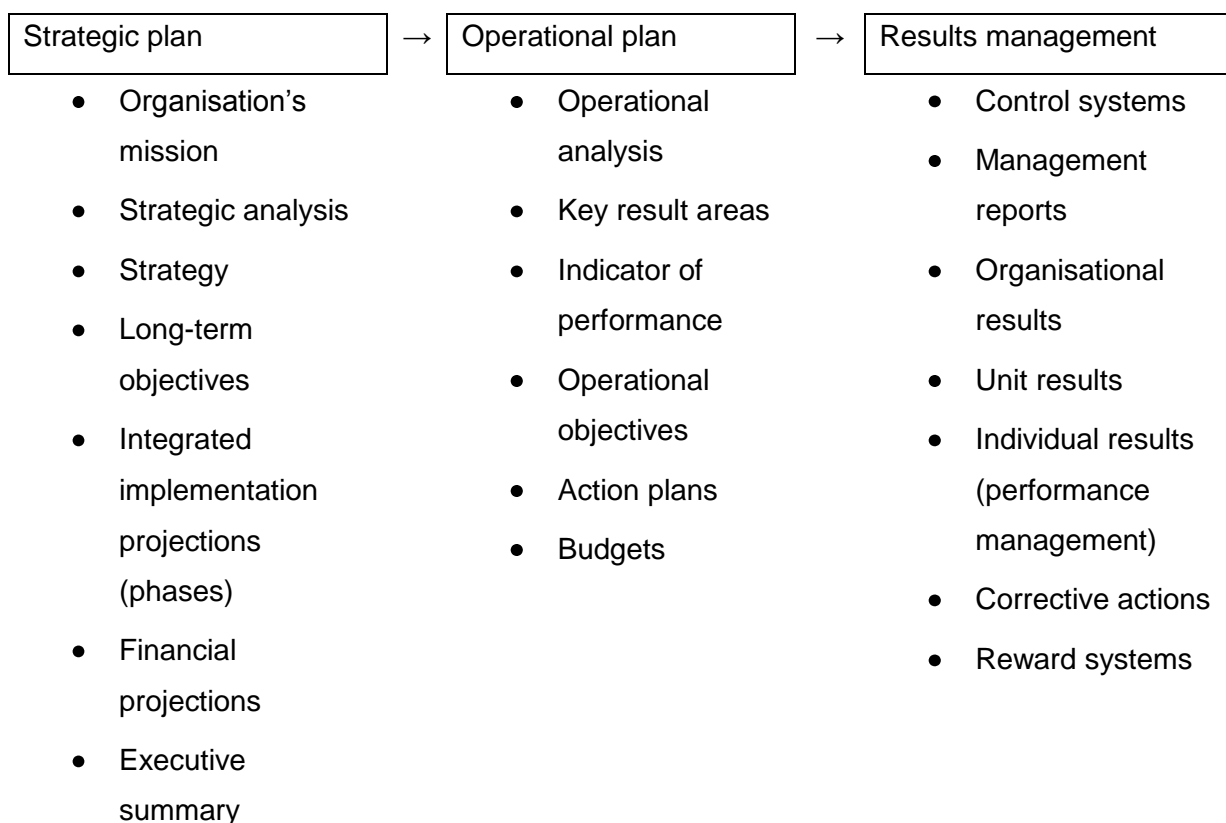
- Is the current planning process doing the job?

- Does the current planning effort involve all key employees in the organisation and is it integrated both vertically and horizontally?
- How can the current planning process be strengthened?

Despite the growing understanding of the importance of processes, many organisations continue to view activities individually and try to improve them in isolation. Process thinking and improvement is an essential ingredient of horizontal alignment (see section 2.3.4.1) (Labovitz and Rosansky, 1997: 127 – 130).

The integrated planning process represents a total view of an organisation’s planning and control system. The three main components of the process are strategic plans, operational plans and results management. All three components are necessary to achieve organisational results. However, each of the three components serves a distinctly different purpose. The strategic plan focuses on the basic concept (mission) and direction (strategy) of the organisation (the *what*).

Figure 3.2: Integrated planning components



(Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 7)

The operational plan concentrates on how to implement the strategic plan and apart from aiming at the achievement of long-term strategic objectives, it also produces short-term results. The results management component is concerned with comparing performance with plan (both strategic and operational) and ensuring the achievement of results. Thus, although each component serves a different purpose, they are highly integrated (no part of the planning process can be effectively carried out in isolation) (Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 6 – 10).

The principal elements that make up each component are outlined in Figure 3.2.

3.7 SUMMARY

In Chapter 3 the researcher attempted to identify a comprehensively-aligned-strategic-management approach that may enhance effective and efficient correlation between strategic objectives and operational plans. An overarching model with specific phases was explained as well as possible measurement criteria as part of the comprehensively-aligned-strategic-management approach. This specific approach will be utilised in Chapters 5 and 6 to measure the correlation levels between the strategic objectives and operational plans of Unisa with specific reference to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. No specific comparisons were made in this chapter to determine the effectiveness of the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans, since this comprehensive exercise will receive attention in Chapters 5 and 6. In this chapter reference has also been made to a strategic operational template or model which includes a sequence of activities within a process that will be managed by specific project and process principles, ensuring ownership and accountability for the “doers” (people responsible for the implementation of strategic plans).

CHAPTER 4

THE DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS AT UNISA

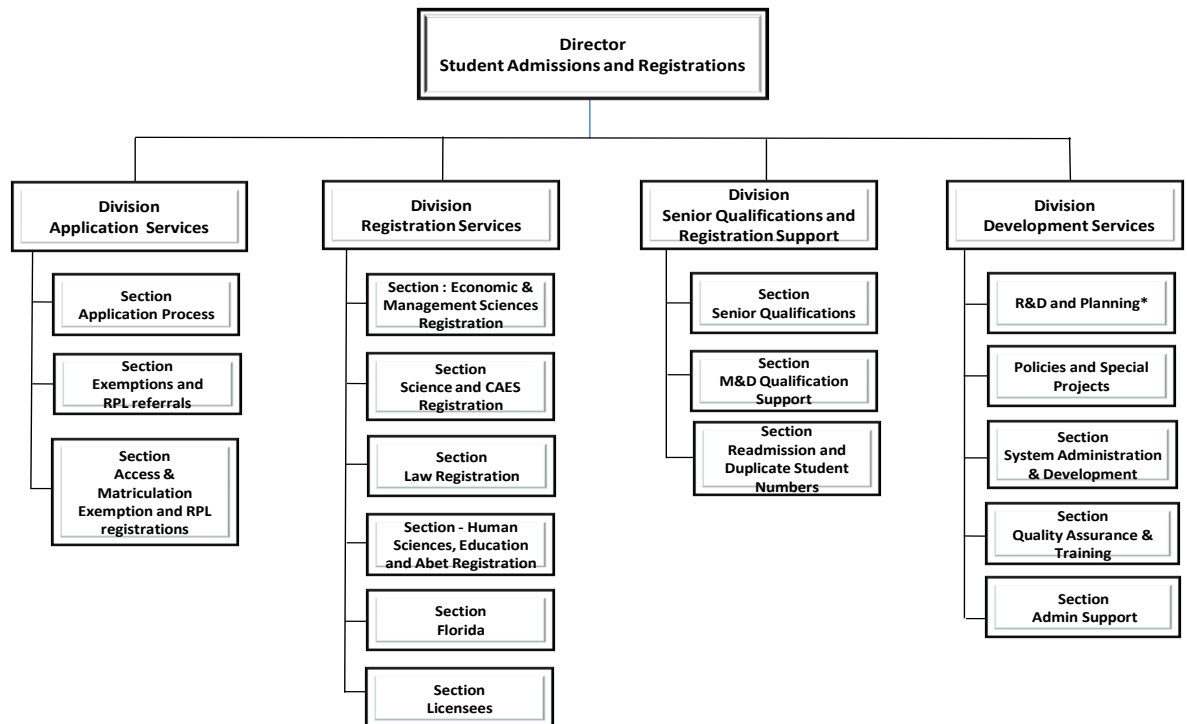
4.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter concentrates on the major processes, functions and activities which form part of the operational implementation plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. The impact of the services provided by the Directorate to external and internal clients will be explained and more specifically in alignment with the implementation of specific strategic operational plans of Unisa. Further to the above, statistics illustrating the numbers of Unisa students and related administrative actions the Directorate deals with, will be given. The operational plans of the Directorate concerning its functions and activities will be discussed and more specifically the methods / tactics and supportive enablers/dependencies. In conclusion, a summarised table of important objectives, activities and performance measures emanating from the Directorate's Operational Plan will be discussed as part of the critical information related to the execution processes.

The operational functionality of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, its functions, procedures and activities in respect of service delivery and the implementation of Unisa's strategic plans, as described in this Chapter, will form an important platform in respect of cross references/referrals to Chapters 3 and 5.

4.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Figure 4.1: Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational structure, 2011



(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' approved structures, Mancom Minutes, 2010: 12 - 15)

The purpose of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and its various divisions, as reflected on the above organisational structure, can be summarized as follows:

- The purpose of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is to support the leading, planning and provision of high quality student admissions and registration services to Unisa and its clients in accordance with and in support of the strategic objectives of Unisa in South Africa, the rest of Africa and abroad.

- The purpose of the Division: Application Services is to plan and execute effective application (pre-registration) support services to prospective students at Unisa to enable them towards self-help registrations.
- The purpose of the Division: Registration Services is to plan and execute effective registration services as needed within shortened registration cycles to prospective and returning (registered) students.
- The purpose of the Division: Senior Qualifications and Registration Support is to develop and maintain suitable infrastructure, accessible technology in respect of correct registration information and user-friendly support and advisory service to postgraduate students.
- The purpose of the Division: Development Services is to ensure proper systems (ICT-support), financial support (budget), logistics, training and development (adequate staff capacity) and the verification of completed qualifications.

The first entry point and perceptions of Unisa's clients are usually created within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations where the importance of doing the right things right with the right people at the right time is emphasised (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan 2011: 2 – 5).

4.3 FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES

The University of South Africa embarked on a 2015 strategy to strive towards being the University of choice throughout Africa. As such, various strategic objectives were formulated to realise this and to promote the Open Distance Learning (ODL) model of the University.

Subsequently, directorates were requested (Unisa 2010 Institutional Operational Plan, 2010: 3 - 7) to put forward operational implementation plans to support the institutional strategic objectives of Unisa. The functions and services of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations outlines its intention to work towards achieving Unisa's strategic objectives; more specifically in alignment with the following objective:

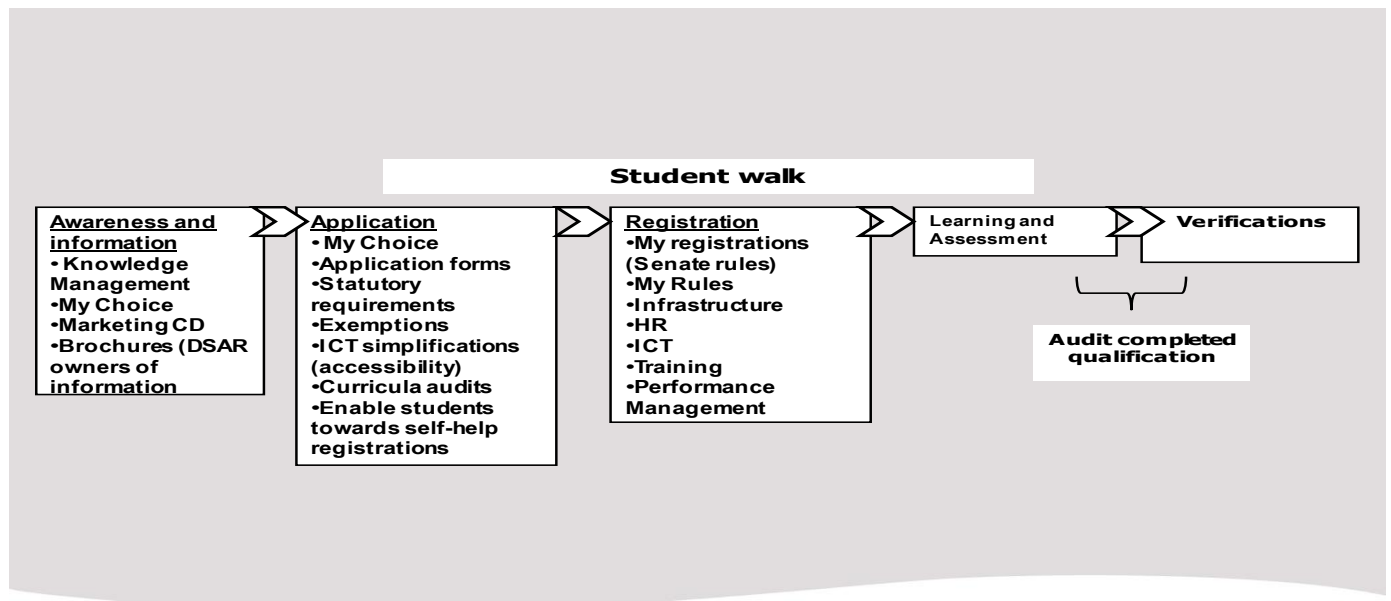
- The alignment of all systems, structures, processes and resources with Unisa's business model and the implementation of an effective technology-driven registration administration system (see Figures 3.1 and 4.2). The functions and services of the Directorate are outlined in the following paragraphs (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Structures, 2011: Mancom Minutes 2010 : 14 – 15).

4.3.1 Provision of registration information to students (awareness of information)

This Directorate is accountable for all student administration-related information and more specifically the correctness of student administration-related information. All information related to admissions, registrations and qualifications on the Unisa website, in brochures and within the student registration system, must be verified and signed off by the Directorate's management before being published. This process is essential to ensure standardised procedures and the execution of all centralised and decentralised registration services.

4.3.2 Student registration system / process (The Student Walk)

Figure 4.2: Open Distance Learning (Unisa Student Walk)



(Conceptual Framework for Student Support at Unisa, 2010 : 6 – 9)

The above figure illustrates the involvement of the activities of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations from the first entry point i.e. awareness of information to the verification of completed qualifications. There is a specific sequence of activities within a specific integrated process to ensure connectivity of actions. In this way, the outcomes of one action become the input of the next activity. It is therefore important to group together what belongs together in the right sequence of activities, to ensure ownership and accountability for the successful achievement of objectives. If not, the final result could be the successful implementation of the wrong things (see sections 2.3.4.2, 2.4.4.3 and 3.4.2).

4.3.3 Admissions to qualifications (application phase)

The specific functions related to the application phase entail the following:

- The evaluation of applications in respect of all new pre-registration information on the student system.

- The issuing of new student numbers and the provision of registration materials.

The process that is followed (see Figure 4.1) will enable all prospective students who qualify for university studies to access technology via the internet and self-help facilities towards self-help registration.

The process will also form the starting point for the tracking of students from the time they apply for studies at Unisa. This information is also essential for Unisa's Management to do proper proactive planning in respect of numbers per Academic College and in respect of the number of study materials that must be available to students per semester registration and per year registration respectively.

4.3.4 Registration and administration

The following core activities and services form part of this division:

- Standardise and simplify a technology-driven self-help registration system and process to enable students to utilise self-help services.
- Coordinate and activate the registration information on the internet registration system.
- Provide electronic advice to students pertaining to all registration matters (Senate rules, regulations, exemptions, fees and completion of qualifications).
- Provide effective Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) advice, mentoring and assessment services.
- Coordinate and facilitate registration of access students and matriculation exemptions.
- Manage the applications, admissions and registration of master's and Doctoral students.
- Standardise and manage the Unisa registration facilities at the various campuses in South Africa.

4.3.5 Verification of completion of qualifications

In the final year of study, the verification of completed qualifications to determine whether students meet all the requirements toward a completed qualification, is an important exercise which enables possible diplomates/graduates to submit this as evidence to their employers. The following are important in this regard:

- Ensuring the timely provision of information to students in respect of their completed qualifications during the release of Unisa's examination results annually;
- Auditing all final year students to determine whether they meet all requirements toward certification and graduation; and
- Updating student records on the student system to reflect completed qualifications.

(The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' structures, 2011: Mancom Minutes, 2010: 12 - 15).

The abovementioned core support services within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations confirm the fact that first and last perceptions of Unisa amongst students are created here (internally and externally). It is, therefore, important to ensure alignment of all relevant activities within a specific process and specific sequence of events, as well as alignment with the "student walk": a process within the new Open Distance Learning Model (ODL) of Unisa (see section 4.3.2 in respect of the Student Walk model).

4.3.6 Statistics illustrating the number of Unisa students dealt with by the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registration

Untested data concerning the registration activities speak for the volume of work that passes through the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations during any registration period.

Table 4.1: Comparison of students registered by number

On 7 February	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of registrations	173 643	187 516	198 795	233 167 (without access registration figures)

(Unisa registration statistics, ICT Department, 2011)

The 233 167 does not include the access registrations (prerequisite modules prescribed by the academic college before students may proceed with formal qualifications), which total a further 10 099 registrations. This means that effectively until 7 February 2011, there were **44 471** more registrations than on 07 February 2010.

Table 4.2: Undergraduate registrations per college: semester one (S1/2011) until 2 February 2011

College	Number of registrations	Web registrations (Finalised i.e. no manual/advisor intervention required)	Web registrations (Received)
College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences	3 861	1 032	1 497
College of Economic and Management Sciences	97 244	55 184	66 655
College of Human Sciences	69 303	18 584	22 930
College of Law	24 083	8 801	10 455
College of Science and Technology	15 520	7 113	9 038
Non-degree purposes	8 635	2 655	3 391
ACCESS	10 043	864	1 265
Total	228 689	94 233	116 131

(Unisa registration statistics, ICT Department, 2011)

In addition to the primary activities of registration, the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations also has several allied activities that must be completed during this period. These include:

- Reinstatement of students who were financially cancelled during the previous year due to non-payment. Comparative students for the 2009 and 2010 academic years are as follows:

Table 4.3: Financial cancellations and reinstatements

Academic year	Total students financially cancelled	Total students reinstated
2009	112 970	85 508
2010	163 739	130 764

(Unisa financial cancellation statistics, Finance Department, 2011)

- Matriculation exemption applications i.e. in respect of students who do not comply with the standard required school-leaving qualifications: either a National Senior Certificate (NSC) or Senior Certificate (SC) with endorsement.

Table 4.4: Matriculation exemption numbers (comparisons)

Academic year	2009	2010	2011 (to date)
New applications	24 676	36 419	9 448
Renewals	5 264	5 814	1 434
Senate discretionary access	5 730	5 068	2 361
Declined	831	2164	391
TOTAL	36 501	49 465	13 934

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, Systems (online) analysis statistics programme, 2011)

- Credit and exemption applications:

Table 4.5: Comparison per academic year (exemption applications)

Academic year	Number of students	Number of modules
2009	14 116	69 693
2010	11 506	53 546
2011 (processed)	1 267	6 167
2011 (outstanding)	1 340	

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, Systems (online) analysis statistics programme, 2011)

- Verification of qualifications (for graduation purposes):

Table 4.6: Comparisons per academic year (completed qualifications)

Qualifications	2008 (totals)	2009 (totals)	2010 (totals)	2011 (to date)
Doctor's	107	113	131	25
Master's	784	655	622	55
Honours	3 393	3 858	3 941	1 628
Undergraduate	13 020	16 895	21 430	9 205

(Division Graduations, (online) analysis statistics, completed qualifications, 2011)

These core functions and services of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations support Unisa's strategic objectives (see Chapter 5, section 5.3). Comparisons of these core functions and services with the strategic objective of determining how successfully they contribute towards achieving the objectives will be dealt with in Chapter 5, section 5.7.

4.4 OPERATIONAL BUSINESS PLAN

The main purpose of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan is to specify details regarding why and more specifically how to achieve the strategic objectives of Unisa. The intention is to identify specific actions and activities to enable the Directorate's Management to achieve the relevant

strategic objectives within a specific process (see sections 1.9.5, 1.9.18, 2.4.4.9, 3.2.1 and 3.3).

The operational plan confirms the operational mandate of the institution to execute certain tasks, tactics, actions and activities, guided by procedures, to meet targets and timelines and to identify supportive mechanisms, dependencies and people responsible for executing specific objectives (also see sections 1.9.19 and 2.2.4 in this regard).

4.4.1 Defining the core business (vision and mission statements)

The vision and mission statements outline the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' intentions to work towards achieving Unisa's strategic objectives.

Vision:

To provide a one-stop user-friendly fully fledged technology-driven registration process and supportive service to prospective, current and former under- and postgraduate students so that the students' pursuit of an academic qualification progresses administratively as smoothly as possible.

Mission:

To implement strategic directions and further options and developments in open distance learning, sound academic administration processes as well as the maintenance and development of a suitable infrastructure and a skilled staff complement to all students and other stakeholders (Unisa, the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Business Plan, 2010 /11 : 4).

4.4.2 Competitive advantage

Unisa's new registration plan falls within the purview of the Unisa Institutional Operation Plan (IOP) and is in alignment with the Open Distance Learning concept, in respect of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' services. In this way, it is in alignment with the following major objective, namely:

- To have in place a fully-fledged functional technology-driven registration system to enable students to register themselves in time within a shortened registration period (Institutional Operational Plan, 2009 – 2010: 19).

To ensure a competitive advantage above all competitors, the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations has introduced and implemented admission and registration processes to enable the following:

- A cutting-edge, nationally and internationally benchmarked technology;
- Accessible academic administrative processes and infrastructure with simplified, standardised and easy-to-use systems in respect of information for registrations and administrative support;
- Visible and accessible registration facilities at decentralised registration facilities; and
- An effective and efficient professionally trained and skilled core staff component to manage \pm 6 000 students per day in peak periods, thus registering large volumes of students correctly and in time (Unisa, the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan, 2010: 2 – 3).

4.4.3 Barriers and enablers

An enabler can be defined as the means, knowledge, opportunity and tools to activate or enable action or operational activity successfully. It ensures a supportive platform for the implementation of plans and should be available on time before the execution process commences (see section 2.4.4.1).

Barriers prevent the successful achievement of objectives since the effective and timely execution of activities is dependent on supportive enablers i.e. structures, policies, timely decisions, procedures, infrastructure, ICT support, human resources, budget and performance management. The lack of the abovementioned enablers will result in barriers such as inadequate support resources which will in

turn delay the implementation process since alternative implementation plans and implementation activities must then be introduced (also see sections 1.9.2, 1.9.6, 2.4.4.1 and 2.4.4.4).

It is therefore imperative to identify all possible barriers that could prevent the effective achievement of strategic objectives in an operational plan and to introduce workarounds/alternatives (see section 2.4.4.5) to manage the implementation of plans successfully.

4.5. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Once an organisation has analysed its mission and vision and defined its objectives, the directorates responsible for executing them must measure progress toward achievement. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are measurements and should be linked to objectives to ensure the effective and timely implementation of plans. The two most important key performance indicators in the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations are:

- (i) The correctness of information; and
- (ii) Effective turnaround time.

Key performance indicators are of limited value if they are not used to identify service delivery and performance gaps; to set targets and to work towards better results. These performance indicators must be specific to the nature of an institution's or directorate's mandate (see sections 4.3.1 – 4.3.6). The performance indicators should measure progress in respect of the specific inputs, activities and outputs within an implementation process towards the achievement of relevant strategic objectives. Some important performance indicators in respect of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations are the following:

- On time availability of enablers and dependencies (see sections 1.9.7, 2.4.4.1, 4.4.3 and 5.7.1.3);

- Productivity outputs (statistics)(see section 4.3.6 and tables 4.1 – 4.6);
- Service delivery feedback/surveys;
- Having accommodated all prospective students towards successful registration by closing dates; and
- Simplified and standardised registration information as well as accessible user-friendly self-help registration facilities (Directorate: Student Admission and Registrations' Operational Plans, 2011: 2 – 21).

The re-alignment of higher education with its environments means that universities must recognise their roles and responsibilities in relation to a variety of internal and external constituencies. There really is no effective way of doing this other than to check performance against expectations (both expectations that institutions have developed for themselves and the expectations of their clients). Unlike mission-driven planning, planning that is based on a premise of measuring and checking performance against expectations provides an important and highly beneficial linkage between the institution and its environment. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are the lynchpins that tie the most essential operations of the institution to the strategic planning process (Dolence, Rowley & Lujan, 1997: 16 – 17).

4.6 VALUE CONTRIBUTION

The value contribution of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations relates to those specific operational objectives and specific functions and activities that are reflected within the Directorate's structures (see sections 4.3.1 – 4.3.6). Critical functions concerning the admission and registration of students at Unisa include the following:

- Setting policies and procedures;
- System development and enhancements;
- Standardisation and simplification of day-to-day activities in respect of service delivery processes;

- Training and assessment;
- Quality control;
- Performance management; and
- Determining service level agreements (SLAs) in respect of decentralised services.

4.6.1 Critical success factors

The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' critical success factors are the major enablers and operational dependencies which enable the effective management of service delivery in the context of student admissions and registrations. These factors are interdependent and exist in a specific sequence of priority to ensure alignment and connectivity with the mission, vision, policies and strategic objectives of Unisa (see section 4.3.2 in respect of sequence of events, The Student Walk).

At the time of writing, the following critical success factors were identified as essential enablers and dependencies in the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations:

- Policies and procedures;
- User-friendly academic college specific calendars and registration information brochures;
- Registration closing dates;
- Simplified and easy-to-use internet, self-help registration functions;
- Accessible self-help registration facilities;
- Adequate infrastructure and human resources; and
- Effective ICT support and performance management.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational plan, 2011).

4.6.2 Strategic operational objectives

The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan falls within the purview of the Institutional Operational Plan (IOP) of Unisa and involves the following, namely:

- To ensure alignment of all systems, structures, processes and resources with Unisa's strategic objectives;
- To offer effective student services to enhance the total student experience; and more specifically;
- To have in place a fully functional technology-driven registration administration system in accordance with simplified academic offerings (set curricula).

(Unisa Institutional Operational Plan, 2009 – 2010: 18 – 19).

The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations aims at providing students with accessible, simplified self-help registration modes which include the internet and more particularly the Unisa website, facsimile, email and decentralised registration facilities. Pursuing the abovementioned core strategic objectives is the specific responsibility of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and forms the focus in respect of all the activities incorporated in the operational plan of the particular Directorate. The Directorate, through pursuing "ownership" of the strategic objectives, ensures accountability towards implementing the required plans and eliminating duplication and overlapping of specific activities within a specific sequence of events – thus it groups together what belongs together.

4.6.3 Strategic operational 3-year plan

The strategic operational 3-year plan (see Table 4.7) forms part of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan and contains critical information in a summarised format. Any changes or progress will be indicated on the template as a result of the amendments in the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan. This amended template will be distributed to all roleplayers involved in the implementation of the Directorate's operational plan to

ensure the alignment of activities with the set objectives and to serve as an updated document in respect of what is expected by due dates. The communication of relevant implementation issues will therefore be captured in a simplified shortened format and will eliminate the circulation of a thick comprehensive document (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan, 2011: 1 - 17).

Table 4.7: Template: Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan: 2009 - 2011

SO	Objectives	Actions	Performance Measure	Targets			Resource Requirement/s	Dependency
				2009	2010	2011		
S.O. 1	An appropriately staffed portfolio (including the finalization of evaluations, placements, job gradings, and performance contracts)	<p>Approve structures for all departments.</p> <p>Design and finalise job descriptions and ensure approval by HR.</p> <p>Finalise evaluations gradings for all posts.</p> <p>Identify training needs per Directorate.</p> <p>Implement a change management system.</p>	<p>Staff having received letters of placement with concomitant gradings.</p> <p>Identified vacancies appropriately filled.</p> <p>Performance contracts concluded and signed.</p> <p>Staff feedback on processes and outcomes</p>	<p>Structures approved 95% by January 2008.</p> <p>Job descriptions 100% finalized by December 2007.</p> <p>60% of staff placed in positions.</p> <p>60% of vacancies filled.</p> <p>Skills audit 50% completed.</p> <p>50% of performance contracts concluded.</p>	<p>100% placements completed.</p> <p>100% vacancies filled.</p> <p>100% performance contracts complete</p>	<p>Revisit targets during end of 2011</p>	<p>Budget</p> <p>HR (Knowledgeable staff)</p> <p>ICT (systems)</p> <p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>- HR policies and guidelines staff commitment</p> <p>- Timeous decisions</p> <p>- Split ownership for some processes</p> <p>- Knowledgeable managers</p> <p>- Minuted decisions communicated for all processes at all levels</p> <p>- QA and Monitoring activities</p> <p>- Adherence to due dates</p>

(Unisa, Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan (template); 2010: 1)

Explanatory notes:

S.O. – 2015 Strategic Objective that is being addressed.

OBJECTIVES – These refer to the Directorate’s objectives and are a reflection of what the Directorate hopes to achieve in three years’ time in line with the focus area.

ACTIONS – This column must reflect how the Directorate proposes to achieve the stated objective – in other words, ‘how will one get there?’ The actions that will be taken during the 2009-2011 period are specified.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES – This column contains details on how one will know when success has been achieved.

TARGET – Targets for the next 3 years are set by indicating what needs to change each year and by how much.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS – These will include F (Financial), HR (Human Resources), ICT (Information Technology), PI (Physical Infrastructure), and/or O (Other). In the case of ‘O’, the specific requirement should be specified.

4.7 IMPACT AND RIPPLE EFFECT OF THE ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS OF THE DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF UNISA (STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS)

The entire admissions and registration process is a complex web of actions and the activities span a number of different portfolios across the University (internally) as well as externally (students, employers, Government sectors, private institutions and society in general)(see also section 2.3.2). The impact of all activities within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations in alignment with the Open Distance Learning Model (ODL) and The Student Walk (see section 4.3.2) is direct and will determine the correctness of information and turnaround time of service delivery to external and internal clients.

4.7.1 External impact

The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' activities toward effective service delivery must meet all expectations of students from Recognition of Prior Learning to doctoral programmes in respect of the following:

- Visibility and accessibility to technology to support self-help registrations;
- Accessibility to simplified registration-related information;
- User-friendly information brochures and internet/website information;
- Timely provision of registration material;
- Effective and efficient administrative support (simplified, standardised and accessible information communication systems); and
- Knowledgeable staff (advisory services).

The above will assist students to plan their studies properly in respect of a shortened tuition period within semester registration periods and also enable them to prepare adequately for examinations (researcher's observation).

4.7.2 Internal impact

The challenge of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operations is the effective planning and on time provision of high quality student admission and registration services to the University community and to ensure that its core support administrative functions are aligned with Senate rules and regulations and support the strategic objectives of Unisa. Through the on time delivery of services, the Directorate will contribute towards effective learner support, tuition and assessment practices (see section 4.2 – 4.3 in respect of the Directorate's structures and services).

4.8 SUMMARY

In Chapter 4 the researcher has concentrated on the organisational structure, responsibilities, functions and activities of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations in alignment with some of the strategic objectives of Unisa and more specifically the administrative support services. A key focus of the Directorate is to provide students with timely application and registration services by utilising technology – a key strategic objective of Unisa. The importance of simplified accessible processes in the admission and registrations of students in order to support their learning experience - once successfully registered - are highlighted. The importance of doing the right things right the first time within a specific process in order to ensure effective learner support, tuition and assessment practices are also reflected on.

CHAPTER 5

AN ALIGNED STANDARDISED ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4 the importance of the activities of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations was highlighted. Also evident was the impact and importance of the successful implementation of strategic objectives on the internal and external clients of Unisa. In Chapter 5, further important mechanisms to optimise the correlation levels between the strategic objectives and operational plans and more specifically that between the operational plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and Unisa's specific identified strategic objectives, will be analysed and discussed.

An exercise within a specific process (measurement criteria) to benchmark the achievement of Unisa's strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations against actual successes will take place. Specific measurement criteria will be identified and proposed and primary findings and perceptions in respect of the accomplishment/non-accomplishment of strategic objectives will be highlighted. Reference will also be made to previous chapters to include and incorporate parts of specific models in support of the identified comprehensive measurement criteria, to determine proper or optimum correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans, or to confirm the lack thereof.

5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF A STANDARDISED ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

An aligned standardised administrative framework across all administrative units could ensure the effective communication and strategic intent towards the actions

necessary to successfully achieve specific strategic objectives within a specific process. This would enable the implementation plan to become known to all relevant roleplayers responsible for implementing certain activities in the chain or sequence of activities which in turn will enable connectivity from inputs, to operations, to outputs (process driven) for the achievement of specific objectives. It could contribute to ensure that the operational plan's objectives and implementation activities form an integrated and standardised implementation process with clear procedures towards the achievement of strategic objectives, both vertically and horizontally. In more simplified terms, it contributes to ensure that the **what** and the **why** are linked with the **when, how** and **by whom**.

No part of a planning process can be effectively carried out in isolation (Morrisey *et al.* 1988: 6 – 10)(see also section 3.3.1). Linkage of all relevant activities within an execution process and tying together what belongs together will ensure that all resources are “rowing in the same direction” (see section 3.3.2).

5.3 THE 2015 REVISED STRATEGIC PLANS OF UNISA

“Five years into the implementation of its strategy (Unisa 2015: An Agenda for Transformation) the university has paused to reflect on progress, to reprioritise, and if necessary, to reformulate aspects of its strategic plan in the light of the changing institutional and higher education context” (Unisa 2015 Revisited, 2011: 2).

The central transformational challenge is to revitalise the capabilities of the University concerning social developments, the production of human capital, knowledge creation, and the promotion of innovation. The promise of Open Distance Learning (see section 4.4.2 and 4.6.2) to increase access, widen participation and promote quality, is now widely recognised and is influencing higher education policy in many developing countries. However, better endowed and developed countries and institutions continue to have an obligation to support the development of those less privileged, especially on the African continent (Unisa 2015 Revisited, 2011: 2).

Unisa's distance education infrastructure, evident in its central, regional and technological facilities for registrations, services and delivery to students, as well as its production and despatch systems, make it unique in South Africa. It can comfortably cater for 300 000 students by aligning its infrastructural resources appropriately (2015: Agenda for transformation, 2010: 5). The latter part is of critical importance to the operational plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 4.3).

5.3.1 Strategic objectives and key strategic plans (relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations)

A number of overarching strategic objectives (intent) relevant to the Portfolio of the Registrar and more specifically to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations will be identified (see sections 5.3.1.1 and 5.3.1.2). These strategic objectives will be analysed and explained in respect of targets and focus areas towards implementation. However, only a summarised version will be provided, since the detail pertaining to the operational implementation plans will only be unpacked in the Institutional Operational Plan (IOP) and the Operational Plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 5.6). The overarching strategic objectives (intent) - the **what** and the **why** - will result in implementation functionality/activities (**how, when, who**) during the operational implementation phases (see sections 5.5 and 5.6).

The above is important in ensuring that what belongs together (specific objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations) will be grouped together within one specific execution process from the very start in respect of the implementation of identified strategic plans. This will ensure ownership and accountability (see sections 3.3 and 3.5).

However, it is important to bear in mind that a large percentage of the strategic objectives will be generic to most of the administrative directorates: aligned structures, performance management, financial sustainability, adequate

infrastructure, adequate human resources, training and development and quality control mechanisms (see section 1.5).

The focus of this chapter will fall on specific identified strategic objectives (the core business of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations) and aligned operational implementation plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, which will ensure the effective and efficient management of a technology-driven admission and registration service delivery system in support of the overall strategic vision of Unisa (see sections 4.2 and 4.3).

The supportive overarching strategic objectives of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations are the following:

5.3.1.1 Establish service-oriented technology-enhanced learner support to increase retention and throughput

- The purpose and outcomes of this specific objective will be to ensure optimal use of the physical infrastructure, technological resources and facilities of Unisa to enable effective delivery of student support regionally in South Africa and beyond its borders.
- The purpose will be to implement a leading edge ICT strategy to expand the innovative use of ICTs in teaching, learning, administration and support.
- The purpose will be to establish the systematic collection and interpretation of data on and from students with the view to continuously improving the quality of study material, teaching, student support, physical facilities and service delivery (2015: An Agenda for Transformation, 2011: 18).
- The purpose will be further to ensure full alignment of all organisational unit and portfolio plans with the Unisa 2015 Strategic Plan.

5.3.1.2 Advance Open Distance Learning (ODL) on the African continent and internationally

The focus will be to foster a healthy, secure and stimulating environment for staff, students and visitors and to protect the assets of the University.

- The purpose and outcomes of this specific objective will be to foster a service-orientated culture through appropriate interventions.
- A second purpose will be to make Unisa's facilities/student centres aesthetically inviting, user-friendly and accessible to staff and students (2015: An Agenda for Transformation, 2011: 23).

5.4 THE INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONAL PLANS OF UNISA (2009 – 2011) (DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS)

5.4.1 Align technological capabilities with an Open Distance Learning Model (ODL)

Unisa will rely on well-defined processes, procedures and robust organisational systems supported by ICT systems. It will continually review and develop governance, management and technology systems/infrastructure in order to give effect to its institutional vision and mission.

In alignment with the above, the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations will provide technology driven, accessible administrative support in the form of accurate and simplified procedures provided when needed towards self-help admissions, registrations, administrative support and the verification of completed qualifications (see Student Walk section 4.3.2)(Unisa Open Distance Learning Policy 2008: 1 – 4).

5.4.2 Constitute a service delivery forum to regularly evaluate delivery of service to students

The above entails the design and development of an effective monitoring mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of all service delivery processes, as well as surveys to determine satisfactory rates toward further enhancements and appropriate service delivery levels (2011 – 2013 Institutional Operational Plan, 2011 : 23).

5.4.3 Enhance student access to technology and develop communication tools to enhance the total student experience and effective service delivery

Related to the above objective, the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations will be accountable for introducing ongoing initiatives to improve the achievement of all institutional goals towards enhanced service delivery. This service delivery comprises administrative, academic research and community services (see Student Walk, section 4.3.2). It will also introduce an effective technology-driven application and registration system (Institutional Operational Plan, 2009 – 2010: 19) and (2011 – 2013 Institutional Operational Plan, 2011: 23).

The various divisions within the institution are responsible for supporting parts of the learning experience of students. Effective student support can only be achieved through the effective strategic integration of various initiatives employed to equip academics and support staff to create a welcoming and barrier-free teaching and learning environment. This is accomplished by anticipating the diversity of students that may enrol and to plan accordingly.

Students need integrated support at all stages of the learning experience (also see the Student Walk, section 4.3.2 and Figure 4.2), i.e.

- Marketing (refers to all related information from admission to graduation);
- Applications (selection and career planning);

- Registration (administrative support);
- Preparation (academic skills and guidance);
- Orientation (study/learning process);
- Formative assessment (preparing for examinations);
- Reflection on summative assessments; and
- Career planning and coaching towards lifelong learning (entering the labour market and updating skills)

(Conceptual Framework for student support at Unisa, 2010: 6 – 9).

5.4.3.1 Implement a fully-fledged technology-driven registration administration system (Core operational objective: Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations)

Core operational objectives of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations are:

- To introduce an effective technology-driven registration system (Institutional Operational Plan, 2009 – 2010 : 15, 19); and
- To implement an online postgraduate delivery model which will enable online application registrations and administrative tracking devices (IOP 2011 – 2013 : 5 – 7).

The above will entail a global on-demand accessible and easy-to-use (simplified) technology-driven system and procedures to enable prospective and returning Unisa students and staff to become familiar with online self-help functions; from marketing information, admissions and registrations, administrative support, payments and e-learning to the completion of qualifications in real time. The above services via the utilisation of relevant technology must be accessible to students at all Unisa facilities globally and through utilisation of the internet.

5.5 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONAL PLANS OF UNISA IN RELATION TO THE OPERATIONAL PLANS OF THE DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS

As part of the major objective of this research, the following important questions were asked in the problem statement, section 1.4:

- What is the current contribution of the function of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations towards achieving Unisa's strategic objectives; and
- Could the improved process-management model of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations ensure the effective achievement of some strategic objectives of Unisa?

In this section and section 5.6 the focus and emphasis will be on the overarching aligned and integrated operational implementation plans, functions, activities and procedures. This will be done in an effort to enhance the correlation levels between the strategic objectives of Unisa specific to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and their successful implementation.

In the first phase, the intention will be to align the operational plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations with the overarching comprehensively-aligned-strategic-management approach (see section 3.2). In the second phase, the measurement criteria (see section 3.2.1 and Table 3.2) (an integrated part of the first phase) will be utilised to eventually measure the successes of the execution process. The benchmarking of accomplishments against criteria, as explained in section 5.7, will, in the final phase, determine the successes or lack thereof in the achievement of specific objectives. The above process and outcomes will be in alignment with the aim and objectives of this study (see sections 1.5 and 5.7).

The purpose of planning is not merely to produce plans. Its main purpose is to produce results, thereby ensuring that strategic objectives will eventually be achieved successfully; creating effective and efficient correlation levels between

strategic objectives and operational plans (see section 2.3.4.4). The lack of correlation or alignment between intent (the **what**) and the accomplishment (the **how**) of strategic objectives and operational implementation plans is often the result of many complex factors (see sections 2.4 and 2.4.1 to 2.4.3). Simply speaking, success is a result of two factors: the quality of the strategy that guides the organisation and the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the strategy (see section 2.4.4).

A useful operational plan outlines in considerable detail the work required to change how things are done within the organisation in order to support the achievement of strategic objectives (Judson, 1996 : 73) (also see section 2.4.4.1). In a well-conceived strategic or operational plan, the changes required of an operating system in order to implement a particular strategy are outlined in the form of a sequence of action steps. Each action step specifies the scope of work to be done, the nature of the “deliverable” when the work has been completed, the resources required including the key individuals who will be working on the task, the person accountable for meeting the commitment, and the date of completion (see section 2.4.4.9 in this regard).

Judson (1996: 68 – 70) states that five key success factors are important for effective strategy execution (see section 2.4.4.9). Further, he indicates that, if management is to achieve these five key success factors, it must begin doing so at the very outset of the planning process, both when developing the strategy and when formulating operating plans in more detail (Judson, 1996: 64 – 66).

Barry (1994: 6) confirms that the organisation must develop specific operational programs that will tie together the entire model, from beginning to end. The operational plans should be developed to be action- and results-oriented (see sections 2.4.4.9 and 2.4.4.10).

The above principles will apply when developing and establishing the operational implementation plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, which will be unpacked and explained in the next section.

5.5.1 Integrated technology-driven projects in alignment with the 2015 Strategic Plans and the 2010/2011 Institutional Operational Plans of Unisa

Table 5.1: Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' ICT Projects, 2011 – 2013

Directorate : Student Admissions and Registrations : Technology-driven Projects : 2011 – 2013
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Project Name	Project Description	Alignment	Expected duration	Benefits
<i>Applications and Registration 2011</i>	<i>This is an ongoing project running from Jan to Dec 2011 to cover the following for the Application/Registration, Graduation, Academic Structure and Learning Centre systems: 1) Enhancements that are not projects, 2) Maintenance 3) Data extraction, 4) Support (this will include data analysis, consultation, user support, problem solving, initial investigations, etc) and 5) General meetings and admin.</i>	<i>IOP 2010, 7.2.1</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>Improved service delivery and efficient systems.</i>
<i>Final year student verification</i>	<i>Pre-audit of final year students to determine correctness of curriculums, auditing of matric and names, etc.</i>	<i>Registrar IOP2011, Goal 9, number 24</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>Quicker turnaround time for students to get confirmation of completion. Reduced overtime. Improved service delivery to clients and other stakeholders.</i>
<i>Tracking of exemption applications</i>	<i>Tracking system that will enable staff to track status of application for quick responses to students. System to be made available to students to track status of application on web as well.</i>	<i>Registrar IOP 2011, Goal 9, point 23</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>Enhanced business process and improved service delivery.</i>
<i>Tracking of M and D applications</i>	<i>Admin procedures (application, referral, approval, registration, document handling) with web online trail to identify where in the process an application for M and D studies is at any stage.</i>	<i>IOP 2010, 7.2.1</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>Improved process and service to students, as well as internal stakeholders.</i>

<i>ODL - new admission requirements</i>	<i>Part of the ODL requirements - Task Team 1.</i>	<i>IOP 2010, strategy 1.1; ODL Task Team 1</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>Generic admission requirements may possibly help automate the application process for the majority of applicants.</i>
<i>Uniflow rollout to Regions</i>	<i>The Uniflow system needs to be expanded to the regions to be able to process postal (web, fax and post) registrations to ensure additional resources for DSAR during peak periods. The Uniflow system will have to be programmed and route codes created for worklists for the Regions. These worklists would need to contain specific documents linked to a specific region- thus needing to read address details of students from the student system.</i>	<i>IOP 2010, strategy 7.2</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>Improved turnaround time for postal registrations with increased capacity.</i>
<i>Self- help and web re-write of registration functions</i>	<i>The self- help system is currently dependant on the registration function 138. A rewrite is required for the sequence and flow for students. The web registration system is written using outdated technology and should be re-written similar to the flow and sequence with the self- help registrations.</i>	<i>IOP 2010, strategy 7.2</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>Improved self- help process as institution requires functionality to be more student focused than staff focused. In other words applications need to be changed bearing in mind that students must be able to use easily, rather than just staff.</i>
<i>Enrolment management system</i>	<i>As part of the Registrar's Operational Plan, DSAR is expected to be a part of the discussions and then do specifications for an enrolment management system.</i>	<i>IOP 2010, strategy 4.1, point 4.1.2; Registrar IOP 2011, Goal 2, point 3</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>Adequate resources can be acquired timeously. Allows institution to plan better for what it wants to deliver on.</i>
<i>Communication system</i>	<i>The increased use of SMS's and emails needs to be addressed with standard formats and messages. At the same time, the Registrar's operational plan requires considering increasing the communication to rural students using technology.</i>	<i>Registrar's IOP 2011, Goal 4, points 9 and 10</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>Better quality of communication from institution to students.</i>
<i>Telephone Registration System</i>	<i>As part of the Registrar Operational Plan, DSAR is expected to investigate a telephone registration system in 2011.</i>	<i>Registrar's Operational Plan 2011, Goal 9, point 26</i>	<i>2 years</i>	<i>Enhanced and increased service delivery for students.</i>

<i>Replacement/ upgrade of the Student System</i>	<i>The Student System needs to either be upgraded to latest technology or be replaced by a system that is based on the latest technology that can support ODL initiatives and processes.</i>	<i>Unisa Revisited Goal 7, IOP 2010 7.3.3</i>	<i>4 years</i>	
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(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan, 2011: Annexure A)

Table 5.1 reflects the specific sub-operational objectives in alignment with the major strategic objectives of Unisa which are relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, namely: a fully-fledged technology-driven registration system (see sections 4.3 and 4.4.2).

These specific objectives and related activities are linked with technology support platforms and are registered as high priority ICT projects to enable the successful achievement of the operational objectives/services of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.6.2 and Figure 3.1).

5.6 THE DIRECTORATE: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATIONS' STANDARDISED OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Operational planning is the “how do we get there”. It describes a work plan (see section 2.2.4). Operational plans should be prepared by the people who will be involved in their implementation. Operational planning focuses on the ways and means by which each of the individual functions may be programmed so that optimum progress may be made towards the attainment of strategic objectives (see sections 2.4.4.9 and 5.4).

The administrative standardised operational framework of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is in alignment with the comprehensively-aligned-strategic-management-approach (see section 3.2). This will enable Management of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations to focus on only achieving the specific strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate within a specific identified process (see Figure 3.1).

The measures implemented by the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 5.7.1) to measure effective progress towards achieving strategic objectives are directly aligned with the consolidated comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-approach, of which the measurement criteria also form a part (see section 3.2.1). This integrated, aligned approach ensures the up-front availability of supportive enablers and dependencies, thereby ensuring effectiveness in managing the implementation processes towards due dates (see sections 5.2 and Table 3.1).

5.6.1 Operational business plan

The operational business plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is a management model that will enable all roleplayers at all the different structural levels within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, as well as across Directorates involved in the execution process, to manage progress towards the achievement of specific strategic objectives.

This approach, which is in alignment with the comprehensively-aligned-strategic-management-approach, will integrate, utilise, optimise and coordinate all resources involved within a specific execution process. This will ensure that the following occur in the most appropriate manner:

- Activities and results will be aimed at achieving common objectives.
- Objectives will be aligned with the strategic and operational plans of Unisa – specific to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.
- Work will be systematically developed in a sequence of activities in alignment with the standardised operational plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, ensuring that all people do the right things (tactics, activities, procedures) at the right time – moving in concert toward achieving the desired outcomes.
- The required resources, enablers and dependencies will be accurately established.

(researcher's observation)

5.6.1.1 The operational business plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations

The University of South Africa embarked on a 2015 strategic drive to strive towards being the University of Choice throughout Africa. As such, various strategic objectives were formulated to realise this and to promote the Open Distance Learning (ODL) model of the University. Subsequently, directorates and/or departments were requested to put forward operational action plans to support the institutional strategic objectives.

This document outlines the intentions of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations to work towards achieving Unisa's strategic objectives - more specifically to be aligned with Objective 7: (7.2) namely:

- the alignment of all systems, structures, processes and resources with Unisa's business model; and
- the implementation of an effective technology-driven registration administration system (Institutional Operational Plan, 2009 – 2010: 19).

The registration process comprises the following primary activities:

- Applications (new students);
- Registrations;
- Finance (payment of the minimum fee);
- Scheduling, print production and dispatch of the study materials to the student;
- Records management; and
- All the above actions are underpinned by an ICT platform (see Table 5.1).

The entire registration activity is a complex web of actions and the activities span a number of different portfolios in the University. Each Executive Director and Director is responsible for the activities of his/her Department/Directorate.

The Director: Student Admissions and Registrations holds weekly coordination meetings with all roleplayers to monitor operational outputs, specifically in respect of sections 5.6.1.1.1 – 5.6.1.1.9 and Table 5.5 which will be outlined below.

5.6.1.1.1 Important dependencies

In considering its options, the Directorate considers the following factors to impact on its intentions:

- Budget;
- Quality control;
- HR capacity;
- Logistical arrangements;
- Financial arrangements;
- ICT requirements;
- Staff training;
- Registration process requirements;
- Role player interfacing;
- Infrastructure;
- Availability of resources (including human capital; technology; physical and financial resources);
- Unisa policies and procedures;
- On-time management decisions;
- Availability of study material;
- Information management;
- Knowledge management; and
- Effective collaboration between the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and support directorates/departments.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan 2010/11: 6 – 7)

5.6.1.1.2 Proposed registrations plan – 2010/2011

This plan entrenches the following fundamental changes, in alignment with ODL principles:

- There will no longer be face-to-face registrations.
- All students will be required to finalise their registrations either online, in a self-help mode or by fax or post. An advisory self-help electronic service will be offered online (Unisa website) to students. After this, students will be referred to the self-help centre or, if they wish, they may register via fax, post or the internet.
- Study materials will be delivered online or dispatched to students by the South African Post Office (SAPO) or by a courier service (costs to be paid by Unisa) – there will be no over-the-counter distribution of study materials.
- The basic model of self-help registration facilities and no over-the-counter dispatch of study material will be replicated at registration sites.
- Cashless registration: No cash, cheques, postal orders or money orders will be accepted at any of the registration sites. The only form of payment in person at one of Unisa's offices will be by means of credit cards, debit cards or bank cash cards. Study fees can be paid in person at SAPO and ABSA bank, or by electronic transfer to ABSA bank or by credit card online on the Unisa website (Mancom, Unisa, 2009: 5 – 9).

5.6.1.1.3 Key success factors

The following key success factors are the major operational dependencies which enable effective management of the technology-driven registration service delivery:

- Accessibility;
- Correctness of information;
- Turnaround time;
- Simplified systems;
- Standardised processes; and
- Knowledge management.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan 2010: 1
– 4)

5.6.1.1.4 Key enablers and monitoring mechanisms

At the time of writing, the following key enablers and monitoring mechanisms were identified to ensure effective support towards successful achievement of operational objectives:

- Infrastructural layout;
- Resource requirements;
- Equipment;
- ICT-support;
- Budget;
- Quality Control mechanisms;
- System changes;
- Performance management;
- Information / registration brochure / web information / self-help menu;
- Registration dates;
- Registration form;
- Readmission policy implementation;
- Training / assessment; and
- Road shows.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan 2010: 1
– 4)

5.6.1.1.5 Measurements

In order to manage performance properly, it must be measurable. Some critical measurements towards the achievement of specific operational objectives are:

- Monitor the execution of tasks (feedback);
- Surveys;
- Correctness of information;
- Turnaround time;
- Policies / procedures / training manuals (assessments);

- Advisor / student ratio;
- Statistics;
- ICT integration;
- Service level agreements (SLAs);
- Audit trails; and
- Budget.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan 2010: 1 – 4)

5.6.1.1.6 Registration Coordination Committee

The role and functions of the Registration Coordination Committee of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations will be:

- To manage and oversee the implementation and review of the Directorate's project plan;
- To conduct root cause analysis (what has caused a specific problematic issue, such as late registrations and wrong information in calendars) with regard to problems identified;
- To propose valid and reliable solutions to problems identified;
- To provide regular feedback to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Management ; and
- To ensure compliance management in terms of DSAR and Unisa quality control mechanisms.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plan 2010: 1 – 4)

5.6.1.1.7 Major risks

High priority risks and their possible impact on the operations of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations are indicated in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Risk evaluation table

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Workarounds and contingency plan
Inadequate infrastructure	HIGH	RED (High priority)	Combined planning Enhance utilisation of simplified technology
ICT Capacity – lack of technical support	HIGH	RED (High priority)	ICT to ensure sufficient platforms Programmer capacity
Simplified curricula and offerings are needed	HIGH	RED (High priority)	Academic departments to address
Knowledge management not sufficient	MODERATE	AMBER/RED (Medium/High priority)	Succession planning and staff training and development plan; internal communication strategy

(Unisa, Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan, 2010/11: 4)

5.6.1.1.8 Minor risks

Minor risks and the impact they could have on the operations of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations are indicated in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Risk evaluation table

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Contingency plan
Incorrect/ insufficient info	MODERATE	AMBER (Medium priority)	Standardise all info into one source of data
Non-adherence to due dates (Policies and SLAs)	HIGH	AMBER (Medium priority)	SLAs to be established with all support departments/ directorates
On-time decisions from top and senior management regarding e.g. fees are required	HIGH	AMBER (Medium priority)	Accountability - policy and procedures
Delays at Despatch	MODERATE	AMBER (Medium priority)	Combined planning and information management
HR issues	HIGH	AMBER (Medium priority)	Combined resource planning; project plan to address inadequacies; HR accountability
Streamline internet registration process	MODERATE	AMBER (Medium priority)	Operational action plan

(Unisa, Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan, 2010/11: 4)

5.6.1.1.9 Project-driven tasks (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations)

The main purpose of the operational plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is to specify details on why, and more specifically how activities and targets must be achieved in respect of the strategic operational objectives of Unisa relevant to the Directorate (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Project-driven operational goals and activities

GOAL 1: TO ENHANCE SUPPORT FROM ALL STAKEHOLDERS AND ROLEPLAYERS		
#	Activity	Targets
1	Mitigate the risks of split ownership pertaining to issues such as regions and licensees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Regions Host regular training and stakeholder workshops to share information and ensure staff capacity (Done/ongoing) b. Licensees Draw the list of students registered with the licensees annually and submit to DIRP for follow-up with licensees regarding the tuition discount c. Registration Coordinate a weekly operations meeting to ensure that application and registration activities will be efficient (Done/ongoing)
GOAL 2: TO HAVE THE ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM APPROVED		
#	Activity	Targets
2	Senate approval for the Unisa targets Task Team and roleplayers Workshop 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Draft an enrolment management plan for the Committee b. Plan submitted to Senate for approval c. Consequential policy changes approved
3	Develop the technology platform to support the enrolment management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consultation with ICT and stakeholders from DSAR to develop the specifications for the enrolment management system b. System developed (to also include signals when thresholds are approaching) c. System tested d. System implemented S1/2012
GOAL 3: FINALISE SPACE REQUIREMENTS		
#	Activity	Targets

4	Finalise space allocation for DSAR with University Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Space plan to be agreed b. Allocation of space to be implemented
5	Finalise space allocation for DSAA with University Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Space plan to be agreed b. Allocation of space to be implemented
6	Finalise space allocation for RMC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Allocation of space for filing and storage to be implemented b. Office space to be revamped
GOAL 4: COMMUNICATION STRATEGY		
#	Activity	Targets
7	Call Centre sms platform implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Call Centre sms platform approved by Tender Committee b. Call Centre sms platform designed c. Call Centre sms platform tested d. Call Centre sms platform implemented
8	Content of standard student letters, emails reviewed to ensure correctness and student-friendliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All student communications from DSAR and DSAA to be reviewed and revised
9	Planned use of sms/email to students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify list of activities when the sms/email will be used to communicate with students b. Draft the message to be sent to the student c. Hard-code the system to ensure that advisors are forced to send out the required communication linked to the specific activity
10	Increase communication to rural students Task Team Cellphones Web/self-help SAPO ABSA ATMs Posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify and implement strategies that assist rural students to (i) receive information; and (ii) make use of technology in the admin activities
11	Improve myLife activation for new students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure that students gain access to myLife email facilities immediately upon registration for the service (noted: there is currently a 48-hour

		delay in the service)
12	Improve language and communication skills of staff Deputy Directors (schedule)	a. All staff from Deputy Director to supervisor to be placed on a business-writing skills course b. All advisors to be placed on a language training course
GOAL 5: STRUCTURES		
#	Activity	Targets
13	Set up decentralized student email query structure (P9) for DSAA (Directorate : Student Assessment Administration)	a. Request Organisational Development assessment b. Management Committee approval c. Identify staff from the Unisa Call Centre to be redeployed
14	DSAR: Review the function of the Licensee section	a. Present a clear role and function statement for the section
15	DSAR: Review the structure of the M & D section, especially the split management of the section	a. Role clarification to be reviewed at manager level b. Staff needs in view of online process to be reviewed c. Decentralisation of staff to Colleges to be reconsidered
16	DSAA: Review decentralization of staff to Colleges Workshop / Task Team Academic representatives	a. Review of staff allocation (from assignments) to Colleges to assist with administrative functions to be undertaken
GOAL 6: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT		
#	Activity	Targets
17	All performance contracts to be signed by Deputy Directors (ongoing) Training sessions	a. Performance targets to be agreed with staff b. Staff to be managed through Performance Agreements to ensure improved service delivery c. Appropriate action to be taken against non-performing staff (zero-tolerance to non-performance)
18	Approve an incentive plan for staff	a. Develop an incentive plan for staff members – which can be rolled out

		on a monthly basis
GOAL 7: DEVELOPMENT OF A DIRECTORATE PROTOCOL AND SERVICE STANDARDS		
#	Activity	Targets
19	Agree on a Protocol of House Rules for the Directorate RC Harding (held workshop) Finalize documents Done	a. Workshop the proposed house rules with the Directorates b. Agree on a single set of standards for the Directorate
20	Develop service standards in line with the Portfolio Service Charter Deputy Directors Part of performance agreements Audit trails	a. Review the Portfolio Service Charter to ensure efficacy b. Develop service standards to improve turnaround times for student queries c. Implement service standards in the Directorates
21	No temporary staff to be used in core business activities Done	a. Eliminate all temporary staff in core business functions (noted: the lack of commitment from most temporary staff) Done b. Rather, appoint staff on fixed term contracts, where needed c. Agreed that the target should be - 3-year contract: permanent at a ratio of 30%:70%
GOAL 8: CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION		
#	Activity	Targets
22	Host change and transformation management and development workshops/discussions with staff Eliminate all temporary staff in core business functions (noted: the lack of commitment from most temporary staff) Deputy Directors' schedule	a. Identify 1/more service providers. b. Focus on 1 change/transformation initiative per month with the staff in each of the Directorates.
GOAL 9: STREAMLINE PROCEDURES		
#	Activity	Targets
23	Implement credits/exemptions online In process / Task Teams	a. Develop a tracking system for credits/exemptions applications b. Tracking system to be linked to myUnisa to enable students to see

		progress of application
24	Implement FI pre-audits In process / Task Teams	a. Final year audit process to be scheduled in the DSAR year planner b. Due date for finalization of pre-audit for Semester 1 and Semester 2 to be provided at the beginning of the year
25	Streamlined shortened registration form Deputy Director / Director ICT	a. Review the registration form to identify the registration questions b. Amend/shorten the registration form accordingly
26	Investigate the possibility of telephone registrations Deputy Director Director ICT	a. Contact University of Utah regarding available technology b. Develop a concept paper for Unisa c. Obtain approval for the new process d. Develop specifications e. Implement telephone registrations
27	Improve applications process so that system automatically unflags students when outstanding documents are submitted	a. Discuss with ICT b. Implement enhancements to system c. Ensure that sms/email message to students is clear and correct

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plans, 2011 – 2012: 1 - 35)

Table 5.5: Consolidated operational business plan: 2011 – 2012 (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations)

The operational business plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is presented below in table format:

PORTFOLIO OBJECTIVES	TARGETS (INCLUDING TARGET DATES)	ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE TARGETS	ALLOCATED RESOURCES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
Finalisation of departmental structure, placements and appointments	February 2011	-Consultation with staff members -Human Resources - Placements / evaluations	Human Resources Portfolio Manager	Effective execution of tasks
Provision of effective and efficient administrative systems, procedures and turnaround times	Ongoing	-Train key members of staff -Regular workshops -Operations meetings -Liaison with colleges and regional offices	Management Team and Task Team	-Turnaround times - Correctness of information -Feedback surveys -Process mapping -Statistics
Standardisation of services at regions and licensees	September 2011 (Signed) March 2011 (workshop)	-Regular internal workshops - SLA (revisited) annually - Needs analysis	- Director - Regional Directors - Directors	-ICT integration -Region model -Visits to Regions -Feedback from clients
Effective and efficient administration of applications and admissions for prospective students	Ongoing	- Regular internal training workshops - Increased online registration - ICT Support - Self-help Centres - Internet accessibility	Section Head Director Task Teams	-ICT integration -Turnaround time -Policies -User-friendly calendars -Procedures -Feedback
Customer care (advisory and registration service) conduct student surveys	In progress (Annually)	Distribute questionnaires at registration points	Section Head Director	-Feedback analysis -One-stop service

To provide accurate, user-friendly accessible and attractive brochures to students on demand	August / September (Annually)	Consult with Colleges Website info Simplify templates	Task Teams Division Registration services	-Tuition model -ICT migration -Feedback -Turnaround time
Development of electronic registration processes (Internet, Self-help facilities). Introduce a fully- fledged technology-driven registration system	Ongoing	Task teams Enhancements annually ICT platforms Test functionality	System Development section Task Team	-IT integration policies -Feedback -One-stop services -Advisor/student ratio -Correctness of information
Training and staff development	Ongoing Needs analysis before and after registrations	2007 strategies Training schedule (internal/external training)	Section staff training and development	-Service level agreements -Internal audits -Audit trails -Standardized info pertaining to training and development- identification of risk/internal/ external
Optimisation and utilisation of resources in a cost-effective manner	Ongoing	Optimise structures Staff meetings Utilisation of technology / workflow	-HR Department -Task Teams -Section Head meetings -Consultation	-IT integration policies -Feedback -One-stop services -Advisor/student ratio -Correctness of information - Audit trails
Training Academic staff Master's/Doctoral online applications and registrations	Throughout 2011/2012	Meetings with individual staff, College Tuition Committees	Section Staff Development and Training	-Confident, competent staff across disciplines

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Plan, 2011 – 2012: 1 - 35).

5.6.2 Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations: Self-assessment and Quality Assurance plan

Briefly stated, Total Quality Management is a transformation in the way an organisation manages.

It involves focusing management's energies on the continuous improvement of all operations, functions and above all, processes. Therefore, quality is really nothing more than meeting customer needs. In order to do this, work processes must be improved because it is the result of these processes that the customer considers. Quality management emphasises teamwork, because processes cut across an organisation, and no single function, employee or manager owns the entire process. When one re-engineers processes, one improves productivity and quality.

A quality action plan should clearly define the following:

- What business are we in?
- What principles guide us?
- What do we intend to become?
- Short- and long-term goals;
- A list of individual responsibilities;
- Effective communication about the initiative;
- Recognition and reward systems;
- Determining training needs; and
- Prioritisation of critical success factors and the implementation of an action plan.

In order for it to be successful, the process as a whole should be effectively managed with due consideration for control, effectiveness and competitive measures. The essence of the process is the improvement of quality and the setting up of a measuring and monitoring system (see also Figure 3.1).

The purpose of internally driven quality assurance is to effect improvement in the functioning of the department's core objectives. Internal quality assurance processes have, inter alia, the following objectives:

- To assist staff members to acquire a sense of ownership in the quality improvement process;
- To identify the areas in the department needing attention;
- To provide information of progress made; and
- To demonstrate plans on how the department should improve service delivery.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Quality Assurance Procedure, 2011: 11 - 26).

The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations utilises various control and self-assessment mechanisms and criteria to manage the effective and efficient execution of objectives i.e. (i) action research and observation; (ii) SWOT analysis; (iii) process and systems analysis (process mapping of activities); (iv) empirical methods (surveys and group discussions); (v) productivity measurements and progress audits; and (vi) performance contracts and performance evaluations.

Further efforts to ameliorate the delays in the processing of student registrations include:

- Staff working during the recess to finalise all postal and online registrations received up to that point, in order to ensure that the new academic year commences with a minimal backlog; and
- Licensees are required to submit all applications online to prevent delaying the processing of these forms by waiting for hard copies.

Further quality assurance systems that are in place include:

- Audit trails to monitor actions-per-minute operator codes;
- Student system functions to monitor backlogs with regard to internet registrations;

- Unfinalised registrations/payments, temporary registrations due to documents not submitted and final year students who are monitored on the student system;
- Workflow inboxes and rollout to the regions;
- Expert system (step-by-step registration, quality control process of the student system);
- Within one week of the closing date of registrations, the system is shut down and students who have not submitted the required documentation and/or paid the minimum prescribed fees are automatically de-registered and transferred to the next registration period. This creates the necessary degree of certainty in respect of all post-registration activities;
- Scanning of registration documents at regional offices is being investigated for possible implementation by mid 2012;
- Sources of evidence for a particular academic year include student registration details on the student system, the number of registrations per module/course/qualification and the number of exemptions processed being accessible in real time on the student system;
- Admission requirements are verified and matriculation details are audited;
- Checks are done on modules transferred to non-degree status;
- In checking the curriculum, the correctness of the major subject combinations are confirmed;
- Unfinalised examination results are followed up with the Directorate: Student Assessment Administration;
- Curriculum controls, supervisor check boxes for electronic workflow and admission audits are used to monitor and check work;
- The student system is also audited annually by external auditors (external to the Directorate) to report on potential systems problems that may exist;
- Meetings are conducted on a weekly basis by the HOD with the directors, section heads, unions and any member of staff wishing to attend to discuss operational issues. At these meetings problems are identified and solutions found;

- There are specific task teams in the Directorate to review strategic issues, calendars, registrations, master's and doctoral registrations, regional facilities, quality assurance and training; and
- A dedicated Quality Assurance and Skills Development Section provides ongoing internal training and schedules external training where training needs among staff in the Directorate are identified. Internal training is provided to registration staff at regional offices.

The Staff Training and Development Section provides training throughout the year in respect of registrations, admissions, systems and procedures. Training analyses and the identification of training needs are done annually to determine grey areas in respect of staff development. Customer care as well as supervisor skills training are at present in process. Management approved R980 000,00 as a Strategic Special Project for 2010 to enable the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations to upgrade the skills and knowledge levels of staff. (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations; Quality Assurance Procedure, 2011: 28 – 30).

5.6.3 Service Level Agreement (SLA) in respect of a decentralised registration services model

Regional Services Centres act as a local platform for the delivery of university services to the Unisa community of scholars. The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations interacts with Regional Service Centres as the deliverer of professional support services through this channel of service delivery.

The purpose of the Unisa Student Admission and Registration services is to provide administrative support services to customers within a specific geographical area by providing a smooth, effective and efficient admission and registration process and administrative support to promote the student's quest for academic achievement.

The service level agreement provides a broad guideline towards establishing a service level agreement (SLA) between the central Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and Regional Service Centres.

There is an ongoing requirement to provide an admissions and registration support service to local student communities. To address this requirement, the central Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations wishes to agree with the Regional Service Centres on the most effective and efficient service delivery mechanisms to promote high quality service delivery to Unisa and local communities.

The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations serves both the internal and external Unisa communities. These include academic departments, Directorate: Student Assessment Administration, Student Support, Graduations, Unisa student population (undergraduate and post-graduate levels) as well as staff from other tertiary institutions.

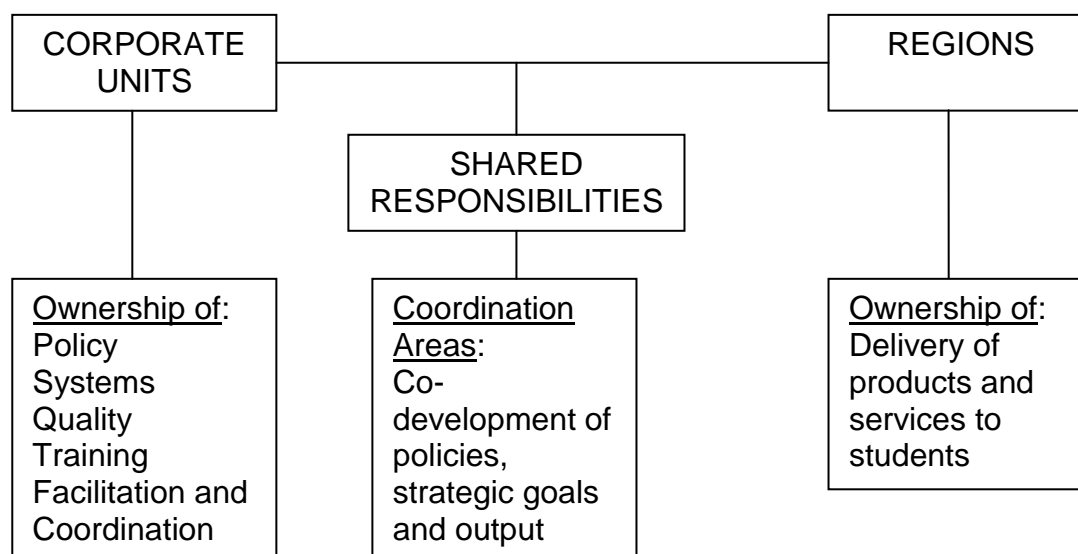
It is of the utmost importance that services delivered through the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations be excellent – both professionally and where quality is concerned. This is shared by the various Regional Service Centres. To realise this goal, there is a need for a collaboration agreement to govern service delivery through a decentralised model of service excellence.

This model will enforce connectivity of the strategic objectives in respect of student admissions and registrations at decentralised levels and the standardisation of operational implementation activities in alignment with the approved technology-driven registration model of Unisa (see also section 3.4.3).

In order to achieve effectiveness and to promote efficiency at a national level, the researcher proposes that a model of shared accountability be established, clearly defining the roles and functions of all parties involved.

The relationship between regions and corporate units can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 5.1: The relationship between Regions and Corporate Central Units



In terms of this model, the various roles are the following:

The role of Corporate Central Units

- Be the custodian of Unisa’s policy;
- Be responsible for the unit’s national strategy;
- Initiate, recommend key performance indicators;
- Set standards, processes and procedures;
- Be responsible for Quality Assurance;
- Be responsible for training and development (specific);
- Provide professional support; and
- Facilitate and coordinate.

The role of the Regions

- Implement policies, processes and procedures;
- Recommend, review key performance indicators;
- Assume responsibility for staff training and development (generic);
- Assume responsibility for the identification and communication of regional needs (per unit);

- Assess/evaluate staff performance; and
- Assess the attainment of goals and objectives.

Joint responsibility

- Develop policies, processes and procedures;
- Assess functions;
- Develop service level agreements, minimum standards, key performance indicators and turnaround times; and
- Delivery/ implementation strategies

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' SLAs, 2009: 1 – 11).

5.6.4 Communication in respect of decentralised registration services

In alignment with the standardised administrative framework of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and to ensure effective communication in respect of the operational strategic intent within a specific execution process, the communication plan for decentralised standardised execution actions will serve a similar purpose across all administrative units (see sections 3.4.3 and 5.2).

The communication plan in respect of decentralised services reflects the following seven principles:

- Organisational communication is a management process with a specific business purpose and disciplined methods of development, implementation, and measurements. It is accomplished through a strategic communication plan review and approved by senior management of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.
- Organisational communication is a change agent. The purpose of communication is not just to convey information, but to change behaviour. It changes behaviour by persuading people to take action to meet the organisation's objectives.

- The primary responsibility of internal communication lies with all managers and supervisors. The organisational communication unit is responsible for designing and delivering systems and tools which enable managers to play their role as communicators. Face-to-face communication with the immediate manager is the most effective form of communication, and is the way employees prefer to receive key information.
- Communication is a two-way process. Listening and encouraging feedback must be emphasised and practised to the same degree as speaking and providing information and directions. Two-way is the only way for real communication to exist in the organisation.
- To be understood, communication must be grounded in the interests and language of the receiver. While it seeks to achieve the organisation's strategic objectives, it cannot do so effectively unless it uses a receiver-focused approach in both content and context.
- To be noticed, communication must be compelling and continuous. As it must compete for the receiver's attention, communication must use highly compelling and creative ways to deliver its message. To be remembered and internalised, communication should be continuous and consistent. The Directorate cannot afford not to communicate.
- To be influential, communication must be credible. Without a high degree of credibility, the integrity and credibility of the message will be lost, and the whole communication process will be a waste of resources.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Regions
Communication Plans, 2009: 1- 6).

The purpose and outcomes of this communication plan will be to enforce standardised operations in alignment with the operational plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations which comprises:

- All issues pertaining to registrations and admissions of formal programs;
- Any amendments regarding procedures/policies, rules, curriculums and system changes pertaining to the registration process;
- Guidelines that may be instituted from time to time regarding registrations and admissions, e.g. checking curriculum controls;

- Decisions taken by the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations related to registrations and admissions which impact on the regions;
- It would be best to use email as a means of communication, especially if information is urgent;
- At the same time, news should be stored on the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' intranet and be available to staff in the regions;
- There will obviously be times when information has to be communicated by means of hard copies, e.g. posters containing registration information such as closing dates;
- Information will be communicated in English as the official language of the university for official communication; and
- Communication should be kept simple, clear without ambiguity, and professional but without any old-fashioned bureaucracy such as insistence on memo style.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Regions Communication plans, 2009 : 1- 6).

5.6.5 Job descriptions and performance contracts

Before performance at any level can be managed, the expectations for that performance must be clearly established and communicated. Probably one of the more important items to include in any alignment audit is the assessment of whether or not the performance appraisal and/or organisational reward system are tied to the mission statement in a clear, systematic way (see sections 1.9.10, 2.3.3.5 and 2.4.4.10).

Management of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations track and monitor staff performance and continuously provide feedback and coaching to ensure that all staff members perform at optimum productivity levels and that execution services are in alignment with the operational plans. Further to the above, the management of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations ensures that the key performance areas captured in each job description are

aligned with the strategic objectives specific to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

The above will enable staff at various structural levels to optimise all their energy and knowledge in doing the right things right at the right time, thereby executing activities within a standardised operational process to meet desired outcomes.

5.6.6 Staff training and development plans

Staff training and development are considered an important component of the overall human resources management structure within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. Within the context of Unisa, staff training and knowledge development refers to all activities designed to help employees gain knowledge, skills, attitude or behaviour patterns that would improve their performance in current jobs so that organisational objectives may be achieved.

As part of the annual Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' training and development plans, the following key aspects are considered:

- Alignment of specific key objectives to determine specific needs and requirements in terms of training initiatives;
- The methodology for needs assessment and suggested mechanisms for addressing needs;
- Ensuring that all training (external) is outcomes-based and satisfies the standards required by SETAs and Unisa's quality assurance policies;
- Prioritising training needs in terms of departmental and job-related individual needs;
- Adequate budget and infrastructure which are approved promptly and available; and
- Ensuring that all identified training needs form part of the annual performance appraisal development plans.

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations; Operational Plan, 2011/12: 21 - 23).

5.7 BENCHMARKING OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITH STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The underlying reason for benchmarking is to learn how to improve business processes and to increase competitiveness. Benchmarking is an operational process of continuous learning and adaptation that results in the development of an improved organisation/unit. Benchmarking is a systematic and continuous measurement process; a process of continuously gaining information which will help the organisation take action to improve its performance (Watson, 1993: 20, 48, 54).

Although benchmarking is a measurement process and results in comparative performance measures, it also describes how exceptional performance is attained. The practices that lead to exceptional performance are called enablers (See section 2.4.4.1) (Watson, 1993 : 3, 20, 48, 54).

Benchmarking is the comparison of selected performance measures or operational processes against challenging yardsticks such as the organisation's own history/competitors or best class performers in the industry (or similar organisations). Subsequently, these best practices should be incorporated into strategy implementation efforts and strategic control systems (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 284 – 285).

However, it is important to remember the customer when conducting benchmarking studies, otherwise it is possible to sub-optimize the focus only on internal results and improvements that are not in alignment with the intended outcomes (service delivery).

The methodology which will enable the researcher to measure both the correlation levels between the strategic objectives and operational plans of Unisa (specific and relevant to the operational implementation plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations), and the specific activities and execution procedures (approach) will consist of following the phases below (see also section 5.5). This will enable the management of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations to analyse these specific objectives towards effective and successful implementation.

- Reference will be made to the specific services for which the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is accountable (see sections 4.2 and 4.3).
- Reference will be made to the implementation of specific strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see sections 5.4.1, 5.4.3, 5.4.3.1 and 5.6.1.1.2).
- Reference will be made to the consolidated operational plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Operational Business Plans (see section 5.6.1.1).

The above cross-reference approach will identify the consolidated processes, policies, procedures, tactics and activities related to specific strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

Measurement criteria (see section 5.7.1.2) will be unpacked and defined. They will then be assessed to determine their availability and completeness (see measurement criteria Figure 3.1, 3.2 and section 3.2.1) to support the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations during the implementation phases. The assessment of the measurement criteria (5.7.1.2) and the cross-reference approach will be in parallel with the cross-reference process/approach above, at the time of the implementation of specific strategic plans relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (also see section 5.5).

In the final phase (section 5.8) the outcomes/results of the measurement/benchmarking process will be consolidated and explained in respect of the correlation levels between objectives and operational plans. Successes and/or the lack of successes and the implementation of workarounds (see sections 2.4.4.5 and 5.6.1.1.9) will be identified. Comprehensive reports which have been submitted to the Management Committee of Unisa will further confirm the above outcomes (see section 5.8).

5.7.1 Vertical and horizontal alignment criteria

Alignment strategies should be aimed beyond simply providing descriptions of the objectives of an organisation. They should analyse the information that is necessary for the workforce to meet those objectives – i.e. the **how** and the **what** of workforce alignment. They relate to a situation where all those responsible for a specific execution process pull together in the same direction. Vertical alignment energises people, provides direction and offers opportunity for involvement – thus aligning activities with intention. Horizontal alignment links an institution's actions with customer needs and establishes processes and operations to meet those expectations (see section 2.2.5). With both the vertical and horizontal dimensions aligned, strategies and employees are synchronised with consumer focus and process capabilities (see sections 2.3.4.1 and 2.4.3).

Alignment strategies are aimed beyond simply providing descriptions of how to create alignment. There should be clear criteria in terms of which principles, measurement criteria, enablers, dependencies and drivers are important. These aspects will be dealt with in the following sections.

5.7.1.1 Specific principles in respect of alignment criteria

According to Labovitz and Rosansky (1997: 27 – 29) an organisation is aligned when (see section 3.5):

- All staff have a shared purpose;
- All staff are aware of how their contribution drives the core strategies of the organisation toward accomplishment of its purpose;
- Work, processes and actions are executed toward accomplishment of the purpose (strategy intent); and
- Priorities become clear and simple.

Alignment is that optimal state in which strategy, employees, customer structure, people (implementers), technology and key processes work in

concert to propel growth and optimal needs satisfaction. Alignment in an organisation is defined as being focused on completing the right work the right way with the right people at the right time (see section 3.5.3).

Achieving and sustaining alignment demands focusing on maximising enablers and minimising the inhibitors that cultivate alignment (see section 3.3). Linkage is simply tying together what belongs together of all activities within a specific execution process. Linkage, both vertical and horizontal, is aimed at encouraging all the organisational units to play in harmony (see section 3.4.1).

Labovitz and Rosansky (1997: 164 – 165) identified the following crucial factors as drivers towards a self-aligning organisation:

- Start with the main/core driver of the organisation or organisational unit;
- Create a specific set of indicators;
- Make sure that everyone understands the organisation's measures and how they tie in with the main driver (specific core objectives);
- Link measures and activities with rewards and recognition;
- Give people the training they need to do the job right;
- Create goals for everyone (ownership); and
- Review performance on a regular basis (see section 3.4.2)

5.7.1.2 Measurement criteria

The selection of measures and related goals/objectives is an important determiner of an organisation's effectiveness as a system. Without measures, it would be difficult to achieve desired performance and managers will have no consistent feedback on:

- Specifically, the communication of performance expectations to subordinates;

- Knowing what is happening in their organisations;
- Identifying performance gaps that should be analysed and eliminated;
- How performance compares to standards; and
- Effectively making and supporting decisions regarding resources, plans, policies, schedules and structure (see section 2.4.4.8).

Efficiency means doing things right while *effectiveness* involves doing the right things. This statement emphasises the importance of selecting the right objectives. There are two important elements designed to ensure that objectives are being correctly set:

- Key results/performance areas (KPA) that help identify specific categories within which the most important organisational results must be achieved; and
- Indicators of performance that help ensure that what is being measured in the objectives presents the most important results (see section 3.3.3).

An organisation should use standards and targets throughout the organisation, as part of its internal management plans and individual performance management system. A useful set of criteria for selecting performance targets are the “SMART” criteria:

- Specific: the nature and the required level of performance can be clearly identified;
- Measurable: the required performance/activities can be measured (qualitative/quantitative);
- Achievable: the target is realistic, given existing capacity;
- Relevant: the required performance is linked to the achievement of a goal; and
- Time-bound: the time period or deadline for delivery is specified.

Therefore, the primary purpose of identifying key result areas and indicators of performance is to enable an organisation's management to establish the right objectives within the right execution processes at the right time to be implemented by the right people – creating effective and efficient execution of strategic plans (see section 2.4.3).

The abovementioned criteria which ensure the appropriate measurement of a well-designed strategic objective will be further explained in subsequent sections.

5.7.1.2.1 Specific

A well-grafted objective must be highly specific and should ask the **who** and **what** questions towards its accomplishment. Each objective should have one purpose and one end result. To set a specific objective the following questions should be answered:

- Who is involved (human capacity)?
- What is to be accomplished (end-goals/outcomes)?
- Where must it be executed (infrastructure)?
- When should it happen (time-frames)?
- Which requirements (enablers), risks and constraints are applicable?
- Why should it happen (purpose/benefits/results)?

The more specific the objective, the less ambiguity is involved and the better the performance will be.

Activities should be written for each of the above specifics and should be jointly formulated and agreed upon by all roleplayers involved in the specific execution process. Activities are tasks that must be done by someone to accomplish a specific objective (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 258 – 260).

5.7.1.2.2 **Measurable**

Without specific measures linked to the specific objectives, employees at all levels within an implementation process will not know what is expected of them. Indicators of progress/performance ensure that those aspects that are being measured present the most important results (see section 3.3.3). Measurements focus on the **how much** and **how many** questions. When progress is measured, activities can stay on track, target dates can be reached, and a feeling of achievement can be experienced. However, it is important that the tools, mechanisms and audit procedures are specified and known to everyone involved in the implementation process. Without clearly defined measurable objectives, organisations will find the coordination of activities related to the achievement of specific objectives difficult. Evaluation and control allow an organisation to compare its actual performance with its strategic objectives and then make any necessary adjustments in time (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 260; Judson 1996: 194 – 196).

5.7.1.2.3 **Achievable**

It is important that the program of activities related to an objective be accepted by the target audience. The **why**, **where** and **how** questions are factors and enablers to support the execution process towards successful implementation. The lack of an important enabler or tool to support the people involved in the execution process could delay or derail the original strategic intent. The right people at the right time may contribute to a sense of ownership and may ensure commitment towards successful implementation. Even if the objective is specific and attainable, individual acceptance is still necessary for effectiveness (Judson, 1996: 201 – 202; Pearce & Robinson, 2000: 244 – 245).

5.7.1.2.4 Relevant

Key questions to be answered to establish relevance are: can the objective be achieved realistically in view of the resources and experience at hand (enablers/dependencies) and will this objective lead to the desired results?

5.7.1.2.5 Time-bound

Exact time-frames should be determined jointly by the roleplayers accountable for implementation to ensure realistic achievement of specific objectives. Can the objective be reasonably accomplished within the given time-frame taking into account the abovementioned SMART criteria (see 2.4.4.8 and 2.4.4.9).

5.7.1.3 Enablers

Enablers are the means, knowledge, opportunity, and supportive tools required to activate or enable action or operational activity. They ensure a supportive platform for implementation plans and should be available at the right time, before the execution process commences (see section 2.4.4.1).

Essential enablers that will guide and support the achievement of specific objectives towards intended outcomes are the following.

5.7.1.3.1 Policies

Policies are standing plans that determine the parameters within specific categories for decisions to be made, depending on the specific organisational/structural level. Policies, amongst others, make it possible to:

- make decision-making easier with less time wasted;
- provide permission to managers to delegate decision-making to subordinates; and

- secure consistency and equity in decision-making.

Policies standardise routine decisions, thereby reducing the time it takes to make decisions and provide a basis for control and coordination (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 263; Pearce & Robinson, 2000: 280 – 281).

5.7.1.3.2 Procedures

Procedures act as guides to the execution or implementation of activities. They consist of detailed chronological steps in performing tasks or events. Little leeway is usually allowed for discretion. Procedures pervade all levels of the organisation; cut across departmental lines and make routine certain types of recurring activities; allowing activities to be delegated to the lowest organisation levels (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 263 – 264).

5.7.1.3.3 Clear objectives

A strategic objective is a concrete statement describing what an organisation aims to achieve within a specific time-frame through a particular action. Clear objectives must be measurable, acceptable, flexible, suitable, motivating, understandable and achievable. Objectives should be supported by functional tactics and appropriate policies (see sections 1.9.19 and 2.4.4.9) (Pearce & Robinson, 2000: 244 – 245).

5.7.1.4 Dependencies

Dependencies refer to the relationship between activities, i.e. where one activity requires input from the other. A dependency is an activity that is likely to impact on a project during its lifecycle. It also refers to the logical relationships between tasks and supportive units as part of an execution process (see section 1.9.6 and Table 3.2).

It would be difficult to implement strategic plans effectively and efficiently without the support and availability of the following dependencies.

5.7.1.4.1 Infrastructure

Infrastructure relates to the specific needs and requirements in respect of accessible, user-friendly, adequate and suitable space and equipment to enable the implementation of operational plans and service delivery. Care should also be taken right from the outset at the point of workplace design – including the design of buildings and infrastructure to match the physical work environment requirements of the worker (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk & Schenk, 2003: 548 – 549).

5.7.1.4.2 Human resources

Human resources or workforce planning can be viewed as the process of developing and implementing plans and programmes to ensure that the right number and types of individuals are available at the right time and place to perform the work necessary to achieve the organisation's objectives. Workforce planning must be directly linked to strategic operational planning (Swanepoel *et al.* 2003: 234 – 235) (also see section 2.3.4.3).

5.7.1.4.3 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) support / systems

Technology developments are important for all strategy-related implementation activities. The technologies used include various processes and equipment throughout the entire value chain. The question that should be asked is: What are the levels, quality and availability of technological developments and supportive ICT platforms? (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 91, 141) (see also section 5.5.1 and Table 5-1).

5.7.1.4.4 Budget

To achieve successful strategy implementation, it is essential that resources be allocated in such a way that they support the organisation's long-term goals, chosen strategy, structure and short-term objectives. A change in strategy requires a change in the resource allocation plan to ensure a continued strategy-resource fit. Budgets form the plan according to which various resources available to an organisation are allocated for the achievement of the organisation's objectives. Budgets quantify, specify and prioritise the resources needed to ensure strategy implementation. They also indicate which additional resources will be required and give a sense of reality to the organisation's objectives and strategies. Budgets are based on the organisation's short-term objectives, and operating results are regularly compared with the budget (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 256 – 257; Judson, 1996: 182 – 183).

5.7.1.4.5 On-time decisions

“Decision making is one of the most fundamental and important management tasks, and refers in essence to the identification and choice of alternatives (usually regarding objectives, priorities and courses of action) in order to solve problems and to achieve organisational objectives” (Swanepoel *et al.* 2003 : 28). A lack of on-time decisions could derail original planning for the implementation of specific operational plans.

5.7.1.5 Drivers

“Organisations need to ensure that the entire workforce is committed to strategy implementation and change. In order to achieve successful strategy implementation, organisations make use of various strategy implementation drivers, namely leadership, organisational culture, rewards systems, structure and resource allocation” (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 212)(see also section 2.4.4.6). The challenge of successful strategy implementation is to create a series of tight fits between the chosen strategy and the drivers referred to here.

The following “buy-in or change-management challenges” must be in place before the implementation processes of specific operational plans may commence.

5.7.1.5.1 Strategic leadership

Strategy planning and formulating objectives do not happen spontaneously, nor does a strategy implement itself. Leadership drives strategic change. It is only through effective strategic leadership that organisations are able to use the strategic management process successfully (see sections 2.4.3 and 2.3.4.3). Strategic leadership can be defined as the ability “to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility and to empower others to create strategic change towards implementation” (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 217).

5.7.1.5.2 Organisational culture

Organisational culture refers to important, often unstated, assumptions, beliefs, behavioural norms and values that the members of an organisation share. It is a system of taken-for-granted practices that determines how those activities are performed for which there are no rules. Organisational culture and leadership are closely linked/related. As the organisation grows, it typically attracts managers and recruits employees that share in the founder’s values and belief systems (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 224 – 227) (see also section 2.3.2.3).

In order to establish a tight fit between the new chosen strategy and the organisation’s culture, a change in organisational culture may be required.

5.7.1.5.3 Reward systems

Another key success factor is motivating staff (managers/employees) to give their commitment to the implementation of the new chosen strategy. New strategies involve risks and imply changes in leadership, culture and structure, and may cause uncertainty about the future.

Reward systems can be defined as the umbrella term for a variety of components considered in performance evaluation and the assignment of monetary and non-monetary rewards. Reward systems should be created in such a way that they are tightly linked/aligned to strategy and strategic objectives in order to ensure commitment to change and to support strategy implementation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2009: 230 – 232) (see also section 2.3.3.5) (Judson, 1996: 61, 184).

5.7.1.5.4 Organisational structure

The concept *structure follows strategy*, is widely used in strategic management literature. It confirms, or emphasises, that a change in the chosen strategy necessitates a change in structure. When a tight fit between strategy and structure is absent, the organisation's performance will decline, as it may experience administrative problems, resource allocation problems and conflicting priorities regarding strategy implementation tasks. An organisational structure is the framework within which the strategic process must operate in order to achieve the organisation's objectives (see section 4.2 and Figure 4.1). Furthermore, an organisational structure specifies who is responsible for specific tasks. An organisational structure can be a source of competitive advantage if designed in such a way that it is aligned with the strategic objectives of the organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 246 – 248).

5.7.1.5.5 Resource allocation

In organisations which do not follow a strategic management approach, resources are often allocated on a political or personal basis and not according to the priorities established by the strategic objectives. The value of a resource allocation plan lies in its alignment with the organisation's

specific strategic objectives. If too few resources are allocated, this slows down and hinders strategy implementation efforts. The allocation of too many resources wastes costly resources and reduces financial performance. A change in strategy requires resources to be reallocated in order to support the new objectives and priorities. The new strategy must drive the resource allocation process (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2007: 255 – 257) (see also sections 2.3.4.3 and 5.7.1.4.2).

5.7.1.5.6 Process identification (sequence of events)

A process is a series of activities, often repeated over and over within the basic flow of activities from inputs into outputs (see section 2.3.4.2). A process, therefore, is a repeatable series of actions, changes or functions aimed at bringing about results (see section 2.3.4.5). A process is, further, the utilisation of resources in work activities needed to produce a specified result (work product). It is a sequence of activities characterised as having measurable input, value-adding activities, measurable output and repeatable activities (see sections 2.4.4.2, 2.4.4.3, 2.4.4.9, 3.4.1 and 3.4.2).

5.8 PRIMARY FINDINGS AND PERCEPTIONS IN RESPECT OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Since the core focus in this chapter is on the specific related strategic objectives relevant to the operational plans and the successful achievement of these objectives through the operational execution plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, it is appropriate to summarise / consolidate the core objectives in a specific sequence of implementation phases. This means grouping together what belongs together within one identified implementation process (see sections 3.3 and 3.5). By doing this, alignment, accountability and ownership will be created for the successful achievement of strategic objectives within a specific implementation process. The above approach will further ensure proper and specific cross-references to various specific identified activities which are related to the implementation challenge of specific strategic plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and will also be in alignment with the benchmarking

exercise/methodology. This will identify reasons for either successful or unsuccessful / partial implementation processes (see sections 5.5 and 5.7) (also see Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1).

The two major/core strategic objectives of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations in alignment with the operational objectives of Unisa that will form the focus in respect of the benchmarking exercises and that eventually will constitute primary findings are:

- The establishment of a service-orientated technology-enhanced learner support system and a fully-fledged technology-driven application and registration system (see sections 5.3.1.1, 5.3.1.2 and 5.4.3.1); and
- The provision of accessible technology-driven administrative support in the form of accurate and simplified usage of self-help application and registration facilities available nationally and internationally when they are needed (see sections 5.4.1, 5.4.2 and 5.4.3).

The functions, services, activities and operational implementation plans towards the achievement of the above core objectives will be reflected in the following components:

- Aligned operational implementation plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see Table 3.2);
- Organisational structure of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see Figure 4.1);
- Functions and services of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 4.3 and Figure 4.2);
- Strategic operational objectives of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 4.5.2 and Table 4.7);
- Overarching operational implementation plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see sections 5.5, 5.6 and 5.6.1);
- Integrated technology-driven projects of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 5.5.1); and

- Operational business plan of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 5.6.1.1 and Table 5.5).

In sections 5.8.1 – 5.8.8, the outcomes of the benchmarking processes in respect of the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans (see section 5.7) will be consolidated and explained. In section 5.8.8, reference will be made to primary documents/reports to confirm the benchmarking exercise outcomes.

However, to put the exercise in perspective, an explanation of the rationale in respect of the outcomes / results is deemed necessary.

The measurement criteria model (Table 3.1) is a systematic effort and attempt to proactively determine and introduce the most appropriate mechanisms / model to monitor and ensure more effective and efficient correlation levels and to enhance the correlation between strategic objectives and operational plans with specific reference to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

According to Judson (1996: 118 – 120 and 279 – 283) a legitimate measurement tool should be made up of percentage (%) of importance weighting to indicate the possibility of executing certain actions effectively.

Should the important enablers / dependencies be available on time to support the implementation of specific operational plans, there is almost a 100% chance that they may be implemented successfully. However, the smaller the number of enablers present, the smaller the chance of achieving specific objectives (see also sections 2.4.3, 2.4.4, 2.4.4.8, 2.4.4.9, 2.3.4.1, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5.3 as well as Nutt & Backoff, 1992 : 274 – 279).

The source of information that will determine the weight of the enablers or dependencies will differ in respect of the specific objectives. The level of evaluation appropriate for a strategy depends on how well-established the evaluation/measurement approach is (Judson, 1996: 119). The relevant and specific criteria (factors 1 – 7 see Table 3.1), were critical supportive enablers and

dependencies during the implementation of the new technology-driven registration system during the periods 2008 – 2010. Percentage allocations are linked to the performance contracts and performance appraisals of each Directorate in respect of the importance of specific strategic objectives.

Two critical examples in respect of core objectives are:

- Objective 4 (KPA - Key Performance Area): Oversee effective implementation of the Directorate's objectives and targets in line with the Departmental operational plan (40%) (see section 5.6.1.1); and
- Objective 5 (KPA): Develop and manage systems, methods, structures, processes and resources in line with Unisa's business plan (20%).

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Performance Agreement, 2010/2011: 1) and (section 5.6.1.1, Tables 5.4 and 5.5).

From the above objectives, the Directorate's management determines the availability and completeness of the supportive enabler / dependency per operational objective relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. In alignment with the percentage (%) importance of the objective as reflected in the performance agreement, a percentage is allocated / or deducted in respect of the implementation possibilities – as reflected in Table 3.1. These percentages may change after 6 – 12 months, depending on the specific circumstances, progress or timeframes indicated in the implementation phases, and will continuously be updated within the progress reports (see also section 3.2). "Achieving and sustaining alignment demands focusing on maximising the enablers and minimising the inhibitors that cultivate alignment" (Luftman, 2000: 1).

5.8.1 Lack of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach

From the very start during strategic planning sessions by top management in respect of institutional strategic intent and the decision-making process to determine strategic objectives, the following was evident:

- There was a lack of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic management-process-approach (see Figure 3.1) that could have involved all the units and people at all appropriate structural levels of the organisation in planning and managing for the desired results in respect of the strategic objectives. This resulted in not involving all relevant roleplayers in the registration process (see sections 5.4.3 and 5.6.1.1), especially in specific processes, procedures, activities and measurements required towards successful implementation (see section 2.3.4).

Many problems were experienced with the alignment of procedures and activities in respect of the inputs from other supportive dependencies (departments) during the implementation phases of specific strategic plans related to the effective turnaround time of applications and registrations. These were:

- Bottlenecks within the indexing of postal registrations and statutory admission requirement documents at the Records Management Division, which resulted in late registrations and a high influx of student complaints. These in turn caused questions to be raised about the effectiveness of the technology-driven registration processes.
- Backlogs in credit card payments at the Department of Finance due to a lack of human resources and problems encountered with technology systems which eventually forced late registrations and the late dispatch of study material.

Split ownership (where the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is not solely accountable for certain registration-related activities, such as those carried out by the regions) forced ineffective monitoring of all activities within a specific execution process and resulted in unprofessional service delivery which did not

meet due dates. Furthermore, it activated a chain of events (a ripple effect) throughout the organisation and eventually resulted in crisis management (Registration Report to Mancom, 2009).

Each specific phase i.e. corporate strategic objectives, institutional operational objectives and the portfolio/departmental operational plans was reflected in separate documents. These completed documents were distributed and handed over to the next level of accountable people for determining their specific methods and implementation tactics (see Unisa 2015 Revisited, 2011; 2015 Strategic Plan, An Agenda for Transformation, 2011; Unisa 2015 Strategic Plan and 2011 – 2013; Institutional Operational Plan, 2010 - 2013). All the above documents are also available on the Unisa website (<http://www.unisa.ac.za>).

The lack of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach has created ineffective communication levels between intent and the accomplishments of specific strategic objectives and operational plans. No immediate connectivity within a specific execution process and sequence of activities was in place and various performance gaps were created (see sections 3.3, 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.4.1). System failures occurred which resulted in long queues during the registration periods due to the fact that the ICT Department had no representatives present at registration sites to address ICT-related problems as they were encountered. Bottlenecks with the indexing of registration forms occurred at the Records Management Division. These backlogs were only identified when students started complaining about the lack of information regarding the finalisation of their registration applications (Registration Report to Mancom, 2009).

It was also clear that the organisation's top management/or portfolio line managers were mostly not even aware of the fact that the individual, section or departmental objectives were not properly aligned with specific implementation plans, because adequate communication and information in respect of the on-time availability of enablers, dependencies and procedures were vague/absent (see management reports, section 5.8.8).

Based on the researcher's own experience and being part of all major decision-making bodies and meetings at Unisa, no specific execution process in alignment with the comprehensively-integrated-aligned strategic-management-approach was evident (Report to Council, Revised Registrations Process, 2009 : 1 – 5 ; Close-out Report – Registrations 2009 : 1 – 8) (see also section 1.2). This increased the risks and ineffective management of the implementation of operational plans. Ultimately the institution may be unable to introduce change management in time and the improvement of processes and systems to support and enable people to do the right things right at the right time (see sections 1.3 and 3.5.3).

Benchmarked against the measurement criteria in Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1 (factor 1) the lack of a comprehensively-aligned-integrated-strategic-management-process-approach has reduced the chances of achieving specific objectives successfully by more or less ten percent (10%) (see also section 5.8). This has forced units and directorates accountable for specific strategic objectives to build in workarounds or alternative working arrangements (i.e. service level agreements) with decentralised service units at regions, to enforce the standardised operations or service levels expected from the units at Head Office. It has also forced them to establish interim weekly monitoring steering committees to ensure that intended strategic outcomes are achieved across the institution in respect of student services (see section 2.4.4.5).

5.8.2 Lack of vertical / horizontal alignment

The benchmarking exercise further reveals that there was a weak link/poor alignment between vertical and horizontal connectivity due to the lack of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management- approach (see section 5.7.1), which forced low correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans; thereby creating further difficulties between intent and implementation processes (see also sections 2.3.4.1 and 2.4.3). The benchmarking/measurement criteria as reflected in Table 3.1 (factors 1 and 7) indicate that the lack of proper connectivity between horizontal and vertical alignment creates a further 15% (see section 5.8) less chance to achieve specific strategic objectives successfully; which in turn forces the introduction of

workarounds or alternative tactics (see section 2.4.4.5). The operational plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations have made provision for specific workarounds such as frequent visits to regions and registration facilities to ensure proper infrastructure in respect of ICT support, training of staff and assessments to upgrade knowledge levels. Strategic sessions before commencement of the registration cycles are also in place. Outsourcing ICT support and standardised registration information on the Unisa website were necessary to ensure continuity of the implementation activities and to enable the achievement of specific strategic objectives. This was due to the lack of proper alignment of activities and enablers (see sections 5.6.1.1.7, 5.6.1.1.8, 5.6.1.1.9, 5.6.4 and 5.7.1).

5.8.3 Lack of enablers and dependencies available on time

Specific enablers and dependencies (i.e. directly supportive mechanisms – see sections 4.4.3, 4.5, 5.7.1.3 and 5.7.1.4) which were supposed to ensure a streamlined, aligned and integrated implementation chain of activities, were inadequate and not available when needed during the execution process of major strategic objectives of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see sections 4.5, 5.3.1.1, 5.3.1.2, 5.4.3.1, 5.6.1.1.2 and 5.6.1.1.5 and section 5.8 in this regard).

The benchmarking and measurement criteria as indicated in Table 3.1 (factors 2 and 6 respectively) confirm that the chances of success when implementing strategic objectives will be reduced by 20% if clear objectives, enablers and dependencies are not available up front to support the process towards successful implementation (see sections 2.4.4.9 and 3.3 and more specifically section 5.8). For instance, the on-time availability of a standardised and simplified curriculum per qualification which was the major enabler towards self-help registrations was not in place. The alternative / workaround will be to introduce standardised and simplified templates with registration possibilities per qualification and post these along with the registration forms to all students before the commencement of the registration process.

Simplified and standardised policies, procedures and infrastructure were not in place during the implementation phase of 2009/10. This was especially true of the establishment of self-help registration facilities at the main campus and decentralised service centres (regions). The major enabler towards a simplified self-help registration model, namely a simplified set curriculum for each academic college, was not in place. The result was that certain offerings could not be programmed into the student system due to their complexity (see sections 5.8.8 in respect of reports to Mancom and Council and Senate Minutes June 2010 and June 2011; Unisa Mid-year IOP Progress Report, 2011: 39 – 40).

5.8.4 Lack of ownership (split ownership)

Lack of ownership creates a duplication of activities at different structural levels within the organisation. It is therefore crucial to create ownership by involving those responsible for the execution of a specific process under the authority of a specific portfolio manager (see sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). The portfolio of the Registrar (Academic) is accountable for the effective management and coordination of student-related administration i.e. from applications through to the completion of qualifications (see Student Walk section 4.3.2 and Figure 4.2).

However, all student administrative-related functions at decentralised centres (regions) (see sections 5.6.3, Figure 5.1 and Table 5.2) resort outside the responsibility of the Registrar's portfolio. All decentralised student administrative-related activities resort in the portfolio of the Vice-Principal Academic: Teaching and Technology, thereby creating split ownership and a lack of proper coordination of effective and efficient service delivery at decentralised level. Workarounds such as SLAs, special coordinating meetings, training sessions and annual workshops were introduced to ensure standardised operations at these decentralised levels (see section 5.6.4) (see also Unisa's new approved structures [Council Minutes, 2011: 5 – 11]).

Measurement criteria (Table 3.1) indicate that the chances of implementing specific strategic objectives successfully, will be reduced by 15% (factor 4), should

ownership in respect of a specific execution process not be correctly allocated (see section 5.8).

5.8.5 Duplication and overlap of activities (lack of process identification)

One way to ensure process improvement is to eliminate non-value-adding activities within a specific process. However, even more important is the elimination of duplication and overlapping of activities towards the achievement of the same specific strategic objective. As a result of the lack of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management process (see section 5.8.1) and a lack of ownership (see section 5.8.4), there was a lack of process identification and no grouping together of what belonged together within a specific execution process. Some activities which should have been part of the registration processes i.e. information during the marketing campaign, information on the Unisa website and in the registration brochures, were finalised by a variety of roleplayers (portfolios within Unisa) i.e. Corporate Marketing, Academic Colleges and the Office of the Academic Planner. This resulted in incorrect and/or inadequate information, since the owners of the process were not sufficiently involved. Only once the incorrect/inadequate information had been traced, could actions to rectify this be introduced. However, this almost occurred too late (see sections 2.3.3.2, 2.3.4.2, 2.4.4.2, 2.4.4.3, 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). The result is that different portfolios (administrative and academic) deal with the same issues in respect of student services, duplicating activities at decentralised level. Different outcomes are not standardised or in alignment with the core functions of the mother units/departments accountable for the specific services, policies and procedures and this creates confusion amongst clients in respect of the product or information to students (see section 5.8.8 in respect of the reports to Mancom).

According to the measurement criteria, Table 3.1 (factor 3) the chances of success when implementing strategic objectives will be reduced by 15% (see specifically section 5.8) if there is a lack of a specific process identification to support the execution process.

Again the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations was forced to introduce service level agreements (SLAs) to ensure connectivity of all relevant actions and activities in an attempt to eliminate duplication and overlapping of activities (see sections 5.6.3, 5.6.1.1.9 and Figure 3.1).

5.8.6 Lack of connectivity and involvement of all roleplayers

Further, it becomes evident that the lack of connectivity and involvement of all key roleplayers (see section 5.8.5) within a specific execution process is a direct result of a lack of primary findings in the sub-sections that were discussed in section 5.8 above; more specifically, the lack of vertical and horizontal alignment (see sections 3.4.1, 3.4.2 and 5.8.2). There will be no continuity of activities unless the needs of the people who are responsible for the execution process are taken into account and if they feel empowered to participate in the implementation process towards the achievement of specific operational objectives. The implementation planning process must be addressed at the very beginning of the strategic planning process, involving people (the doers) and gaining understanding and commitment towards successful implementation actions, thereby creating ownership of a specific execution process (see sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). The absence of connectivity of all activities within an execution process will reduce the effective and efficient implementation of objectives by 10% (see section 5.8). In turn, this will force those accountable for implementation to introduce workarounds or alternative methods i.e. outsourcing of ICT services, support service level agreements with regions and interim monitoring steering committees to ensure continuity towards successful implementation (see sections 2.4.1 – 2.4.4.5, 5.6.3, 5.6.1.1.9 and Figure 3.1).

5.8.7 Lack of commitment to keep implementation alive

All role-players within a specific execution process must work in concert, in order to move in the same direction towards the collective implementation of identified strategic plans. The lack of commitment to keep the integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process alive became evident in Chapter 2 (see also section 5.8.5), where the separation of the strategic planning process and operational

implementation plans was confirmed (see sections 1.3 and 2.4.4.1). To ensure proper alignment and correlation levels between strategic objectives and the operational plans of an organisation, it is of critical importance to enforce a comprehensively-aligned-integrated-strategic-management-process approach (see sections 2.3.4, 2.3.4.4, 3.2 and Figure 3.1).

At the lowest operational implementation levels, project management-driven execution and performance management should enforce further alignment and connectivity of all activities within a specific execution process (see sections 2.3.4.5, 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.4). The lack of the above according to the measurement criteria (factor 7) will reduce the chances of successful implementation by 10% (see section 5.8). Due to the lack of clear strategic project and process management-approaches in respect of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, specific objectives as indicated in the strategic objectives documents as well as in the Institutional Operational Plan of Unisa; the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations has developed and introduced an operational business plan, based on project management principles, to ensure ownership at all operational levels of all roleplayers within its specific implementation plans (see sections 3.5.4, 4.4, 5.3.1, 5.5.1, 5.6 and 5.6.1-5.6.2) (also see Tables 3.2 and 4.7).

5.8.8 Primary reports confirming primary findings

It became evident from the above benchmarking and measurement criteria exercises that the absence of several important factors (see Table 3.1) in respect of effective and efficient support mechanisms available on time, necessitated the introduction of certain workarounds and alternative methods to ensure continuity towards the successful achievement of strategic objectives. These specific factors 1 – 7 (Table 3.1) correspond and are the major support factors within any given time in the execution processes towards the successful achievement of the objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see sections 2.4 – 2.4.4 and 5.7; Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1 and the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' specific enablers, dependencies and drivers which correspond with the abovementioned sections: sections 5.6.1, 5.6.1.1.2, 5.6.1.1.5 and 5.6.1.1.6).

It has become evident that the fewer enablers/dependencies present, the less the chances of success are of achieving specific objectives. This demands the enforcement of alternative methods and tactics which in turn could delay or derail the original execution planning process (see section 3.2.1).

The above benchmarking exercise confirmed the legitimacy and appropriateness of the measurement tool that was utilised to determine effective/efficient or ineffective/inefficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans. It further determined the implementation possibilities based on the evaluation outcomes of the measurements. Therefore, the greater the degree in which the comprehensively-aligned-integrated-strategic-management-process-approach is applied, the more the specific identified objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, within a specific execution process, will be aligned with the performers accountable for implementation, since the lack of support mechanisms will be identified in time to ensure proper workarounds and alternatives. By doing this, the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans will be more acceptable and ensure continuity of all activities and roleplayers towards the achievement of specific objectives (see section 5.5).

The operational plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, in alignment with a comprehensively-aligned-integrated-strategic-management-process-approach, have therefore facilitated appropriate correlation and the alignment of specific strategic objectives in the Directorate by identifying the absence or availability of enablers, dependencies and drivers relevant to the implementation tactics and activities of specific objectives. Where necessary, prompt workarounds and alternative methods have been introduced to facilitate continuity of processes towards successful implementation. Therefore, by doing the right things right with the right people at the right time, the Directorate ensured effective and efficient performance management which is measurable (see sections 2.4 – 2.4.4, 5.2, 5.5, 5.6, 5.6.1, 5.6.3, 5.6.4, 5.6.5, 5.6, 5.7, Figure 3.1 and Tables 3.1 and 5.5. See also sections 5.6.1, 5.6.1.1.2, 5.6.1.1.5 and 5.6.1.1.6).

In the following paragraphs, all the above statements and primary findings will be confirmed by means of quoted extracts from reports to Mancom sent by the Registrar's Office, as well as from reports from important steering and coordinating committee meetings and various strategic sessions before and after each registration cycle.

- “The Program Quality Mix (PQM) initiative has a series of implications, the most significant being the quality and effectiveness of a streamlined curriculum on transformative teaching and meaningful students learning experiences” (Unisa, Mid Year Review, IOP Progress Report, 2011: 39 – 40).

The above enabler is the major dependency in respect of the core objective of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, relating to a fully-fledged technology-driven self-help registration system. The complexity of current curricula forces the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations to intervene manually to advise students face-to-face in respect of module selection options. This causes a deviation from the self-help registration concept. A fully-fledged registration system is therefore not 100% implementable (see sections 4.4.2, 4.6.2, 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3, 5.4.3.1 and 5.6.1.1.2).

- “The depth and quality of reporting also warrants attention. The ‘plans within – plans’ reporting tendency is rather unhelpful – for example referring to related operational plans instead of accounting for progress on output ...”; and
- “Timely responses to institutional requests and meeting reporting deadlines internally remain a major problem. Given the reported administrative fatigue, efforts to streamline and integrate the vast number of requests must be creatively considered” (Unisa Mid Year Review, IOP Progress Report, 2011: 39).

The result of the above is delayed responses on unfinalised critical decisions in respect of HR resources and other important dependencies such as temporary staff in peak periods, training funds, adequate ICT support and budget constraints to enable effective and efficient planning and management of execution processes (see sections 5.8.3 and 5.8.7).

- “Awaiting HR approvals for structures and the acquisition of needed staff within a reasonable timeframe has still been identified as the most salient hurdle to meeting deadlines effectively” (Unisa Mid Year Review, IOP Progress Report, 2011 : 41); and
- “There is a need to look into improving infrastructure at the regions” (Unisa Mid Year Review, IOP Progress Report, 2011: 42).

The absence of the above factors hampers the effective roll-out of standardised services at regions as prescribed by the centralised core departments – creating down-sized, inadequate service delivery standards/outputs (see sections 5.8.2, 5.8.3, 5.8.5 and 5.8.6).

- “Why did Unisa encounter problems with the 2008/9 registrations? The building was unfortunately not completed in time and the surrounding environment and space allocation for staff and students were not optimal”. (Report to Council, The Revised Registrations Process, 2009: 3 – 4).

An inadequate infrastructure has forced the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations to implement alternative methods to register students i.e. to revert to manual intervention and face-to-face consultations. Some staff members could not be relocated to the new building and remained at the main campus which made effective quality control extremely difficult.

- A “further constraining factor was that the ICT system did not function optimally from the start of the new technology-driven registration process. The staff and systems moved into the new building with the students on the opening date of registrations. This gave very little time for proper testing. Staff experienced difficulties with network connections, disabled computers and printers, and self-help facilities that were off-line – all this contributed to incorrect procedures and slow turn-around time” (Close-Out Report, Registrations 2009 : 5- 7); and

- “The complexity of some of the curricula continues to pose problems for students. It constrains the ability of students to finalize their registrations without the support of an advisor. Further, if Senate decisions are taken after the information brochures are submitted for printing, the information contained in the brochures is incorrect” (Registration Close-Out Report to Mancom, 2011 : 7 – 8).

- “A related aspect to maintaining standards of performance and operational efficiency is the need to adhere to planned institutional processes and the calendar. Cancellation or postponing of any institutional committee’s activities or meetings results in delays in obtaining the necessary approvals and impacts negatively on reporting processes and the timely management of operations” (Unisa Mid Year Review, IOP Progress Report, 2011 : 39).

- “The new registration project was a mammoth task and there is no gainsaying the teething troubles (system failures, an incomplete registration building, confusing decisions and students not complying, the new processes as well as complex calendars and qualification rules), which make the online processes more difficult” (Report to Council, The Revised Registration Process, 2009 : 4 – 5).

- “Major problems were experienced during 2009 with the alignment of activities within a process management model from other supportive roleplayers within Unisa namely:
 - Backlogs with the indexing of registration documents at the Records Management division which resulted in late registrations;
 - Bottlenecks occurred in respect of credit card payments at the postal room of the Finance Division (which also resulted in late registrations); and
 - Late submission of registration material from the regions (also resulted in late registrations)
 (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, Report to Mancom, 2009: 3 – 4).

- Dependencies from supportive Directorates (Dispatch, Finance, ICT and Marketing) forced split ownership and resulted in the ineffective management of timely delivery of services to students (meeting closing dates and finalizing registrations) (researcher’s observation).
- The outputs of one unit becomes the inputs of the next unit within the chain of activities in respect of registrations and in this way, late submission or availability of important information, study material and registration material have led to late registrations (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, Report to Mancom, 2009 : 5 – 6).
- “Aligned to the Institution’s purpose of creating a single institutional identity, the priority of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations was the amalgamation of the registrations sections and processes of the institutions into a single cohesive well-informed unit that could handle the full spectrum of qualifications. This was not an easy task especially since the programme and qualifications mix (PQM) and college calendars remained fairly complex” (Five years transformation, 2004 – 2008: 57).
- “The dramatically increased student numbers strained the institution’s capacities, exacerbated by inadequate physical infrastructure” (Five years transformation, 2004 – 2008 : 57).
- “Constraints of the 2008/9 registration supportive processes could be summarised as follows:
 - Some minor system/ICT failure (downtime) of registration system functionality;
 - Students were not adequately informed of the new technology-driven registration model – lack of aggressive marketing campaign;
 - Still split ownership and lack of standardised service delivery at decentralised registration facilities;

- Lack of on-time submission of statutory admission requirement documents from regions resulted in delays of the finalisation of registration; and
- Simplification of self-help registrations was difficult due to the different and complex curricula”

(Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations’ Strategic session presentation to Mancom, 2009: 6 – 7).

The main purpose of the operational plans and standardised improved process-management-model of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations is to ensure the effective achievement of specific relevant strategic objectives of Unisa. The operational model/approach to the execution of certain tasks, actions and activities guided by policies and procedures which were aimed at meeting targets and timelines and at identifying supportive mechanisms, dependencies and resources responsible for executing specific plans, was reasonably successful – taking into account the lack of on-time available dependencies and enablers referred to above (see also sections 3.2, 3.2.1, Tables 3.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.4, 5.5 as well as sections 5.6, 5.6.1, 5.6.1.1, 5.6.1.1.7, 5.6.1.1.8 and 5.8.8).

“Thus, the intention of the revised registration process was to make registrations an action that the student could finalize without manual intervention. Unfortunately, there were two major impediments: the first was the complex PQM and curricula which required the intervention of student advisors for quality checks and adherence to curriculum rules before a registration can be finalised; and the second is the human factor. Change management, especially moving from the old manual system to the new technology-driven self-help system was a constraining factor. A further constraining factor was that the ICT systems did not operate optimally from the first day of registrations, but at the end of first week the registration was in place. However, on a preponderance of all factors and given that this was a new process, the management team is of the view that the processes worked well” (Registrar’s Report to Council, 2009: 6 – 8).

“Given the very tight timeframes, the new registrations process is without doubt an historical achievement and milestone in the new Unisa’s development to a dynamic ODL Institution” (Five Year Transformation, 2004 – 2008: 58).

5.9 SUMMARY

Important supportive mechanisms to optimise or to enhance the correlation levels between the strategic objectives of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations’ operational implementation plans and specific identified institutional strategic objectives were analysed and discussed.

The Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations’ standardised operational framework and improved process/project management-approach were analysed and discussed and more specifically their contribution to the enhancement, alignment and enforcement of proper correlation levels between the Directorate’s strategic objectives and the operational implementation plans.

A benchmarking and measurement criteria tool (a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach) was utilised to determine the accomplishment/non-accomplishment of strategic objectives related to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations and primary findings in respect of this accomplishment were provided.

Extracts from critical documents/reports were quoted and discussed as confirmation of the primary findings. It also became evident that the more often a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach is applied, the greater the correlation between objectives and operational plans. This will enable an increase in the number of successful implementation processes related to specific strategic objectives.

Chapter 6 will be the concluding chapter and the conclusions relating to the problem statement, aim and objectives of the study, research questions and the hypothesis will be analysed and explained.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter of the dissertation will provide a summary and conclusions that relate to the problem statement, aim and objectives of the study and the research questions. The hypothesis on which the dissertation is founded will be discussed under the conclusions. Specific proposals will also be dealt with in this chapter.

The research results will be benchmarked against the objectives of the research. Confirmation or discrepancies related to the above will be highlighted and proposals for solving or addressing them will be made. Recommendations for possible future research will be made.

6.2 SUMMARY

Various literature reviews and research topics on strategic management focus either on strategic planning or strategic implementation as separate identities (see section 1.3). New publications address the challenge of connecting the pursuit of strategic objectives with operational plans. Few literature reviews indicate the relationship or correlation levels between the strategic objectives and operational plans of an organisation and the desirability of such a relationship/correlation levels to ensure the effective pursuit of strategic objectives (see section 1.3). The outcomes of this study could contribute to the identification of measures, mechanisms, processes and approaches to ensure connectivity and alignment (proper correlation levels) between intent (the what/why) and accomplishments (the who/how) of an organisation, by utilising a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach (see sections 3.2, 3.2.1, 3.4, 3.6, 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8).

The major focus and questions that emanated from the research was firstly: To what extent do the operational action plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' policies, functions, procedures and activities as well as their implementation thereof, correlate with the strategic objectives of Unisa (see section 1.4).

Secondly, the focus was on whether an improved process management model of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations could ensure the effective achievement of specific strategic objectives of Unisa. Emanating from the above the challenge was to measure proper efficient or inefficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans, and to determine the ideal and proper correlation levels or alignment. This could ensure that the strategic objectives are effectively promoted to those responsible for carrying out the plan.

Eventually the major challenge was to identify adequate processes, models, approaches, sequences of events, measurement/criteria and tactics to ensure proper and appropriate correlation levels to keep the implementation process alive, aligned and connected with specific relevant strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, and eventually to match outcomes and achievements with original intent (strategic objectives and plans).

The research for this study was mainly conducted through (i) a literature survey pertaining to strategic management approaches towards the achievement of strategic objectives (ii) an analysis of official documents (iii) observation (iv) personal unstructured conversations and interviews (v) individual and group discussions during strategic sessions and meetings, and (vi) descriptive research. A participative action research model, i.e. a qualitative approach was followed. The specific focus areas were literature study reviews, human behaviour and characteristics of public officials as well as the products of human behaviour (reading, understanding and interpretation)(see sections 1.8 and 6.2).

The above constituted the blueprint for the collection and analysis of relevant data to determine, measure and enhance proper correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans.

A literature study, observation and personal interviews, source document analyses and benchmarking were used to collect data and will be unpacked in the following sections.

- **Literature study/review**

The literature study/review focused specifically on possible solutions to address and identify the major challenges/focus of the study, namely:

- To identify key concepts and approaches towards the achievement of strategic objectives; and
- To identify and explain a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach to ensure/enhance effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans specifically relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

The challenge of every departmental head is to turn theory into practice, make something happen and translate strategic plans into real business results. This will be accomplished only when there is synergy or connectivity between strategic and operational planning towards effective implementation (Balovich, 2005: 16).

Chapter 2 mainly dealt with the literature reviews based on opinions and views from various sources significant in this particular research field. In this way, various models, key concepts, definitions, approaches and theories were dealt with which determined the effective and efficient (most appropriate and adequate) correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans (see section 1.9.4). Comparisons and descriptions of various strategic management approaches and processes were analysed to determine the most appropriate approach to ensure effective correlation levels between strategic objectives and their effective execution. Specific reference was made to the customer-driver approach, specific management

driven approaches and a comprehensively-aligned-integrated-management-process-approach. The latter approach was adopted and was aligned with the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' standardised operational plan to enable more effective and efficient correlation between Unisa's specific strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3.4 and 2.4.4.9).

In Chapter 3 an in-depth discussion of the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach was given. Measurement criteria as an integrated part of the approach were also included in order to measure the correlation levels in respect of the execution of specific strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see sections 2.4, 2.4.4 as well as Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1).

- **Observation and personal interviews**

During the past 27 years as an employee of Unisa of which the past 15 years were in an executive capacity and being accountable for one of the core support functional departments at Unisa, namely the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, the researcher's experience and observation has shown that within a constantly changing environment, the lack of effective and efficient process identification and a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach became evident. The lack of a clear communication plan for the introduction of the strategic plan (objectives) to the relevant roleplayers responsible for the implementation process was also evident (specifically during various strategic information sessions held by different top management officials).

At strategic planning level, important workshops and planning sessions had been conducted without the involvement of key roleplayers accountable for the execution processes (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Strategic Planning Sessions and workshops, March/April, 2009 – 2010). Split ownership, duplication and overlap occurred which resulted in vague

and misaligned execution exercises and poorly formulated policies and procedures (see section 5.8 in this regard).

To determine the correlation levels (connectivity and alignment) between strategic objectives and operational plans and to analyse the understanding of these in respect of the execution of action plans, the following were undertaken:

- Case studies through personal interaction with relevant roleplayers involved in the planning processes of specific strategic objectives;
- Group interaction during strategic planning sessions, feedback and discussion on identified problematic areas within execution processes;
- Analysis of presentations and feedback sessions in respect of progress reports and Unisa's Management Committee's minuted decisions related to the implementation phases of strategic plans; and
- Training and assessment sessions in respect of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plans.

In an attempt to eliminate split ownership and to eliminate the lack of important enablers and dependencies as well as the lack of active participation and involvement of all roleplayers within a specific execution process, involvement of representatives of all academics as well as administrative directors, portfolio managers, managers and representatives from the regions was required. These roleplayers' involvement in the planning and implementation of all student administrative matters towards the finalisation of action plans was emphasised and these members were scheduled to attend weekly meetings of the Registration Steering Committee.

One of the most important interactions and consultation platforms was the establishment of the abovementioned Registration Coordination Steering Committee within the institution. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to:

- Manage and oversee the implementation and review of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plans;
- Conduct root cause analysis in respect of misaligned activities, problematic issues, system failures and late changes in rules and procedures and their impact; and
- Propose alternatives and reliable solutions and to ensure connectivity within the chain of events towards successful implementation of specific strategic plans (Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' Steering Committee, 2009 – 2011) (see also section 5.6.1.1).

Active discussions, interviews, consultations and interaction with all the relevant roleplayers within the implementation phases of strategic plans took place at weekly sessions of the Registration Steering Committees. The researcher utilised these opportunities to build a database dealing with the lack of a clear understanding of each unit/accountable person's role within their specific area of implementation responsibilities.

In addition to the above, the specific lack of enablers and dependencies and supportive policies and procedures were minuted as part of a comprehensive summary of needs and unfulfilled requirements (minuted action plans) that must be available to enable the successful implementation of unit action plans.

Further to the above, the researcher was actively involved in the following decision-making bodies within the institution:

Unisa's Faculty Board of Academic Colleges, Senate Tuition Committee, Senate (observer), ODL Task Team, Marketing Committee, Registration Steering Committee and Quality Assurance Committee.

Being involved in these bodies exposed the researcher to all possible scenarios to analyse, experience, observe, interpret, contextualise and describe the challenges of the alignment of strategic plans with operational implementation plans. Outcomes of all discussions, consultations and

interviews were minuted and were followed up with all relevant roleplayers accountable for implementation processes. Presentations, emails, memos, reports, contracts, follow-up meetings, one-on-one interactions, negotiations and consultations formed the basis of the researcher's data collection which was eventually analysed and confirmed in Chapter 5 and more specifically sections 5.8.1, 5.8.2, 5.8.3, 5.8.4, 5.8.5, 5.8.6, 5.8.7 and 5.8.8. In most instances, the researcher made use of unstructured questions during discussions and consultations at various meetings, strategic sessions and workshops. This approach was an attempt to obtain firsthand information on a personal basis which would normally not be easy to obtain through structured questions. "Conducting an interview based on experience by relevant roleplayers is a more natural form of interacting with people than making them fill out a questionnaire, therefore it fits well with the interpretive (qualitative) approach to research" (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999: 128).

- **Source document analysis**

Critical source documents in respect of the strategic plans of Unisa as well as the Unisa operational plans were analysed in an effort to determine the specific objectives for implementation within the portfolio of the Registrar and more specifically the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 5.5). Unisa's Management Committee decisions (minuted) and implementation timeframes were benchmarked against the specific objectives towards implementation (see sections 5.7 and 5.7.1). Each objective was unpacked into activities, measurements and dependencies and enablers were determined (see sections 5.4, 5.6.1.1.3, 5.6.1.1.5, 5.6.1.7, 5.7.1.2 and Tables 3.2, 4.7 and 5.4) to support the implementation. A process activity workflow chart was used to determine the sequence of events within a specific driven process and to group together what belonged together (and so creating ownership) in respect of the implementation of plans (see sections 3.3, 3.3.1, 3.4.1, 3.4.2, Figure 3.2 and Table 3.2). All discrepancies or lack of supportive dependencies were listed. Strategic sessions with all roleplayers accountable for the achievement of specific objectives were scheduled in an effort to determine action plans. The time-

frames linked to implementation activities were evaluated against original strategic plans (see sections 5.6.1.1.6, 5.6.1.1.7, 5.6.1.1.8 and Table 5.4). Reports based on the analysis of source documents relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations were drafted and submitted to Unisa's Management Committee to advise on unresolved supportive issues, consequences, impact on service levels and amended implementation plans in respect of strategic objectives, should it not be made available on schedule (see sections 5.3, 5.5, 5.6.1, 5.8, 5.8.8, 5.6.4 and table 3.2).

In alignment with the activities mentioned in the section on observation and personnel interviews, the outcomes of this sections' activities formed an integrated/consolidated part of the benchmarking exercise (see sections 3.2.1 and 5.7) to eventually determine and confirm the lack of important supportive enablers/dependencies. In other words, ineffective levels of correlation between specific strategic objectives and the execution of implementation plans thereof were identified, where applicable. Outcomes were confirmed in section 5.8.8 (annual reports to Unisa's Management Committee and Council).

- **Benchmarking**

The achievement of Unisa's specific strategic objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations (see section 5.1, 5.4.1 and 5.5) was benchmarked against actual successes, achievements or non-achievements. This exercise was unpacked, explained and introduced to specifically analyse the on-time availability of supportive mechanisms (see section 5.6.1.1.1) or lack of availability to enable the successful achievement of objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. Extracts from reports and source documents were quoted to confirm the outcomes of the above benchmarking/measurement criteria exercise (see sections 5.7 and 5.8 as well as Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1).

The primary findings in respect of the accomplishment of strategic objections

relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations are the following:

- A lack of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach (see Figure 3.1 and section 2.3.4 and more specifically section 5.8.1);
- A lack of vertical / horizontal alignment (see section 5.8.2);
- A lack of available drivers, enablers and dependencies available when required (see section 5.8.3);
- A lack of ownership / split ownership (where a specific unit is not solely accountable for all activities specific to an objective)(see section 5.8.4);
- Duplication and overlapping of activities (lack of process identification)(see section 5.8.5);
- Lack of connectivity and involvement of all roleplayers within a specific execution process (see section 5.8.6); and
- Lack of commitment to keep the implementation process alive (see section 5.8.7).

The researcher has therefore adopted a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-process-management-approach as part of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' standardised operational plans to enable more effective and efficient (appropriate) correlation levels in respect of specific strategic objectives in relation to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' implementation plans.

The above approach represents a total view of an organisation's strategic management and control systems and consists of the strategic plan, operational plans and results management implementation plan (see Figure 3.2). The above approach will also consist of a measurement criterion with critical enablers and dependencies (see sections 1.3 and 2.3.4). The challenge is to group together what belongs together within a specific process in a specific sequence of events, thereby creating ownership and accountability to ensure alignment and connectivity as well as proper

correlation levels between the strategic objectives and operational plans of an organisation (see section 2.3.4, 3.1, 3.2, Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1).

The above approach should also contribute towards the vertical and horizontal alignment of intent (the *what*) versus the implementation (the *how*). Eventually effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans will be enforced by utilising the above approach. The connectivity of all actions will therefore flow from input to outcome, in this way moving everyone responsible for the achievement of specific objectives in harmony towards successful implementation (see sections 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 3.2 and 3.5).

6.2.1 Aim and objectives of the research

This section contains the insights that emerged from all the chapters containing the exposition of the research aim, objectives, research questions and lastly the problem statement and hypothesis which will be dealt with in section 6.3. The research findings will be analysed and explained in alignment with the aim and objectives of the research, the research questions, problem statement and hypothesis.

- One of the major challenges was to identify appropriate approaches and processes in respect of strategic management that could enhance more appropriate correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans towards their effective and efficient implementation – more specifically relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations’ operational plans. This challenge formed part of the aim and objectives of the research as well as of the problem statement.

The above challenge was explored in Chapter 2 (literature study and research), under the heading “A conceptual analysis of strategic management approaches towards the achievement of strategic objectives”. Specific reference was made to the customer-driven approach, specific management (internal) driven approaches and a comprehensive-integrated- aligned-strategic-management-process-approach.

The latter approach was adopted and aligned with the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' standardised operational plans to ensure more appropriate correlation levels with Unisa's specific strategic objectives especially those relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

It was also clear from the benchmarking exercise as well as from the research findings and the primary reports/documents, that there was a lack of a proper supportive management approach to ensure or to enforce more effective and efficient correlation levels/connectivity between strategic objectives and operational plans (see sections 5.8 and 5.8.8).

The identification and explanation of effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans are one of the main factors/enablers that create alignment and connectivity between the *what* (strategic objectives) and the *how* (operational plans) in respect of the effective implementation of specific strategic plans. Emanating from the introduction and utilisation of the comprehensively integrated, aligned, strategic-management-process-approach, the specific sequence of activities from input → operations → outputs will enable more effective and efficient correlation levels in respect of the achievement of strategic objectives. In this way, the integration of both effectiveness and efficiency (which relate to leadership and management skills), which are enforced by utilising this comprehensive approach, could create and enhance appropriate correlation levels that will eventually contribute towards successful achievement of strategic objectives. In-depth analyses and explanations in respect of effective/efficient correlation levels were given in Chapter 1 and particularly in Chapter 2.

- The identification of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach is the most important factor or enabler to ensure more appropriate correlation levels (connectivity) between specific strategic objectives and the operational plans relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

This approach was analysed and explained comprehensively in Chapter 3 of the research. An important part of the above approach is the fact that it also consists of measurement criteria to enable the measurement of the most appropriate correlation levels necessary for the effective and successful implementation of strategic plans. The measurement criteria also measure and indicate the unavailability of critical dependencies, enablers and drivers, which can create ineffective and inefficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and their execution. The above approach represents a total view of an organisation's strategic management processes and consists of strategic objectives, operational plans and results management processes. It creates vertical and horizontal alignment (connectivity) with intent (the *what*) and the execution phase (the *how*). This approach also creates ownership within a specific implementation process and sequence of activities, thereby grouping together what belongs together; moving all roleplayers towards achievement of the same goal and objectives (see sections 2.3.4, 3.2, 3.2.1, 3.4, 3.6, 5.8.1 and Figure 3.1).

- A critical issue and focus area that forms an integral part of the aim and objectives, the research questions, problem statement and the major focus of this research, is the introduction and establishment of an aligned integrated standardised administrative framework/model as part of the strategic and operational plans of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations, in alignment with the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach.

The first phase was to determine to what extent the standardised integrated administrative framework of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plans correlate with specific strategic objectives of Unisa relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations. The second phase was to determine whether the adopted comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach, as part of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' standardised operational framework could ensure more effective and efficient correlation levels to enable the achievement of specific strategic objectives. In Chapters 4 and 5 the importance of the major operational objectives and activities of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations was analysed

and discussed, as well as the impact of its operations as part of the core functions in alignment with Unisa's core administrative supportive objectives.

It was found in the benchmarking exercise, from the measurement criteria, as well as from the outcomes of primary reports, that there was a weak/insufficient correlation level between some specific strategic objectives and their execution within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plans, i.e. a lack of horizontal and vertical alignment, a lack of enablers, dependencies and drivers available on time as well as a lack of ownership. More important, the major reason for the above was the lack of a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach – which also led to other shortcomings as was reflected in sections 5.8.2, 5.8.3, 5.8.4, 5.8.5, 5.8.6 and 5.8.7.

However, with the adoption, alignment and integration of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plans with the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach, the availability or unavailability of important enablers, dependencies and drivers could be timely identified with the measurement criteria when needed, which is an integrated part of this approach. Alternatives or workarounds could be introduced as needed to ensure the effective management of different phases within a specific implementation process. This integrated approach could therefore enforce effective and efficient correlation levels, thereby enabling supportive mechanisms between strategic objectives and the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plans toward the achievement of specific strategic objectives (see sections 2.2, 2.3.4, 2.4.4.9, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5.3, and 5.6, Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1).

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

Evident from the research findings that were tested during the benchmarking exercise, is the confirmation of the hypothesis namely “There is a low or weak level of correlation between strategic objectives and operational action plans within the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations at Unisa”.

This statement states that the confirmation of the hypothesis is in alignment with the aim of the study i.e. to determine whether correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans are determining factors (interdependencies) to ensure the successful achievement of strategic and operational objectives, by matching accomplishments (results) with initial intent (strategic plans) relevant and specific to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations.

However, with the integration of the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' standardised operational plans with the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-approach the correlation levels between the specific strategic objectives of Unisa and the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations' operational plans were enhanced in particular through the timely enforcement of enablers, dependencies and drivers to ensure more successful achievement of the strategic objectives.

This integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach and measurement criteria approach enforced the availability of supportive enablers, drivers and dependencies (or alternatives/workarounds) thereby ensuring effectiveness in managing and coordinating the implementation processes towards due dates. The above model will integrate, utilise, optimise and coordinate all relevant resources involved within a specific execution process. It will, furthermore, ensure that all supportive enablers, drivers and dependencies will systematically be utilised in a specific sequence of activities creating connectivity, ownership and accountability from strategic level (intent) to implementation level (the *how*) ensuring that everyone does the right things (tactics, activities, procedures) at the right time and that everyone moves in concert towards achieving the desired outcomes. The focus is on managing the entire core process as a unit and producing outcomes of success (see sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.2.1, 3.3, 3.5.3, 3.6, 5.2, 5.5, 5.6 and Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1).

The above process/model should be holistically introduced and implemented from the very start of the initial strategic planning process (intent).

However, within the context of this study, the sometimes ineffective and insufficient achievement of strategic objectives is not necessarily the result of bad strategy or poor implementation, but a lack of the effective utilisation of the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-management-process-approach and measurement criteria, to enhance more appropriate correlation levels in order to ensure the successful achievement of strategic objectives (see sections 3.5.3, 3.6, 5.7.1.2, 5.8, 5.8.1, 5.8.2 and 5.8.8).

6.4 PROPOSALS

The summary of the research outcomes forms the basis and rationale for proposing an appropriate management approach within a specific process and sequence of events, to ensure a more effective and efficient execution process in respect of strategic plans. As part of this approach different phases within the model will be proposed to be used as a mechanism which could ensure more effective and efficient correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans. In view of this, the following are proposed:

- Unisa should consider formally introducing, implementing and utilising a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach to ensure effective and efficient correlation between strategic objectives and operational plans. This approach consists of various steps with important enablers, dependencies and drivers (also part of the measurement criteria), within a specific sequence of activities. The utilisation of this approach could create horizontal and vertical alignment with the strategic objectives of the institution to enable an effective and efficient implementation of strategic plans. Further to the above the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach will enforce and enhance effective management of the organisation to drive outcomes within specific identified processes, taking into account project management driven principles within a specific sequence of activities. By doing this, the organisation groups together what belongs together and involves all roleplayers in the work situation accountable for the implementation process. This will create ownership, eliminate duplication and the overlap of activities and will enforce connectivity between intent (planning)

and implementation from the very start of the strategic planning process. By doing this, the focus is on the entire key/core processes and cycle, producing successful outcomes in respect of the achievement of objectives. Eventually the *what* (strategic knowledge), the *why* (theoretical knowledge) (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3), the *when* (tactical knowledge) and the *how* (practical/operational knowledge) will be in concert and connected (horizontally and vertically) moving together in harmony towards the successful achievement of objectives (see Chapters 3 and 5).

- The measurement criteria as an integrated part of the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach, should be introduced and utilised for each operational unit that is accountable for the implementation of strategic plans of the organisation. By doing this, the major enablers, dependencies and drivers necessary to support the execution of activities will relate to specific objectives and will be identified early, prior to the implementation plans. This measurement exercise will inform those accountable for the successful implementation of strategic plans in time of the correlation levels between strategic objectives (intent) and operational plans (the *how*). The availability or unavailability of important supportive mechanisms will then determine the chances or possibility of implementing strategic plans successfully. This will enable the identification of specific alternatives or workarounds to ensure continuity in respect of the implementation processes of plans. However, important to the above is that all stakeholders and clients should be informed in good time of the implications of the outcomes in respect of the lack of adequate enablers/dependencies and drivers so as to eliminate expectations that cannot be met, pertaining to expected service levels. In this way, the implementation phases with specific service level outcomes must be communicated clearly and early to internal/external clients.
- All directorates and departments accountable for specific strategic objectives should ensure that their operational plans, before being approved for implementation, should be in alignment with strategic objectives in terms of the comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach. This integrated aligned approach enforces the early availability of supportive

enablers and dependencies and if these enablers are lacking, will enable implementers to identify workarounds or alternative methods ensuring effectiveness in managing the implementation processes towards due dates (see section 5.2 and Table 3.1). The more a comprehensively-integrated-aligned-strategic-management-process-approach is applied, the more the specific identified objectives relevant to the Directorate: Student Admissions and Registrations will be aligned with its operational activities, since it is relatively easy to identify the lack of support mechanisms and to ensure appropriate workarounds and alternative methods when needed. By doing this the correlation levels between strategic objectives and operational plans could become more acceptable to ensure continuity of all activities towards the achievement of specific objectives.

The abovementioned approach could contribute to more successful implementation processes since all related activities within the execution process will be based on the same policies and procedures and will be performed within a specific sequence of activities toward the achievement of the intended strategic plans and outcomes, ensuring involvement of all roleplayers, ownership, accountability and commitment.

- In conclusion, a further research topic of importance that could add value to the research outcomes of this study, could be an in-depth analysis of programme management (process and project-driven management principles and approaches) to ensure the effective and efficient management and coordination of task teams accountable for results management. In view of this the following definition of programme management proposed by Steyn (2001: 3-7) is appropriate:

“The coordinated and integrated management of portfolios of processes and projects, including large tasks that bring about improvements in organisations that achieve benefits of strategic importance”.

Such a study might be of particular value if one considers that programme management provides for the organisational processes, organisational architecture, and an organisational culture that:

- Enables linkages between the top level strategic direction of the organisation and the management activities required to achieve benefits of strategic importance;
- Ensures that the strategic goals of the programme remain valid in response to changes in the internal and external environment;
- Supports the executives who have to plan and control activities, set priorities and allocate resources for the projects and processes in the various portfolios;
- Assists in the effective communication, delegation and management of work in the organisational value chain;
- Ensures all issues are identified, recognised and dealt with to maximise strategic success;
- Ensures all risks are identified, monitored and controlled;
- Ensures all stakeholders are informed and involved and that their interests are always considered;
- Focuses attention on the realisation of strategic benefits defined by a balanced scorecard approach to strategy formulation; and
- Optimises human talent utilisation (Steyn, 2001: 3-7).

6.5 SUMMARY

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter of this dissertation. It relates specifically to the research questions, the problem statement, the aim and objectives of the study and the hypothesis on which the dissertation is founded. In particular, a summary, conclusions and some proposals as well as a topic for possible further research arising from the dissertation, are the subject of this concluding chapter.

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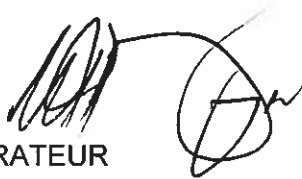
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