EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING WITHIN THE MIDDLE EASTERN PUBLIC SECTOR

Basel Shahin

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Faculty of Business and Law
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DECLARATION

I, Basel Shahin, declare that the DBA thesis entitled *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategic Planning within the Middle Eastern Public Sector* is no more than 75,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature ………………………….

Basel Shahin
11th August, 2011

DEDICATION

To my great parents Khader and Ruqayya
To my lovely wife Yusra
To my wonderful brothers and sisters
&
To my newborn baby Khaddoor

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ABSTRACT

Strategic planning is intended to help governments, communities and organisations deal with and adapt to their changing internal and external circumstances. It can help clarify and resolve the most important pressing issues they face. It enables them to build on strengths, take advantage of opportunities, and become much more effective in what seems to be a more hostile world.

The aim of this study is to discover the nature and the extent of the strategic planning formation process within Middle Eastern public sector organisations, particularly in Dubai. This includes an assessment of the formality of the strategic planning formation process, determining the influence of the external contextual and internal organisational barriers on the formality of the planning process, and evaluating the quality of the strategic plan document produced. Furthermore, the research aims to evaluate the influence of organisational characteristics on the planning process, as well as the determinants of the planning horizon.

The conceptual framework of the study includes all research variables as well as the postulated relationships between variables deemed to be integral to the dynamics of the situation being investigated. A mail questionnaire survey was considered an appropriate method for this study due to reason associated with the context of the study and type of investigation. In total, 147 usable surveys were collected from twenty-two organisations representing approximately 75% of the targeted public sector organisations in Dubai. The findings of the research support, to a large extent, the developed propositions within the conceptual framework of the study.

Findings of the research indicate that organisations practising, to a great extent, a formal strategic planning process are more likely to formulate strategic plan documents than organisations with low process formality. Also, the formality of the process is influenced by organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level and the availability of the strategic planning unit. In addition, process formality was found to enhance the implementation of strategies and plans.

In relation to barriers of the planning process, findings showed that the higher the influence of internal barriers on the planning process, the lower the formality of the strategic planning formation process. However, no relationship was found between the external barriers and the formality of the strategic planning process. Furthermore, the research provides some findings in relation to the

quality of the strategic plan document produced. Findings show that a strong association exists between the quality of the strategic plan document and the formality of the planning process; also it was found that the quality of the strategic plan document is influenced by organisational elements.

The findings regarding the planning horizon show that organisations practising a high formal planning process tend to have longer planning horizons, also it was found that organisational elements are strong determinants of the planning horizon. Finally, it was noted that the internal barriers of the planning process, not the external ones, strongly influence the planning horizon.

Hence this research provides a coherent framework to link the public sector strategic planning process formality with all the interrelated variables. This has led to clear implications for theory and practice and makes clear contributions to management in the Dubai public sector.

In addition, the findings of the research suggest that an expansion of the coverage of surveys and an extension of the study to include other Middle Eastern public sectors would be beneficial to accommodate various socio-cultural, economic, and political differences among Middle Eastern countries. Further, it is suggested that researchers can extend the investigation to examine the implementation of strategies and plans as well as the influence of strategic planning (formation and implementation) on organisational performance within the Middle Eastern public sector.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMIPOR   Business Monitor International Political Outlook Report

DGEP   Dubai Government Excellence Program

FSP   Formal Strategic Planning

GCC   Gulf Cooperation Council

GPRA   Government Performance and Results Act

IBP   International Best Practices

IT   Information Technology

KPIs   Key Performance Indicators

OMB   Office of Management and Budget

PESTEL   Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal

PH   Planning Horizon

PPBS   Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System

QAF   Quality Assurance Framework

SP   Strategic Planning

SPD   Strategic Plan Document

SPFP   Strategic Planning Formation Process

SPSS   Statistical Package for Social Sciences

SPU   Strategic Planning Unit

SWOT   Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

TEO   The Executive Office

UAE   United Arab Emirates

UK   United Kingdom

USA   United States of America

VP   Vice President

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

1.1 Research background

Managing public organisations is an extremely complex endeavour. It encompasses values, organisational arrangements, community interests, political choices, individual views and organisational objectives that are sometimes at odds with those of stakeholders. In a sense, decision-makers within public organisations are managers, policymakers, and constitutional lawyers. It is frequently impossible to satisfy all the managerial, political, and constitutional demands placed upon public organisations since emphasising one approach is certain to provoke criticism from those who think other approaches are more important. That could be discouraging in some aspects, but it also makes public management challenging and even fascinating (Rosenbloom, 1998, p. 39).

The grand promise of strategic planning in public management is to enable public sector organisations to manage the interrelationships and interconnectedness between the various internal and external organisational factors for the purpose of improving the quality of life of residents and promoting 'public value'. The governmental obligation to promote the public interest (public value) distinguishes public administration from private management in a moral and basic sense, where public administration is ultimately serving a higher purpose. Even though it is often difficult to identify precisely what is in the public interest, there is no dispute about the obligation of public administrators to consider public interest as a general guide for their actions (Rosenbloom, 1998, p. 9).

The environment of public sector organisations is changing continuously. Change has a profound impact on public and non-profit organisations and how they are managed to handle change. How top management adapts to the changing environment will reflect on its ability to cope successfully with unpredictable and unknowable external and internal events. With the help of strategic planning, governments, communities and public organisations have dealt with change and adapted to it. Strategic planning is intended to strengthen an organisation's capacity to adapt to change and

to enhance the ability of an organisation's members to think, act, and learn strategically (Bryson, 2004, p. 15).

1.2 Reasons for the research

The main reasons for the study can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, most of the literature on strategic planning comes from Western countries, and the United States in particular. Whittington and Mayer (2000, p. 23) point out that 'the social sciences made America the universal pattern'. The resulting frameworks may not necessarily be applicable to developing countries (Haines, 1988), leading to questions about the suitability and efficacy of North American management paradigms and practices for developing countries (Gelfand et al., 2007). Consequently, scholars have been advised to research indigenous management practices (Tung and Aycan, 2008; Scott-Jackson, 2008).

This reflects 'the overwhelming geographical bias' of synthetic reviews of the field of strategic management (Pettigrew et al., 2002, p. 8). Hence it is important to examine how closely the results of research conducted in the USA apply to strategic planning in other parts of the world (Kotha and Nair, 1995). While much is known of the practices of management in Western countries, comparatively little is known about their equivalent in Arab countries (Parnell and Hatem, 1999). Moreover, some of the studies that have been conducted in Arab countries suffer from conceptual and methodological weaknesses. This leads to doubt on the validity of their results (Atiyyah, 1997).

Secondly, there are particular difficulties associated with strategic planning in the public sector compared with the private sector. The strategic planning process in public organisations is not a simple process; it requires consideration of the characteristics of public sector organisations, their external environments, as well as the constitutional limitations of public organisation mandates (Bryson, 2004, p. 99). The following difficulties were noted in the public sector that affect the planning process: constraints in decision-making due to political, financial and legal factors (Foster, 1990); goal conflict and ambiguity, different stakeholders having different goals and interests resulting in conflicting and ambiguous goals (Banfield, 1975); organisational culture, where the bureaucratic character of public organisations developing a culture that minimises risk and inhibits change (Lorvich, 1981); and the difficulty in measuring results in the public sector since diverse stakeholder expectations are often unclear (Backoff and Nutt, 1990). These

difficulties confirm the need to investigate the strategic planning formation process (SPFP) that this research addresses.

Thirdly, there are gaps in the SPFP literature in public sector organisations in general, and within the research context (Dubai public sector) in particular. Most of the thinking about strategic planning has focused on its use and applicability to for-profit organisations. It was not until the early 1980s that strategic planning found its way into public sector organisations (Wechsler, 1989). Importing private sector strategic planning concepts and practices into public organisations requires attention to the differences in the aims and context in which planning takes place. These differences not only affect the implementation of the process but also the initial design and the formation of the process. A number of gaps were noted in public administration literature such as: the relation between the formality of the strategic planning formation process and planning horizon in public organisations; the extent to which a formal planning process is practised at a departmental level; the influence of organisational characteristics on the strategic plan document quality. In relation to the research context, many specific gaps were noted, such as: the influence of organisational characteristics such as organizational size and age on the formality of the planning process; the relation between the formation process and the implementation of strategies and plans; the quality of the strategic plan document produced, and others.

Fourthly, there is inconsistency in the findings of the strategic planning process literature within the Middle Eastern context. For example, a study by Yusuf and Saffu (2009) on firms within the Middle Eastern context surprisingly showed no support for the claim that planning incidences are higher in younger firms than mature ones. Also, in relation to the planning horizon and organisation size, Al-Shaikh (2001) found no significant difference between the planning horizons of large and small firms, which is inconsistent with previous findings in the literature. Another example of inconsistency was found in Elbanna's (2008 and 2009) studies, the results of both studies, contrary to expectations, showed that management participation in Arab countries surveyed does not contribute to strategic planning effectiveness. However, it should be said that the inconsistency of findings does not imply weaknesses in Middle Eastern studies since the reasons might be related to socio-cultural factors.

Fifthly, the final reason for this study is related to change within the research context. Two main factors are seen as prompting change in the Dubai public sector. These are: economic recession and the government's reform programs. Dubai was one of the cities that was impacted heavily by the

economic recession of 2008; this, to a large extent, affects the social demographics of the city since many expatriates left for their home countries, which resulted in a sudden reduction in the demand for public services. The sudden change in population size and lack of financial resources needed to finish projects already underway, required extensive strategic planning initiatives to respond to change. In relation to government reform programs, the Dubai government through its Executive Office has issued a number of requirements to the public sector organisations to enhance their strategic planning practices and to comply with some frameworks, such as the Dubai Government Excellence Program Framework.

The above-stated reasons represent the driving forces for conducting this research, which aims to enhance the effectiveness of the strategic planning formation process within the Dubai public sector and to set the grounds for the development of future research in the Middle East public sector context.

1.3 Problem statement

The above-mentioned reasons for the research have led to problems in the practices of the strategic planning process and process outcomes. These can be summarised as follows:

Adopting strategic planning concepts and practices developed in Western societies into other areas such as the Middle East has led to managerial problems associated with the applicability of such frameworks and management paradigms in developing countries (Haines, 1988; Gelfand, Erez and Aycan, 2007) where cultural differences might be strong determinants of the success or failure of such initiatives.

The difficulties associated with strategic planning in the public sector have led to serious managerial problems in the strategic planning process within Dubai public sector organisations. This is because either the management (in Dubai public sector organisations) is not aware of such difficulties, don't have the necessary change management initiatives to overcome such difficulties, or more importantly, did not determine the external and internal barriers to the planning process. In addition, particular characteristics of public sector organisations seem to cause managerial problems not always encountered in the private sector. Some of these characteristics are: weak

customer/client influence; restraints on the use of rewards and punishments; political influences on management decisions; and the separation of policymaking and policy implementation.

The third research problem is the gaps and inconsistencies found in the literature. Some areas in the public sector strategic planning literature were not fully addressed by scholars, or have some inconsistencies in findings as noted in the Middle Eastern context (described in the previous section – third reason). This generates confusion for practitioners and scholars and, consequently, problems in decision-making.

Finally, the environment in which Dubai public organisations operate has become increasingly uncertain: changes in population demographics; a shift in people's expectations; political changes; diversifying population; and weaknesses of the macro economy are some of the factors that cause uncertainty in the external environment within the research context. In addition, government initiatives to enhance strategic planning practices have placed pressure on public administrators to promote strategic thinking and acting and to rethink the way organisations are performing. This has led to internal managerial challenges not encountered previously.

1.4 Purpose of the study

This study will provide solutions and answers to the research problems identified in the previous section. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to uncover the practices of the strategic planning formation process (SPFP) within Middle Eastern public sector organisations (particularly in Dubai). Four aims have been developed for that purpose. These are:

- Research Aim One: Assessing the strategic planning formation process within Dubai public sector organisations
- Research Aim Two: Evaluating the influence of external (contextual) and internal (organisational) barriers on the SPFP
- Research Aim Three: Evaluating the quality of the strategic plan document produced and its association with the planning process
- Research Aim Four: Assessing the determinants of the planning horizon within the research context.

1.5 Research question

The following main research questions will be answered to cover each of the research aims addressed in the previous section:

- To what extent is a formal strategic planning formation process (SPFP) practised within Dubai public sector organisations?
- What are the influences of external and internal barriers on the planning process?
- What are the main external and internal barriers within the research context?
- What are the evaluation criteria for a quality strategic plan document?
- Is there any association between the formality of the planning process and the quality of the strategic plan documents produced?
- What is the relationship between process formality and the planning horizon?

Other specific questions are stated in Chapter Four for each group of propositions.

1.6 Statement of significance

This research is expected to lead to a significant contribution to knowledge in four main areas:

Firstly, public administration scholars and practitioners: Even though a lot has been written about strategic planning, particularly within the private sector, there is a lack of attention from writers and practitioners about the strategic planning process and the factors influencing the process within public sector organisations (Wilkinson and Monkhouse, 1994; Young, 2001). The research will deepen our understanding of the effective use of SPFP by digging into researching areas not fully covered, such as the influence of organisational characteristics on the strategic plan document produced, the determinants of the strategic plan document quality; the relation between the formality of SPFP and the planning horizons in public organisations and other areas.

Secondly, Middle Eastern public sector organisations' planning process: Most of the research in the area of public administration has been conducted within the context of European countries, United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan (Green, 1998). Little research has been found within the public administration in Middle Eastern countries (Al-Shaikh, 2001). The research

context is relatively new; the United Arab Emirates (UAE) only gained independence in the early seventies. This study is believed to be the first of its kind in Dubai and is expected to open the door for future studies into other Middle Eastern regions.

Thirdly, government regulatory bodies: Improving the effectiveness of public sector organisations is a major governmental objective. For example, public sector excellence is included as a guiding principle in the Dubai Strategic Plan 2015. In addition, the Dubai government has introduced a number of initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of public administration, such as the Dubai Government Excellence Program, the establishment of the Executive Office as a regulatory and policy body, and the Human Development Award program. The findings of this study will be important to regulatory bodies and government policymakers since the research will assess the process used for strategic planning and the effectiveness of strategic planning within the Dubai public sector. It is expected that the findings will be a basis for future developments. Also, the research will provide an evaluation framework for assessing the strategic planning formation process that can be readily applied by regulatory bodies to any government organisation.

Fourthly, the organisation's decision-makers and management team: One of the expected findings of the research is the identification of barriers and obstacles to the strategic planning process. The findings will be crucial for decision-makers within public sector organisations to make quick and timely decisions to overcome the barriers and obstacles to the planning process. In addition, the evaluation of the SPFP and process output 'strategic plan document' will also be important for decision-makers within public sector organisations to take necessary corrective actions.

1.7 Boundaries on the scope of the study

This study is constrained by a number of boundaries. Firstly, the study focuses on public sector organisations. Private and for-profit organisations were not included in the study. Secondly, the study investigates the strategic planning formation process: the implementation phase of the strategic planning process was not covered since such analysis requires a longitudinal study that is not within the scope of this research. However, the relation between the formation and the implementation phases was examined. Thirdly, in relation to the geographical context, the study focuses entirely on public sector organisations in Dubai because Dubai is recognised as one of the business hubs in Asia, and its public administration is going through a transformational period that

is important for the analysis of the strategic planning formation process. In addition, some logistic and visa requirements prevent the researcher from extending the study to other Middle Eastern regions. However, comparisons are made between the findings of this study and the findings of other Middle Eastern and Western studies.

1.8 Overview of the research project

This section provides a brief review of the structure of the thesis. The thesis is organised into eight chapters.

Chapter One introduces the issues related to the research project, research problems, research aims and questions, significance of the research, and boundaries on the scope of the study.

Chapters Two and Three establish the theoretical context of the research, and provide the background for the following chapters to address the research issues. For this purpose, strategic planning literature is reviewed in its historical and conceptual context. The main topics covered in Chapter Two are: strategic planning and strategy concepts; planning in public sector organisations; strategic planning in the Middle Eastern context; and strategic planning and organisational elements. In Chapter Three the literature concerning the steps of the strategic planning formation process are explained, the strategic plan document produced and its quality criteria are detailed; and lastly, the internal and external barriers to the planning process are covered.

In Chapter Four, the conceptual framework shows how the process of strategic planning is theorised and shows the main variables of the study. Research propositions are also developed in this chapter for each of the research questions listed in section 1.5. Four groups of propositions totalling 14 propositions are formed covering all aspects of the research study. The four groups of propositions are: Formality of the Strategic Planning Formation Process; Barriers to SPFP; the Strategic Plan Document produced; and the Planning Horizon.

In Chapter Five, the methodology used to empirically examine the propositions is outlined. This methodology comprises an overview of the design and justifies the use of quantitative methods, discusses the scale items selected to measure the underlying variables, and describes the instrument used to collect the data. In addition, this chapter discusses the pre-test and final survey procedures,

justifies the techniques used to analyse the data collected, and finally, discusses the reliability and validity of the constructs.

In Chapters Six and Seven, data analysis and interpretation are conducted to test research propositions and to discuss research findings. Chapter Six commences with data editing, coding, and data screening, followed by the response rate and a description of respondents and sample characteristics. Then data analysis and interpretation are conducted and triangulated with secondary data findings. In Chapter Seven, each group of propositions is presented with the associated research aims and research questions. For each proposition, necessary statistical tests are conducted, followed by result findings and discussions.

The last chapter, Chapter Eight, interprets the results drawn from testing each of the fourteen propositions, and conclusions are stated. Then the theoretical and managerial implications are drawn from the research findings. The limitations of this thesis are explained. And lastly, avenues for further research are suggested.

Following Chapter Eight a bibliography showing all of the works consulted or referred to in the development of this study is provided.

1.9 Summary

This chapter introduced the research study, starting by emphasising the importance of strategic planning in public sector organisations. Then the reasons for the study are presented. These are: unsuitability of Western management frameworks; difficulties of strategic planning in the public sector; gaps in the literature; inconsistencies of findings; and changes to the public sector within the research context. This is followed by the problem statement, then the research aims and research questions are listed in sections four and five respectively. The statement of significance is detailed in section six, showing the expected benefit and contributions of the research. Section seven describes the boundaries of the study: three boundaries were noted to relate to the sector, the topic, and the geographical context. Finally, in section eight, the organisation of the thesis, consisting of eight chapters, is outlined.

In the following chapter the literature in relation to strategic planning and public administration is reviewed. In particular it covers planning models; characteristics of public sector organisations; problems encountered with planning in the public sector; strategic planning in the Middle Eastern context; strategic planning and organisational elements; as well as planning formality.

CHAPTER TWO
STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

Introduction

This chapter together with Chapter Three, establishes the theoretical context of the research and provides the foundation for the following chapters to address the various research issues. For this purpose, strategic planning literature is reviewed in its historical and conceptual context. There is a huge corpus of research on strategic planning (much of which includes studies of implementation and corporate performance). While this review is designed in a comprehensive fashion, it will only briefly introduce the most important issues of strategic planning literature relevant to the present research. A detailed critical analysis of literature will be presented in Chapter Four while developing research propositions.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section (2.1) starts by defining strategic planning and strategy concepts, then the evolution of strategic thinking will be covered followed by a brief description of strategy elements. The second section (2.2) covers strategic planning in the public sector: this section will first introduce public management, then the purpose of public sector organisations and the benefits of planning in the public sector will be explored before presenting the strategic planning models in public sector organisations. The last part of this section will shed light on the characteristics of public organisations and the difficulties of planning in the public sector. The third section (2.3) will narrow the scope by focusing the research on its geographical context: the literature on strategic planning in the Arab world, mainly in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), will be covered. Section four (2.4) will look at the relationships between organisational characteristics such as the organisation's size, age, and organisational level and its relation to strategic planning. The last section of this chapter (2.5) presents the literature concerning the formality of the planning process and formality measures.

2.1 Strategic planning

In the last century we have experienced world wars, industrial revolutions, modernism and post-modernism, democratic and bureaucratic systems, civil rights movements, the evolution of the oil

industry and the revolution of the IT industry, as well as a dramatic shift in political ideology in many parts of the world. All of that has led to one thing: 'change'. Strategic planning helped governments, communities, organisations and even individuals deal with change and adapt to it. Strategic planning is intended to strengthen an organisations' capacity to adapt to change and to enhance the ability of organisations' members to think, act, and learn strategically to face continual environmental and institutional changes (Bryson, 2004, p. 15).

2.1.1 Defining strategic planning

The definition of the term 'planning' varies based on the different usage scenarios of the term. In fact, as Loasby (1967) wrote, 'the word "planning" is currently used in so many and various senses that it is in some danger of degenerating into an emotive noise'. Definitions of strategic planning, for the most part, are varied yet remarkably alike in many ways: an extensive review of the literature gives several definitions of the term 'strategic planning'. Viljoen (1994) describes strategic planning as 'the process of identifying choosing and implementing activities that will enhance the long term performance of an organization by setting directions and by creating an ongoing compatibility between the internal skills and resources of an organization and the changing external environment in which it operates'. Johnson and Scholes (1993) have quite a similar definition of strategic planning as Viljoen: they emphasise the direction and compatibility of an organisation with its environment. To them, strategy is 'the direction and the scope of an organization over the long term, which matches its resources to its changing environment'.

Others such as Boulter (1997) look at strategic planning as a way to comply and align the organisation with policy. He defines strategic planning as 'a procedure for developing a long-term and policy oriented device'. Barry (1997) emphasises the leadership role and management decisions and states that it is 'what an organization intends to achieve and how leadership within an organization will utilize its resources to achieve its ends'. Kovac and Thompson (1994), on the other hand, define it as 'the process by which an organization establishes its objectives, formulates actions designed to achieve these objectives within a time frame, implements the actions and assesses progress and results'.

The purpose of this section is not to find a universal definition of the term as much as to find an appropriate definition that will serve the purpose of this research project. In an attempt to define the term, Mintzberg in his book *The rise and fall of strategic planning* (1994) states that the need for

such a definition is not to create a place for planning so much as to reorganise the place it already does occupy with regard to strategy. In doing so, Mintzberg summarised various definitions into one fine definition of planning: 'Planning is a formalized procedure to produce an articulated result, in the form of an integrated system of decisions'.

This view of planning, according to Mintzberg, takes us closer to the place planning occupies in relation to strategy, since it takes into consideration the interrelationships between decisions and formalisation of procedures which are an integral part of this study.

From the above definitions it is concluded that there are two key components to strategic planning: these are the destination that the organisation is aiming at, and the most appropriate paths and methods to get to that destination. As the aim of strategic planning is to produce strategies that will enable the organisation to reach its desired destination, the following section aims to cover the concept of 'strategy'.

2.1.2 Strategy concept

Strategic thoughts have existed throughout history, when the earliest historians combined life-and-death strategies and converted them into wisdom and guidance for human wellbeing. Later on, and as societies grew and conflicts started to arise, strategy was used mainly in a militaristic fashion. This was indicated in the thoughts of Lenin, Napoleon, and others.

An attempt to provide a tie between the contemporary use of the term 'strategy' in the organisational context and other historical uses of the term has been made by Bracker (1980). The word 'strategy' is derived from the Greek verb 'stratego' meaning to 'plan the destruction of one's enemies through effective use of resources'.

In recent history, strategy has become widely used in many fields, particularly in business administration. It has been suggested that it was probably William Newman of the Columbia University Business School who first used the word strategy in management literature in 1951 (Mintzberg, 1990). The concept, as applied to firms, has been growing due to the contributions of a number of early business management scholars of the twentieth century, including Igor Ansoff (1965), Alfred Chandler (1962), Peter Drucker (1954), William Newman (1951), and Alfred Sloan (1963). Since then the concept has grown into a rich and robust intellectual domain while drawing

from a number of other more mature disciplines such as sociology, psychology and economics. Progress has been evident on a number of fronts, such as advancing the conceptual and empirical understanding of the concept and practice of strategy; looking at strategy from multiple perspectives or schools of thought; and the use of innovative and diverse methodological approaches in strategy research. Where some scholars have appraised this as a healthy development (Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999), others have asserted that the diversity and fragmentations of strategy as a field of study have now become an impediment to its own progress (McKiernan and Carter, 2004). In the light of these observations, some authors have emphasised the need to re-examine the concept of strategy (Mintzberg and Lampel, 1999; Prahalad and Hamel, 1990). Others even went further and suggested that firms should no longer practice strategy (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006).

Given the sophisticated nature of the concept and the dynamic organisational settings in which it applies, it was noted from reviewing the related literature that there is no single universally agreed definition for the term 'strategy' that captures all viewpoints and fits all situations (Brews and Purohit, 2007). Nonetheless, there seems to be a core set of characteristics resonating whenever the term is interpreted by scholars and practitioners alike. Aspects such as long-term goals, direction and guidance, resource allocation and utilisation, coordination and control have been determined as the key elements that characterise the strategy concept. Therefore, the aim of this section is not to end up with an assembled definition for the term 'strategy', since the researcher believes that by choosing one definition some elements of the term might be missed or over-emphasised, but rather to present some of the well-articulated definitions for the term.

Drawing from the classical school of thought which relied on long-term rational planning to achieve objectives through means such as the efficient allocation of resources, Chandler (1962) defined strategy as 'the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out those goals' (p. 13).

Strategy, according to Brian (1968), is the pattern or plan that integrates an organisation's goals and objectives with policies, programs, and action sequences into a cohesive whole. Brian stated that a well-formulated strategy is one that not just takes into account the organisation's internal competencies but also the shortcomings and the anticipated changes in the environment.

Michael Porter (1996) has described strategy in terms of positioning and focus, trade-offs and choice, fit and sustainability, and growth and leadership in an iterative style around the central theme that 'strategy is making trade-offs in competing'. The essence of strategy, as he has claimed, 'is choosing what not to do'.

Others such as Mintzberg (1994) took a more evolutionary view of strategy and distinguished between four types of strategy: intended strategy (what the organisation intends to do at the planning phase); unrealised strategy (what the organisation fails to achieve); emergent strategy (the subsequent direction that arises during implementation); and realised strategy (the final outcome). What emerges from Mintzberg's interpretation is that the strategy is both the outcome of the process and the process itself.

The variety of strategy definitions is a result of the evolution of strategic thinking over the past six decades. This is described next.

2.1.3 The evolution of strategic thinking

Several developments in the external environment have influenced the development of strategic thinking and strategy making. The first wave of strategy making occurred during the late 1940s and 1950s. The principal objective was to ensure that the budget was actually met. During this period (post-World War II) the economies of Western countries were enjoying high-growth rates, and the external and internal environments were relatively stable (Kuncoro, 1998).

As the external environment became more turbulent and competitive, budgeting became an ineffective way of managing organisational resources, in fact, it became risky to rely on past performance to predict or deal with the future as the budgeting method did (Kahn, 1994). By the 1960s the rapid growth in technology, as well as expansion of both organisational size and business opportunities, started to occur. As a result, managers were forced to think for the long term and consider long-range planning, which moved the focus onto organisational capabilities and environmental analysis. However, forecasting was limited to what were fairly predictable trends (Lewis, Morkel and Hubbard, 1993). The ongoing inability of companies to forecast economic fluctuations using the tools that were available to them at the time continued to limit their growth (Kuncoro, 1998).

During the 1970s, strategic planning replaced long-range planning. Many companies embraced this next level of strategy maturity when management began to understand the fundamental forces in their external environment rather than reacting to them or simply 'trending' the past (Tang and Bauer, 1995). It has been suggested that during the 1970s substantial progress was made in theory building, research making and in the field of business policy and strategy. This progress was seen to mark recognition that the area was developing as an academic discipline (Schendel and Hofer, 1979).

'Strategic Conflict Approach' is another approach to strategic thinking that rose in the 1980s. This approach uses the tools of game theory: hence, it implicitly views competitive outcomes as a function of the effectiveness of a firm to keep its rivals off-balance through strategic investments, advertising, pricing strategies, signalling, and the control of information (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997).

The resource-based perspective emphasises firm-specific capabilities and assets and the existence of isolating mechanisms, such as the fundamental determinants of firm performance (Rumelt, 1984). Unlike the 'competitive forces model' where the focus is on the industry and the firm's external environment, this model stresses the importance of the firm's internal environment. This model relies on two points: the first is the role of resources in defining the identity of the firm in terms of what it is capable of; the second is that profits are ultimately a return to the resources owned/controlled by the firm (Grant, 1993).

With the growing interest in the strategy concept within the business domain, numerous propositions have emerged, both supplementing and challenging the doctrines of the classical school. Over time, these contributions have culminated in a number of alternative frameworks, models and typologies. A notable aspect associated with this phase of development is a shift in emphasis from prescriptions towards descriptions of strategy (Mintzberg, 1978; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Mintzberg and Lampel (1999) later assembled ten different schools of strategy formation, which were classified as either the prescriptive or the descriptive type. They investigate whether these perspectives represent different processes of strategy making or different parts of the same process. They concluded that both scenarios are possible. The ten schools are grouped as follows: three prescriptive (design, planning, and positioning), five descriptive (cognitive, learning, power, cultural, and environmental), and two schools have elements of both prescriptive and descriptive (entrepreneurial and configuration).

After the 1990s the development of strategic thinking has been marked by the implicit and explicit integration of multiple perspectives leading to the adoption of more holistic frameworks (Barnett and Burgelman, 1996; Farjoun, 2002). Also, there was a shift in thinking about strategy formation towards synthesising the prescriptive and descriptive approaches into organic forms that emphasise organisational culture and learning, with an increasing recognition of the influence of organisational and environmental contextual factors.

Overall, these historical developments have represented a shifting perception and treatment of the strategy concept, from a quasi-scientific (analytical-prescriptive), through to an art-like (evolutionary-descriptive), to a craft-like (integrative-organic) perspective (Mintzberg, Lampel, Quinn and Goshal, 2003).

2.1.4 Strategy elements: Content, process, context, and outcomes

Strategy has traditionally been studied in terms of content, process, context and outcomes (although, in reality, they are all intertwined and inseparable). The content of strategy deals with three aspects: the overall goals of the firm, the scope of strategy, and the nature of specific strategies (Fahey and Christensen, 1986). The goals of the firm can be formally expressed in the form of objective statements or revealed as part of an unfolding strategic intent (Hamel and Prahalad, 1989). The scope of strategy indicates the span of control and the degree of pervasiveness of strategies pursued at each level of the organisational hierarchy (Fahey and Christensen, 1986). The strategies, whether formally agreed upon or emerged as patterns in decisions and actions, may be studied in numerous forms, such as programs, action plans archetypes or stages of a firm's growth and evolution. Even though the content of strategy is an important element, this study looks at the process by which strategies are formulated.

The process refers to the mechanisms or organisational processes through which strategies develop, deliberately or emergent, and the way they are realised through implementation (Chakravarthy and Doz, 1992). The scope of this research is to examine the strategic planning formation process (SPFP) and the formality of the process within the research context. Therefore, the emphasis is on deliberate strategies (as a result of a formal planning process) at the formation phase. The implementation phase of the strategic planning process is beyond the boundaries of this study as are emergent strategies.

The context of strategy, or the organisational settings in which strategies are formed and realised, relates to the internal and external organisational factors that shape the content and process of strategy. Anecdotal as well as empirical evidence suggests that the strategy process is contingent upon such diverse contextual factors as the size and maturity of the firm and organisational culture, as well as the demographics, personal attributes and the leadership styles of the key actors involved in the process (Papadakis, Lioukas and Chambers, 1998). The context of strategy is an important element of this research since one of the research aims is to identify the organisational and contextual factors that influence the strategic planning process.

The other important aspect of strategic management, but outside the scope of this study, is strategy outcomes 'organisational performance'. The link between strategy and performance has been the subject of research over a long period of time, and the majority of findings have supported a strong positive relationship between the two (Miller and Cardinal, 1994). It has also been found that the ways in which strategies are formed under the influence of a multitude of internal and external contextual factors do affect the effectiveness of strategies in enhancing organisational performance (Ketchen, Thomas and McDaniel, 1996). This dimension is also outside the scope of this study since the relation between strategic planning and organisational performance would require a longitudinal study that is not the intention of this research.

2.2 Public management

The management of public sector organisations is moving through an intriguing and transformational period all over the world. For the last twenty years, governments and international aid organisations have been launching major public sector reform programs (Kettle, 2002).

Public management is an extremely complex endeavour. It encompasses values, organisational arrangements, community interests, political choices, individual views, and organisational objectives that are often inconsistent and conflicting with those of stakeholders. In a sense, decision-makers within public organisations are deemed to be managers, policymakers, and constitutional lawyers.

Satisfying all the managerial, political, and constitutional demands placed upon public organizations is a challenging task, since emphasising one approach is certain to provoke criticism from those who think the other approaches are more important (Rosenbloom, 1998). However, the purpose of public sector organizations should remain the same.

2.2.1 Purpose of public sector organisations

The ultimate goal of public sector organisations is to help meet the nation's objectives, solve its problems and improve the quality of life of its residents. There is little consensus on how public organisations should proceed, as well as many alternative approaches on how they could succeed. Public sector organisations are both blessed and cursed by living in interesting 'good and bad' times (Rosenbloom, 1998, p. 40). However, the ultimate goal of public sector organizations might be diverted by political influences, where the quality of life of residents might not be seen as important as the objective or 'agenda' of the ruler. This is particularly true in some Arab societies where democratic systems are not fully exercised.

The government's obligation (in democratic systems) is to promote the public interest or 'public value', and to distinguish public administration from private management in a moral and basic sense that is serving a higher purpose. Even though it is often difficult to identify precisely what is in the public interest, there is no dispute about the obligation of public administrators to consider public interest as a general guide for their actions (Rosenbloom, 1998, p. 9). Creating public value means producing policies, programs, projects, services, and infrastructure that advance the public prosperity and the common good at a reasonable cost. In the United States, for example, creating public value means enhancing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all while also fostering a more perfect union (Moore, 2000). In Dubai, despite the immaturity of the democratic system, the ruler has stipulated public interest as an obligation and objective for the government of Dubai.

Governments are responsible in many ways for health care, education, infrastructure, defence, social welfare, and other areas. The increasing power of taxpayers and community groups, in western societies, holds government departments accountable for any shortcomings. In fact, it was noted by Heidenheimer, Heclo and Adams (1975) that the increasing role of government had led to serious dissatisfaction by the public. A crisis in values within the public services in many Western societies, including Australia in the 1970s, became a subject of considerable debate that is said to

have been marked by the rise of the movement of 'The New Public Management (NPM)' (Wilenski, 1988).

2.2.2 New public management

The movement, which bears the name of New Public Management, and which has been sweeping across the world and transforming many bureaucratic systems since the 1980s offers a new managerial ideology model. This new model challenged the bureaucratic ideology on which modern western administrative systems have been traditionally based (Horton, 2006). The new public management (NPM) philosophy has been described as a move towards a governance approach that places emphasis on transparency, performance management and accountability of public sector employees and managers. The philosophy has been identified as "one of the most striking international trends in public administration" (Heyer, 2010). The philosophy of the new public administration added 'Social Equity' to the equation. Fredrickson (1990) states that social equity is a phrase that comprises an array of value preferences, organisational designs and management style preferences in addition to emphasising the equality in government services, the responsibility for decisions and programs, and the responsiveness to the needs of citizens.

2.2.2.1 The theoretical background of new public management

The theoretical background of NPM is based on five microeconomic frameworks, public choice theory, principal agent theory, transaction cost theory, technical rational theory, and institutional theory. However, two had the biggest influence on NPM. These are: public choice theory and principal agent theory. Public choice theory, in particular, had a huge influence in the thinking and development of political science, public policy and public administration over the prior two decades (Heyer, 2010). A number of different terms have been used to describe public choice theory, including social choice theory, rational choice theory, the economics of politics, and the Virginia School. The main principle of the theory was that people were believed to be rational and that they were dominated by self interest. The theory also sought to minimise the role of the state and limit the discretionary power of politicians (Gorringe, 2001). It was believed that because politicians had abused their power, this power could be minimised through the restructuring of budgets and performance arrangements. As a result, government departments separated their policy making functions from the delivery of their service (Heyer, 2010).

The second main framework, principle-agent theory, is based on the notion that social and political life can be understood as a series of "contracts" (or agreed relationships) in which one party (the principle), enters into exchanges with another party (the agent). Usually such a contractual relationship is based upon the agent agreeing to undertake specific or various tasks on behalf of the principal and being compensated for the results (Gorringe, 2001).

2.2.2.2 The rise of new public management

NPM was one of the major public sector reform approaches that many western nations as well as many developing countries adopted during the last three decades. The rise of NPM is the outcome of a number of factors. The environment of the early 1980s was a time of great domestic and international upheaval with extensive economic, political and social changes occurring simultaneously across a number of countries (Casey, 2009). The political emphasis placed upon the public sector was to do more with less, which required public sector managers to critique their structures, budgets and service delivery processes (Gorringe, 2001). There was also increasing pressure from the public for the public sector to be more accountable for the use of public funds and to deliver better and more focused services (Gillespie, 2006).

Despite the pressure across western nations to review their bureaucracies, the adoption of NPM was uneven across governments and across sectors within same governments. For example, NPM was more readily accepted in New Zealand and the United Kingdom when compared to the United States. Moreover, a number of western nations, principally within Europe, only adopted selected features of NPM, while others embraced a managerial ethic without introducing NPM completely (Butterfield et al., 2004). There are a number of possible reasons for the differing acceptance rates. The first possible reason is the different fiscal crises each western nation experienced. These fiscal crises included a period of rapid inflation. The second possible reason was that the introduction of NPM was in response to a set of special social conditions developing in the long period of peace in the developed countries since the Second World War, and the unique period of economic growth which accompanied it.

After the adoption of NPM in western society's serious attempts were made by many developing countries to adopt NPM, this is referred to as the globalisation of NPM. A number of explanations stand behind the globalisation of new public managementas outlined by Common (1998). These are: the NPM "missionary"; the internationalisation of new right politics; the internationalisation of privatisation; the role of international organizations; and increasing policy transfer activity. First,

NPM had quickly become a "self-serving industry" to an army of consultants, business schools and advisers, who had helped in spreading NPM. Second, the link between the introduction of NPM and a global new right politics appears to be a strong one. For instance, NPM was adopted by Labour governments in New Zealand and Australia in the 1980s, both countries had social democratic parties in power yet both parties embraced the kind of market liberalism associated with NPM. Third, privatisation and NPM often appear to go hand in hand as policy options. Government officials, when reworking the relationship between the public and the private sectors may use the terms "privatisation" and "NPM" interchangeably, especially when the managerial techniques are drawn from the private sector. Privatisation and the spread of NPM are highly associated with the international environments that influence policy-making. Fourth, international institutions such as the OECD, European Union, World Bank, USAID have a role to play in the spread of NPM. For instance, the OECD's Public Management Committee produces a series of Public Management Studies which clearly intends to facilitate policy learning between member countries. As the World Bank and the IMF have an interest in ensuring "best practice", managerial techniques are likely to be imposed on countries. International organizations have political agendas that cannot be ignored; these organizations are at the centre of a continual conflict over the control and direction of global policy. However, these organizations only exercise their power on countries with weak finances.

Although each of these points of view has their merits, the globalisation of politics generally appears to offer a neat explanation for the spread of NPM. Globalisation assumes that the exercise of political authority and bureaucratic power is no longer constrained by the boundaries of nation states. In the case of NPM, this should not lead us to the conclusion that all countries will adopt a global standard for public management. Furthermore, there is the danger that "pressures for globalisation" produce unintended consequences if applied uniformly across diverse political or administrative cultures.

Within the Middle Eastern countries, despite the move toward government reform, the adoption of government reform initiatives remain limited, two factors, in particular, help explain the weak commitment to comprehensive reform by governments in the region. The first is the impact of soft budget constraints on the intensity of demand for reform (Vandewalle, 2003). Many governments in the region have been able to rely on revenues generated outside the domestic economy and flowing directly to the state through some combination of oil exports, remittances and foreign aid. In the past decade, this flow of resources has been sufficient to cushion the impact of economic

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stagnation and permit governments to adopt limited reforms, while postponing difficult decisions about structural adjustment and reorganization of the social contract. Secondly, governments in the Middle East have found it difficult to manage the relationship between political and economic reform. During the initial phases of economic reform in the 1980s, many governments accepted an instrumental connection between economic and political reform (Yousef, 2004).

2.2.2.3 A critique of new public management

The adoption of NPM has been subject to debate by many scholars due to reasons associated with the managerial acceptance, sector, culture, financial returns, and others. Next, brief presentation of what was noted in the literature.

The introduction of NPM has been successful in enhancing public sector organisational effectiveness and efficiency in the United Kingdom and in New Zealand, while in other western nations, the success of NPM has been limited due to the varying level of managerial acceptance. This has been due to the divergent capabilities of the managers concerned and the levels of efficiency prior to the reforms (Heyer, 2010). It is argued by some scholars that NPM is no longer recognised as a distinctive reform approach. Dunleavy et al.(2006) state that due to NPM evolving over time and the differing implementation context, NPM is now "dead". He elaborated by saying that If NPM is now everything, maybe it is nothing and certainly not a distinctive way of managing organizations.

Others such as Dunleavy and Hood (1994) maintain that NPM had not succeeded in its prime objective of defining the core purpose of individual public sector departments. Their critique is founded upon NPM having a flexible agenda during the period of 1980 to 2000, which enabled the incremental identification of the core functions of departments. They claim that this was due to "a residualising process of outsourcing solutions being applied piecemeal to different bodies of work"

A number of scholars also state that the appropriateness of some of the components of NPM utilised by the public sector has caused rigorous debate, especially in regard to the public sector's adoption of private sector business specific principles. This contention is based on the view that the public sector is vastly different from the private sector and as a result, the adoption of some private sector attitudes and theories are therefore inappropriate (Heyer, 2010). Public-private distinction will be covered in section (2.2.4).

Central to the debate on NPM is whether financial returns are achievable from this increasingly accepted framework. While success and its measurement are complex notions in a public sector context, the financial success of NPM is particularly interesting, given it has been both promoted and derided (White, 2005). In general terms, success is achieved when the strategy or policy choice taken produces the intended outcome. In the context of the public sector, a successful outcome is one which maximises the welfare of society, defined broadly as the sum of each citizen's individual welfare. The latter is evidenced by factors such as improved service quality, increased levels of customer satisfaction, and equitable access to services (Luke, Kearins,and Verreynne, 2011).

Although the concept of a more efficient approach to public sector management has been well received, a more comprehensive approach to NPM involving commercial and profitable operations within the public sector has also been subject to criticism. In particular, a traditional view of the public sector as inefficient and bureaucratic has resulted in much scepticism regarding the potential for profit under NPM. This scepticism is consistent with traditional property rights theory, which advances the view that the public sector is less efficient in using resources to maximize wealth. Increasingly, however, incidences of enhanced efficiency and financial success are being noted from studies of NPM practices in various countries (Khaleghian and Das Gupta, 2005). These occur alongside the achievement of social goals, with which public sector organisations are more traditionally associated.

The changes that accompanied the adoption of NPM are impacting public officials and their roles and the work they do, the ways in which they are managed, their relationships with the public and the criteria by which they are assessed, and these changes are continually evolving. As a result public service ethics are being replaced by public management logic with a corresponding identity and ethical framework for public servants. As the public service is losing its specificity and its unique role and mode of operation, being a civil servant or public official no longer has such a distinct identity (Horton, 2006). Individual civil servants are adjusting their perceptions of the collective identity, the public's perception of that identity and their own self-identity.

Some scholars such as Khaleghian and Das Gupta (2005) and Flynn (1995) critiques NPM on the ground that its future is not clear especially because NPM is applied to different contexts. First, there are different constitutional arrangements. In countries where there is a strong central government, with powers over the whole of the administration, centrally driven reforms are easier

to implement than in countries where 'subnational' government is both relatively large and constitutionally protected. Second, the neo-liberal arguments are clearly political: the use of market mechanisms as administrative instruments is not an idea free from ideological belief, which is stronger among Christian Democrats and Conservatives than among Social Democrats and Socialists. Convergence towards markets, both for service delivery and in respect of the labour market for civil and other public servants, would require an ideological commitment. Third, there are different cultural attitudes towards the role and nature of the State. The acceptability of a high level of State involvement in economic and social life has developed unevenly in Europe since the Second World War. Therefore, responses to fiscal deficits that demand a significant reduction in State activity meet different levels of resistance in different countries (Flynn, 1995).

The literature on NPM is of particular importance to the research context especially if we note that major public sector reforms have been initiated in Dubai public sector within the last decade. However, care should be taken on how to integrate such initiatives within the Middle Eastern culture. A number of points stated above such as the influence on public official identity, clarity of the future of NPM, the adoption of private sector attitudes and principles in public sector are all important in explaining some of the findings of this research as will be discussed in chapters seven and eight.

2.2.3 Move to adopt strategic planning as core practice in public sector

The main purpose of public organisations as described earlier is to create 'public value' and promote 'social equity' through changes to government's role, boundaries, structure and changes to the management paradigm. Fundamental commitment to social equity by the new public management meant that it is continuously engaged in change including change to those policies and structures that systematically inhibit social equity. In response to new public administration initiatives, new management tools and programs started to rise, some of which are: program-planning budgeting systems, policy analysis, productivity measurement, zero-base budgeting, and restructuring, all of which can be seen as positive moves in the direction of social equity (Pettigrew, Ferlie and McKee, 1994).

De Laine (1997) noted that two types of changes are required for public organizations to create 'public value' and promote 'social equity'. These are:
  - Changes that are concerned with the role, boundaries and structure of governments

- Changes that are more concerned with the internal management 'paradigm' of the public sector.

De Laine states that since there are elements of change common to both, the distinction is not entirely satisfactory, but the structure and boundaries of the state are changing in many countries. Referring to recent reform efforts, De Laine (1997) asserts that the kinds of major change seen in the UK and in New Zealand are clearly examples of the first category, with the USA in the second category.

Strategic planning is one way to help organisations and communities deal with change and enhance their ability to think, act, and learn strategically (Bryson, 2004, p. 15). Through strategic planning public sector organisations are able to promote strategic thinking, improve decision-making, enhance organisational effectiveness, align value chain activities, create interconnectedness, and better serve the broader societal system. All these benefits are seen as valid reasons to the adoption of strategic planning in public sector. Next, the benefits and models of strategic planning in public sector organisations are presented.

2.2.3.1 Benefits of strategic planning in the public sector

Researchers and writers have identified a number of benefits that are likely to arise from the use of strategic planning in public sector organisations. These are:
- promoting strategic thinking, acting, and learning: Van der Heijden (1996) states that dialogues and strategic conversations are initiated between main players once involved in strategic planning. Regular dialogue about key concerns are central features of improving the organisation and increasing its effectiveness (Barry, 1997)
- improving decision-making: recent studies have indicated that at least half of strategic decisions fail as a result of poor decision-making processes (Nutt, 1999)
- organisational effectiveness: organisations engaging in strategic planning deal effectively with rapidly changing circumstances and respond wisely to increasing or decreasing demands, in other words, become well managed. Many writers in the field have emphasised the positive relation that exists between well-managed organisations and good performing ones (Coggburn and Schneider, 2003)
- value chains: the value chain concept which refers to the relationship between inputs, processes and outputs of an organisation's products and services was introduced by Porter (1985) mainly for its applicability in the private sector. In the case of the public sector, the

value chain is represented by creating public value (output), at a reasonable cost (Bryson, 2004)

- interconnectedness: another benefit of strategic planning noted by Cleveland (2002) is the ability to manage the interconnectedness of the public sector with the private sector. The boundaries between the public, private and non-profit organisations have eroded. The blurring of these boundaries means that no one organisation or institution is fully in charge and yet many are involved, affected, or have a partial responsibility to act
- effectiveness of broader societal systems: most of the problems found in public sector organisations stretch beyond organisational boundaries. It is the interrelationships that exist between public sector organisations and/or between the public and private sectors that should be managed well to enhance the effectiveness of the societal systems. With the use of strategic planning, public sector organisations can better manage the relationship with other entities within the system of public organisations (Kettle, 2002).

Although strategic planning is expected to provide all those benefits, there is no assurance that it will. In fact, strategic planning is not always advisable (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998). Certain situations suggest holding off a formal strategic planning effort such as filling leadership positions, recovering from a cash flow crunch (Dutton, Frost, Worline, Lilius and Kanov, 2002), or the availability of skills and expertise necessary to carry out a formal strategic planning initiative (Bryson and Roering, 1989).

2.2.3.2 Strategic planning models in public sector organisations

Although strategic planning as a management approach was introduced into the public sector twenty years later than the private one, the American Department of Defense in the early 1960s adopted formalised strategic planning with the inception of the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS). PPBS aimed at effective and efficient use of financial resources based on needs, priorities, and projected available resources. Although not strategic planning in the traditional sense, still PPBS was an early antecedent in the public sector (Ott and Ott, 1972).

Starting in the 1980s, public organisations adopted the ideas of corporate-style strategic planning found in the private sector and applied these within their own context. Most approaches were based on previous corporate strategic planning models and included variations that account for unique public sector aspects. Many writers in the area hold that to be successful, the planning and

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implementation process should have specific elements that reflect the unique nature of the organisation and its environment (Koteen, 1991).

Managers in public organisations operate in a more complex environment compared to those in the private sector. They must deal more directly with questions of value, and democratic principles must underlie the process (Ring and Perry, 1985). These principles have implications for both the planning content and its process. For example, the process should be inclusive and open and embrace the organisation's stakeholders and constituencies, whereas the goals and objectives defined in the formulation of plans should conform to legal mandates and direction and be based on values such as equity and fairness. Even though these concerns bring to the picture additional difficulties to the planning process, authors have proposed models and techniques to deal with them.

The remainder of this part of section two presents the main strategic planning models used by different scholars and practitioners in the field of strategic planning for public sector organisations. The purpose of this section is not just to present the models and their purpose and scope, but also to explore the suitability and conditions that govern their successful use in the public sector.

The Harvard policy model is one of the longest-serving approaches to strategic planning and is said to be the principal inspiration behind the recent models of public sector strategic planning (Bryson and Roering, 1988). The main purpose of this model is to develop a best fit between the organisation and its environment. The Harvard model is seen to be applicable for planning at the corporate level and business unit level. Its application to the public sector can be seen through the consideration of various stakeholders' interests, identification of the strategic public planning unit, and the agreement of management teams on the actions to be taken. It is most suitable in circumstances where strategies are internally directed or negotiated (Wechsler, 1989).

The stakeholder's model approach suggests that the organisation will only be successful if it satisfies the needs of its various stakeholders. Since this model integrates economic, political and social concerns, it is one of the most applicable models to public organisations (Wechster, 1989). An important requirement is that its mission and values should be formed in a way that integrates different group interests otherwise the organisation will not be able to achieve the responses which satisfy its key stakeholders (Freeman, 1984).

Although the application of portfolio theory to the public sector may be less obvious, many public sector organisations do consist of multiple businesses that could benefit from the use of portfolio

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models. Portfolio models provide a method for measuring entities' strategic dimensions for the purpose of analysis and recommendations. The difficulty in using this model is the ability to determine what the strategic dimensions are. Also, within the public sector portfolio, models such as the Boston Consultant Group (BCG) approach must be modified to take into consideration the political and social elements that are considered to be important in the public sector (Wechsler, 1989).

Another approach that finds its way into the public sector is the competitive analysis approach. Porter (1985) identifies five key forces that shape an industry as the main elements for this approach. In recent times, as the public sector became more open to competition with the private sector, this approach has gained significant importance (Lamb, 1987). The strength of this approach is that it provides a systematic way of assessing industries and forces affecting organisations within the industry. However, a number of weaknesses exist in the applicability of this approach in the public sector due to the following reasons:

- Collaboration instead of competition is mainly what describes relationships of the public sector with other organisations.
- The considerations of social and political elements that shape the public sector are less apparent in this approach.
- The approach is mainly related to identifying industry structure and forces within the industry that might not be apparent to public sector organisations.

The strategic issue management approach refers to the development of organisational strategies in response to critical issues that may impact the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives (Ansoff, 1980). The strategic issue approach is seen as being applicable and appropriate to the public sector with its strength being the ability to recognise and analyse strategic issues quickly (Wechsler, 1989). However, no specific advice is offered on how to frame the issues other than a situation analysis. Its effective application in the public sector comes from its ability to identify the strategic issues (Bryson and Roaring, 1988).

Importing private sector strategic planning into public organisations requires attention to the differences in the context in which planning takes place. These differences not only affect the design and content of the strategic planning formation process, but also affect the implementation of the process. Therefore, it is important at this stage to distinguish characteristics of public sector organisations from those of private ones.

2.2.4 Public-private distinction

Reform movements, such as the New Public management movement, often propose alternatives that involve applying to public management models and techniques drawn from business management (such as strategic planning). Transporting a technique across sectors raises much-discussed questions about whether one can apply a business technique in a public organisation, and whether certain adaptations or adjustments must be made. In other words, why is it that some strategic management concepts and approaches used extensively and effectively in the private sector cannot be readily applied in the public sector? In order to answer this question, scholars and academics have suggested a number of important differences between both sectors that need to be taken into account to ensure the effective and appropriate use of management approaches within public sector organisations (Hatten, 1982).

Most of these differences between public and private organisations are attributed to economic and political conditions and the effect these conditions have on the organisation's external relations and internal processes (Rainey, 1983). Another attribute of these differences is ownership. Wamsley and Mayer (1973) contend that public organisations are owned and funded by the government, while private organisations obtain funding from private sources, such as market transactions. However, some writers argue that public and private organisations are very similar and that management roles and processes can be transported between the organisations (Allison, 1983; Lau, Newman and Broedling, 1980).

2.2.4.1 Characteristics of public sector organisations

As described above, the lines between the public and private sectors are often blurred, and several aspects of management are generic to both sectors. However, fundamental differences exist not in management practices as much as in their intentions and paradigms. These differences can be summarised as follows:

The extent of legislative and judicial authority stated by the constitution: constitutions fragment power and control over public organisations; they help define the legal rights and obligations of agencies, individuals and groups, and the constitutional rights of the employees. The extent of

legislative and judicial authority over public administration leaves chief executives with only limited control over the organisation compared to that commonly exercised by executives in the private sector (although some might argues that recent changes in governance regulations for US-corporations have brought the two much closer together).

The separation of power between policymakers (which could be more than one group) and implementers: even though policymakers and implementers share a legitimate interest in public administration, the separation between them causes some confusion and mis-coordination. Ring and Perry (1985) see the most fundamental difference between the two sectors as being the separation of policy formulators from policy implementers.

Public interests: the government obligation to promote the public interest distinguishes managerial practices in the public and private sectors. A central issue presented by public administration is an assurance that public administrators represent and respond to the interests of the citizens. By contrast, private firms are thought to be best serving the general interest by pursuing their own economic interests (Porter, 1985).

The market: a closely related distinction between the public and private sector concerns the market. It is generally true that public organisations do not face free, competitive markets in which the market is less constraining in the public than in the private sector. Private firms usually face markets in a direct fashion. Under free market conditions, if a private entity fails to produce a product or service at a competitive price, the consumers will move to another producer. Whereas the remoteness of market forces in the public sector makes it difficult to determine the value or perceived value of products and services to consumers because they are not sold in a free market.

Managerial problems: Newman and Wallender (1978) suggest that particular characteristics of public sector organisations seem to account for managerial problems not always encountered in the private sector such as:
- an intangible service compounded by multiple service objectives
- weak customer/client influence
- strong influence on decision-making by external stakeholders
- restraints on the use of rewards and punishments
- centralised structures.

Further problems in non-profit organisations associated with goal-setting have been recognised by Hatten (1982). These are:

- major goals may not be clearly evident or obvious
- measurability of goals and objectives since many objectives within the public sector are subjective in nature
- linking performance to service effectiveness
- communication problems between strategy makers and elected officers.

The characteristics of public sector organisations have led to difficulties in the formation, implementation and control of strategic planning.

2.2.4.2 Difficulties associated with strategic planning in public organisations

The strategic planning process in public organisations is not a simple process. It requires taking into consideration the characteristics of public sector organisations stated above, as well as the contextual elements that constitute the external environment. A number of difficulties were noted from reviewing the literature in this field as follows.

Constraining forces: Managers of public organisations do not have the luxury of an unlimited discretion to set the strategic direction of the organisation and decide how strategies will be implemented. They must adhere to the organisational mandate and legal framework of the organisation (Wamsley, Goodscll, Rohr, Stivers, White and Wolf, 1987). Rainey, Backoff and Levine (1976, p. 238) elaborated by stating that the formal, legal environment of government organisations is the source of limitations on the autonomy and flexibility of the public organisation and its managers. In addition Nieboer (2011) state that the strategic planning models implicitly suppose a vertical, top-down implementation of policies, whereas in reality, policies are also formed by other strategies, beliefs and motives in the organisation.

Another type of constraining force found in the literature is constraints on financial resources and funding. These are subject to political forces that make obtaining funds more complicated than in the private sector. There may not be political support to fund certain strategic initiatives even if there is a customer demand for it. In addition, implementation may suffer bureaucratic barriers associated with personnel rules and regulations. The pervasiveness of this difficulty is

demonstrated by the number of writers who have argued that these types of constraints are sources of problems for managers in public organisations (Blumenthal, 1983).

Goal conflict and ambiguity: It is frequently impossible to satisfy all the managerial, political, and constitutional demands placed upon public organisations. Emphasising one approach is certain to provoke criticism from those who think the other approaches are more important. Because setting goals for a public organisation is a highly political process, the tendency is to satisfy as many stakeholders as possible (mainly the ones with higher political influences). In doing so, substance gets flushed out in the process of political negotiation, and agreement is achieved at the expense of goals that are ambiguous and sometimes conflicting and difficult to implement (Miller, 1989). Many writers emphasise the diverse and ambiguous nature of goals in public organisations, including Banfield (1975) and Rainey et al. (1976).

Organisational culture: Strategic planning is inherently change-oriented and requires managers to establish goals that call for modifications in the traditional practices carried out in the organisation (Meyer, 1979). However, the bureaucratic character of public organisations can develop a culture that minimises risk and inhibits change. There are few incentives to change, and rules and regulations may limit the discretion of managers, which result in a conservative attitude toward change. In some cases, it is more appropriate for public managers to avoid risk and change. For example, risk-taking may violate a fiduciary role or a legal responsibility (Lorvich, 1981).

Organisational alignment: Organisational alignment has internal and external dimensions. Internal alignment refers to matching the individual's goals with the organisation's goals. This alignment is significant for strategic planning because it addresses the tension between an organisation's leaders and the bureaucrats who are normally sympathetic to the needs of the clients. External alignment involves the degree of the match between the organisation's strategy and the preferences of political authorities and other stakeholders. Stakeholder diversity and dispersion can be a source of conflict for the agency as it attempts to accommodate the views of interest groups and the public. Political actors weigh into the process of formulating and implementing strategic goals to make sure their objectives are met, especially if the goals are ambiguous and conflicting. The tension between the organisation's leaders and bureaucrats and the tension between an organisation's strategy and stakeholders is complicated (Allison, 1983).

Measuring results of strategic planning: Measuring the results of an organisation's strategic initiatives is difficult in the public sector, because the goals are often ambiguous and the desired outcomes are nebulous. In most cases, performance in public organisations is determined by the degree to which the organisation has met its legal mandates, mission responsibilities, and the legislative program objectives. Because of the multiple diverse stakeholders, expectations for the organisation are often unclear and have a pervasive vagueness (Backoff and Nutt, 1990). Lack of clear benchmarks to measure progress affect the ability to develop incentives and control mechanisms.

The Difficulties associated with strategic planning in public sector as well as the characteristics of public sector organizations are of particular importance to this research study, since the developed research propositions are greatly dependent on those characteristics and difficulties. Moreover many of research findings are explained based on those elements. This will be comprehensively covered in the following chapters.

2.2.5 Overview of the Dubai public sector

The previous subsections described public administration in terms of purpose, benefits, models, characteristics, as well as difficulties of strategic planning. The intention here is to narrow the scope by looking at the Dubai public sector as the geographical context of the research.

Dubai is one of the seven emirates that make up the federal state of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The constitution of UAE was first written in 1971 and reaffirmed several times since then. The constitution declares Shari'a (Islamic law) to be a principle source for law in the United Arab Emirates. The national constitution delineates a division of power between the federal government and the governments of each of the seven emirates. The central government is responsible for foreign policy, defence, education, public health, the communications infrastructure, and immigration and territorial issues. Powers not given to the federal government are reserved in the constitution for the individual states of the UAE. The degree of local governance varies in accordance with the size of the emirate and the size of the local community.

The UAE has a federal government system that sets the federal laws and regulations, but each emirate runs its own local government and has much autonomy in managing its own affairs,

especially in economic and social matters. The Dubai local government is structured into three main layers:

The Executive Council: Is the centre of the body of the centre of Dubai government. It is responsible for setting the overall strategic direction and objectives of Dubai. Members of the Executive Council are the Department's Director Generals from the Dubai government. The Executive Office (TEO) was established to support the operations of the Executive Council. It provides the Council with decision-making support, policy analysis, and economic research. In addition, TEO is responsible for putting together the Dubai Strategic Plan, fiscal, human resources, overall government policy, and government performance restructures.

The Executive Council Sector Committees: There are four Executive Council Sector Committees that oversee the activities of the government departments, the policymaking, and the strategy development in specific sectors of the emirate. The four sectors are:
1. Economy & Trade
2. Safety, Security & Justice
3. Infrastructure, Land & Environment
4. Human Resources & Social Development.

Government Departments: They develop policy proposals and programs to deliver the goals set out in the Dubai Strategic Plan for each department.

The development of the Dubai public sector has considerably gained the attention of Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice-President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai. On 17 April 2007, he announced the strategy of the UAE which highlights the overall direction of the UAE government for the next three years. The strategy covers six major areas of social development, economic development, government sector development, justice and safety, infrastructure, and the development of rural areas. In an unusual step in the Arab region, Sheikh Al Maktoum instructed all ministries and governmental organisations within less than one year to develop strategic plans to consider the overall strategy of the UAE. Sheikh Al Maktoum said, 'The passage of time, change in perceptions have enticed us to think differently and adopt International Best Practices (IBP) in all areas of governance. A strategy is therefore needed to take us to the next level'.

The Dubai public sector consists of 29 government entities distributed among different organisational types. The main organisational types are authorities and departments, representing approximately 65% of the Dubai public sector. According to the Dubai Statistical Center, the number of employees in the Dubai public sector for 2008 is 78,529, an increase of 16% over 2006 figures with expatriates representing 72% of the workforce (2007 Statistical Yearbook – Emirate of Dubai).

The Dubai public sector consists of 29 government entities distributed among different organisational types. The main organisational types are authorities and departments, representing approximately 65% of the Dubai public sector. According to the Dubai Statistical Center, the number of employees in the Dubai public sector for 2008 is 84,495, an increase of 7.5% over 2007 figures with expatriates representing over 68% of the workforce (2008 Statistical Yearbook – Emirate of Dubai).

The economic climate in Dubai was considered one of the strongest in the region due to a number of factors such as: a relatively stable political system; solid infrastructure; strategic geographical location and a developed banking system. In addition, successful economic policies embraced by the UAE government has led to high growth rates (Annual Social and Economic Report United Arab Emirates – August 2008).

After reviewing the main elements of strategic planning literature in general, and the literature of public administration in particular, the following section presents the strategic planning literature within the Middle Eastern context.

2.3 Strategic planning and management style in the Middle Eastern context

Most of the literature on strategic planning comes from Western countries and the United States in particular. The resulting frameworks may not necessarily be applicable to developing countries (Haines, 1988), leading to questions about the suitability and efficacy of North American management paradigms and practices for developing countries (Gelfand et al., 2007; Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990). Consequently, scholars have been advised to research indigenous management practices (Tung and Aycan, 2008; Scott-Jackson, 2008).

While much is known of the practices of management in Western countries, comparatively little is known about their equivalent in Arab countries (Atiyyah, 1993; El-Kot and Leat, 2005; Elbanna, 2008; Parnell and Hatem, 1999). Moreover, most of the studies that have been conducted in Arab countries suffer from major conceptual and methodological weaknesses. This leads to doubt upon the validity of their results (Atiyyah, 1997).

Despite the fact that a huge gap exists in the literature of strategic planning in the Middle Eastern context, serious attempts were made by scholars and academics to close the gap in the literature. These attempts are described next.

2.3.1 Strategic planning in the Middle Eastern context

Despite the fact that a huge gap exists in the literature of strategic planning in the Middle Eastern context, serious attempts were made by scholars and academics to close the gap in the literature. These are described next.

In an attempt to investigate the relationship between strategic planning practice, management participation, and strategic planning effectiveness in the Middle East, Elbanna (2008 and 2009) conducted two studies, one on privately owned firms working in Egypt, and the other on public and private firms in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The results of both studies, contrary to expectation, showed that management participation in Arab countries does not contribute to strategic planning effectiveness. A likely explanation for this finding is that the influence of participation on strategic planning effectiveness may be moderated by other variables such as company culture (Marchington, Wilkinson, Ackers and Goodman, 1994).

Moreover, the social-cultural context in Arab countries should be taken into account when interpreting such results. For example, Parnell and Hatem (1994) noted that seeking subordinates' participation is considered as a symbol of weak management in the Egyptian setting. However, the studies show that the practice of strategic planning positively and significantly influences its effectiveness. Further, both strategic planning practice and management participation jointly enhance the effectiveness of strategic planning.

A recent study conducted by Yusuf and Saffu (2009) on planning practices, strategy types, and the performance of indigenous firms in Bahrain and United Arab Emirates (UAE) shows that whilst

most of the firms are long-term planners, many of them do not have a planning process and the majority of the firms are prospectors and analysers (Prospectors are innovators and market leaders who accept higher risk where analysers are opportunistic in the sense of utilizing the best qualities of defenders and prospectors and use informal, adaptive strategies to create alignment). Prospectors in this research context perform considerably better than all the other strategy types which is consistent with other findings regarding significant relationships between strategy type and performance (Khalifa, 2008; Miles and Snow, 1978).

However, the findings regarding strategy type and implementation are inconsistent with previous studies. Also, the study showed that there are no significant differences between planning in young firms compared to mature ones, which is at variance with past research that indicates that as firms become older, their planning intensity diminishes slightly, while younger firms have higher planning intensity (Risseeuw and Masurel, 1994).

One of the first attempts to investigate strategic planning (SP) practices in UAE firms was conducted by Al Shaikh (2001) through a study of 131 firms. The purpose of the study was to assess the presence or absence of strategic planning within the research context, to test whether relationships exist between strategic planning and firm characteristics, and to investigate who is involved in setting strategic planning. Some important findings emerged from this study: First, prevalence of strategic planning practices within this research context is low and not all companies believe in the value of SP. The impact of cultural and environmental factors might be behind such findings. Second, a lack of significant differences between small and large companies regarding planning orientations was related to the cultural and environmental factors. This finding is not consistent with the widespread assumption that the larger the company and the older it is the longer will be its planning horizon. Furthermore, it refutes the argument that large and old firms are likely to be established and, therefore, will have a clearer sense of vision for the future than smaller and younger firms. The fact that most companies in the Emirates are new should not be ignored, especially in that about 42% of the companies included in the study were 10 years old or less.

In order to develop a profile of organisations working in Egypt with respect to their practice of strategic planning, Elbanna (2007) investigated attitudes on the importance of strategic planning, the extent to which the tools of strategic planning are employed, and the involvement by the organisational hierarchy in the strategic planning process. The results showed that a positive attitude towards strategic planning has been noted. However, high percentages of the respondents

are not familiar with some of what are seen as the traditional tools of strategic management. Also, the results indicated that the formality of the strategic planning process is lower than the formality noted in studies conducted in developed countries. For example, 35.8% of organisations in this study do not have written strategic plans compared to 19.5% in the USA (Glaister and Falshaw, 1999; Ibrahim, Angelidis and Parsa, 2004). Further, the study showed that there are relatively few significant differences in the findings between manufacturing and service organisations compared with the differences between local and foreign organisations and also between small and large organisations within the research context.

Khan and Al-Buarki (1992) looked at planners' familiarity and awareness of strategic planning tools and techniques in Bahrain, one of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries that shares common economic and socio-cultural characteristics with the United Arab Emirates. The study targeted business firms from various sectors as well as public organisations. Ten common strategic planning tools and techniques were selected, which are usually found in use. The result of the study showed that over a fifth of the planners (22 per cent) reported using such techniques regularly, with an additional 17 per cent saying they had tried more of them. The two most widely used tools are financial analysis and SWOT analysis, followed by gap and SPACE analyses. The product life cycle, experience curve and PIMS had received limited use. At the sector level, financial institutions used strategic tools more than other types of firms. The study also showed that a large number of the respondent 'planners' (61 per cent) are either unaware of or have never used these tools and techniques, and require development programs.

A recent attempt to study the nature and practice of strategic planning in organisations based in UAE was made by Elbanna (2010). The focus of the study was to investigate the time taken for preparing strategic plans and whether these plans are written or not; to explore views and attitudes on the importance of strategic planning; to assess the extent to which the tools of strategic planning are employed within the research context; and to reveal the level of involvement in the strategic planning process by people at different organisational levels. The results of the study showed that only 17.7% of organisations do not have written strategic plans in UAE. Approximately one-third of organisations took one to four months in preparing their strategic plan, and large organisations required a significantly longer time to prepare the strategic plan than small firms do. In relation to attitudes toward strategic planning, a strong belief in the importance of strategic planning was found. The study also concluded that environmental uncertainty is seen as an obstacle to the planning process whereas availability of resources is not. In relation to the use of strategic planning

tools, the result showed that financial statements, cost-benefit analyses, and (SWOT) analyses are the three most used tools for strategic analysis. The study also concluded that participation in strategic planning is mostly limited to top management, the groups of middle/lower managers and outsiders' participation is minimal.

From the above Middle Eastern Literature in relation to strategic planning a number of variations were noted either between Middle Eastern Studies or with literature in different contexts. For example Al Shaikh (2001) noted that prevalence of strategic planning practices is low and not all companies believe in the value of SP. This is inconsistent with Elbanna (2010) who found a strong belief in the importance of strategic planning. This inconsistency however could be due to the time span between the two studies since many strategic initiatives were launched in the last decade and the benefits of it are more materialized in Elbanna study. Another example is the influence of organisational characteristics on planning. Yusuf and Saffu (2009) showed that there are no significant differences between planning in young firms compared to mature ones, while past research indicates that as firms become older, their planning intensity diminishes slightly and younger firms have higher planning intensity (Risseeuw and Masurel, 1994). The inconsistencies between research findings and as decribed previously might be a result of cultural differences rather than business practice.

Most of the findings of strategic planning studies within the Middle Eastern context are explained or justified based on Middle Eastern culture. Therefore, it is important at this stage to shed some light on cultural differences between East and West.

2.3.2 Cultural differences in management style between "East and West"

While there is an established knowledge base within economic studies that examines trade developments in the Middle East and Arab states, there is lack of knowledge in business practices and management philosophies in Arab countries. The management inquiry in Arab countries is scarce and fragmented (Robertson, Al-Khatib, & Al-Habib, 2002). However, an important contribution to the management literature in the Middle East is the influence of Islamic principles on management practice and the differences between conflict management style between Middle Eastern and western societies.

2.3.2.1 Islam and managerial dimensions

Islam is more a "way of life" than a mere religion. In a nutshell, it teaches believers how to oblige to their faith. In the context of "Islam and Work," Islam sheds light on the obligations of the worker towards his work in particular and his employer or employee in general. The more committed to his religion, the more committed he has to be to his work. Hence, as per the teachings of Islam – by working more dedicatedly as per the agreed terms of his employment, the employee justifies his earning and livelihood and at the same time stands out as a role model for the believers and non-believers alike. Nobility, patience, self-discipline, good appearance, sincerity, truthfulness, servitude, and trust are identified as major Islamic values. (Khan, Farooq and Hussain, 2010). Islamic values were found to influence management practice on at least four dimensions: corporate culture, planning, motivation, and communication.

Corporate culture: the Islamic culture is derived from the Islamic world view that does not necessarily reflect contemporary Muslims' societies. Ideal Islamic culture subscribes neither high power distance nor low (Kazmi and Ahmad, 2006). Islam teaches to respect and care for others at the workplace irrespective of the power or position one holds. Therefore, any power distance and authority's respect is due to the benevolence in mutual relationship. Islamic culture promotes the feeling of social belongingness where a respect for individual's right is guaranteed. For the cultivation of an Islamic corporate culture, Islam has provided a number of values to be applied in organizations such as: wisdom, humility, fortitude, justice and while simultaneously shunning pride.

Motivation: In modern times, the triggers to motivate an employee are bonuses, perks, and other incentives which are usually in monetary form. The employees are attracted towards these additional benefits, as a result they become more productive and efficient. Despite the fact that material gains are important source of motivation to employees, the teachings of Islam conveys the message that work and religion itself are a great source of motivation for Muslims. A Muslim knows that when he/she is working, he/she is worshipping god, and that is a powerful motivator in itself irrespective of any material gain. Sources of motivation for Muslim workers are not confined to the higher standards of living and self fulfillment but to the fact that his work is a morally good deed which will ultimately help him/her to attain true success in this world and well-being in the hereafter. When a Muslim works with this meaningful objective, any reduction in the value of worldly and materialistic reward does not affect his motivational levels and performance.

Communication: communication is commonly understood as the imparting, sharing, or exchanging of information, news, views, thoughts, attitudes or ideas between two or more people (Shah and D'Souza, 2008). To follow the Islamic perspective, individual should communicate in such a manner that it pleases Allah (god) and communicate the message effectively at the same time. While communicating, Islam promotes kindness and affection towards others. An element of politeness in conversation is also required.

Planning: planning to reach the final aim, should be done a way that it goes parallel to Islamic principles. If one has to follow the Islamic perspective to plan and compete then the intention should be to strive and achieve in the cause of Allah (god). While competing, one should remember the teachings of Quran (holly book). If the intention is dishonorable such as envy, jealousy, or mutual rivalry then it does not follow the Islamic view (Kazmi and Ahmad, 2006).

Planners within an Islamic setting must spell out the strategy and the actions that will be put into practice or operation in the early stages of strategy development. This is a requirement of Islamic work ethics discussed previously under the communication dimension. In addition, planners must devise a strategy based on Islamic principles. For example, the strategic planning process should take into consideration the overall benefit for the community and not just for the organisation. Moreover, care should be taken while planning not to involve the organisation in unfavorable actions such as employees lay off. In addition, financial strategy of the organisation should not deal with or relay on financial interest in any way or form (Al-Buraey, 2001).

2.3.2.2 Managers from the Islamic perspective

Managers working from the Islamic perspective should clarify goals, set objectives, consult and respect followers, and deal with followers kindly, humanely and with fairness. In addition a manager should have a balanced personality where he is strong but not violent, lenient but not weak, and generous but not extravagant. Kindness in Islam is seen as a form of strength and, therefore, managers are expected to be kind enough to others whether they are employees, customers, or suppliers. Islam emphasizes relationships among people which should advocate equal rights for all, and urges leaders to seek advice or information from their followers in the carrying out their affairs. If this is translated into behaviour at workplace then this should mean a consultative decision-making process, and a fairly diffuse power structure. Self-discipline, trustfulness, honesty, respect, resolve, and loyalty should encourage managers to trust their

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subordinates judgment and integrity, which could result in participative management. Co-operation, perseverance, and family-like relationships among people, should encourage teamwork and mutual support, and enhance productivity within an organization (Khan, Farooq and Hussain, 2010).

Manager should be trustworthy since trust is a moral responsibility for everyone in the performance of their duties and their social, political and economic lives (Hanafi and Sallam, 2006). The Quran (holly book) says "Allah doth commend you to render back your trust to those to whom they are due and when ye judge between man and man. That ye judge with justice". A manager should therefore judge employees in an unbiased manner, and place considerable attention on his/her actions with issues associated with justice to employees or subordinates.

2.3.2.3 Leadership from the Islamic perspective

Robbins (2001) defines leadership as the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals. Great leaders possess distinct qualities of confidence, iron-will, determination and strong decision-power. (Kazmi and Ahmad, 2006) informs that in Islam, leadership is trust. It is psychological contract between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them and to treat them fairly and with justice. The focus of leadership in Islam is on doing good. According to Islam, the two major roles of a leader are those of servant- and guardian-leader. A leader is the servant of his followers. He is to seek their welfare and guide them towards good. On the other hand as the guardian-leader, the Muslim leader should protect his community against tyranny and oppression, encourage god-consciousness and promote justice.

Leadership in Islam is rooted in belief and willing submission to the creator, Allah. It aims at serving Allah. To serve God, a Muslim leader is to act in accordance with the order of God and his Prophet, and must develop a strong Islamic character. Kazmi and Ahmad (2006) highlight the key moral bases of Islamic leadership. These are: Islam, Iman (faith in God), Taqwa (inner consciousness) and Ihsan (love of god). Islam means achievement of peace, with oneself and with the creation of God, through willing submission to him. Iman implies in the oneness of God and his prophet. A leader with strong Iman will consider himself and all his possessions as belongings to god. He will bow his ego, his ideas, his passions and his thinking to god. A leader with firm Iman will not dodge responsibility for his actions, and will continuously emphasize good deeds. Taqwa is the all-encompassing, innerconsciousness of duty towards god and awareness of one's

accountability towards him. Taqwa will restrain a Muslim leader or follower from behaving unjustly – whether to community members, to customers, to suppliers, or to anybody else. Ihsan is the love of god which motivates the individual Muslim to work towards attaining god's pleasure.

2.3.2.4 Conflict Management

In studying cultural differences among nations individualism versus collectivism is considered one of the most important dimensions by researchers in studying cultural differences between human societies. It can be described as the conflict between what an individual wants and the interests of the group. Individualistic cultures value individual goals over group goals and individual concerns over group concerns, while collectivist cultures value group goals over individual goals and group concerns over individual concerns (Elsayed-EkJiouly and Budam, 1996)

Comparing Middle Eastern countries with western ones on the individualism- collectivism dimension showed that the Middle Eastern countries were categorized as a collectivistic culture whereas the United States was categorized as an individualistic culture. In other words, in the United States it is believed that individuals have the right to a private life and to take care of themselves. They are self-oriented and emotionally independent, and the emphasis is on individual initiative, the right to privacy, autonomy, and individual decisions. (Trompenaars, 1994). On the other hand in Middle East it is believed that individuals' identity is based on social system, and emotionally dependent on their institutions and organizations.

The individualism-collectivism dimension can help determine the management style of handling conflict. In a study conducted by Elsayed-EkJiouly, and Budam (1996) the results indicates that differences exist in styles of handling conflict between American executives and Arab Middle Eastern executives. Arab Middle Eastern executives scored higher on the styles of integrating and avoiding while American executives scored higher on the styles of obliging, dominating, and compromising. These findings are a demonstration of an individualistic versus collectivistic culture. It is concluded that executives from countries which differ in culture tend to adopt different strategies to resolve conflict, develop different anticipations about possible results, and be motivated by different causes.

In addition to individualism- collectivism dimension Al-Ajmi (2007) found that personal characteristics of Arab executives play an important role in determining the style of conflict

management. Al-Ajmi found that there were significant differences in choosing the conflict management style with regard to years of experience, managerial level, and gender. However, these differences could not be found with regard to age.

Cultural differences stated above are strong determinants of success and failure of many initiatives and practices. The understanding of Middle Eastern culture particularly the influence of Islamic work ethics will allow for better management of strategic planning obstacles and barriers within the Middle Eastern context.

2.4 Strategic planning and organisational elements

The previous sections looked at strategic planning from different areas and from different contexts (private vs public; Western societies vs Arab societies). In this section, strategic planning will be investigated in relation to organisational elements. Three organisational elements were noted in the literature and represent an important field in relation to research objectives. These are: organisation size, age (maturity), and the organisational level.

2.4.1 Organisation size

Organisation size has gained considerable attention in strategic planning literature. The size of the organisation is frequently defined by the number of full-time employees (e.g. Fredrickson, 1984). Research into organisation size and planning has been tackled from different aspects. Where some scholars have looked at the influence of organisation size on strategic planning practice, others investigate potential benefits of planning in large firms compared to small ones; some scholars went even further to assess the influence of organisation size on the planning horizon, the influence of uncertainty on planning in small and large firms, and even the relation between strategic flexibility and firm size was looked at. Next is presentation of what has been noted in the literature.

Mintzberg (1994) argues that planning may be more important in large firms due to its ability to improve coordination and control. Robbins (1990) added that size has its strongest effect on organisation structure up to a level of approximately 1500 employees. Behaviour formalisation as well as organisation complexity increases according to size up to this level. After that, size becomes a less important determinant of structure as the organisation has already become highly

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formalised. Plans can be used to aid coordination either by making individual behaviours more organised or through forecasting events where increased coordination will be necessary to give organisational members time to prepare for that event. This argument is supported by Sapp (1980) who provided strong evidence of a positive relationship between organisational size and the use and formality of planning. In addition, large organisations also tend to be highly formalised through the use of standardised mechanisms. However, because behaviour patterns are institutionalised by other means, the potential for exploiting the benefits of strategic planning is likely to be reduced in large firms.

Risseeuw and Masurel (1994) note that larger firms have greater planning incidences than smaller firms due to the ability of large organisations to access more resources (Barney, 1991). In the public and non-profit organisations it was found by a number of scholars that large organisations were more likely to plan than smaller ones (Stone, 1989; Young and Sleeper, 1988).

Numerous organisational researchers have recognised environmental scanning as central to the strategy-making process (for example, Andrews 1971; Hambrick 1982; Miles, Snow, and Pfeffer, 1974). However, research on how perceived environmental uncertainty impacts strategic planning did not take into account organisation size and was developed extensively for large firms only (Aldrich 1979; Hambrick 1983). Large firms have been reported to increase planning in the face of turbulent environments (Lindsay and Rue, 1980), while small firms' resource constraints, in terms of managerial time as well as financial resources, make such a response less likely (Patterson, 1986). Matthews and Scott (1995) found a negative relationship between perceived environmental uncertainty and sophistication of planning in small firms. This is because small firms typically have less management expertise to draw on than large firms; therefore, they are likely to be less sure of their possible responses to uncertainty. Further, while both large and small firms may be unsure about the likely effectiveness of following a particular course of action in response to uncertainty, the superior resource base of large firms gives them greater degrees of 'strategic freedom' (Bourgeois, 1984).

Moreover, large size creates opportunities for a firm to enhance the level of specialisation and it is through specialisation that firms are able to realise the benefits of experiential learning and economies of scale (Dobrev and Carroll, 2003). Firms owe such scale and efficiency advantages to a complex system of repetitive and specialised routines.

The literature also reveals that size has conflicting effects on strategic flexibility. The firm's strategic flexibility refers to the ability to develop and deploy capabilities that enable the firm to reconfigure its resource base quickly and effectively (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000) or dismantle its current strategies (Harrigan, 1985). Effective strategic flexibility requires a responsive organisation (Sanchez, 1995) and also requires extensive information processing capabilities (Ansoff, 1965). In an attempt to investigate the relationship between strategic flexibility and firm size, Weerdt, van der, Verwaal and Volberda (2007) assess the effect of firm size on the capability to recognise environmental changes and on the ability to respond to it. Weerdt et al. (2007) found that while large firm size is negatively associated with organisation design parameters (technology, structure, culture), it is positively related to environmental information processing capabilities. Therefore, large firm size increases the capability to recognise environmental changes and simultaneously reduces the ability to respond to it.

In an attempt to study whether organisation size creates conditions of rigidity or fluidity with respect to adaptation to change, Ford (2009) empirically examined processes used to implement planned change initiatives such as strategic planning and its associated outcomes in small and large organizations. His findings show that small organizations employs significantly lower levels of refreezing activities and realize lower levels of implementation success relative to large organisations. This is due to the fact that the hierarchical structure of large organizations facilitates command of the refreezing process. Control systems guide closure of performance gaps necessary for effective outcomes, positioning large organisations to realise relatively high levels of implementation success from their planned change initiatives.

In relation to the planning horizon and organisation size, it is suggested that a firm's planning horizon is determined by a number of organizational factors such as size, type and age (Harrison, 1995). Larsen (1998) states that the companies selecting short planning horizons are more likely to be small companies rather than large ones. However, that might not be the case within this research context. In a study conducted by Al Shaikh (2001) on organisations operating in UAE, it was found that there are no significant differences between length of plans in small and large firms. Al Shaikh also concluded from his study that there are no significant differences between lengths of plans in the different types of companies under study. In other words, the length of the plan is independent of the type and size of the company.

2.4.2 Organisation age (maturity)

It was noted from the literature that the relationship between strategic planning and organisation age has various components. For example, Loderer, Claudio and Urs Waelchli (2009) looked at the effect of age on an organisation's ability to change as well as the effect of age on growth. Skrt and Antoncic (2004) investigated planning and growth. Others such as Yusuf and Saffu, K (2009) directly assessed planning intensity with age and benefits expected from planning for young firms compared to old ones. Another interesting area was the relation between the planning horizon and organisation age. Next is a presentation of what was noted in the literature.

In the management literature, Leonard-Barton (1992) has pointed out that, when firms focus on core capabilities, they bring on core rigidities that make it difficult to adapt to changes in their environment. Barton also added that age could affect performance by inducing organisational inertia. Moreover, old age may make knowledge, abilities, and skills obsolete and induce organisational decay (Agarwal, Rajshree and Michael, 2002). Therefore, older firms are consequently less flexible and are less likely to react to the profitable innovation signals they receive from the market.

The relation between age and growth has been given careful attention in the industrial organisation literature. Evans (1987), for example, finds that firm growth decreases with firm age. Cooley, Thomas and Quadrini (2001) offer a model that explains this observation. The intuition is that, as capital increases over time, its marginal product declines. On the other hand, Skrt and Antoncic (2004), as well as Miller and Cardinal (1994), found a positive relationship between strategic planning and firm profitability and growth. Successful young firms tend, to a large extent, to use advanced planning and activity analysis. Moreover, strategic planning is a process that helps organisations to identify strategic issues and so to forecast and prepare for the future, which will help organisations to grow (Zimmerer and Scarborough, 1996).

From the above, because a firm's growth decreases with age (higher for young firms than older ones), as stated by Evans (1987), and Cooley and Quadrini (2001) and since strategic planning increases firm's growth (Zimmerer and Scarborough, 1996), then it can be concluded that for young firms the planning activity is higher than in old firms.

The relation between strategic planning and organisation age were also looked at from the planning horizon side. A firm's planning horizon refers to the length of the future time period that decision-makers consider in planning (Das, 1987). Determinants of the planning horizon are influenced by a number of factors such as size, type and age (Harrison, 1995; Larsen, Tonge and Ito, 1998). Higgins (1981) states that planning systems do go through a development cycle. Mature system companies do learn to cope with planning problems. With experience, comes a better understanding of long-range planning and a more effective organisation for planning. However, the intensity of planning was found to be higher in young organisations than mature ones. As firms become older, their planning intensity diminishes slightly, while younger firms have higher planning intensity. That could be due to the fact that for young firms to raise debt and equity capital, they have to project expectations through plans (Risseeuw and Masurel, 1994). Also, younger firms need to plan to withstand uncertainties (Mathews and Scott, 1995).

In addition, Delmar and Shane (2003) noted three motives of planning in newly formed organisations. These are:
- Objective-setting in young organisations has greater motivational properties than relative performance goals in mature organisations.
- Planning is more effective when the time span between planning and feedback is short.
- Planning is more valuable when the ratio of assumption to actual information is higher.

A study by Yusuf and Saffu (2009) on firms within the Middle Eastern context surprisingly showed no support for the claim that planning incidences are higher in young firms than mature ones. They explain this by stating that most of the firms studied are large in size, which brings a new dimension into the relationship since large organisations are more likely to plan than small ones (Barney, 1991).

2.4.3 Organisations' planning function (levels of planning)

Most of the planning literature talks about planning at corporate level. However, the fact is that planning is a function that takes place at various organisational levels. Ansoff (1967) argued that for the planned levels to be implemented, they should be converted into coordinated action programs for various units of the firm. Along the same lines, Steiner (1979) states that 'All strategies must be broken down into sub-strategies for successful implementation'. In addition (Mintberge, 1994, p. 62) states that the operationalisation of strategies gives rise to a whole set of

hierarchies of plans, objectives and strategies. As Nichol (1992) put it, strategy synchronisation is a team effort, requiring contributions at various levels. From here comes the importance of middle management.

The importance of middle-level managers in strategic planning was recognised by some scholars such as (Burgelman, 1983; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). It was also noted from the literature that middle managers might influence strategy formation in two ways: upward and downward influences (Dutton and Jackson, 1987). Upward influence affects top management's view of organisational circumstances and the decisions among the alternative strategies under consideration. Downward influence, on the other hand, affects the alignment of organisational arrangements within the strategic context and facilitates the implementation of strategic objectives (Nutt, 1987).

From the above, it is concluded that planning takes place at various organisational levels, and the importance of planning at lower levels is no less important than the one at corporate level. In fact, they complement each other. As Nichol (1992) puts it, strategy synchronisation is a team effort, requiring contributions at various levels.

2.5 Formality of strategic planning process

Formal Strategic Planning (FSP) has been associated with the field of strategic management from its earliest roots. These early developments include that of Learned, Christensen, Andrews and Guth (1965), Ansoff (1965), and Pearce, Freeman and Robinson (1987) who define FSP as the process of determining the mission, major objectives, strategies, and policies that govern the acquisition and allocation of resources to achieve organisational aims. These authors, and others such as Mintzberg and Lampel (1999), point out that when the term formal strategic planning is used, the intent is to convey that a firm's strategic planning process involves explicit systematic procedures used to gain the involvement and commitment of those principal stakeholders affected by the plan (Pearce, Freeman and Robinson, 1987).

O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002) argued that a formal strategic planning process is a deliberate means to include factors and techniques in a systematic way to achieve specified tasks. It involves the establishment of clear goals and necessary processes to achieve it (Armstrong, 1982). Prior

empirical studies provide a mixed picture in relation to the value of formal strategic planning. For example, a study by Robinson and Pearce (1983) showed that there was no relationship between a formal strategy and financial performance. Frederickson and Mitchell (1984) also found no relationship between planning comprehensiveness and financial performance. However, the literature does suggest that there are non-financial benefits (direct & indirect) deriving from a formal planning process. Direct competitive benefits accruing from planning formalisation processes include product quality, market share performance and new product development effectiveness (Yip, 1989). Indirect organisational benefits include enhanced understanding of corporate priorities (Hofer and Schendel, 1978; McDonald, 1982); increased executive confidence in the company's future (Higgins and Finn, 1977); enhanced awareness of global problems, and internal strengths and weaknesses (Al-Bazzaz and Grinyer, 1980; McDonald, 1982); and better overall coordination, implementation, and control of company strategy (McDonald, 1982; Schwenk and Shrader, 1993).

The measure of formality is also another area of inconsistency in formal strategic planning literature. Written or unwritten strategic plans were used as a surrogate measure of formality (Robinson and Pearce, 1983; Bracker, Keats and Pearson, 1988). The present research requires a more comprehensive measure of formality since the intention is to assess the formality of the strategic planning formation process and the implication of that on producing quality strategic plans and also the influence of external and internal barriers on the process, rather than on the process output 'strategic plan document'. Therefore, a more detailed definition (measure) is required.

The concept of planning formality has evolved over time along two separate (but related) dimensions. These were planning completeness (what elements were included in the plan) and commitment (how rigorously planning guidelines were followed) (Chae and Hill, 2000). Sapp and Seiler (1981) referred to the degree of completeness of the planning process by using four classes to distinguish degrees of planning formality. Kallman and Shapiro (1978) used a similar categorisation using five classes of planners (from non-planners to sophisticated planners). However, as planning became more process-oriented, researchers became more inclined to view the planning process by its component parts. For example, Armstrong (1982) identified objectives, strategy generation, strategic evaluation and monitoring results as four steps of the strategic planning process. This type of approach formalised the link between strategic planning and the

processes prescribed by most strategic management theorists (e.g. Ansoff, 1965; Andrews, 1971; Hofer and Schendel, 1978; Prescott, 1983).

A second element of planning formality was commitment to the planning process. Early researchers (e.g. Rue and Fulmer (1973) and Karger and Malik (1975)) regarded whether plans were written or not to be valid indicators of corporate commitment to strategic planning. Armstrong (1982) saw commitment at all stages of the planning processes as essential: 'formal planning calls for an explicit procedure for gaining commitment to the plan' (pp. 200–1); and Harju (1981) included measures of commitment as well as planning formality to assess variations in corporate performance. What the literature suggests then is that planning formality is a function of both content and commitment.

In this research, content of the strategic planning process is adopted as the measure of process formality, and is defined by the degree to which the essential steps of the planning process are performed.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter the theoretical context of the research is covered through five sections. The first section starts by defining the terms strategic planning and strategy concepts as noted by the scholars in the field. Then the evolution of strategic thinking is briefly described from the early 1940s until the present, covering budgeting method, forecasting, long-range planning, strategic planning, strategic conflict approach, resource-based perspective, and multiple perspectives. Then strategy elements: content, process, context and outcome were covered.

In the second section, public management is covered from different perspectives. The purpose of public sector organisations is described first. Then the new public management is covered in terms of theoretical background, the movement toward the adoption of NPM, and a critique of NPM. The third part of this section deals with the adoption of strategic planning as core practice in public sector, this is covered through detailing strategic planning models in public sector and listing the main benefits of strategic planning practice in public sector organisations. The fourth part of this section covers the distinction between public and private sector in terms of the characteristics of PS organisations and expected difficulties associated with strategic planning in public organization.

The last part under the public management section gives an overview of Dubai public sector as the context of this research.

The Middle Eastern context is presented in section three. This includes the literature covered of strategic planning in the Middle Eastern and Arab countries, and the differences in management style between "East and West". In section four, strategic planning and its relation to organisational elements such as size, age, and organisational level are detailed. In the last section the formality of the planning process as described by various scholars is explained and the different measures of formality are detailed.

In the following chapter the literature in relation to the steps of the strategic planning formation process will be covered, the strategic plan document and its quality criteria will be stated, and the related literature of external and internal barriers to the planning process will be closely examined. In Chapter Four a detailed critical analysis of literature stated in this chapter and Chapter Three will be presented while developing the research propositions.

CHAPTER THREE

STRATEGIC PLANNING FORMATION PROCESS: STEPS, STRATEGIC PLAN, AND BARRIERS

Introduction

Chapter Two introduced the main elements of the research project that include strategic planning, public administration, the Middle Eastern context, organisational elements, as well as the formality of the strategic planning process. The intention of this chapter is to dig deep into the component parts of the strategic planning formation process (SPFP), to define the evaluation criteria for the strategic plan document, and to identify the barriers or potential barriers to the planning process. Therefore, this chapter is divided into three sections: section one (3.1) describes the steps of the strategic planning formation process; section two (3.2) details the quality criteria for the strategic plan document; section three (3.3) determines the external and internal organisational barriers to the planning process as noted in the covered literature.

3.1 Steps of the strategic planning formation process

In this section, the steps of the strategic planning formation process (SPFP) are covered comprehensively. These include: initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process; organisation mandate; vision development and communication; mission development and communication; environmental assessment; strategic issues; strategies and plan development; and monitoring and evaluation. Although the steps are presented in this order, it's important to mention that the strategic planning process is not a linear process. The steps may overlap, or they may happen in parallel, or the whole process may even go back and forth (Bryson, 2004, p. 52). For each step of the SPFP, the definition of main elements, the purpose of conducting the steps in relation to the whole planning process, as well as the expected benefits, will be covered.

3.1.1 Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process

The strategic planning process starts with recognising the need for strategic planning; once the need is recognised and the importance of strategic planning is conceptualised, then an initial

agreement about the overall strategic planning effort should be developed as well as an agreement on the main steps of the planning process. The aim of this step is to agree that strategic planning is needed and desirable, and that all participants are 'on board', committed and supportive of the planning process and its various sequence of steps. In other words, agreement on the 'plan to plan' (Steiner, 1979). As this step requires the agreement of main players including external stakeholders, stakeholder analysis will be of benefit at this early stage to determine who should be part of the agreement process (Bryson, 2004, p. 35). The involvement of various stakeholders will improve the quality of the strategic plan. As noted by Hamel and Prahalad (1994), organisations need to consider input from all stakeholders in order to produce a quality strategic plan. This is particularly true for public sector organisations. Rainey (1997) states that 'the key to success in public and non-profit organizations is the satisfaction of key stakeholders'.

In this first step, the agreement on the strategic planning process should specify: the reason or intent of the strategic undertaking; the planning steps; the desired deliverables; the roles and responsibilities of group participants; and the agreement to provide adequate resources to complete the strategic planning process (Young, 2002). Others such as Sherman, Rowley and Armandi (2007) state that at pre-planning phase, the assessment of organisation structure, leadership, and culture should be done.

A number of benefits are expected from the initial agreement step. These are: First, recognition of the purpose and worthiness of the planning process by the main participants in the process, which will lead to a broad sponsorship and legitimacy (Schein, 1997). The second expected benefit is the creation of a communication mechanism across the organisation, such as a strategic planning task force or coordinating committee which will coordinate, communicate, and solve issues relating to the planning process. Without such mechanisms, conflicts during the planning process may arise (Borins, 1998). The third benefit of the initial agreement comprises an outline of the general sequence of steps to be followed while strategically planning ahead. Procedural rationality of the process means that the procedure used in planning is rational, coherent, and follows a series of steps where each step relates to prior and consecutive steps (Eden and Ackermann, 1998). A fourth benefit of initial agreement is the political support of key decision-makers regarding strategic issues that may arise during the process, and the coalitions around those issues (Mintzberg and Westley, 1992). A fifth benefit from the initial agreement is the access to the resources needed for planning. Financial resources are needed to implement strategies and plans. Although this may seem far ahead, the implementation phase still has to be considered at the initial stages for the

planners to plan according to the allocated budget. However, financial resources are not the most important resources needed for strategic planning: the time and dedication of decision-makers are more important (Bryson, 2004, p. 70). The last benefit expected from this first step of strategic planning is setting the stage for major changes in the organisation. If planning requires major changes in the organisation, the initial agreement among main players will facilitate the groundwork needed for major strategic change such as changing basic technology, altering coalitions, or even having a different set of skills and capabilities (Bryson, 2004, p. 70).

3.1.2 Clarifying organisational mandate

As stated earlier in section (2.2), the ultimate goal of government is to improve the quality of life of its residents. Governments are responsible for promoting the public interest, 'public value', by producing policies, programs, projects, services, and infrastructures that advance the public prosperity and the common good at a reasonable cost. Governments can create public value through a number of overlapping activities, some of which are more related to one type of public organisation than others (Moore, 1995). Public sector organisations are chartered by the state to pursue certain public purposes. Therefore, the value the organisations create and the social justification and legitimacy on which the organisations' existence depend should be clarified in the organisations' mandates (Rainey, 2003).

An organisational mandate clarifies what the organisation formally and informally is required to do or not to do by external parties. Formal requirements are usually codified in the constitutional framework of laws, regulations, charters, and articles of incorporation that govern an organisation's operations. In addition, organisations must also meet a variety of informal mandates embodied in the norms or expectations of key stakeholders. Further, an organisation's mandate clarifies what is forbidden by the organisation. This is equally important as the formal and informal requirements of the mandate (Nelson and French, 2002).

This step in the strategic planning process has two benefits: first, clarity about what is mandated, what is explicitly and implicitly required or forbidden. The clarity of what is required by the organisation will enhance planners' ability to structure clear goals. The more specific and clearer the goals, the more likely they will be achieved (Nutt, 2002). The second expected benefit is the possibility of developing new strategic initiatives to serve public value in areas not explicitly

forbidden. Once decision-makers know what's not forbidden by the mandate and not covered in current practices, new initiatives can be generated (Bryson, 2004, p. 101).

3.1.3 Establishing an effective vision

An organisation's vision is described by authors in a variety of ways. For example, Parikh and Neubauer (1993) define vision as 'an image of a desired future state of an organization'. Kouzes and Pozner (1996) described four attributes of vision: ideality, uniqueness, future orientation and imagery. Despite the fact that authors make various statements while defining an organisation's vision, two concepts are usually found in the definition of vision: 'desirability' and 'future orientation (O'Brien and Meadows, 2000).

In developing an effective vision, a number of benefits are expected to emerge. These benefits can be summarised into six benefits as found in the literature. These are: first, the vision helps organisational members and stakeholders understand the overall direction of the organisation and why and how things should be done (Bryson, Gibbons and Shaye, 2001). In a survey study conducted by O'Brien and Meadows (2000), it was found that clarifying organisational direction was noted as the main reason for having a vision statement. Second, the vision will provide guidance to the organisation's members about what is expected from them, how they fit into the whole picture, as well as providing a framework for innovation in pursuit of organisational purposes (Collins and Porras, 1997). Another expected benefit proposed by Kouzes and Posner (1996) is that a well-developed vision statement provides an effective substitute for leadership since employees are able to manage themselves when given clear guidance on the organisation's direction. Fourth, in association with the third benefit, an agreed-upon vision may contribute to a significant reduction in the level of organisational conflict. Once the employees understand the overall direction of the organisation, disputes over certain issues can be resolved, judged by their importance to organisational purpose (Thompson, 2001). Fifth, a well articulated vision would help people recognise the current or potential barriers to realising that vision. Recognising barriers is the first step in overcoming them (Bryson, 2004, p. 228). The last benefit noted in the literature is that a well-developed vision will provide a core framework if the organisation is to purposefully yet flexibly respond to changes in its environment. In other words, a good vision will enable the organisation to hold tightly to its core while being willing to change (Collins and Porras, 1997).

A final point to make here as noted by Bryson (2004) is that for the vision statement to yield the benefits listed above it should be well developed and articulated and should be widely circulated and communicated among internal organisational members and external key stakeholders. A vision of success will have little effect if organisational members are kept in the dark.

3.1.4 Mission statement

While the vision statement is a broad description of the desired future state of an organisation, the mission statement refers to the organisation's intended specific contributions to the realisation of vision. According to Thaw (1997), an effective mission statement addresses the following concerns: Why does the organisation exist? What are the main organisational activities? And to whom are the organisation's services and products intended to serve? Galloway (1990) states that an organisation's mission statement is a broad but succinct definition that explains the reasons for an organisation's existence. For a government department, the reasons for an organisation's existence is stated in the organisation's mandate. Therefore, for a government department, the mission statement is most commonly derived from the department's legislative base.

A number of benefits were found in the literature as a result of developing and communicating an effective mission. The most important benefit is focusing attention on what is truly important for the organisation to reach its destination. An agreement on an organisational mission that embraces social desirability and purpose will strengthen the organisation's internal and external legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). The second important benefit as stated by Hamel and Prahalad (1994) is the clarification of organisational purpose. Clarifying organisational purpose will lead to a reduction in conflicts among decision-makers, and will enhance a more effective leadership, which is the third expected benefit. The clarity of an organisation's purpose will help leaders articulate an effective organisational structure, develop aligned systems, and distribute resources according to the organisation's intended aims (Bryant, 2003; Schein, 1997). Another expected benefit from this step is the attention of decision-makers to the organisation's philosophy, values, and culture that support the organisation's mission. For example, the developed strategies should be in line with organisational philosophy, values, and culture; therefore, an organisation's mission unifies purpose across tangible and intangible organisational intentions (Schein, 1997; Johnson and Scholes, 2002).

3.1.5 Assessing the environment

Assessing the environment was noted in the literature as one of the main steps in the strategic planning formation process (SPFP); this is due to the fact that no public organisation exists within a vacuum. The environment in which an organisation operates has become more complex, more rapidly changing, and more demanding (Ghosh and Nee, 1983). As stated by Drucker (1969), we are living in 'an age of discontinuity'. It is therefore vital that an organisation be aware of the internal and external forces that may shape its future (Galloway, 1990).

The monitoring, evaluating and disseminating of information from the external environment to key personnel within an organisation is known as environmental scanning (Wheelen and Hunger, 1984). Hambrick (1981) states that environmental scanning refers to the managerial activity of learning about events and trends in the organisation's environment. Environmental scanning can yield a number of benefits for decision-makers within the organisation, for example, it will help in detecting environmental signals. However, this is only part of the scanning process as assessing its strategic implications requires a forecast of the expected rate of change, or a forecast of the impact of the change (Bowden, 1985). In addition, scanning provides managers with information about events and trends in their relevant environments, which facilitates opportunity recognition (Bluedorn, Johnson, Cartwright and Barringer, 1994). Also Barringer and Bluedorn (1999) state that scanning is a method to reduce uncertainty. Scanning can help managers cope with uncertainty, but only if they realise that uncertainty can only be reduced, not eliminated.

In order to assess the external and internal organisational environment as one of the main steps in the SPFP, strategic tools are used. According to Clark (1997), strategy tools are concepts, analytical frameworks, techniques and methodologies that assist strategic managers in making informed decisions. The importance of strategic tools is highlighted in the literature by a number of authors, for example, Clark (1997) believes that strategic tools are an enabling mechanism to improve strategic thinking, whereas Liedtka (1998) supports the use of strategic tools as a key corporate planning mechanism. Osbourne and Gaebler (1992) link the importance of formal strategic mechanisms such as plans and tools to creating an intuitive sense in organisational direction. Bryson (1988) describes the importance of strategic tools as an aid to strategic issue identification (strategic issues are covered in the following step). It is also important to use strategic tools due to the cognitive limitations of managers. Simon (1955) highlights the limitations of human cognition and the bias or subjectivity in the process of strategic decision-making, where

managers try to rationalise the irrational, that is, the environments in which they operate. Finally, Quinn (1980) sees an important use of strategic tools in focusing the attention of stakeholders on strategic issues to gain their commitment.

Different types of strategic tools can be used to achieve some of the above-mentioned benefits. Clark (1997) highlights fifteen strategic tools that might be applied in core strategic tasks. In a study on strategic tools in the UK, Gunn and Williams (2007) found that the main strategic tools used are: SWOT analysis, benchmarking and critical success factor analysis. Within the Middle Eastern context, Elbanna (2010) conducted a study on the use of strategic planning tools in UAE and found that the three most used strategic planning tools are pro forma financial statements, cost-benefit analyses, and SWOT analyses. Elbanna added that the high use of pro forma financial statements and cost-benefit analysis might be a sign of short-term business planning rather than strategic planning. Aldehayyat and Anchor (2008) investigated the use of strategic planning tools and techniques in Jordanian organisations and found that the most used techniques are financial analysis, PEST or STEP analysis, Porter's five forces analysis and analysis of key (critical) success factors. They also noted that the use of strategic planning tools and techniques related more to the size of company and less to the age.

3.1.6 Strategic issues identification

Issues management is a continuous process concerned with the identification of issues that may impact the strategic directions of the organisation, the likelihood of their occurrence and the development of appropriate responses to these issues. Furthermore, the issues management process is one component of the strategic planning process (Lozier and Chittipeddi, 1986).

This definition implies that there are three stages in the issues management process: (1) scanning the external environment to identify strategic issues; (2) analysing these issues for their strategic impact and probability of occurrence; and (3) developing suitable responses for managing them.

This step in the strategic planning process identifies strategic issues based on the strategic analysis conducted in the previous step. The development of appropriate responses to strategic issues are left to the following step 'development of strategies and plans'. The issues covered under this step are those with strategic implications, as Freeman (1984) pointed out: 'The key to success for issue management must be its ability to surface and track real issues that affect the strategic direction of

the corporation or business unit' (p. 221). Perrott (2008) describe strategic issues as an events or forces (with either positive or negative effects) either inside or outside an organization that are likely to alter its ability to achieve its objectives. In response to the above, the following definition of strategic issue was adopted: An external development which could impact the organisation's performance to which the organisation must respond in an orderly fashion over which the organisation may reasonably expect to exert some influence (Ashley, 1983, p. 11).

The expected benefits of identifying an organisation's strategic issues are: focusing attention on what is truly important to the organisation; clarifying the problems or potential problems that the organisation may face (Bryson, 2004, p. 155); and promoting organisational change. The identification of strategic issues will justify organisational required changes (Fiol, 2002).

3.1.7 Strategies and plan development

Following the previous step, this step addresses the third stage in the issue management process, which is developing suitable responses for managing strategic issues. The effectiveness of conducting the previous step will affect the outcomes of this step, such as the development of appropriate strategies and the evaluation of alternative strategies. The contribution of issues management to the strategic planning process is to provide updated and organised information on relevant external and internal issues (Lozier and Chittipeddi, 1986).

In section (2.1.2) it was noted that there is no universal definition of the term strategy; it may be thought of as a pattern of purposes, policies, programs, decisions, and resource allocation that defines what an organisation does, how it does it and why. As described by Poister (2003) and by Millar, Simeone, and Carnevale (2001), every organisation evidences some sort of pattern or logic across its purposes, policies, programs, and resource allocations although it may not be a good pattern or logical. The task of strategy formulation involves highlighting what is good about the existing pattern, what is bad about it, and modifying it when necessary to bridge the gap between the organisation and its environment (Mintzberge, 1987; Nutt, Backoff, and Hogan, 2000). Despite the fact that every strategy is almost always both emergent and deliberate (Mintzberg et al., 1998), the intention of this step in the SPFP is to focus on developing deliberate strategies that deal with strategic issues identified in the previous step. In addition, the purpose of this step, as stated by Bryson (2004, p. 186), is to create a set of strategies and associated plans that will effectively link the organisation to its environment to achieve organisational goals and vision.

Research indicates that a number of benefits are expected to emerge from this step. These are: first, clarity of the path the organisations take to create public value. When strategies and plans are developed, this will clarify and justify the means used to overcome various strategic issues (Kotter, 1996). Second, enhancing organisational learning and early implementation of strategies will enable an early detection of the suitability of strategies used, and the ability to revise strategies before being fully implemented (Patton, 1997). Third, enhance organisation members' commitment and create emotional bonding to the new reality (Fiol, 2002). Fourth, improve communication across the organisation. Strategy development requires a high level of coordination between various units from which new channels of communication may emerge. Fifth, constructing a coalition with external stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of strategies and plans (Bryson, 2004).

3.1.8 Monitoring, evaluation and control

Over the past decade, performance measurement in public organisations has gained a lot of interest among researchers and practitioners in various fields, such as the design of the measurement system, its implementation, the use of the system, and the content of the measurement systems (Rantanen, Kulmala, Lo¨nnqvist and Kujansivu, 2007).

Even though balanced performance measurement is applicable in both private and public organisations, there appears to be a general view that public and private organisations are different from a measurement point of view (Brignall and Modell, 2000). This could be mainly due to the fact that, in the public sector, there are many stakeholders that have different and conflicting requirements (Brignall and Modell, 2000; Wisniewski and Olafsson, 2004). This creates two problems for the performance measurement system. First, taking account of all stakeholders may result in producing a multitude of performance measures that satisfy no one (Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004). Second, it may be difficult to set targets or to make decisions based on the measurement results because some of the stakeholders have conflicting objectives (Lawton, McKevitt and Millar, 2000). In addition to the two fundamental problems, other specific challenges have been identified. For example, Pollanen's (2005) study showed some obstacles that can hamper the acceptance of performance measures in the public sector. These are mistrust of measurement; lack of credibility and usefulness; lack of standards and timeliness; substantial investment of time and resources; and resistance by public officials and employees. In addition, Bourne, Mills,

Wilcox, Neely and Platts (2000) have identified three challenges in the implementation of performance measures. These are: the resistance to measurement; IT infrastructure support; and distracted top management commitment occurring between the design and the implementation phases.

Despite the previous challenges and problems, a number of benefits are expected to emerge from aligning performance management systems with organisational strategy. These benefits have been highlighted by a number of authors such as (Dyson, 2000; Kaplan and Norton, 1996b; Simons, 2000). Some of these benefits are: communicating strategic priorities; monitoring and tracking the implementation of strategy; evaluating outcomes; alignment of short-term actions with long-term strategy; and promoting integration among various organisational processes. Moreover, performance measurement system is expected to focuses change efforts and permits organisational learning (Kaplan and Norton, 1992).

Significant progress has been made in the area of linking the design and development of performance measurement systems with organisational direction through the employment of a particular approach such as: the balanced scorecard approach (Kaplan and Norton, 1992); the results and determinants framework (Fitzgerald, Johnston, Brignall, Silvestro and Voss, 1991); the performance prism (Neely, Adams and Crowe, 2001); and strategy maps (Kaplan and Norton, 2000, 2004).

There is also a recognition in the literature that, as strategy changes, whether deliberate or emergent (Mintzberg et al., 1998), whether driven by changes in the external or internal environment, performance measures need to be reviewed and if necessary changed to ensure alignment with strategy (Bourne et al., 2000; Parker, 2000). If this is not done then there is a danger that performance measurement could become irrelevant or counterproductive (Wholey and Hatry, 1992).

A final point to make is that the monitoring and evaluation of plans and strategies as a result of performance management systems occur during and after the implementation of plans and strategies. However, this step has been considered as one step in the SPFP since the outcomes of evaluating the strategies will be used as an input to develop and formulate strategies and plans for the coming period. As stated by Bryson, while describing the 'strategy change cycle' approach, the desired outcome of this step is to maintain good strategies, modify or eliminate less successful

ones, and evaluate policies, plans, and projects to decide on the appropriate course of action for the coming period (Bryson, 2004, p. 266).

3.1.9 Implementation of strategies and plans

As stated in section (2.1.4), the implementation part of the strategic planning process is outside the scope of this study. However, since the strategic planning process is not a linear process and may go back and forth, it is important to shed light on the relation between the implementation phase and the formation of strategic planning.

The implementation of strategies and plans completes the cycle of strategic planning. The previous steps of the SPFP result in an effective formation process. However, this is not enough to realise the strategic goals. The implementation of the developed programs, projects, and action plans will bring life to strategies and create tangible values (Bryson, 2004, p. 238). Bryson also added that the implementation process will also allow for adaptive learning and such learning will lead to a better understanding of SPFP, which will feed into the new round of strategic planning. In addition Glaister, K, Dincer, O, Tatoglu, E, Demirbag, M, and Zaim, S (2008) found that a strong and positive relationship was formed between formal strategic planning and firm performance, through implementation, firm performance can be evaluated and assessed and corrective actions can be made.

The other benefit from implementation is creating public value: this is the most important outcome and the aim of the whole strategic planning exercise. Effective implementation moves the value proposition embodied in the strategic plan from being a hypothetical story to being a true story (Moore, 2000). Another important benefit is the ability to evaluate the strategies and plans (Patton, 1997). The fourth expected benefit is increased support for the leaders and the organisation (Burns, 2003). When strategies and plans are successfully implemented and benefits are realised, this increases the legitimacy and confidence of employees and community with leadership and the organisation in general. In addition, individuals involved in effective implementation will experience heightened self-esteem and self-confidence (Schein, 1997).

From the above it is important to note that although the steps are presented in order, the strategic planning process is not a linear process. The steps may overlap, or they may happen in parallel and the whole process may even go back and forth (Bryson, 2004, p. 52; Kaplan and Norton, 1996a). However, the steps of the planning process are strongly related to each other. Some steps cannot be initiated before others and, further, some steps in the planning process depend on the findings of preceding steps (Bryson, 2004). One of the benefits of first step is an outline of the sequence of steps to be followed. Procedural rationality means that the planning process is rational, coherent, and follows a series of steps where each step relates to the prior and following steps (Bryson, 2004; Eden and Ackermann, 1998). The development of vision and mission statements is also highly associated with each other and with other steps in the planning process. Lipton (1996) defines vision as a combination of mission, strategy and culture. The following three steps in the planning process (assessing the environment, identifying strategic issues, and the development of strategies and plans) constitute the issue management process and are highly associated (Bowden, 1985; Bluedorn et al., 1994). Once strategic issues are identified, the organisation's members develop appropriate strategies and plans to address those issues (Lozier and Chittipeddi, 1986).

The strategic planning formation process and each step within the process will lead to significant benefits to the organisation as described earlier. The strategic plan document produced is one of those benefits expected from a well-performed SPFP. In the next section the strategic plan document will be covered comprehensively.

3.2 Strategic plan document

One of the main objectives of this study, as noted earlier, is the assessment of the strategic planning formation process output, which is the strategic plan document produced. In order to assess the quality of the strategic plan document, it's necessary first to shed light on some important aspects of the strategic plan document. In the following sections the relationship between the strategic plan document (SPD) and planning, the definition of SPD, the main parts of the documents, the planning horizon, as well as the evaluation criteria for a quality strategic plan, will be covered.

3.2.1 Strategic plan document and planning

What is a strategic plan? And how is it related to strategic planning? According to Thompson (1990), a strategic plan 'concerns the number and variety of product markets and service markets that the organization will compete in, together with the development of the necessary resources (people, capacity, finance, research and so on) required to support the competitive strategies'. Thompson goes on to explain that strategic plans relate to the whole organisation, cover several years, are concerned with the future needs of the organisation, and are generally not highly detailed.

A plan as quoted by JO McKinsey in Steiner is 'the tangible evidence of the thinking of management, it results from planning' (Steiner, 1969, p. 8). Thompson (1990, p. 14) states that one of the results of a strategic planning exercise is the production of a planning document. A second result is that those involved in the planning exercise gain a strong appreciation of the organisation, its strengths, opportunities, alternatives, vision and so forth.

The plan is not always seen as the most valuable output. In fact, and as Thompson (1990, p. 14) argues, the planning document is the less valuable output of the planning exercise. Moreover, Porter (1987, p. 11) states that planning had become unfashionable by the 1980s. As a result, the outcome of planning was often a plan that in reality had little impact on actual management decisions, and therefore was not implemented.

In addition, Sawyer states that 'formal systems are only a means to an end – they do not cause planning to occur, and can prevent it when their emphasis is too much on form instead of substance' (Sawyer, 1983). The end product of the planning process is often a huge document filled with reams of analysis and meticulous details that are frequently not read, acted on, or used. This lack of focus and clarity is particularly harmful to strategic planning, as 'preparation of the document' begins to override the development of good strategy. This can be seen in organisations where the meeting of planning deadlines is more important than making sound strategic decisions. Therefore, for the strategic plan to be a valuable output of the planning process, the planning process should imbue managers and employees in general to think strategically. A strategic plan then, becomes a document that is in essence, an input to detailed planning by others (Mellalieu, 1992).

Planning and the ability to think strategically by planners, managers and employees alike, feed into the strategic plan document. However, planning has its drawbacks. Plans are seldom perfect and may divert attention away from problems or opportunities not identified by the planners (Loasby, 1967). As Mintzberg (1994b) suggests, plans not only identify what the organisation should focus on, but what it should not be focusing on as well.

A final point to make here is that, having a formalised planning process does not necessarily lead to planning, neither does it necessarily lead to the production of a plan (Mintzberg 1994, p. 32).

Despite the fact that the strategic plan document is not the most valuable output of the strategic planning formation process, neither is it a definite output, it is tangible evidence that includes most of the planning efforts. The document is expected to provide well-justified answers to the strategic questions by stakeholders and should be used as a basis for communication. The definition, content, importance, and evaluation criteria of the strategic plan document will be covered next.

3.2.2 Strategic plan content

The content of a strategic plan document varies across organisations. Some organisations include most or all parts of a formal strategic plan document, such as vision and mission statements, values, strategic issues, assumptions, objectives, strategies, and KPIs, other organisations include just a few. According to the requirements of the *Government Performance and Results Act 1993* (GPRA), a strategic plan should include a mission statement, a description of the agency's long-term goals and objectives, and strategies or means the agency plans to use to achieve these future goals and objectives. A survey of among 381 electric and gas utilities, conducted by Whelan and Sisson (1993), showed that the definition and completeness of strategic planning varies significantly across companies surveyed. Although 74% of respondents believed that they engaged in formal strategic planning, an analysis of the content of their plans suggests a much lower percentage within the range of 20% to 50%. For example, only 66% involved in strategic planning include a vision statement in their plan, and only 72% identify critical issues.

This variation is due to a number of reasons, the main three reasons noted in the literature and relate to present study are: The sector or industry the organisation is involved in – in the public sector some organisations are obliged by government to include certain parts in their strategic plans, where others are not (*GPRA Act 1993*). The research context, the Dubai government

specified the minimum components a strategic plan must include, that is, mission, vision, values and objectives (Strategic Plan Manual, Dubai Government, 2006). Third reason is managerial decisions – organisations involved in a highly competitive environment might prefer not to include their marketing strategies to prevent competitors gaining access to certain information, or might choose to include their marketing strategies as a maneuvering technique. The degree of detail in the strategic plan is determined by the management. The commitment to complete all the essential steps of the planning process – this can affect the content of the process output 'strategic plan document', for example, if the strategic analysis step was not conducted during the strategic planning process then strategic issues might be missed from the strategic plan.

In relation to the research context, the Dubai government issued a manual for the strategic planning process emphasising the importance of each step in the process and the requirements of the strategic plan document produced (Strategic Plan Manual, Dubai Government, 2006). Also, under the Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP) a number of requirements specify certain criteria to comply with in the strategy and policy component (Dubai Government, DGEP, 2007).

Finally, an effective strategic plan should also include the assumptions that management holds about the operating environment, the most critical issues facing the organisation, and a set of action plans for addressing critical issues (Whelan and Sisson, 1993).

3.2.3 Planning horizon

Planning horizons affirm the essentiality of time as the principal dimension in strategic planning. The plan gives a sense of direction to the organisation as it continues in time. Thus strategic planning is clearly embedded in the phenomenon of time flow (Das, 1991).

A firm's planning horizon refers to the length of the future time period that decision-makers consider in planning. The rationale for a given planning horizon is that it should be long enough to permit planning for expected changes in strategy and yet be short enough to make reasonably detailed plans available (Das, 1991).

For most firms, this period corresponds to the length of time necessary to execute the firm's routine strategies (Camillus, 1982). According to Rhyne (1985), the planning horizon for individual firms can vary from less than one year to more than ten years depending on environmental,

organisational and managerial factors (will be covered next). For example, a 'long' planning horizon (more than 5 years) may be optimal for conservative firms that are not predisposed to continually look for opportunities to introduce new products or services as a result of environmental change (Covin, 1991). Das (1986, p. 69) argues that a five-year planning horizon is probably most common among organisations having strategic planning systems. According to GPRA specifications, the strategic plan shall cover a period of not less than five years (Ref. section 3/chapter 3/*GPRA Act 1993*).

3.2.3.1 Determinants of planning horizons

Harrison (1995) argued that determinants of the planning horizon are influenced by a number of factors. He proceeds by stating that the establishment of the planning horizon for a given organisation is centred on the answers to two interrelated questions:
(1) How far into the future does the organisation need to plan?
(2) How far into the future is management willing and able to plan?

The answer to the first question depends on six organisational factors. These are:
- Product life cycle: The planning horizon should be long enough to accommodate the longest product life cycle in the organisation; the rationale behind this is that the planning horizon should be best suited to the important future decisions necessary to attain the strategic objectives (Ebert and Piehl, 1973).
- Industry or sector: An organisation's planning horizon depends on the industry in which the organisation operates, for example, information technology organisations or organisations dependent on high technology need a shorter planning horizon to accommodate high rates of technological change (Das, 1991, p. 56).
- Lead time: The temporal interval between formulating and establishing a strategic objective and its expected maturity is called lead time. Lead time should be sufficient to accommodate all the future decisions that must be made to attain the strategic objectives. It should be long enough to give management the flexibility needed in adjusting the strategic objectives to unanticipated environmental changes.
- Present value: Money has a time value and should be taken into account while determining the planning horizon, especially with periods of high interest rates.
- Organisation's age: The planning horizon for a young organisation with a high rate of growth would tend to be somewhat shorter than for a more mature organisation with most

of its growth behind it. As the organisation becomes more established, its planning horizon would be extended accordingly.

- ▪ Validity of planning premises: Planning premises are based on assumptions regarding the probable course of future events. The further into the future that one projects, the greater the importance of valid planning premises. Consequently, the organisation's planning horizon may be temporarily or permanently limited by an excessive reliance on unavoidable assumptions.

The answer to the second question: How far into the future is management willing and able to plan relates to the willingness and ability of the management team to set a realistic temporal boundary for strategic planning. Each individual member of the management team differs in his/her perspectives on future time and the uncertainty that accompanies it (Das, 1986, pp. 52–61). The cognitive limitations of managers tend to bind their rationality in the process of selecting a planning horizon (Simon, 1957). In fact, managers vary greatly in their perceptions of uncertainty in relating to the future (Harrison, 1992). Individual managers are also influenced in their choice of a planning horizon by personality differences that manifest themselves in different degrees of willingness to accept risk (March and Shapira, 1987). While some individuals feel quite comfortable with considerable risk, others tend to be very averse to risk (MacCrimmon and Wehrung, 1986). Planners and managers are also bound in their choice of a planning horizon by time, cost and availability of information. To summarise, planners and managers involved in the selection of a planning horizon operate within a context of bounded rationality (Harrison, 1987). This context is restricted by cognitive limitations, risk, time and cost, and imperfect information to make informed decisions.

Finally, some organisations' characteristics such as size and type may impact the planning horizon. Larsen et al. (1998) state that companies selecting short planning horizons are more likely to be small companies rather than large ones. However, that might not be the case within this research context. In a study conducted by Al Shaikh (2001) on organisations operating in UAE, it was found that there are no significant differences between length of plans in small and large firms. Al Shaikh also concluded from his study that there are no significant differences between mean lengths of plans in the different types of companies under study. In other words, the length of the plan is independent of the type of company.

3.2.4 Quality criteria for the strategic plan document

Assessing the strategic plan document is an important part of this research because the strategic plan is the tangible output of the strategic planning formation process; the quality of the strategic plan produced is a reflection of the goodness of the process itself. If the planning process is poorly designed, it will not lead to a quality strategic plan (Whelan and Sisson, 1993).

In order to assess the quality of the strategic plan document produced, it's important first to identify the determinants of the document quality. Therefore, in the next section, current knowledge regarding document quality criteria (in general) and the strategic plan document quality criteria (in particular) will be covered.

Under the Statistics Canada's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) (2002), the concept of document quality has been broken down into six dimensions. These are:
- Relevance: reflects the degree to which it meets the real needs of clients
- Accuracy: is the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena
- Timeliness: refers to the delay between the reference point and the date on which the information becomes available
- Accessibility: refers to the ease with which it can be obtained from the agency.
- Interpretability: reflects the availability of the supplementary information and metadata necessary to interpret and utilise it appropriately
- Coherence: reflects the broad analytic framework.

Since quality is defined as fitness for use, any quality rating would have to permit each user to set its own priorities among the dimensions. For example, some would put more emphasis on timeliness and others on accuracy as determinants of document quality.

Mellalieu (1992) states that a quality planning document should provide well-justified answers to the strategic questions and the planning document should be a basis for communication with people who need to know about the strategy but who were not participants in the planning process. Also, the document may well contain some specific, measurable objectives. Mellalieu proceeds by stating that for an auditor to appraise the quality of a strategic planning document the following issues should be considered:

- Has the plan soundly addressed all the 'strategic questions', goals and objectives sufficiently to take advantage of critical opportunities and overcome critical threats?
- Does the plan identify the key tasks and priorities upon which the strategy is fundamentally dependent for its success?
- Is there sufficient flexibility in the plan to be able to cope with risk and uncertainty, and unreliable information?
- Were good planning practices adhered to, or is there the prospect of a biased report?
- Is the organisational structure compatible with the requirements of the strategy?
- Have control systems been established to assure that the strategy implementation is in control?

Within the business strategy literature, Richard Rumlet (1980) demonstrates that a business strategy can never be assured to work. Nevertheless, it can be tested for critical flaws and the evaluation criteria that can be used are:

- Consistency: the strategic plan should not present inconsistent goals and policies
- Consonance: the strategy should represent an adaptive response to the external environment and critical issues identified
- Advantage: competitive advantage should be created by the strategy
- Feasibility: the strategic plan should utilise organisational resources and provide solutions to strategic issues without creating new problems.

A more detailed characteristic of a quality strategic plan document came from Cox (1997). Cox states that a useful strategic plan should exhibit the following characteristics:

- Prioritised: Setting priorities allows for the plan to be adjusted according to changing needs or resources.
- Achievable, measurable, and time-sensitive: The plan should contain goals that are measurable and have deadlines.
- Flexible and responsive to changing conditions: The plan is a road map that may contain unforeseen detours such as unexpected crises, new opportunities, or changes in resources.
- Short and simple: The plan should focus on the most important things to accomplish.
- A unit, not a menu: A useful plan is not a wish book. Everything in the plan needs to be accomplished.
- The means to an end, not an end in itself: The plan is the process by which it reaches its destination; it is not the destination.

From the above it can be said that the criteria to assess document quality in general and the strategic planning document in particular are dependent on the standards set in each assessment framework; the following criteria are seen as the most relevant to assess the strategic planning document.

3.2.4.1 Formality

The formality of the strategic plan document (SPD) as seen from the covered literature is related to the inclusion and the documentation of all essential parts of the planning process. According to Whelan and Sisson (1993), companies should include a vision statement that defines what the company is striving to become in the long run; the most critical issues facing the organisation; a set of action plans for addressing critical issues; and values or a statement of principles by which the company will operate. According to the *American Government Performance and Results Act 1993* (GPRA), the strategic plan should include:

-   a comprehensive mission and vision statement
-   general goals and objectives, including outcome-related goals and objectives
-   a description of how the goals and objectives are to be achieved
-   a description of how the performance goals included in the plan relate to the goals and objectives in the strategic plan
-   an identification of key factors external to the agency which may influence performance
-   a description of the program evaluations used in establishing or revising general goals and objectives.

More relevant guidelines came from the Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP). According to DGEP, public sector organisations should have a vision and mission statement, values, strategies, as well a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the overall strategy (DGEP, 2007). In relation to the documentation of the strategic plan, a study conducted on organisations operating in Dubai showed promising results: only 17.7 per cent of organisations in the whole sample and less than one-quarter of organisations in all sectors (21.1 per cent) do not have written strategic plans (Elbanna, 2010). This is consistent with the findings of Ibrahim et al. (2004) who report that 19.5 per cent of organisations do not have written strategic plans in the USA setting. However, a study on another Middle Eastern country (Egypt) showed that approximately 36% of organisations do not have a written strategic plan.

From the above, the formality of the strategic plan document relates to the inclusion and documentation of all essential elements of a strategic planning document such as vision, mission, values, strategic issues, strategic objectives, and strategies, as well as the related performance measures.

Before moving to the next quality criteria, it's important to distinguish here between the formality of SPFP (process formality) and the formality of SPD: the former relates to the formality of the process itself and is measured by the extent to which the steps of the planning process is conducted, whereas the latter relates to the documentation and inclusion of all essential elements of a strategic plan document.

3.2.4.2 Clarity

Many assessment criteria for document quality in general and the strategic planning document in particular emphasise the importance of clarity, whether implicitly, such as Cox (1997), who states that in order for a strategic plan to be useful, it should be short and simple. Also under the guidelines of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the concept of clarity is embedded under its definition of objectivity (Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106–554)).

Objectivity, according to OMB, consists of two distinct elements: presentation and substance. The presentation element includes whether disseminated information is presented in an accurate, clear, complete, and unbiased manner. The substance element involves a focus on ensuring accurate, reliable, and unbiased information, or explicitly, as in the framework developed by the World Bank in collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The framework is based on four main dimensions, one of which is clarity that is defined as the need to ensure that data and metadata are presented in a clear and understandable manner. Thus clarity within the context of this research will be defined as the degree to which strategic objectives and strategies are clearly stated in the strategic plan.

3.2.4.3 Measurability

Measurability of objectives within a strategic plan document is one of the quality criteria found in a number of quality frameworks. For example, the Statistics Canada's Quality Assurance Framework

(QAF – 2002) emphasises the importance of measurability under the 'Interpretability' dimension. Cox (1997) also states that for a strategic plan to be useful it should be achievable, measurable, and time-sensitive. He elaborates that the plan should contain goals that are measurable and have deadlines. Mellalieu (1992) emphasises the importance of measurability of the strategic plan document and considers it being one of the control systems that assures the proper implementation of strategy.

The most important frameworks for this study are the Dubai Government Strategic Planning Manual and the Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP): the importance of measurability is one of the main requirements in both guidelines. For example, under DGEP requirements, component '9' states that strategic objectives in the strategic plans should be monitored regularly and assessed for implementation. Also, Chapter 6 in the Dubai Government Strategic Planning Manual describes the importance of measurability and how to measure the strategic objectives by setting the right KPIs.

3.2.4.4 Objectivity

The objectivity of a strategic plan document was referred to by a number of scholars and assessment frameworks. For example, Mellalieu (1992) argued that key assumptions upon which the plan is based should be recognised in the strategic plan. The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF-2002) also emphasised the importance of objectivity within the 'Relevance' dimension that is defined as the degree to which it meets the real needs of clients. In addition, the World Bank & UNESCO Institute for Statistics referred to objectivity under the reliability and serviceability dimensions.

Within the business strategy literature, Richard Rumelt (1980) demonstrates that a business strategy should be tested for critical flaws. One of the evaluation criteria proposed by Rumelt is consonance, which means that the strategy should represent an adaptive response to the external environment and the critical issues identified.

Thus the objectivity of a strategic plan document will be defined as the degree to which the desired outcomes of the strategic objectives and its end results are clearly stated within the strategic plan (Hiraga, Wang, Drew and Lynd, 2003).

3.2.4.5 Coverage

Coverage has been identified as one of the evaluation criteria for the strategic plan document and it relates to the degree the objectives in the strategic plan address the critical issues and opportunities and threats identified in the analysis phase. This criterion is referred to by a number of scholars such as Rumlet (1980), who included this criterion in two business strategy evaluation dimensions: feasibility and consonance.

Feasibility means the strategic plan should utilise organisational resources and provide solutions to strategic issues without creating new problems. Consonance means the strategy should represent an adaptive response to the external environment and critical issues identified.

Another source of reference for this criterion came from Mellalieu (1992) who indicates that the plan's goals and objectives should take sufficient advantage of critical opportunities and overcome critical threats. In the same vein, Whelan and Sisson (1993) state that an effective strategic plan should include the assumptions that management holds about the operating environment, the critical issues facing the organisation and a set of strategies and action plans to address those critical issues.

3.2.4.6 Openness (transparency)

The communication of a company's strategic plan is vital to its successful implementation, as it is the basis for linking strategy to operational planning and individual objectives. Without communication, organisational priorities are unclear and conflicts between various departments may arise. Also, employees cannot be committed to achieving the plan if the plan has not been communicated to them (Whelan and Sisson, 1993). Sharing strategic information with lower level managers and employees may enhance both job comprehension and organisational commitment (Bryson, 2004).

However, companies face several barriers – some real and some largely imaginary – from a free dissemination of the organisation's strategic plan (Whelan and Sisson, 1993). Open discussion to any group outside top management (e.g. middle managers, investors, community leaders, etc.) may be easily translated into competitive intelligence for rival firms. Parnell and Lester (2003) argue that the disadvantage here is that strategic secrecy may not only keep a strategy hidden from those

who might wish to exploit it, but also from those who can contribute to its development and implementation. Internally, many managers are concerned about employees misunderstanding or mis-communicating the plan. The culture in some companies is based on the idea that knowledge is power and, therefore, information is not readily shared (Whelan and Sisson, 1993).

The definition of quality as determined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) guidelines is a term comprising utility, objectivity, and integrity (Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-554)). Utility refers to the usefulness of the information to its intended users, including the public. In assessing the usefulness of information that the agency disseminates to the public, the information should be viewed not only from the agency's own perspective but also from the perspective of the public. As a result, transparency of information has to be addressed from the public's perspective.

3.2.4.7 Consistency

Strategic consistency is referred to as the organisation's commitment to stability by adopting a predictable, successful course of action (Evans, 1991). Organisations usually commit to successful courses of action. However, outcomes are not always predictable and the environment is dynamic, therefore, strong arguments can usually be made for substantial strategic shifts, even when performance is not lacking (Grewel and Tansuhaj, 2001).

Strategic flexibility is the ability of firms to respond and successively adapt to environmental changes (Evans, 1991). The term has also been applied to strategic decision-making as it is the extent to which new and alternative options in strategic decision-making are generated and considered (Sharfman and Dean, 1997).

Whether an organisation chooses to adopt a consistent strategy or promote flexibility is a managerial decision based on a number of institutional and environmental factors (Parnell and Lester 2003). Next, a presentation of arguments in favour of consistency and flexibility will be presented.

Proponents of strategic consistency argue for strategy stability on four grounds. These are:
- Uncertainty: As change in any key strategic environment may entice a change in strategy, this may excite competitors to respond aggressively (Wernerfelt and Karnani, 1987).

- Capital: A change in strategy is often followed by substantial outlays of capital. For example, a shift from a prospector strategy to a defender strategy may require huge investments (Miles and Snow, 1978).
- Consumer confusion: One of the outcomes of strategic change is consumer confusion.
- Continuity: Even when strategic change results in a successful new product or service, there is no assurance that this success can be maintained. In fact, competitors may distort consumer perceptions and reap the benefits of the initial strategic change (Foxman, Muehling and Berger, 1990).

On the other hand, proponents of strategic flexibility base their arguments on four grounds. These are:
- Adaptation: A strategy tends to yield superior performance when it 'fits' with the organisation's environment. Without strategic flexibility, an organisation cannot adapt to its changing external environment (Parnell, 1997).
- First mover advantage: Strategic flexibility will allow firms to take advantage of the first mover   by entering a new market or developing a new product or service prior to its competitors (Petersen and Welch, 2000).
- Capability change: It is argued that an organisation should modify its strategy based on its unique human, physical, capital and informational resources (Barney, 1991).
- Profitability: Strategic change may be necessary if desired performance levels are not being attained by the organisation. Indeed, many studies have concluded that declining profitability is the most common catalyst for strategic change (Webb and Dawson, 1991).

To summarise, under this section the strategic plan document was covered in terms of its importance, content, planning horizon, and quality criteria. Seven quality criteria were noted in the literature. These are: formality, clarity, objectivity, coverage, measurability, openness, and consistency. In the following section the environmental and organisational factors influencing the planning process will be examined as noted in the covered literature.

3.3 External and internal barriers to the strategic planning formation process

Strategic planning for public sector organisations has become more important than ever before because the environment in which public and non-profit organisations operate has become

increasingly uncertain. Changes in population size, a shift in people's expectations, political changes, ageing, a diversifying population, and the use of information technology are some of the changes that cause uncertainty in the environment and are considered to be challenges that managers and leaders of public sector organisations have to deal with. In the public sector, change, though not necessarily dramatic, is the rule rather than the exception (Kettle, 2002).

In thinking broadly about the interaction between organisational internal and external environments, Pondy and Mitroff (1979) note that in organisational life people themselves often produce part of the environment they face. They act, interact and in doing so create the materials that become the barriers, constraints or opportunities they face (Weick 1995, p. 31).

This argument on the interconnection and interdependence between the organisation and its environment further strengthens the case for taking into account the internal and external factors and their effect on the SPFP. In the following section, the external and internal organisational factors influencing the planning process and regarded as barriers to planning will be presented, aiming to list the main ones as noted in the literature rather than capturing all the internal and external factors.

3.3.1 External organisational barriers

The external organisational environment is the context in which the organisation operates. The macro environment represents the broad conditions and trends surrounding the organisation. They include the political-legal climate, the economic conditions, technology, and socio-cultural climate (Bartol, Martin, Tein and Matthews, 2001, p. 65).

3.3.1.1 Barriers associated with the political-legal climate

The political-legal climate refers to legal and governmental systems within which an organisation functions. Trends in legislation, court decisions, political, and governmental regulations are important aspects of this climate (Bartol et al., 2001, p. 67). It was noted within the literature that political stability and political influences are important factors that may influence the strategic planning within public sector organisations.

Political stability: The Middle East is one of the most active regions in the world when it comes to political instability, encompassing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the recent Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. The political environment in the UAE also exhibits, to a lesser extent, some political instability. The Business Monitor International Political Outlook Report (BMIPOR) states that the ongoing tensions between the US and Iran over the latter's nuclear ambitions are a source of great unease for the Arab states along the Persian Gulf (GCC countries). The announcement by the six-member GCC in December 2006 of plans to launch a joint nuclear program is clearly illustrative of the level of threat of Iran. The relationship between political stability and strategic planning was noted by a number of scholars. For example, Hurd (1992) states that the political-legal environment can have an effect on strategic quality planning. The literature suggests that the government can play an important role in encouraging or discouraging strategic planning (Porter, 1985; Thanassoulis, Boussofiane and Dyson, 1994) by creating barriers in specific industries, establishing quality regulations (Benson, Saraph and Schroeder, 1991), and securing state ownership (Jenner, Hebert, Appell and Baack, 1998). In addition, strategic quality planning can also be influenced by import and export restrictions between countries, differences in quality standards and regulations across countries, and the amount of political stability and the stability of governments (Boom, 1995; Lakhe and Mohanty, 1994).

Political influences: Public organisations are faced with various political influences (Smith and Lipsky, 1993). In an attempt to cope with these influences, the literature provides evidence of organisations' political activities that are ultimately designed to achieve outcomes in favour of organisations' economic survival (Keim and Baysinger, 1988). These political activities also provide the organisation with a sustainable advantage (Mahon, Bigelow and Fahey, 1994). However, some political influences could not be dealt with using organisations' political activities and they therefore inhibit the planning process or prevent access to resources needed for planning (Kemp, 1990).

3.3.1.2 Barriers associated with the economic climate

The economic climate involves systems of wealth production, distribution and consumption. Within any economic system, organisations are influenced by economic factors over which they have little control, such as inflation and recession (Bartol et al. 2001, p. 66).

The macro-economy is defined as a branch of economics dealing with the performance, structure, behaviour and decision-making of the entire economy. Macroeconomics is a broad field of study with two main areas of research: the attempt to understand the causes and consequences of short-term fluctuations in national income, and the attempt to understand the determinants of long-term economic growth.

The macro economy influences strategic planning in public sector organisations in two ways. First, with economic growth, people's expectations of public services increase which requires public organisations to strategically plan ahead to satisfy public demands for better services. Second, fluctuations in the macro-economy, such as the recent economic crises, might reduce public organisations' ability to plan ahead because funding is reduced on one side and the availability of reliable economic information (growth forecasting information) is unpredictable/unavailable on the other side (Prasad and Tata, 2003). It was also found in the literature that the degree of international economic involvement could also influence leadership and strategic planning (Cole, Bacdayan and White, 1993). Firms that experienced greater international competition were more likely to implement strategic initiatives (Barringer, Foster and Macy, 1999; Das, Handfield, Calantone, and Ghosh, 2000). As international competition increases, cost, quality and competitiveness become much more interdependent (Naidu, Prasad and Kleimenhagen, 1996). Intense global competition can cause firms to re-examine their strategies and practices (Yong and Wilkinson, 2001). Similarly, the opening of new markets can increase economic pressures toward affordable quality, resulting in a greater focus on quality in the strategic planning process (Feigenbaum, 1994).

3.3.1.3 Barriers associated with the socio-cultural climate

The socio-cultural climate represents the attitudes, values, norms, beliefs, behaviours and associated demographic characteristics of the population within which the organisation operates (Bartol et al. 2001, p. 68). They added that organisations need to be aware of these differences as well as changing trends in order to remain effective in delivering their services and products. In Dubai, the population has grown by 77% between 2000 and 2007 to reach 1,530,000. The gender distribution is 76% male and 24% female, largely due to the influx of male expatriate workers. Sixty-four per cent of the population is between 20–40 years old. In relation to the employment rate, 98% of the active population was reported as employed (Source: Dubai Statistical Center, Statistical Yearbook 2007).

At another level, Bedeian (1993, p. 73) views the social environment of an organisation as the societal views regarding an organisation's behaviour – that is, whether the organisation is pursuing socially acceptable goals. For an organisation to survive, society has to perceive it as legitimate and worthy of support. This facilitates the organisation's ability to acquire resources and deflects questions about its ability to provide goods and services to the community.

In the public sector, the two main problems relating to the nature of public organisations and their relation to external stakeholders are the lack of clarity of the goals needed to satisfy external stakeholders and the multitude of stakeholders, resulting in many conflicting objectives and measures (Rantanen et. al, 2007). Two potential barriers to the strategic planning formation process have been noted in relation to the above: the variety of external stakeholders, and the ambiguity of stakeholders' expectations regarding public sector services.

Variety of external stakeholders: In the public sector there are many stakeholders that have different and conflicting requirements (Lawton et al., 2000; Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004). This creates at least two problems for public organisations while planning. First, the variety of stakeholders may produce a variety of objectives with a multitude of performance measures that satisfy no one (Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004). Second, it may be difficult to set targets or to make decisions based on the measurement results because some of the stakeholders have conflicting objectives and the conflicting needs of different stakeholders must somehow be reconciled (Lawton et al., 2000; Metta¨nen, 2005).

Ambiguity of stakeholder's expectations: Another potential barrier is the ambiguity of stakeholders' expectations, which emphasises the clarity of stakeholders' requirements. For many public sector organisations the planning process is faced with constraints relating to understanding external stakeholders' requirements. Writers such as Banfield (1975) emphasise the diverse and ambiguous nature of goals in public organisations. Although the literature emphasises the problem with goals in the public sector, Lan and Rainey (1992) report empirical evidence to the contrary. They found that public managers perceive their goals as clear and achievable, but this result may depend on the relative public awareness of the organisation. Setting goals in a highly politicised environment can cause difficulties for public managers, especially those who have a variety of stakeholders. Therefore, public organisations are likely to pursue a mix of strategies to satisfy various stakeholders' expectations (Boyne, 2003).

3.3.1.4 Barriers associated with the technological environment

Technology is of particular importance to organisations because it enhances an organisation's productivity, which means it can either provide a competitive advantage to organisations that can use it effectively, or pose a threat to those that lack it (Bedeian 1993, p. 74). To remain competitive, organisations need to understand current technological developments affecting their ability to offer desirable products and services (Bartol et al. 2001, p. 65). Therefore, *Rapid technological developments* can be seen as a potential barrier to strategic planning, especially for those organisations that were unable to follow up on technological developments and use them as a competitive edge.

Before proceeding to the next section 'internal organisational factors', it's important to shed light on overall environmental changes '*turbulent environment*' and their relationship to strategic planning. A general premise of organisation theory is that for organisations to be effective, they must adapt to their environment (Robbins, 1990). In the strategic management literature it is widely accepted that organisations must achieve an appropriate 'fit' with their environment. Andrews (1980) supports this view by stating that strategic planning has been viewed as a means of achieving rational change in an organisation to maintain continuing fit with its environment.

As environmental turbulence increases, strategic issues emerge more frequently that challenge the way an organization formulates and implements its strategy. Turbulence also brings into question the responsibilities, balance of power, and decision-making priorities between those who manage and those who govern (Perrott, 2011). With increasing environmental volatility, the ability to accurately forecast changes diminishes. It becomes more difficult to pre-determine the appropriate strategies for an organisation to achieve its objectives. In an environment of high volatility, use of plans may be too constraining, causing organisational inflexibility. It is in more stable environments, where forecasting is likely to be more accurate and organisational adaptation is kept to a minimum, that strategic planning will be most effective. This argument is consistent with the work of Frederickson (1984), who found that the integration and formalisation of decision processes in planning was positively related to performance in stable environments and negatively related to performance in unstable environments (Drago, 1996). The literature on the turbulent environment and its relation to the formalised planning process gained considerable attention from scholars and practitioners, but with different conclusions. On one side, researchers argued that planning formality and comprehensiveness of planning is negatively associated with uncertainty in

the external environment. Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984) found that planning comprehensiveness in unstable environments was negatively related to return on assets. Similarly, Fredrickson (1984) found that planning comprehensiveness was positively related to performance in stable environments. Bresser and Bishop (1983) went further and argued that comprehensive planning in uncertain and complex environments caused more problems than it solved. They suggested that formal planning procedures suppressed the creativity needed to respond to the fast-changing environment. Within the UAE, Elbanna (2010) reported that environmental uncertainty was found to be an obstacle to strategic planning in the UAE.

By way of contrast, there are studies supporting a positive relationship between planning formalisation and environmental uncertainty. For example, Lindsay and Rue (1980) found that firms in more complex environments were more likely to use formal planning. Similarly, Kukalis (1991) found that greater levels of environmental complexity were associated with more extensive planning, shorter planning horizons, and more frequent plan reviews. Bantel (1993) also found environmental complexity to be positively related to strategic planning formality in the US banking industry. Along the same lines, Lindsay and Rue (1980) introduced firm size into the equation and found that large firms in fast-changing environments were more likely than small firms to use formal planning. Between the two opposite sides of the conclusions some scholars did not find any relationship between planning and environmental uncertainty. For example, Boulton, Lindsay, Franklin and Rue (1982) reported that uncertainty did not consistently impact strategic planning.

From the above discussions, it is noted that external barriers influence the planning process in different ways and with different capacity. The environments of organisations change continually; as environmental volatility increases for an organisation the ability to forecast changes accurately diminishes. It becomes more difficult to pre-determine the appropriate strategies for an organisation to achieve its objectives. It is in more stable environments that forecasting is likely to be more accurate. This argument is consistent with the work of Frederickson (1984) who found that the integration and formalisation of the decision processes in planning were positively related to performance in stable environments and negatively related to performance in unstable environments (Drago, 1996). In addition, researchers argued that planning formality and comprehensiveness of planning are negatively associated with uncertainty in the external environment (Fredrickson and Mitchell, 1984). Within the UAE, Elbanna (2010) reported that environmental uncertainty was an obstacle to strategic planning.

3.3.2 Internal organisational barriers

As in the case of the external environment, a number of internal organisational factors were noted in the literature as being barriers or potential barriers to the strategic planning formation process (SPFP). Organisations, as defined by Atherton (1993), are complex social systems, behaviours and cultures. Organisational change presents a challenge for management and managers. Studies of strategic change illustrate its complexity, political challenges, cultural barriers, the inertia of an organisation's systems and processes, and the bounded rationality of managers (Johnson, 1987; Pettigrew, 1985). For example, Leonard, Scholl and Beauvais (1997) noted that people generally dislike change because they are reluctant to move out of their comfort zone. Successful organisational change requires the expertise of managing both the human elements and their connectivity with strategy, technology, and other process-related elements of the organisation (Schwartz and Davis, 1981). Next, a number of internal organisational factors will be examined as being noted in the literature as barriers or potential barriers to the planning process.

3.3.2.1 Organisation culture

There is no agreement on the precise definition of culture (Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983). Some such as Ashforth (1985) understand it as 'shared beliefs and assumptions'. Schien (1985) says that these beliefs and assumptions are learned unconsciously through group experience and they define , in a basic fashion, an organisation's view of itself and its environment. Organisation culture is seen as one of the most important internal organisational factors that gained considerable attention in the management literature (Alvesson and Berg 1992). The concept of organisational culture has been central to much of the subsequent work on organisational effectiveness. Specialised literatures emerged around particular variants of organisational culture such as learning culture and innovating culture. More recently, attention has turned to identifying and creating an organisational culture that facilitates agility; promotes alliances; encourages knowledge management; fosters corporate responsibility and moral integrity; and embraces diversity (Schien, 1985).

In relation to organisational culture and its influence on strategic planning and organisational change, different views were found in the literature. Many early proponents of organisational culture tended to assume that a strong, pervasive culture was beneficial to all organisations because it fostered motivation, commitment, identity, solidarity, and sameness, which in turn facilitated internal integration and coordination. On the other hand, Perrow (1979) argues that a strong culture

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and the internalised controls associated with it could result in individuals placing unconstrained demands on themselves, as well as acting as a barrier to adaptation and change. Added, a strong culture could also be a means of manipulation and co-optation. Along the same lines, Merton (1957) states that culture could further lead to resistance to goals or sub-goal formation because the behavioural norms and ways of doing things become so important that they begin to overshadow the original purpose of the organisation. Schein (1992) has quite a different view. He noted that even though a strong organisational culture has generally been viewed as a conservative force, that may be dysfunctional for change-oriented organisations. A strong (fairly stable) organisational culture does not necessarily mean that the organisation will be resistant to change.

Despite the different views regarding the benefits or difficulties associated with strong culture, there is strong support in the literature indicating that the primary cause of the failure of most major change efforts has been the failure to successfully change the organisational culture (Caldwell, 1994).

3.3.2.2 Organisation structure

Organisation structure is defined as a formal system of task allocation, coordination and supervision that is directed towards the achievement of organisational aims (Pugh, 1990). The relationship between organisation structure and strategic planning has been discussed by numerous authors. However, empirical studies of this relationship remain scarce (Drago, 1997). An understanding of an organisation's structure is essential to the strategic planning development. If a structure is not compatible with a strategy, this will constrain strategy formulation and implementation. While it is generally agreed that organisational structure must vary according to the prevailing strategy, there is no agreement about an optimal organisational design (Wheelen and Hunger, 1984). Miles and Snow (1978) argue that strategy is a way of adjusting the relationship between an organisation and its environment, and those internal structures and processes in turn must fit the strategy if this adjustment is to be successful. They added that organisations face not only planning challenges but also administrative problems (the selection of the appropriate structure) when they strategically plan ahead. Miles and Snow argue that administrative systems have both a 'lagging' and a 'leading' relationship with strategy: as a lagging variable, the administrative system must rationalise through the development of appropriate structures and

processes. As a leading variable, the administrative system will facilitate or restrict the organisation's future capacity to adapt.

The research into organisational structure and strategic planning concluded that a relationship between strategy and structure exists (Bower, 1970; Chandler, 1962; Scott, 1971) and that the choice of structure makes a difference in the achievement of strategy (Lorsch, 1976; Rumelt, 1974). And because of these conclusions, numerous writers today express the view that an appropriately designed structure is required to facilitate the formulation and implementation of a firm's strategy (Bart, 1986; Steiner and Miner, 1977). Due to this strong relationship, organisational structure can facilitate or inhibit the strategic planning formation process. Therefore, it was included as one of the potential barriers.

3.3.2.3 Leadership commitment

Strategic leadership is seen as a key element in effective strategic management, and for the strategic planning to be effective, there must be commitment and involvement from the very top of the organisation. Leaders focus their organisation on a strategic direction (Paul, 2004). A leadership's lack of commitment to the strategic planning process can be seen as a barrier to the planning process (Hoag, Ritschard and Cooper, 2002). In the public sector, Paul (2004) argues that leaders should participate in the appropriate design of strategic planning systems and see strategic planning systems as useful in helping them change things. Arguably, a well-designed strategic planning system not only helps leaders to increase learning capacity, it also helps to open up their organisations to more effective partnerships and to the needs of the public. In non-profit organisations the support of the executive director and at least some members of the board were essential to the adoption of formal planning (Stone and Brush, 1996).

In a study on the relationship between leadership characteristics and each of the planning processes and planning intensity, results showed that leadership characteristics (including power/control, creativity, and people dependence) have a strong association with planning processes and planning intensity; and even were considered to be strong predictors of them (Drago and Clements, 1999). Along the same lines, Hambrick and Fredrickson (2001) found that strategy formulation is linked to the top executive's personal philosophy and personality. Management's self-interest, their personalities, interpretations and influences on strategy have been linked to the strategy formulation process and ultimately to performance (Guth and Macmillan, 1986).

While top executives are argued to play a central role in strategic adaptation, evidence suggests that they are not equally open to organisational change (Geletkanycz, 1997). A study by Bart (1986) to examine the influence of cultural values on executive open-mindedness towards change showed that culture has an important impact on executive mindsets, as demonstrated by the fact that executives of differing cultural backgrounds are not equally open to change. Also, the study offers empirical support for the view that 'values' prominently help (or add) in shaping executives' strategic and leadership orientations.

Moreover, managers are not evenly open to change even in the context of significant environmental adjustment. Many develop a strong personal attachment to existing policies and profiles that effectively impede change in organisational strategy and the systems and practices which support it (Geletkanycz, 1997).

3.3.2.4 Lack of financial resources

One of the reasons for public sector reforms witnessed in the last two decades is caused by financial pressure placed upon public organisations and governments alike. Local governments are facing a growing contradiction between decreasing levels of financial support and increasing responsibilities and demand for better public services (Teo, 2002; Davis, 2003).

Environmental forces, as well as the availability of resources and organisational capabilities are pre-requisite to formulating strategies and plans. With regard to the resource-based view (Barney, 2001), the success of organisational change is deemed to be rooted in identifying and utilising specific resources in order to gain successful implementation. In examining the consequences of the fundamental rationale of the resource-based view for research into organisational change, one can see that organisations must first possess or control specific resources. Then organisations should combine and utilise these resources. Finally, organisations have to build capabilities from these resources over time. Barney (2001) interpreted resources as being financial capital, physical, organisational and human resources.

3.3.2.5 Information technology infrastructure

Strategic readiness as Redding and Catalanello (1994) explained is a 'state of permanent, organization-wide preparedness for large-scale systemic change'. Because of the prominent

position that information technology (IT) plays in organisations today, IT strategic readiness is critical to overall organisational readiness for change (Sabherwal and Chan, 2001). This alignment can be reflected in the understanding of organisational objectives by information system (IS) planners, a perceived need to change IS goals in light of changing corporate goals, and mutual understanding between top management and IS planners.

Itami and Numagami (1992) state that there are at least three perspectives on the interaction between strategy and technology: the first focuses on the effect of current technology on the current strategy of the firm, the second on the effect of current strategy on future technology, and the third on the effect of current technology on future strategy. Itami and Numagami (1992) concluded that the essence of these effects is respectively: strategy capitalises on technology, strategy cultivates technology, and technology drives cognition of strategy. As one of the intentions of this study is to identify barriers to the strategic planning formation process, the focus will be on the third interaction (the effect of current technology on future strategy).

Itami and Numagami (1992) added that the technology that the firm possesses, or the firm's current commitment to technological development, affects human cognitive processes for strategy formation within the firm. They proceed by saying that any factor can have two opposite effects on human cognitive processes. It can help stimulate appropriate cognitive processes, or it can hinder them. The negative side of the cognitive effect of technology on strategy seems to have been more prominently emphasised in the literature. For example, in the research on the effect of technology on corporate culture, technology is often to blame because excessive psychological commitment to the old technology may hinder emergence of new strategic thinking. However, Itami and Numagami emphasise the positive side, and claim that current technology can drive cognition of future strategy of the firm in two ways. First, it channels and activates idea generation processes. Second, it helps integrate these fragmentary ideas.

A number of governments emphasise the use of technology within their government departments. In Dubai, for example, a number of government departments launched the e-government initiative. Electronic government is the government's use of the internet and other information and communications technologies to improve the processing and delivery of information and services to citizens, employees, business partners and other government organisations (Turban, King, Lee, Warkentin and Chung, 2002). Numerous benefits may accrue from e-government initiatives

including cost savings, improved communications and coordination, expanded citizen participation and increased government accountability (Deloitte Consulting and Deloitte & Touche, 2000).

From the above discussions, technology can act on strategy as a weapon that firms can utilise in their favour (Porter, 1983), constraints to which they must adapt (Hofer and Schendel, 1978), a facilitator that can drive cognition of future strategy or an inhibitor to strategy formation (Itami and Numagami, 1992).

3.3.2.6 Performance management

Performance measurement is seen as a critical activity for management in both the private and public sector (Atkinson and McCrindell, 1997; Behn, 2003). The alignment between performance measurement and strategy is at the core of most performance measurement and management methodologies. Many scholars such as (Kaplan and Norton, 1996a; Neely, Richards, Mills, Platts and Bourne, 1997; Dyson, 2000) emphasised the importance of this alignment since strategy-aligned performance measurement can facilitate and support the implementation of strategy.

The benefits of strategy-aligned performance measurement have been identified by many authors including, for example, Atkinson and McCrindell, 1997; Dyson, 2000; Kaplan and Norton, 1996b, and many others. These benefits include:
- informing the organisation about strategic direction and communicating strategic priorities
- monitoring and tracking the implementation of strategy
- aligning short-term actions with long-term strategies
- rendering both goals and means visible
- making clear the links between performance of individuals and sub-units
- promoting integration among various organisational processes
- focusing on changing efforts and permitting organisational learning.

From the above benefits it's apparent that the importance of performance measures is not just at the implementation phase of the strategic planning process but also during the formulation phase. Therefore, lack of performance measure was included as a potential barrier to the SPFP. Sole (2009) state that lack of well defined performance measures will inhibit politicians and public officials to know and learn how well services are delivered, how well they meet the needs of their constituents, and whether they reflect the political demands they are elected to fulfill. Moreover,

Kald, Nilsson and Rapp (2000) state that there are a growing number of publications expressing the need to tailor management control systems to support the development and implementation of organisational strategies. There is also a recognition that as strategy changes, performance measures need to be reviewed and if necessary changed to ensure alignment with strategy (Bourne, Neely, Platts and Mills, 2002). If this is not done then there is a danger that performance measurement could become irrelevant or counterproductive (Wholey and Hatry, 1992). Along the same lines, Neely (1999) suggested that having strategy-aligned measurement is especially important for those organisations whose strategy is continually changing, often resulting from operating in highly dynamic environments.

In the public sector, Kloot and Martin (2000) argue that performance measurement systems have gained considerable attention due to the drive for reform. However, implementation of performance measurement in the public sector is more difficult than in the private sector. This is mainly due to two fundamental problems – the conflicting stakeholder needs, and the problem of measuring outcomes. Other specific challenges have also been identified. Pollanen (2005) reported that mistrust of measurement, lack of credibility and usefulness, lack of standards and timeliness, substantial investment of time and resources, and resistance by public officials are all considered challenges to performance measurement implementation in public sector organisations.

3.3.2.7 Weak strategic thinking

There is no agreement in the literature on what strategic thinking is. A number of authors have used the term interchangeably with other concepts such as strategic planning or strategic management. Others have attempted to draw a line between different concepts. Wilson (1994), for example, notes that the character of strategic planning has profoundly changed so that it is now more appropriate to refer to it as strategic management or strategic thinking. However, strategic thinking has been researched in both the psychological and management literature with the psychological literature focusing on factors affecting strategic thinking and decision making whereas the management literature has focused on the process of strategic thinking and making strategic decisions (Drejer, Olesen and Strandskov, 2005). Drejer and others explain strategic thinking as thinking about possible scenarios and strategy in a creative manner that is relatively free from existing boundaries. Bonn (2005) goes farther and defines strategic thinking as "a way of solving strategic problems that combine a rational and convergent approach with creative and divergent thought processes".

Other authors have focused on strategic management processes and either stated explicitly that good strategic planning contributes to strategic thinking (Porter, 1987) or assumed implicitly that a well-designed strategic management system facilitates strategic thinking within an organisation (Thompson and Strickland, 1999; Viljoen, 1994). Mintzberg (1994b) suggested a clear distinction between strategic thinking and strategic planning. He stated that 'strategic planning is not strategic thinking' and argued that each term focuses on a different stage in the strategy development process. He claimed that strategic planning is a process that should occur after strategic thinking. Garratt (1995b) argued along similar lines. He defined strategic thinking as a process by which senior executives 'can rise above the daily managerial processes and crises'.

The importance of strategic thinking in the strategic planning process is well grounded in management literature. The importance of strategic thinking is noted at different phases of the planning process. Before the process (strategic planning is a process that should occur after strategic thinking – Mintzberg (1994b)); after the planning process (good strategic planning contributes to strategic thinking (Porter, 1987)); or even an outcome of strategic planning (strategic planning is intended to enhance an organisation's ability to think, act, and learn strategically (Bryson, 2004)).

Strategic thinking was noted by some scholars as a barrier or problem to the planning process. For example, Bonn (2001) argues that the main strategic planning problem identified by the majority of senior executives was strategic thinking. He added that strategic thinking was a problem regardless of whether the companies had a formalised strategic planning system or used a non-formalised approach.

3.3.2.8 Resistance to change

One of the main organisational characteristics that keep the organisation alive and developing is change. However, within the same organisation, change can be embraced or cursed. By reviewing the literature in the field, a number of influences were found to be obstacles to change. Some relate to organisation elements and others are more grounded in individual beliefs (Hoag et. al. 2002). In relation to individuals, Koopman (1991) implies that all organisations have resistors (people who will resist change at all cost). Leonard, Beauvais and Scholl (1995) added that people generally dislike change because they are reluctant to move out of their comfort zone. Larson and Finkelstein

(1999) reported that staff exercise passive and active resistance to change by numerous ways such as speaking out or resigning, absenteeism, disobedience, and shirking. Nevertheless, staff members are not the ones to blame for resisting change. Kotter (1995) noted that three factors are considered to be significant obstacles to smooth organisational change initiatives. These are: manager's mindsets (status quo), internal organisational systems, and most importantly, employee-related reasons.

In relation to employee-related reasons (factors) behind resistance to change, the following was noted: uncertainty – staff threatened by prospects of change; turf protection – staff preferred to live with what they know rather than risking what they have; inability to cope with change – due to lack of certain capabilities and skills; internal politics – employees resist change if they believe their status would be diminished or if they depend on others for emotional or political security (Hoag et. al. 2002).

Although writings have focused additional attention on resistance, there remains substantial variability in how the phenomena associated with resistance are perceived and ultimately operationalized. Several authors have offered definitions broad enough that they could include almost any unfavorable reaction, opposition, or force that prevents or inhibits change. Such definitions have also implied that resistance to change is a problem that needs to be overcome or eliminated. However, others have challenged this perspective of resistance to change and proposed that resistance may be useful, and that it can be productively "harnessed" to help challenge and refine strategic and action plans and to improve the quality of decision making (Erwin and Garman, 2010). In other cases, resistance may be a productive response to perceived unethical actions as well as changes that may not be in the best interest of the organization (Oreg, 2006). In fact some scholars characterized resistance to change as a positive process that fosters learning among organization participants (Msweli-Mbanga and Potwana, 2006). From the above it is noted that resistance to change is one of the main barriers to smooth SPFP.

3.3.2.9 Other internal barriers

As described above, a number of internal organisational barriers to SPFP were noted in the literature and seen as important influencing factors. In addition, other internal barriers were found with less emphasis and these include: organisational processes and regulations; the strategic planning process itself; planner's expertise; as well as the organisational mandate.

In relation to organisational processes and regulations, Eriksson and Penker (2000) pointed out that a good model of business process impacts the development of organisational strategy by: 1. capturing the real business as truthfully and correctly as possible; 2. focusing on the key processes and structures of the business at an appropriate level of abstraction; 3. representing a consensus view among the people operating in the business; 4. facilitate understanding and communicating among the different stakeholders of the business. Schmidt and Treichler (1998, p. 58) reported that organisational processes should be tied to an organisation's strategic intent and actions to ensure that unique value is delivered to the end-user. Processes that do not link strongly to strategy may have the wrong focus, or be too narrow to achieve the intended outcomes (Cook, 1996, p. 34). As such, processes must be defined and developed with regard to their contribution to the overall organisational strategy (Garvin, 1995; Edwards and Peppard, 1997).

The process used to plan can also be seen as a barrier to the strategic planning formation. If the process of planning is not well designed, taking into consideration the sequence of activities, stakeholder involvement, agreements of various parties, availability of resources, control mechanisms, as well as the unique characteristics of the organisation, then the process used for planning could act as a barrier to smooth strategic planning formation (Whelan and Sisson, 1993).

In relation to planners' expertise in strategic planning, Whelan and Sisson (1993) reported that at the core of every strategic planning process are people. Changing the process requires changing the way people behave and interact with one another. Planners may have to change their own behaviour and become catalysts for change and strategic planning missionaries within the organisation. With a little creativity and innovation the planning process can be made interesting, simple, exciting, and relevant to the needs of various stakeholders. Along the same lines, Lenz and Engledow (1986) state that the role of planners should include at least four key functions. These are: continually enrich and update the cause maps used by managers in key decision-making positions. A second function is that of reality tester. This entails testing assumptions about linkages within the cause maps of decision-makers. Another function is to monitor the emergence and definition of strategic problems confronting top management. A fourth function is to aid in the development and coordination of both ad hoc and formal organisational designs (Lenz and Engledow, 1986).

The organisation mandate may also be found to be a barrier to the planning process. As stated by Nelson and French (2002), the organisational mandate clarifies what the organisation formally and informally is required to do or not to do. Formal requirements are usually codified in the constitutional framework of laws, regulations, charters, and articles of incorporation that govern an organisation's operations. In addition, organisations must also meet a variety of informal mandates embodied in the norms or expectations of key stakeholders. Further, an organisation's mandate clarifies what is forbidden by the organisation. This is equally important as the formal and informal requirements of the mandate (Nelson and French, 2002).

From the discussion above, it is found that the internal organisational barriers vary in their type, effect and capacity; and that some internal barriers affecting certain organisations might not be seen as barriers to other organisations. Further, it was found that the organisations and the people themselves are part of creating the constraints and barriers they face.

3.4 Summary

This chapter and Chapter Two have set the foundation for the development of testable propositions by covering the related literature in the field of the strategic planning process, mainly: the steps of the strategic planning formation process (SPFP); the evaluation criteria for the strategic plan document produced; and the barriers or potential barriers to the planning process.

Section one describes the steps of the strategic planning formation process. Eight steps were identified as the main steps of the SPFP. These are: initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process; clarifying the organisational mandate; establishing an effective vision, mission statement; assessing the environment; strategic issues identification; strategies and plans development; and monitoring, evaluation and control. In addition, the implementation of strategies and plans was also covered as a step that follows but contributes to the process. For each step in the SPFP, the definition of main elements, the purpose of conducting the step in relation to the whole planning process, as well as the expected benefits have been covered as detailed in the literature.

Section two details the quality criteria for the strategic plan document. Seven quality criteria were noted in the literature. These are: formality of SPD; clarity; measurability; objectivity; coverage; openness and consistency. For each quality criteria the definitions, quality framework by which the

criteria was chosen, the importance, as well as the reasoning for deciding on the quality criteria were presented. In addition, in this section the definition of SPD, the relationship between the SPD and the planning process, as well as the SPD content were covered. Moreover, the planning horizon, as well as the determinants of the planning horizon, was explained.

Section three lists the main external and internal barriers to the planning process as noted in the covered literature. The main external barriers found are: political stability, political influences, macro economy, unavailability of macro information, turbulent environment, rapid technological developments, the variety of external stakeholders, and the ambiguity of stakeholder's expectations. In relation to internal barriers, a variety of barriers was noted. These are: organisational culture; organisational structure; an organisation's mandate; leadership commitment; strategic planning procedure; organisational processes and regulations; employees' resistance to change; strategic thinking; planner's expertise; lack of financial resources; IT infrastructure; the performance management system; and others. Each of the external and internal barriers was reviewed in relation to their influence on the strategic planning process.

In the following chapter, the conceptual framework for the research will be presented, the relationships between research variables will be explained, and research propositions will be developed for the purpose of satisfying research aims and answering research questions addressed in Chapter One.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

Introduction

The previous chapters have set the scene and background for the development of the conceptual framework. This review of the literature points to a number of gaps that need further explanation; some fundamental questions in the literature are either being disputed or remain unanswered, such as the extent to which a formal planning process is practised within the Dubai public sector, the barriers of the planning process, the influence of organisational elements on the strategic planning formation process (SPFP) and the determinants of the strategic plan document SPD quality.

In this chapter a detailed critical analysis of literature stated in previous chapters will be presented, followed by a number of propositions that this study will address consecutively. The propositions are intended to satisfy research aims and research questions addressed in Chapter One. Each research question will be answered through testing a number of propositions as will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Before proceeding to the proposition development, it is crucial at this stage to derive a theoretical framework that will enable the deduction of testable propositions.

4.1 Conceptual framework

The developed conceptual model shows how the researcher theorises the relationships among several factors identified as being important to the research questions. The conceptual framework draws on the reviews of previous knowledge to discuss the interrelationships among the variables that are deemed to be integral to the dynamics of the situation being investigated. The developed conceptual framework will help postulate appropriate propositions to test certain relationships and thus improve our understanding of the phenomena under study.

The overall strategic planning (SP) process as conceived by the researcher is presented in Figure 4.1. The process is divided into strategy formation, implementation and control. However, for the purpose of this study, a detailed examination of various variables associated with the research in

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hand is needed to satisfy the objectives of this study. The following section presents the various variables associated with the strategic planning formation process (SPFP).
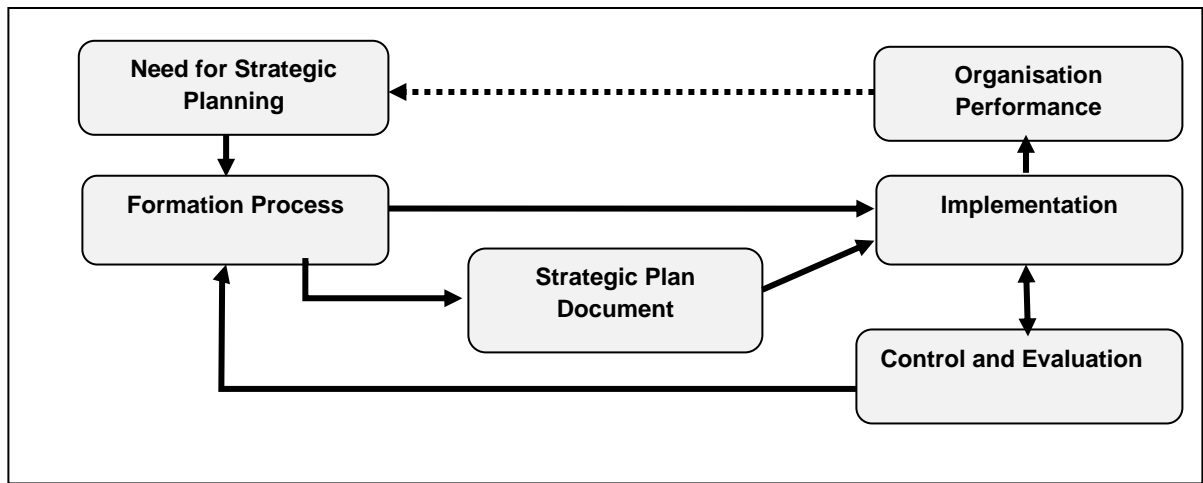
Figure 4.1: Strategic planning process (Source: Researcher)

4.1.1 Describing the variables

Since the conceptual framework offers the foundation that will guide the rest of the research, through identifying the network of relationships among important variables in the research study, it is essential first to list the different groups of variables and to describe the variables they contain. While doing so, the conceptual framework will be developed to its final version.

The variables that were identified as of significance to this study can be broadly grouped into five categories. These are:

    A. Organisational elements
    B. Strategic planning formation process
    C. Strategic plan document
    D. Internal organisational barriers
    E. External barriers.

Each group contains a number of variables that were covered extensively in Chapters Two and Three. The variables are presented in Figure 4.2. The relationship between the main variables will be examined comprehensively while developing the research propositions. Next, a brief description of each variable will be presented (each variable is stated in italics and then defined).

4.1.1.1 Organisational variables

Four organisational variables are included in this study. These are: organisation size, age/maturity, organisational level, and the availability of the strategic planning unit. These control variables will guide the development of a set of testable propositions. Figure 4.2 shows how these variables fit into the research framework. Each of these organisational elements is briefly described next. A full description is available under section (2.4).

Organisation size: the size of the organisation is defined by the number of full-time employees (Fredrickson, 1984)

Organisation age/maturity: the number of years (plus one) elapsed since the year of incorporation (*incorporation age*) (Loderer and Waelchli, 2009)

Availability of the strategic planning unit (SPU): the existence of a unit or a department within the organisational structure responsible for managing the SP process

Organisational level of planning: the organisational level at which planning efforts took place. For this study two types of planning levels were analysed: planning at corporate level and planning at departmental or divisional level (Nichol, 1992).

4.1.1.2 Strategic planning formation process

This category covers the steps associated with the SPFP: each step is included in the framework presented in Figure 4.2 as a separate variable. All steps of the planning process were covered comprehensively under section (3.1). However, a brief description is provided next.

Initiation and agreeing on the SP process: agreeing that strategic planning is needed and desirable, and that all participants are on board, committed and supportive of the planning process and its various sequence of steps. In other words, agreement on the 'plan to plan' (Steiner, 1979)

Clarifying organisational mandate: clarifies what the organisation is formally and informally required to do or not to do, and what is forbidden by the organisation (Nelson and French, 2002; Bryson, 2004, p. 99)

Vision development and communication: developing an effective vision that helps organisational members and stakeholders understand the overall direction of the organisation and why and how things should be done; also to circulate and communicate vision among internal organisation members and external key stakeholders (Bryson et al., 2001)

Mission development and communication: developing an effective mission that unifies purpose across tangible and intangible organisation's intentions (Schein, 1997), and communicating mission to various stakeholders

Assessing the environment: the managerial activity of learning about and assessing the impact of events and trends in the organisation's internal and external environments through the use of strategic tools (Hambrick, 1981). According to Clark (1997), strategic tools can be described as concepts, analytical frameworks, techniques and methodologies that assist managers in making informed decisions. In the present study, the use of a number of strategic tools was assessed. These are: SWOT; PESTEL analysis (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal); critical success factor analysis; portfolio analysis; stakeholders analysis; value chain analysis; gap analysis; porter's – five factors analysis; cost-benefit analysis; and benchmarking

Strategic issues identification: the identification of issues that may impact the strategic directions of the organisation, the likelihood of their occurrence, and the development of appropriate responses to these issues (Lozier and Chittipeddi, 1986)

Strategies and plans' development: the creation of a set of strategies and associated plans (in response to strategic issues) that will effectively link the organisation with its environment to achieve organisational goals and a vision of success (Bryson, 2004, p. 186)

Monitoring and evaluation: the use of appropriate performance measures to track the completion of plans and projects associated with the strategic plan, and the evaluation of the outcomes of strategies and plans (Neely et al., 1997; Dyson, 2000)

In addition to the planning steps, the formality of the SP process is presented as a main variable under this category; a full description of SP formality is available under section (2.5).

Formality of the strategic planning formation process (process formality): the extent to which the essential steps of the planning process are conducted (Armstrong, 1982). This type of approach formalised the link between strategic planning and the processes prescribed by most strategic management theorists (e.g. Ansoff, 1965; Andrews, 1971; Hofer and Schendel, 1978; Prescott, 1983).

4.1.1.3 Strategic plan document

The third category of variables is associated with the strategic plan document produced. These include quality criteria such as: objectivity and measurability, as well as the overall 'strategic plan document quality' as a main variable. A description of each quality criteria is available in section (3.2.4). In addition, the planning horizon is also included under this category as a main variable for this study. The planning horizon is covered comprehensively in section (3.2.3). Next, each variable is stated in italics and then defined.

Strategic plan document quality: the quality of the strategic plan document (SPD) is the degree to which the quality criteria (or quality dimensions) have been met. These criteria are: formality; objectivity; measurability; coverage; clarity; consistency and openness

Formality (SPD): the inclusion and documentation of all essential elements of a strategic planning document found in the related literature such as vision; mission; values; strategic issues; strategic objectives and strategies as well as the related performance measures (Whelan and Sisson, 1993). This variable is different than the SP formality (process formality) described previously

Clarity: the strategic objectives and strategies in the strategic plan are clearly stated

Measurability: the strategic objectives are measurable and can be monitored and evaluated

Objectivity: the desired outcomes are clearly stated and understood in the strategic plan (Hiraga et al, 2003)

Coverage: the objectives in the strategic plan cover all the critical factors identified in the analysis phase (Mellalieu, 1992)

Openness: the strategies in the organisational strategic plan are openly disseminated and not hidden (Whelan and Sisson, 1993)

Consistency/flexibility: strategic consistency is the organisation's commitment to stability by adopting a predictable, successful course of action, whereas strategic flexibility is the ability of the firms to respond and successively adapt to environmental changes (Evans, 1991)

Planning horizon: a firm's planning horizon refers to the length of the future time period that decision-makers consider in planning (Das, 1987).
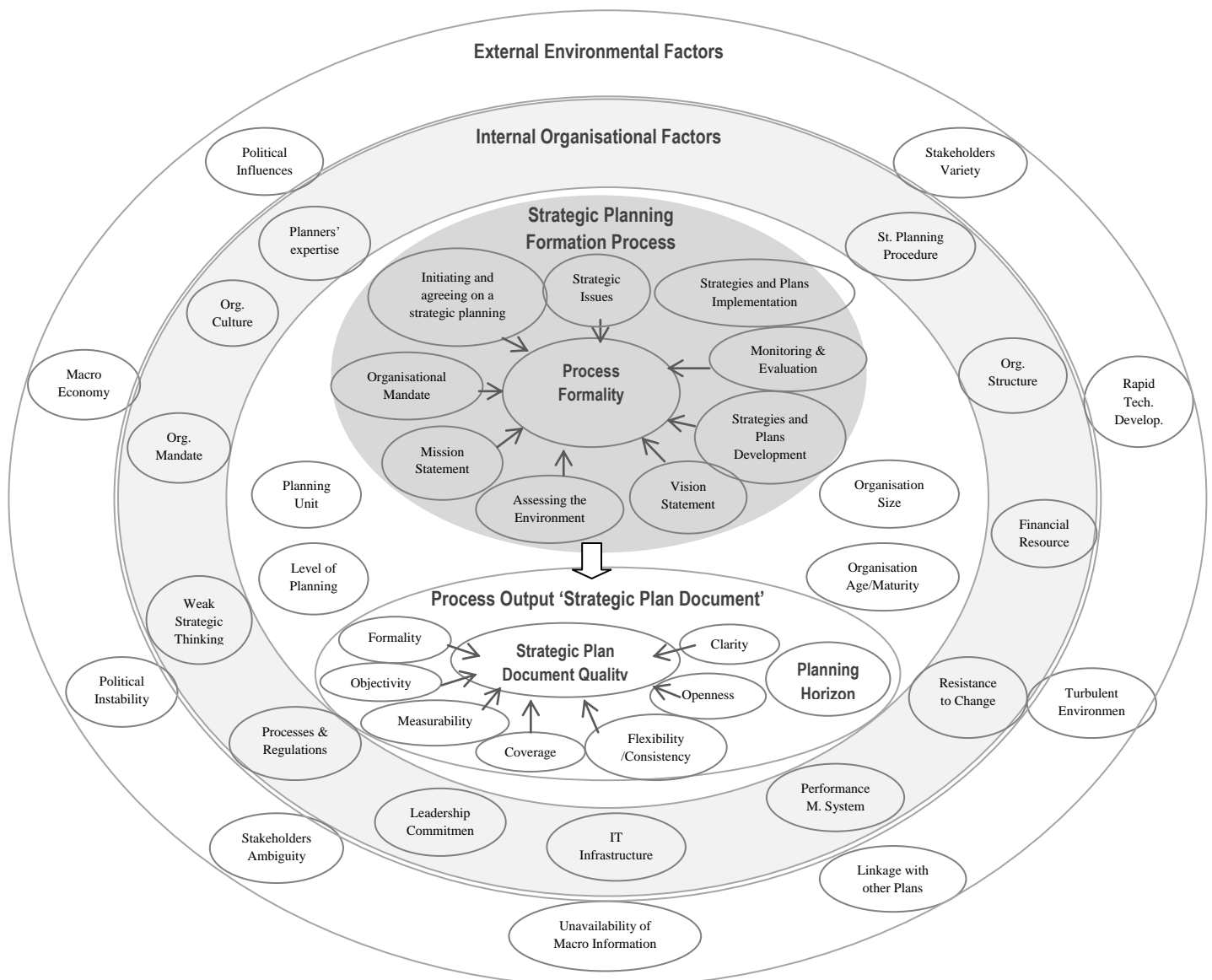
Figure 4.2: Research variable

4.1.1.4 Internal organisational barriers

Internal organisational barriers are internal organisational factors that influence the planning process and were noted in the literature as being barriers or potential barriers to the SPFP. A comprehensive coverage of each of the internal organisational barriers is presented in section (3.3.2). These internal barriers are:

Organisational culture: the organisation's shared beliefs and assumptions that are learned unconsciously through group experience and which define in a basic fashion an organisation's view of itself and its environment (Schein, 1997)

Organisational structure: a formal system of task allocation, coordination and supervision that are directed towards the achievement of organisational aims (Pugh, 1990)

Organisation's mandate: an organisation's reference statement that clarifies what the organisation is formally required to do or not to do. Further, an organisation's mandate clarifies what is forbidden to the organisation (Nelson and French, 2002)

Strategic planning procedures: the process the organisation follow to formally plan ahead

Strategic thinking: the ability of organisational members to raise their thinking above the daily managerial processes and crises (Garratt, 1995)

Leadership commitment: the ability to focus the organisation's effort in a strategic direction, create an agenda for strategic change, keep the organisation progressing towards the strategic vision, overcome resistance to change, facilitate resource requirements, and give managers and employees the power and authority they need to make decisions (Paul, 2004)

Organisational internal processes/regulations: the internal organisational business processes and process maps that link the operations of the organisation. And the regulations and policies that govern the functioning of organisational members

Planners' expertise: planners' ability to drive the strategic planning process and become catalysts for change and strategic planning missionaries within the organisation. Through facilitating the

planning process, and making it interesting, simple, exciting, and relevant to the needs of various stakeholders (Whelan and Sisson, 1993)

Employees' resistance to change: employees exercise passive and active resistance to change through speaking out, resigning, absenteeism, and disobedience (Larson and Finkelstein, 1999)

Lack of financial resources: shortage of organisational resources needed for future plans. Barney (1991) interpreted resources as being financial capital, physical capital, organisational capital and human capital

Information technology (IT) infrastructure: the information technology that the firm possesses, or the firm's current commitment to technological development (Itami and Numagami, 1992)

Performance management system: the system available in the organisation to monitor the execution of plans and evaluation of strategies (Atkinson and McCrindell, 1997).

4.1.1.5 External barriers

External organisational barriers are macro-environmental factors that influence the planning process and are known as being barriers or potential barriers to the SPFP. A comprehensive coverage of each external organisational barrier is available under section (3.3.1). These are:

Political influences: external influence on the organisation's decision-making process (Smith and Lipsky, 1993)

Macro economy: the performance, structure, behaviour and decision-making of the entire economy (Bartol et al., 2001, p. 65)

Political instability: the stability of the country's internal and external political environment (Lakhe and Mohanty, 1994)

Turbulent environment: rapid rate of change in the environment in which the organisation operates or as defined by Brown and Eisenhardt (1998), 'Markets that won't stand still'

Rapid technological development: current technology developments affecting the organisation's ability to offer desirable products and services (Bartol et al., 2001)

Linkage to country's strategic plan: obligation/requirement placed on public organisations to link their strategic plan with the government's plan

Unavailability of macro information: shortage or lack of macro information necessary to make informed planning decisions

Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations: ambiguous nature of external stakeholders' expectations and goals (Banfield, 1975)

Variety of external stakeholders: the variety of external stakeholders of a public sector organisation which may include local citizens, clients, consumers, the media, the central government, and regulatory agencies (Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004).

4.1.2 Variables relationships

The interrelationships or possible interrelationships between the different variables identified previously are deemed to be integral to the dynamics of the situation being investigated and represent the essence of the research investigation. These interrelationships are presented in the conceptual framework shown in Figure 4.3. Each relationship is presented as a bold, dotted, two-ended arrow that links two or more variables; each dotted line is labelled with a code (proposition code). Propositions' development is covered in the following section.
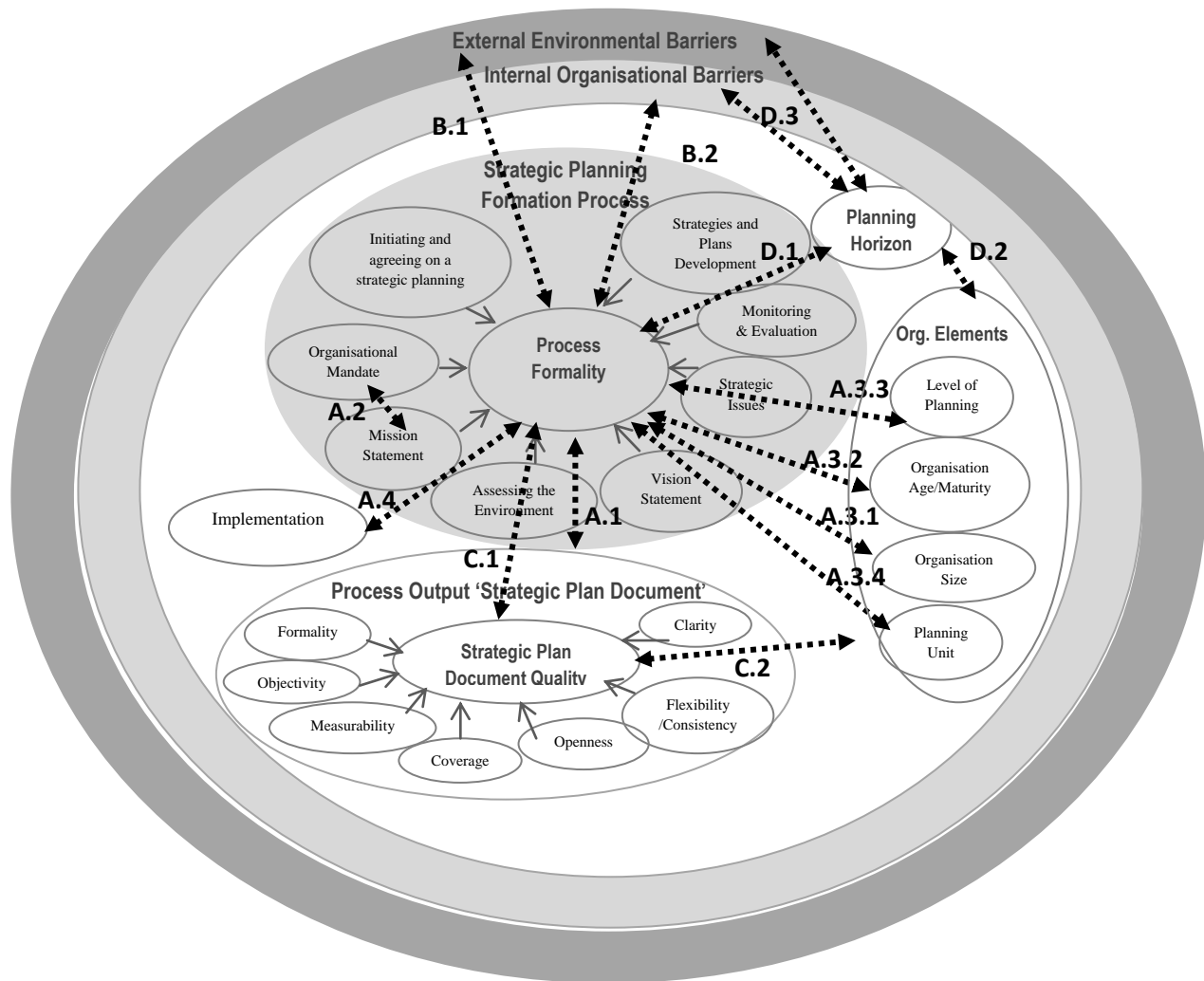
Figure 4.3: The conceptual framework

4.2 Propositions development

The conceptual framework of the present research, shown in Figure 4.3, includes all the variables presented earlier under section 4.1.1, as well as the postulated relationships between variables that are important to the present study aims. Each of the possible relationships presented in the conceptual framework will be analysed through the development of testable propositions. The propositions will be tested empirically and findings will be discussed extensively in Chapter Seven.

Four groups of propositions have been identified in this study: each group covers one or more relations between research variables. These groups of propositions are: the formality of the strategic planning formation process; barriers to SPFP; the strategic plan document; and the planning horizon. Each group contains one or more propositions, totalling 14 propositions, by which research aims will be satisfied and research questions will be answered.

4.2.1 Group (A) propositions – formality of strategic planning formation process

This group of propositions addresses the first research aim 'assessing the strategic planning formation process within Dubai public sector organisations'. Propositions in Group (A) cover the formality of SPFP; the association between the steps of the planning process; the relationship between the SPFP and organisational elements; as well as the relationship between SPFP and the implementation of strategic plans. These propositions are intended to answer the following detailed research questions:

- To what extent is a formal strategic planning formation process (SPFP) practised within public sector organisations in Dubai?
- Is there a relationship between the formality of SPFP and the formulation of the strategic plan documents?
- Is there any association between the steps of the SPFP?
- Is there any variation in the strategic planning formation process across the different types of organisations within the research context?
- What is the relationship between the formality of the planning process and the implementation of strategies and plans?

4.2.1.1 The formality of the strategic planning formation process and its relation to the formulation of strategic plan documents

Before developing this group of propositions it is essential to develop the appropriate measure for the SPFP. A number of scholars have identified the formality of the planning process as a means to measure the planning process. As noted under section 2.5, the measure of formality is an area of inconsistency in formal strategic planning literature. Whether the organisation has a written or unwritten strategic plan is used as a surrogate measure of formality (Robinson and Pearce, 1983; Bracker et al., 1988). However, the present research requires a more comprehensive measure of formality for two reasons: first, written or unwritten strategic plans measure the output of the planning process but not the process itself; the tangible and intangible benefits of the planning

process are more than just producing a written document. The second reason, which is related to the context of the study, is government influences. The Dubai government issued a requirement to all government entities to formulate strategic plans. Measuring the formality of the planning process based on the availability of a strategic plan within this context is not an effective way to measure the formality because strategic plans were formed to satisfy external government requirements. For those two reasons another measure of formality was needed which takes into account the measurement of the SP process itself rather than the process output.

It was noted in the literature that strategic planning could be considered from a content or process viewpoint (O'Regan and Ghobadian, 2002, p. 418). The content relates to the distinct elements of the strategic plan, whereas the process relates to the mechanisms for the development of the strategic plan. Since the intention here is to measure the planning process, the process viewpoint will be considered in this part of the study. The content viewpoint will be considered under Group (C) propositions 'strategic plan document'.

As noted in section 2.1, there are contrasting perspectives on the process of strategy formulation. For instance, Mintzberg and Lampel (1999) have classified ten schools of thought: three prescriptive (design, planning, and positioning schools); five descriptive (cognitive, learning, power, cultural, and environmental); and two which have elements of both (entrepreneurial and configuration schools). Essentially, the question regarding the nature of strategy formulation in organisations is centred on the so-called 'design versus process' debate that emphasises the difference between deliberate and emergent strategies (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Deliberate strategies refer to strategies that are formulated in advance based on intentions, whereas an emergent approach produces evolving strategic patterns despite or in the absence of intentions (Mintzberg and McHugh, 1985, p. 161). One side advocates a formal, systematic, rational, strategic planning process (Ansoff, 1991; Goold, 1992). The other supports an emergent process (Mintzberg, 1991 and 1994a; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Mintzberg and McHugh, 1985). Since the intention of this study is to assess the formality of the planning process, Ansoff's (1991) perception of a formal, systematic, and rational strategic planning process is adopted.

The concept of planning formality has evolved over time along two separate (but related) dimensions (Chae and Hill, 2000). These were planning commitment (how rigorously planning guidelines were followed) and planning completeness (completion of essential steps of the planning process). Early researchers (e.g. Rue and Fulmer, 1973; Karger and Malik, 1975)

regarded whether plans were written or not to be valid indicators of corporate commitment to strategic planning.

In relation to planning completeness, the second element of planning formality, it was noted that as planning became more process oriented researchers became more inclined to view the planning process by its component parts (Chae and Hill, 2000). For example, Armstrong (1982) identified objectives, strategy generation, strategic evaluation and results monitoring as four steps of the strategic planning process. This type of approach formalised the link between strategic planning and the processes prescribed by most strategic management theorists (e.g. Ansoff, 1965; Andrews, 1971; Hofer and Schendel, 1978; Prescott, 1983). In support of the above, Pearce et al. (1987) define formal strategic planning as the process of determining the mission, major objectives, strategies, and policies that govern the acquisition and allocation of resources to achieve organisational aims. Mintzberg and Lampel (1999) added that when the term formal strategic planning is used, the intent is to convey that a firm's strategic planning process involves explicit systematic procedures used to gain the involvement and commitment of those principal stakeholders affected by the plan. Bryson (2004) identifies ten steps as essential steps to what he called the 'strategy change cycle' and concludes that each step in the process should be performed and has its own benefits.

From the above, the formality of strategic planning will be looked at from the process perspective, and 'process formality' is defined as the extent to which the steps of the planning process are conducted. This will be used as the measure of formality for the rest of this study.

The concept of planning formality as stated earlier has evolved over time along two separate (but related) dimensions. These were: planning commitment (measured by written plans) and planning completeness (completion of the planning process steps – adopted measure). The relationship between the two measures of formality is expected to be positive. This is because 'process formality' for SPFP takes into account the completion of all essential steps needed in the formation phase. Once this is completed then all necessary parts of the strategic plan document are available to be documented and for the strategic plan document to be formulated. The completion of each step in the process will affect the process output and contribute to it. For example, the development of vision and mission statements in the planning process leads to the inclusion of them in the produced strategic plan document. Also, the development of strategies and plans as one step in the planning process facilitates the documentation of strategies in the strategic plan document. From

the above discussion it can be proposed that the two measures of SP formality (process formality and written strategic plans) are positively related. Thus the following proposition is developed.

Proposition A.1: Organisations practising a high process formality in their SPFP are more likely to formulate strategic plan documents than organisations with low process formality.

4.2.1.2 Association between the steps of the planning process

Under section (3.1) a detailed examination of the steps of SPFP was covered. These include: initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process; organisation mandate; vision development and communication; mission development and communication; environmental assessment; strategic issues; strategies and plans development; as well as monitoring and evaluation. Although the steps are presented in this order, the strategic planning process is not a linear process. The steps may overlap, or they may happen in parallel and the whole process may even go back and forth (Bryson, 2004, p. 52; Kaplan and Norton, 1996a). For example, organisations might find themselves confronted with a pressing strategic issue, a failing strategy, or a new mandate that leads them to get engaged in strategic planning from the beginning. Despite the fact that the planning process is not always a linear process, the steps of the planning process are strongly related to each other. As noted above, even if the organisation faced a pressing strategic issue, the organisation starts the process from the beginning to address the emergent issue. The reason behind that is the strong 'relatedness' between the steps of the planning process. Some steps cannot be initiated before others and, further, some steps in the planning process depend on the findings of preceding steps (Bryson, 2004). Next, the relatedness between the steps of the SPFP will be discussed.

The strategic planning process starts with recognising the need for strategic planning through an initial agreement about the overall strategic planning effort, as well as the agreement on the main steps of the planning process. The aim of this first step in the planning process is to agree that strategic planning is needed and desirable, and that all participants are on board – committed and supportive of the planning process and its various sequence of steps. In other words, agreement on the 'plan to plan' (Steiner, 1979). This specifies: the intent of the strategic undertaking; the planning steps; the desired deliverables; the roles and responsibilities of group participants; and the provision of adequate resources to complete the strategic planning process. One of the main benefits of this agreement is an outline of the sequence of steps to be followed while planning

ahead. Procedural rationality means that the planning process is rational, coherent, and follows a series of steps where each step relates to the prior and following steps (Bryson, 2004; Eden and Ackermann, 1998). The 'initial agreement', therefore, creates an association between the planning process steps.

With regard to the other process steps, such as clarifying organisational mandates, development of the vision and mission statements, the environmental assessment, and strategic issues identification, each step contributes to the development of the others. For example, the organisational mandate clarifies what the organisation is required to do or not to do. It also clarifies the value the organisation will create and the social justification and legitimacy on which the organisation's existence depends (Rainey, 2003). The clarity of what is required by the organisation's mandate will guide the development of vision and mission statements. According to Galloway (1990), an organisation's mission statement is a broad but succinct definition that explains the reason for an organisation's existence. For a government department, the reasons for the organisation's existence are stated in the organisation's mandate; therefore, for a government department the mission statement is most commonly derived from the department's legislative base. In addition, clarifying the organisational mandate will enhance the planner's ability to structure clear goals, thus enhancing achievements (Nutt, 2002).

The development of vision and mission statements is also highly associated with each other and with other steps in the planning process. For example, Lipton (1996) defines vision as a combination of mission, strategy and culture. Others explicitly separate the terms vision and mission but emphasise the association between them and state that it is the vision which comes first in order to subsequently drive the development of the mission and the strategy (Hay and Williamson, 1997). The vision helps organisational members and stakeholders understand the overall direction of the organisation and why and how things should be done (Bryson et al., 2001); the mission statement focuses the attention of decision-makers on the organisation's philosophy, values, and culture that supports the organisation's mission, so the developed strategies are in line with organisational philosophy, values, and culture. Therefore, the organisation's mission unifies purpose across tangible and intangible organisational intentions (Schein, 1997; Johnson and Scholes, 2002). Hence, it can be concluded that the vision and mission statements are highly associated with other steps in the planning process.

The following three steps in the planning process (assessing the environment, identifying strategic issues, and the development of strategies and plans) constitute the issue management process and are highly associated with each other. As stated in sections (3.1.5 to 3.1.7), assessing the environment will help in detecting environmental signals (Bowden, 1985). Scanning also provides managers with information about events and trends in their relevant environment, which helps opportunity recognition (Bluedorn et al., 1994). Once the environment is assessed, strategic issues should be identified, which will clarify the problems or potential problems that the organisation may face. Once strategic issues are identified, the organisation's members develop appropriate strategies and plans to address those issues (Lozier and Chittipeddi, 1986).

From the above discussion, the steps of the planning process, though not necessarily in a linear order, are highly associated with each other: each step is dependent on the completion of the preceding step. Therefore, the following proposition was formulated.

Proposition A.2: A strong association exists between the 'consecutive steps' of the strategic planning formation process.

4.2.1.3 The strategic planning formation process and organisational elements

As noted in section (2.4), the strategic planning process is influenced by a number of organisational elements. Four organisational elements were noted as being of interest to the study in hand. These are: organisation size, organisational age (maturity), organisational level, and the availability of the strategic planning unit. Definitions are available under section (4.1.1.1).

Scholars emphasised that size constitutes a significant explanatory factor of comprehensive/rational decision behaviour (e.g. Fredrickson, 1984). Mintzberg (1994b) argues that planning may be more important in large firms due to its ability to improve coordination and control. Large organisations tend to have greater structural complexity than small organisations, making effective coordination more difficult (Robbins, 1990). Plans can be used to aid coordination either by making individual behaviours more organised or through forecasting events where increased coordination will be necessary to give organisational members time to prepare for that event. This argument is supported by Sapp (1980), who provided strong evidence of a positive relationship between organisational size and the use and/or formality of planning. Moreover, large organisations tend to be highly formalised through the use of standardised mechanisms.

In addition, Risseeuw and Masurel (1994) note that larger firms have greater planning incidences than smaller firms due to the ability of large organisations to access more resources (Barney, 1991). On the other hand, small organisations have fewer slack resources and are likely to have less diverse environments (Robbins, 1990). In the public and non-profit organisations it was found that large organisations were more likely to plan than smaller ones (Stone, 1989; Young and Sleeper, 1988). In light of the above, it is proposed that:

Proposition A.3.1: The extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised is higher for large organisations than for small organisations within the research context (Dubai public sector).

The age of the organisation is another important organisational element noted as being of influence to the planning process. Leonard-Barton (1992) has pointed out that when firms focus on core capabilities, they create core rigidities that make it difficult to adapt to changes in their environment. This is particularly true for aged firms where processes are codified and mechanisms are formalised. Age can affect performance and the ability of an organisation to change by inducing organisational inertia (Leonard-Barton, 1992) and by impairing a firm's ability to perceive valuable signals. Codification makes it hard to recognise, accept, and implement change within the organisation. Moreover, old age may make knowledge, abilities, and skills obsolete and induce organisational decay (Agarwal et al., 2002). Therefore, older firms are consequently less flexible and are less likely to react to the profitable innovation signals they receive from the market, which in turn affects their competitive edge.

In addition, Evans (1987) found that firm growth decreases with firm age and that it does so at a diminishing rate. Cooley and Quadrini (2001) supported this view and offer a model that explains this observation. On the other hand, Miller and Cardinal (1994) found a positive relationship between strategic planning and firm profitability and growth. Successful young firms tend to use, to a large extent, advanced planning and activity analysis (Zimmerer and Scarborough, 1996). Moreover, strategic planning is a process that helps organisations to identify strategic issues, forecast the future, and prepare for the future to help organisations to grow.

From the above, because a firm's growth decreases with age (higher for young firms than older ones), as stated by Evans (1987), and Cooley and Quadrini (2001) and since strategic planning increases firm's growth (Zimmerer and Scarborough, 1996), then it can be concluded that for young firms the planning activity is higher than in old firms. Thus it is proposed that:

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Proposition A.3.2: The extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised is higher for young organisations than mature organisations in the Dubai public sector.

In addition to the preceding organisational elements, 'size' and 'age', another important element to the present study is the organisational level at which planning takes place. Most of the planning literature talks about planning at a corporate level. However, planning is a function that takes place at various organisational levels. In fact, some types of planning (e.g. 'bottom up'), start at unit levels and are aggregated upward to corporate planning. Even 'top down' conventional strategic planning starts at the corporate level and is cascaded down to planning at lower levels. Ansoff (1967) argued that for the planned levels to be implemented, they should be converted into coordinated action programs for various units of the firm. Along the same lines, Steiner (1979) states that 'All strategies must be broken down into sub-strategies for successful implementation'.

Mintzberg (1994b, p. 62) provides more details by stating that the implementation of strategies gives rise to a whole set of hierarchies, long-term or strategic plans, medium-term plans, and short-term plans. This in turn leads to a hierarchy of objectives in which organisational goals are broken down into specific targets and a hierarchy of sub-objectives. The strategies themselves are also broken down into a hierarchy of sub-strategies, mainly corporate strategies, business strategies, and functional strategies. The consequences of all these sub-strategies are then translated into a hierarchy of action programs. All of this operationalisation is done in the name of planning, but the intention as Mintzberg argues is really control. Despite the fact that control will limit the creativity within the process, the result of the planning process will lead to plans at a corporate level, departmental level, and unit level (Mintzberg, 1994b, p. 62).

Planning at a corporate level is also influenced by middle level managers. In the past, middle level managers have not been considered part of the strategy process except in providing some information and managing the implementation of pre-determined plans. However, the importance of middle level managers in strategic planning was recognised by some scholars such as (Burgelman, 1983a; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). These authors suggest that middle managers regularly attempt to influence strategy and often provide the impetus for new initiatives. Even in the most deliberate contexts, strategies are revised as new information presents itself (Quinn, 1980).

It was noted from the literature that middle managers might influence strategy formation in two ways: upward and downward influences. Upward influences affect top management's view of organisational circumstances and the decisions among the alternative strategies under consideration (Dutton and Jackson. 1987). Wooldridge and Floyd (1990) confirmed middle management's upward influence on strategic decisions and showed a positive relationship between middle management involvement in strategic and organisational performance. Downward influences, on the other hand, affect the alignment of organisational arrangements within the strategic context, and facilitates the implementation of strategic objectives (Nutt, 1987).

From the above, it is concluded that planning takes place at various organisational levels, and the importance of planning at lower levels is no less important than the one at corporate level. In fact, they complement each other. As Nichol (1992) puts it, strategy synchronisation is a team effort, requiring contributions at various levels.

Within the research context of this study, the Dubai Government has issued a government requirement for all public sector organisations to initiate a strategic planning process at corporate level and cascade the planning activities down to the departmental levels (sections 6.2–6.4, Strategic Planning Manual – Executive Council, 2006) since strategic planning at a corporate level drives the development of strategic planning at lower levels within the research context. It can be proposed that:

Proposition A.3.3: The extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised is higher at the corporate level than departmental level for public sector organisations in Dubai.

The last organisational element covered in this study and expected to have an influence on the formality of the SPFP is the existence of a strategic planning unit/department. The importance of having a specialised unit responsible for the strategic planning process is related to functional and contextual reasons. The functional reasons concern the functions of the strategic planning unit such as facilitating the process, following up on the achievement of the different steps or process stages, coordinating activities, meetings, teams, and other administrative requirements for the completion of the planning process, communicating process outcomes such as vision and mission statements, corporate values, as well as conducting strategic planning workshops and training.

The contextual reasons are related to public sector organisations within the research context (Dubai). The establishment of a strategic planning unit seems to be of special importance for public sector organisations operating within the research context as stated by the Dubai Government Strategic Planning Manual, under section 1.2, 'each public sector organization should establish a strategic planning unit in the organization structure' (Strategic Planning Manual – Executive Council, 2006). Issuing such a requirement for public organisations in Dubai is mainly due to three factors. First, strategic planning is relatively new to public management within the research context. Therefore, specialised units with qualified planners should facilitate the process among the various organisational structures. Second, the Executive Council of the Dubai Government (responsible for overseeing the various government departments' functions) necessitates the need for high coordination with public organisations for better implementation of government requirements and for reporting and control purposes,the establishment of a strategic planning unit as a focal point will enhance coordination. Third, standardisation of the process across government departments. The Dubai Government issued a strategic planning manual to be followed by various organisations: the establishment of a strategic planning unit will enable government departments to follow the guidelines stated in the SP process and will formalise the process across various public sector organisations.

In addition to the above-mentioned functional and contextual reasons, the establishment of a strategic planning unit will formalise the SPFP because the planning unit will initiate, facilitate, and follow up on the completion of each step in the SPFP.

Proposition A.3.4: The extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised is higher in organisations with a strategic planning unit than in organisations without a strategic planning unit.

4.2.1.4 Formality and implementation

As stated in section (3.1.9), the implementation part of the strategic planning process is outside the scope of this study. However, since the strategic planning process is not a linear process and may go back and forth, it is important to shed light on the relationship between the implementation of strategies and plans and the formality of the strategic planning formation process.

The implementation of strategies and plans completes the cycle of strategic planning. The steps of SPFP will result in an effective development of strategies and plans in addition to producing

significant values in terms of building intellectual capabilities, enhancing strategic thinking, forming strategic coalitions, modifying policies to support strategies, dealing with change, and enhancing the overall organisational culture. Despite all these benefits, without implementation strategic goals will not be realised. Implementing the developed strategic initiatives, programs, projects, and action plans will bring life to strategies and will create tangible values. The implementation process will also allow for adaptive learning, and such learning will lead to a better understanding of SPFP which will feed into the new round of strategising (Bryson, 2004, p. 238). As noted by Weick (1995) and by Bryson (2004, p. 52), it is an action that leads to real learning. This feedback loop strengthens the association between the formation and implementation components of the strategic planning process.

In addition, through implementation public value will be created. This is the most important outcome and the aim of the whole strategic planning exercise. With effective implementation, the value proposition embodied in the strategic plan moves from being a hypothetical story to being a true story (Moore, 2000). Moreover, without implementation, evaluating whether strategic goals have been achieved as a result of implementing the strategies will not be possible. Furthermore, the implementation of strategies and plans will increase support for the leaders and the organisation (Burns, 2003). When strategies and plans are successfully implemented and benefits are realised, that would increase legitimacy and the confidence of employees and community with the leadership and organisation in general; this in turn facilitates the SPFP for the coming rounds. Mintzberg et al. (1998) noted that effective strategy-making connects acting to thinking, which in turn connects implementation to formulation. They added by saying that we think in order to act, but we also act in order to think.

The formality of the SPFP will focus the attention of decision-makers and planners to develop the appropriate strategies and plans in a rational, systematic, and structural way taking into consideration organisational resources and the ability to implement the associated programs and plans (Bryson, 2004). The developed strategies and plans are more likely then to be implemented since the agreement and the commitment of various parties involved in the planning process are gained. Also, the resources have been considered and the control mechanisms for smooth implementation were developed through well-articulated performance measures. In a study conducted by Glaister et al. (2008) on the relationship between formal strategic planning and organisation performance, a strong and positive relationship was found. In light of the above proposition, A.4 was formulated.

Proposition A.4: The formality of the strategic planning formation process will enhance the implementation of strategies and plans.

4.2.2 Group (B) propositions – barriers to the planning process

This group of propositions addresses research aim two 'Evaluating the influence of external (contextual) and internal (organisational) barriers on the SPFP'. Two propositions were developed for that purpose: one related to the external barriers within the research context, and the other one to the internal barriers. The propositions are intended to answer the following research questions:

- What is the influence of internal and external barriers on the planning process?
- Do organisational characteristics moderate the influence of external and/or internal barriers on the SPFP?

The importance of analysing the external and internal barriers to the planning process is that the environment in which public and non-profit organisations operate has become increasingly uncertain. In fact, in the public sector, change though not necessarily dramatic or rapid, is the rule rather than the exception (Kettle, 2002).

In thinking broadly about the interaction between organisational internal and external environments, Pondy and Mitroff (1979) note that in organisational life people often produce part of their own environment. They act, interact and in doing so create the materials that become the barriers, constraints or opportunities they face (Weick 1995, p. 31).

The strategic planning formation process is an interactive process, affecting and affected by many organisational factors, whether internal or external. Those factors can either facilitate or inhibit the process and some of the factors can even be regarded as barriers or obstacles to the planning process. However, the influence of organisational internal and external factors on the planning process can be changed by the planning process itself. In fact, it was found in the literature that starting the planning process will create barriers not seen before as barriers, prior to starting the process, such as employee resistance to change, strategic thinking, planners' experience, stakeholders expectations, and so on. This argument on the interconnection and interdependence between the organisation and its environment further strengthens the case for taking into account the internal and external factors and their effect on SPFP.

4.2.2.1 External barriers to the strategic planning formation process

The external barriers to the SPFP were covered comprehensively in section (3.3.1); the definitions of external barrier were also presented in section (4.1.1.5). In this section, the influence of each of the external barriers on the strategic planning process will be investigated to reach a testable proposition on the relationship between external barriers and the formality of the planning process.

The external organisational environment refers to the context in which the organisation operates. The macro-environmental factors reflect major trends and conditions outside the organisation and tend to be beyond a single organisation's ability to affect or alter them directly, at least in the short term (Bartol et al., 2001, p. 65). The macro environment represents the political-legal climate, the economic conditions, technology, and socio-cultural climate.

Two main political factors were noted under political climate that may influence the planning process. These are political stability and political influences.

The relationship between political stability and strategic planning was noted by a number of scholars. For example, Hurd (1992) and Zhao, Young and Zhang (1995b) state that the political-legal environment can have an effect on strategic quality planning. The literature suggests that the government can play an important role in encouraging or discouraging strategic planning (Thanassoulis et al., 1994) by creating barriers in specific industries, establishing quality regulations (Benson et al., 1991), and securing state ownership (Jenner et al., 1998). In addition, strategic planning can also be influenced by differences in quality standards and regulations across countries as well as the amount of political stability and the stability of governments (Boom, 1995; Lakhe and Mohanty, 1994). This is an important external barrier to the planning process within the research context, especially if we note that the Middle East is one of the highly unstable regions in the world.

In relation to political influences, public sector and non-profit organisations operate in an increasingly political environment evidenced by the pressures for accountability from government agencies (Smith and Lipsky, 1993) and the expectations of the communities they serve. In an attempt to cope with various political influences placed on public organisations, the literature provides evidence of political activities such as coalition formation, constituency building, and cooptation, as well as corporate political strategy (Keim and Baysinger, 1988). Those political

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activities are ultimately designed to achieve outcomes that favour an organisation's economic survival (Keim and Baysinger, 1988) and provide a sustainable advantage to an organisation (Mahon et al., 1994). However, some political influences cannot be dealt with by using an organisation's political activities and therefore inhibit the planning process and may prevent access to the resources needed for planning (Kemp, 1990).

In relation to the macro economy factors, it is noted that the macro economy influences strategic planning in public sector organisations in two ways. First, with economic growth people's expectations regarding public services increase, which requires public organisations to plan ahead to satisfy public demand for better services. Secondly, changes/fluctuations in the macro economy such as the recent economic crises, tend to reduce public organisations' ability to plan ahead because funding is reduced on the one hand and reliable economic forecasting information is hard to predict on the other (Prasad and Tata, 2003).

Within the research context the economic climate in Dubai has experienced a rapid growth in the last decade up to the economic crises of 2008, after which a noticeable decline in growth rates was recorded. However, the economic climate in UAE and in Dubai in particular is considered one of the strongest in the region due to factors described in section (2.2.6) such as: a relatively stable political system; solid infrastructure; high oil revenues; excellent geographical location; and a developed banking system (Annual Social and Economic Report United Arab Emirates, Aug. 2008).

The social environment of an organisation are the societal views regarding an organisation's behaviour – that is, whether the organisation is pursuing socially acceptable goals in a socially acceptable manner (Bedeian, 1993, p. 73). This has also produced two potential barriers to the strategic planning formation process and these are: the variety of external stakeholders, and the ambiguity of the stakeholders' expectations regarding public sector services.

The variety of external stakeholders creates at least two problems for public organisations during planning. First, the variety of stakeholders may result in producing a variety of objectives with a multitude of performance measures that satisfy no one (Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004). Second, it may be difficult to set targets or to make decisions based on the measurement results because some of the stakeholders have conflicting objectives and the conflicting needs of different stakeholders must somehow be reconciled (Lawton et al., 2000; Mettänen, 2005). The other potential barrier is

the ambiguity of stakeholder expectations. For many public sector organisations the planning process is faced with constraints relating to the understanding of external stakeholder requirements. Many writers emphasise the diverse and ambiguous nature of goals in public organisations, including Banfield (1975), Backoff and Nutt (1990). Setting goals in a highly politicised environment can cause difficulties for public managers, especially those that have a variety of stakeholders. Public organisations, in particular, are likely to pursue a mix of strategies at the same time because they are expected to satisfy a range of conflicting, competing, and ambiguous goals (Boyne, 2003).

Another potential external barrier noted in the literature is rapid technological development. Technology can enhance an organisation's productivity, which means it can either provide a competitive advantage to organisations that can use it effectively, or pose a threat to those that lack it (Bedeian 1993, p. 74). To remain competitive, organisations need to understand current technological developments affecting their ability to offer desirable products and services (Bartol et al., 2001, p. 65). Therefore, rapid technological developments can be seen as potential barriers to strategic planning, especially for those organisations that were unable to follow up on technological developments and use them as a competitive edge.

The variety of the above-listed external organisational factors and their rapid changes constitute a turbulent environment that will influence the SPFP. The environments of organisations change continually: as environmental volatility increases for an organisation the ability to forecast changes accurately diminishes. It becomes more difficult to pre-determine the appropriate strategies for an organisation to achieve its objectives. In an environment of high volatility, use of plans may be too constraining, causing organisational inflexibility. It is in more stable environments that forecasting is likely to be more accurate, organisational adaptation is kept at a minimum and where strategic planning will be found to be the most effective. This argument is consistent with the work of Frederickson (1984) who found that the integration and formalisation of the decision processes in planning were positively related to performance in stable environments and negatively related to performance in unstable environments (Drago, 1996).

In addition, researchers argued that planning formality and comprehensiveness of planning are negatively associated with uncertainty in the external environment. Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984) found that planning comprehensiveness in unstable environments was negatively related to return on assets. Similarly, Fredrickson (1984) found that planning comprehensiveness was

positively related to performance in stable environments. Within the UAE, Elbanna (2010) reported that environmental uncertainty was an obstacle to strategic planning in the UAE.

From the above discussion it is apparent that various external barriers influence or have the potential to influence the SPFP. Thus a negative relationship is expected to exist between the various external barriers and SPFP. Accordingly, proposition B.1 was formulated.

Proposition B.1: The greater the influence of external barriers to the planning process the lower the formality of SPFP.

4.2.2.2 Internal barriers to the strategic planning formation process

Organisations are complex social systems, behaviours and cultures (Atherton, 1993). The strategic planning process presents a challenge for management and managers due to internal organisational barriers. The internal barriers to the strategic planning formation process were covered comprehensively in section (3.3.2); the definitions of internal barriers were also presented in section (4.1.1.4). The influence of each of the internal barriers on the strategic planning process will be investigated next to reach a testable proposition on the relationship between internal barriers and the formality of the planning process.

Organisation culture: The relationship between organisational culture and organisational change can be seen from different perspectives. Many of the early proponents of organisational culture tended to assume that a strong, pervasive culture was beneficial to all organisations because it fostered motivation, commitment, identity, solidarity, and sameness, which in turn facilitated internal integration and coordination. On the other hand, Perrow (1979) argues that a strong culture and the internalised controls associated with it could result in individuals placing unconstrained demands on themselves, as well as acting as a barrier to adaptation and change. A strong culture could also be a means of manipulation and co-optation. Similarly, Merton (1957) states that culture could further lead to resistance to goals or sub-goal formation because the behavioural norms and ways of doing things become so important that they begin to overshadow the original purpose of the organisation. Despite the different views there is strong support in the literature indicating that the primary cause of the failure of most major change efforts has been the failure to successfully change the organisational culture (Caldwell, 1994).

Organisation structure: The relationship between organisational structure and strategic planning has been discussed by numerous authors. However, empirical studies of this relationship remain scarce (Drago, 1997). An understanding of an organisation's structure is essential to the strategic planning development. If a structure is not compatible with a strategy, this will constrain strategy formulation and implementation. While it is generally agreed that organisational structure must vary according to the prevailing strategy, there is no agreement about an optimal organisational design (Wheelen and Hunger, 1984). Miles and Snow (1978) argue that strategy is a way of adjusting the relationship between an organisation and its environment, and those internal structures and processes in turn must fit the strategy if this adjustment is to be successful. The research into organisational structure and strategic planning concluded that a relationship between strategy and structure exists (Bower, 1970; Chandler, 1962) and that the choice of structure makes a difference in the achievement of strategy (Lorsch, 1976; Rumelt, 1974). And because of these conclusions, numerous writers today express the view that an appropriately designed structure is required to facilitate the formulation and implementation of a firm's strategy (Steiner and Miner, 1977; Bart, 1986). Due to this strong relationship, the organisational structure can facilitate or inhibit the strategic planning formation process. Therefore, it was included as one of the potential barriers.

Leadership commitment: Strategic leadership is seen as a key element in the successful implementation of management initiatives such as the strategic planning process. Leaders focus their organisation on a strategic direction, create an agenda for strategic change, keep an organisation progressing towards the strategic vision, overcome resistance to change, facilitate resource requirements, and give managers and employees the power and authority they need to make decisions (Paul, 2004). Because of this essential role of leadership, lack of leadership commitment to the strategic planning process can be seen as a barrier to the planning process (Hoag et. al., 2002). In the public sector, Paul (2004) argues that leaders should participate in the appropriate design of strategic planning systems and see strategic planning systems as useful in helping them change things. Stone and Brush (1996) state that the support of the executive director and some members of the board was essential to the adoption of formal planning, and that without the support of the CEO, planning was unlikely.

Lack of financial resources: Local governments are facing a growing contradiction between decreasing levels of financial support and increasing responsibilities and demand for better public services (Teo 2002; Davis 2003). The relationship between a lack of financial resources and

strategic planning can take two contradictory forms. On the one hand, the lack of financial resources may inhibit or stop the planning process and be seen as a barrier to planning. On the other hand, a lack of financial resources may enhance the planning process to overcome the shortage in financial resources.

Information technology (IT) infrastructure: Itami and Numagami (1992) argue that the technology that the firm possesses or the firm's current commitment to technological development affects human cognitive processes for strategy formation within the firm. They proceed by emphasising that current technology can drive the cognition of future strategy of the firm in two ways. First, it channels and activates idea-generation processes. Second, it helps integrate these fragmentary ideas. In addition, the related literature suggests that technology can act on a firm's strategy in different ways: as a tool that the firm can utilise in its favour (Porter, 1983); as constraints to which they must adapt (Hofer and Schendel, 1978); as a facilitator that can drive understanding of future strategies; or as an inhibitor to strategy formation (Itami and Numagami, 1992).

Performance management: The alignment between performance measurement and strategy is at the core of most performance measurement and management methodologies. Many scholars (such as Kaplan and Norton, 1996a; Neely et al., 1997; Dyson, 2000) emphasised the importance of this alignment since strategy-aligned performance measurement can facilitate and support the formulation and implementation of strategy. There is also a recognition that as strategy changes, whether deliberate or emergent, whether driven by changes in the external environment or internal changes, performance measures need to be reviewed and if necessary changed, to ensure alignment with strategy (Mintzberg et al., 1998; Bourne et al., 2000). Otherwise there is a danger that performance measurement could become irrelevant or counterproductive (Wholey and Hatry, 1992).

In the public sector, Kloot and Martin (2000) argue that performance measurement systems have gained considerable attention due to the drive for reforms. However, implementation of performance measures in the public sector is more difficult than in the private sector. This is due to two fundamental problems: the conflicting stakeholder needs, and the problem of measuring outcomes.

Weak strategic thinking: The importance of strategic thinking in the strategic planning process is well grounded in management literature. The importance of strategic thinking is noted at different

phases of the planning process. Before the process (strategic planning is a process that should occur after strategic thinking (Mintberg, 1994a)); after the planning process (good strategic planning contributes to strategic thinking (Porter, 1987)); or even an outcome of strategic planning (strategic planning is intended to enhance an organisation's ability to think, act, and learn strategically (Bryson, 2004)). Lack of strategic thinking was noted by some scholars as a barrier or a problem in the planning process. For example, Bonn (2001) argues that the main strategic planning problem identified by the majority of senior executives was strategic thinking. Bonn added that strategic thinking was a problem regardless of whether the companies had a formalised strategic planning system or used a non-formalised approach.

Resistance to change: Koopman (1991) implies that all organisations have resistors (people who will resist change at all cost). This is supported by Leonard et al. (1997) who found that people generally dislike change. Larson and Finkelstein (1999) added that staff exercises passive and active resistance to change by numerous methods and for different reasons as stated in section (3.3.2.8). Resistance to change includes resistance to the strategic planning process that puts this internal organisational factor as one of the main internal barriers to the planning process.

In addition to the above internal organisational barriers other internal barriers found are: organisational processes and regulations; the strategic planning process itself; planner's expertise; as well as the organisational mandate. Eriksson and Penker (2000) pointed out that a good model of the business process impacts the development of organisational strategy. As such, processes must be defined and developed with regard to their contribution to the overall organisational strategy (Garvin, 1995; Edwards and Peppard, 1997). Moreover, the strategic planning process itself can also be seen as a barrier to the planning process. If the planning process is not well designed, taking into consideration the sequence of activities, involvement of various parties, control mechanisms and managerial and organisational unique characteristics, then the planning process itself could be deemed as a barrier to the strategic planning formation process (Whelan and Sisson, 1993). In relation to a planner's expertise, Lenz and Engledow reported that a planner's expertise in strategic planning not only affects the completion of the process but also the quality of SPFP (Lenz and Engledow, 1986). Finally, the organisation's mandate may inhibit the planning process since the organisational mandate clarifies what the organisation is formally required to do or not to do Nelson and French (2002). Therefore, planning in areas not formally covered by the organisational mandate is prohibited, which will in turn limit the strategic alternatives available to the strategic planning team.

From the above discussion it is apparent that various internal barriers influence or have the potential to influence the SPFP. Thus a negative relationship is expected to exist between internal barriers and SPFP. Accordingly, proposition B.2 was formulated.

Proposition B.2: The greater the influence of internal barriers to the planning process the lower the formality of SPFP.

4.2.3 Group (C) propositions – the strategic plan document

In this group of propositions, research aim three 'Evaluating the quality of the strategic plan document produced and its association with the planning process' will be investigated. The propositions in this group focus on the strategic plan document produced in terms of its quality criteria and its relationship to the planning process, and the influence of organisational elements on the quality of SPD. This group of propositions addresses the following research questions:

- What are the evaluation criteria for a quality strategic plan document?
- Is there any association between the formality of the planning process and the quality of the strategic plan documents produced?
- Do organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU affect the quality of the produced strategic plan document?

Assessing the strategic plan document is an important part of this research. The strategic plan document is the tangible output of the strategic planning formation process, and the quality of the strategic plan produced is a reflection of the goodness of the process itself (Whelan and Sisson, 1993). A quality-planning document is expected to provide well-justified answers to the strategic questions. Also, the planning document should be able to be used as the basis for communication with people who need to know about the strategy but who were not part of the planning process (Mellalieu, 1992).

In order to assess the relationship between the quality of the SPD produced and other research variables such as process formality, it's important first to identify the determinants as well as the measure of the strategic plan document quality. In section (3.2.4) the determinants of SPD quality were covered comprehensively by reviewing the various quality frameworks in the field. Seven quality criteria were found to be the determinants of a quality strategic plan document. These are:

formality, clarity, measurability, coverage, objectivity, consistency, and openness. The definition of SPD quality and each of the quality criteria is presented under section (4.1.1.3). The measure of SPD quality, therefore, is the extent to which the seven quality criteria of SPD have been met.

Before proceeding further, it is important to highlight the distinction between the formality of SPFP (process formality) which is the extent to which the steps of the planning process is conducted, and 'formality' as a quality criteria for strategic plan document, which is the inclusion and documentation of all essential elements of a strategic planning document. These are two different variables used in this study.

4.2.3.1 The formality of SPFP and the strategic plan document quality

One of the results of a strategic planning exercise is the production of a planning document. However, even though that might be true, the plan is not the only output of the planning exercise and is not even seen as the most valuable one (Thompson, 1990). Thompson added that rather than trying to produce a watertight document covering the next ten years, planning as an exercise should concentrate on identifying and evaluating alternative courses of action for the business so that more opportunities are created. Planning, therefore, should be more cerebral and visionary than detailed and quantitative.

Sawyer states that 'formal systems are only a means to an end – they do not cause planning to occur, and can prevent it when their emphasis is too much on form instead of substance' (Sawyer, 1983). In addition, Porter (1987, p. 11) states that 'Planning had become unfashionable by the 1980s for a number of reasons: planning was often carried out by planners, rather than the managers who would be affected by the resultant plans. As a result, the outcome of planning was often a plan which in reality had little impact on actual management decisions, and therefore was not implemented'.

For the strategic plan to be a valuable output of the planning process the process should imbue managers and employees in general to think strategically; a strategic plan then becomes a document which is, in essence, an input to detailed planning by others (Mellalieu, 1992).

Planning and the ability to think strategically by planners, managers and employees should feed into the SPD. However, planning has its drawbacks. Plans are seldom perfect and may divert

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attention away from problems or opportunities not identified by the planners (Loasby, 1967). As Mintzberg (1994a) suggests, plans not only identify what the organisation should focus on but what it should not be focusing on.

Finally, having a formalised planning process does not necessarily lead to planning (consider organisations' future needs) neither does it necessarily lead to the production of a plan. Organisations might be engaged in planning without a formalised process of planning. Mintzberg (1994b, p. 32) states that 'A major assumption in the strategic planning literature is that the strategy formation is a planning process, designed or supported by planners, to plan, in order to produce a plan. In contrast to this assumption, an organization can plan (consider its future) without engaging in a formalized planning procedure, even if it produces plans; alternately, an organization can engage in a formalized planning procedure yet not plan (consider its future)'.

Despite the fact that the SPD is not the most valuable output of the SPFP and not a definite output, it is tangible evidence that accommodates the planning efforts. The document is expected to provide well-justified answers to the strategic questions by stakeholders and should be used as a basis for communication. From the above it is apparent that there is a strong association between SPFP and SPD produced simply because the planning document is the process output of SPFP.

It was found that the planning process, the design of the planning process and the commitment to complete the steps of the process can affect the content of the process output 'strategic plan document' (Whelan and Sisson, 1993). For example, if the 'strategic issues identification' step was not conducted during the strategic planning process then strategic issues will be missed from the strategic plan that will affect the 'coverage' quality criteria. Also, if the 'monitoring and evaluation' step was not carried out in the SPFP and the appropriate performance measures are not established then the resultant strategic plan document most probably will not be measurable and the 'measurability' quality criteria will not be met. Moreover, if the 'development of strategies and plans' step was not conducted in the SPFP then the clarity of the strategic plan document produced will be affected because the strategies are not clearly stated or not stated at all.

In line with the above, Whelan and Sisson (1993) added that since the strategic plan document is the tangible output of the strategic planning formation process, the quality of the strategic plan produced is a reflection of the goodness of the process itself. If the planning process is poorly designed, the resultant plan's document quality will be affected. From the above discussion it can

be said that the relationship between SPFP and the quality of the strategic plan document produced is expected to be directional.

Proposition C.1: A positive relationship exists between the strategic planning formation process and the quality of the strategic plan document produced (the higher the formality of SPFP the better the quality of the strategic plan document produced).

4.2.3.2 The quality of the strategic plan document and the organisational elements

As noted in section 2.4 the strategic planning process is influenced by a number of organisational elements. These are: organisation size, organisational age (maturity), organisational level, and the availability of the SPU. Definitions are available under section 4.1.1.1; the relationship between process formality and each of the organisation's elements were covered under propositions A3.1– A.3.4. The intention here is to determine if the quality of SPD is influenced by the organisational elements.

The size of the organisation constitutes a significant explanatory factor of comprehensive/rational decision behaviour (Fredrickson, 1984; Mintzberg, 1978). Planning may be more important in large firms than small ones due to its ability to improve coordination and control. Large organisations tend to have greater structural complexity than small organisations, making effective coordination more difficult (Robbins, 1990). Plans can be used to aid coordination either by making individual behaviours more organised or through forecasting events where increased coordination will be necessary to give organisational members time to prepare for that event (Sapp, 1980). Since the planning document is used as a basis for communication and coordination with people who need to know about the strategy, and with participants in strategy implementation, it is expected that the quality of the planning document is influenced by organisational size.

The relationship between strategic planning and organisation age has been looked at from different perspectives. Loderer et al. (2009) looked at the effect of age on an organisation's ability to change and respond as well as the effect of age on growth; others such as Yusuf and Saffu, K (2009) directly assessed planning intensity with age and benefits expected from planning for young firms compared to large ones. It was noted from the literature that age could affect performance and the ability of an organisation to change by inducing organisational inertia (Leonard-Barton, 1992).

Moreover, old age may make knowledge, abilities, and skills obsolete and induce organisational decay (Agarwal and Gort, 2002). Therefore, it is expected that organisational age influences the quality of SPD produced.

In relation to the third organisational element – organisational level – planning at a corporate level is expected to be higher than at a departmental level within the research context, for reasons explained under proposition A.3.3. In addition, the strategic plan document as a basis for communication and coordination is expected to be of more value at the corporate level where more coordination and communication is required internally and externally with the main stakeholders. Therefore, it is proposed that the quality of SPD is influenced by the organisational level.

The last organisational element expected to influence the quality of SPD is the availability of a strategic planning unit (SPU). The SPU is a specialised unit responsible for all strategic planning related functions such as: following up on the achievement of the planning steps, coordinating activities, meetings, teams and other administrative requirements for the completion of the process. Also, the SPU is responsible for communicating process outcomes such as vision and mission statements, corporate values, as well as conducting strategic planning workshops and training. In addition, the SPU is responsible for the formulation of SPD, communicating and updating the document when necessary, as well as monitoring and evaluating the planning process together with the performance management department. Therefore, the quality of SPD is influenced by the availability of SPU.

In light of the above, it is proposed that:

Proposition C. 2: The quality of the strategic plan document produced is influenced by organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level, and the availability of a strategic planning unit.

4.2.4 Group (D) propositions – the planning horizon

Under this group, the planning horizon as one of the main planning elements will be discussed based on the covered literature stated under section (3.2.3), after which a number of propositions will be presented. The developed propositions in this group are intended to satisfy research aim

four 'assessing the determinants of the planning horizon within the research context'. The propositions associated with the planning horizon are expected to enrich our understanding regarding the outcomes of the planning process and various interactions between different variables of this research study aiming at answering the following research questions:

- What is the relationship between process formality and the planning horizon?
- Are planning horizons influenced by organisational elements and barriers to the planning process?

A firm's planning horizon refers to the length of the future time period that decision-makers consider in planning (Das, 1987). For most firms, this period corresponds to the length of time necessary to execute the firm's routine strategies (Camillus, 1982). Planning horizons affirm the essentiality of time as the principal dimension in strategic planning. The performance of an organisation in consequence of the implementation of a strategic plan is universally seen against the backdrop of the passage of time (Das, 1991). Das added that the rationale for a given planning horizon is that it should be long enough to permit planning for expected changes in strategy and yet be short enough to make reasonably detailed plans available.

4.2.4.1 The formality of SPFP and the planning horizon

The planning horizon for individual firms can vary from less than one year to more than ten years depending on environmental and organisational factors (Rhyne, 1985). For example, a long planning horizon (more than 5 years) may be optimal for conservative firms who are not predisposed to continually look for opportunities to introduce new products or services as a result of environmental change (Covin, 1991). Das (1986, p. 69) added that a five-year planning horizon is probably most common among organisations having formal strategic planning systems.

Harrison (1995) argued that the determinant of a planning horizon is influenced by a number of factors and is centred on the answers to two interrelated questions. The first is: how far into the future does the organisation need to plan? The other is how far into the future is management willing and able to plan?

The answer to this question, according to Harrison, depends on six organisational factors. These were listed under section (3.2.3.1); however, in relation to the interaction between strategic planning and the planning horizon the following was noted:

Lead time: The temporal interval between formulating and establishing a strategic objective and its expected maturity is called lead time. Lead time should be sufficient to accommodate all the future decisions that must be made to attain the strategic objectives. It should be long enough to give management needed flexibility in adjusting the strategic objectives to unanticipated environmental changes.

Product life cycle: The planning horizon should be long enough to accommodate the product life cycle in the organisation; the rationale behind this is that the planning horizon should be best suited to the important future decisions necessary to attain the strategic objectives (Ebert and Piehl, 1973). For example, in the public sector a project such as the supply of electricity and water to rural areas must be accommodated by strategic objectives with a long planning horizon to allow for implementation of such a project.

Validity of planning premises: Planning premises are based on assumptions regarding the probable course of future events. The further into the future that one projects, the greater the importance of valid planning premises. Consequently, the organisation's planning horizon may be temporarily or permanently limited by an excessive reliance on unavoidable assumptions.

The second question is more related to the relationship between SPFP and the planning horizon. It relates to the willingness and ability of the management team to set a realistic temporal boundary for strategic planning. Each individual member of the management team differs in his/her perspectives on future time and the uncertainty that accompanies it (Das, 1986, p. 52). The cognitive limitations of managers tend to bind their rationality in the process of selecting a planning horizon (Simon, 1957). In fact, managers vary greatly in their perceptions of uncertainty in relating to the future (Harrison, 1992). Individual managers are also influenced in their choice of a planning horizon by personality differences that manifest themselves in different degrees of willingness to accept risk (March and Shapira, 1987). While some individuals feel quite comfortable with considerable risk, others tend to be very averse to risk. Planners and managers are also bound in their choice of a planning horizon by time, cost and the availability of information. To summarise, planners and managers involved in the selection of a planning horizon operate within a context of bounded rationality (Harrison, 1987).

The relationship between SPFP and the planning horizon can be looked at from a process perspective: the planning horizon is one of the results of the planning process. For example, if a formal planning process was made including all essential steps, such as the environmental assessment step, the identification of strategic issues step, as well as the support of stakeholders (from the agreement on the strategic planning step), all of that will provide the planner with the necessary information and support and will strengthen their reasoning for initiating strategic objectives with long planning horizons. Therefore, the formality of the planning process and the planning horizon are positively related.

Proposition D.1: Organisations practicing a formal strategic planning formation process tend to have a longer planning horizon.

4.2.4.2 The planning horizon and organisational elements

In the previous sub-section it was noted that the determinants of the planning horizon depend on environmental and organisational factors. Harrison (1995) noted that the planning horizon depends on six organisational factors, some of which are related to organisational characteristics, such as an organisation's age. According to Harrison (1995), the planning horizon for a young organisation with a high rate of growth would tend to be shorter than for a mature organisation with most of its growth behind it. As the organisation becomes more established, its planning horizon would be extended accordingly. Larsen et al. (1998) also emphasised that organisational characteristics, such as size, type and age are strong determinants of the planning horizon. He added that large organisations are more likely to have a longer planning horizon than smaller ones. However, a study by Al-Shaikh (2001) on planning horizons in UAE firms showed that there is no significant difference between the planning horizons of large and small firms.

The existence of a strategic planning unit is the third organisational element expected to influence the planning horizon. The importance of having a specialised unit responsible for the strategic planning process is related to functional and contextual reasons; as stated previously under proposition A.3.4, both reasons contribute to the formality of the planning process. Once the planning process is highly formalised (due to conducting all essential steps of the planning process), planners will be able to plan more into the future because these steps such as environmental analysis, identification of strategic issues and others (see discussions of proposition D.1) will provide the planners with essential information about the internal and external

environment which will reduce the risk associated with long-range planning. Therefore, it is expected that the existence of a strategic planning unit will contribute to longer planning horizons.

The last organisational element that influences the planning horizon is the level at which strategic planning occurs. Planning is a function that takes place at various organisational levels. Ansoff (1967) argued that for the planned levels to be implemented, they should be converted into coordinated action programs for various units of the firm. Strategic planning at a corporate level is expected to have a longer planning horizon than one at the departmental or divisional level. This expectation is derived based on two factors. First, in relation to the context of the study, the Dubai government has issued a government requirement for all public sector organisations to initiate a strategic planning process at corporate level and cascade the planning activities down to the departmental levels (sections 6.2–6.4, Strategic Planning Manual – Executive Council, 2006) since strategic planning at a corporate level drives the development of strategic planning at lower levels. It is expected that the planning horizon will be longer for corporate level planning since the planning horizon for lower levels (departmental/divisional) is incorporated within the timeframe of the corporate planning horizon.

The second factor relates to 'managerial abilities' which brings up an important question to ask while determining the planning horizon and that is: how far into the future is management willing and able to plan? (Harrison, 1995) This relates to the willingness and ability of the management team to set a realistic temporal boundary for strategic planning. At a corporate level, strategic planning is a team effort that requires the participation of the top management team, the formation of a strategic planning committee, the involvement of main stakeholders and the facilitation by subject matter experts. Therefore, managerial ability is not limited to individual abilities. However, for planning at departmental or divisional levels, middle level managers are responsible for strategic planning, which is largely dependent on the managers' abilities and personality. Each individual member of the management team differs in her/his perspectives on future time and uncertainty that accompany strategic planning (Das, 1986, p. 52). As stated earlier, the cognitive limitations of managers tend to bind their rationality in the process of selecting a planning horizon (Simon, 1957) due to variations in managers' perceptions of uncertainty. Individual managers are also influenced in their choice of a planning horizon by personality differences that manifest themselves in different degrees of willingness to accept risk. Planners and managers are also bound in their choice of the planning horizon by time, cost and availability of information (Harrison, 1995).

From the above discussion regarding various organisational elements and their influence on the planning horizon it is proposed that:

Proposition D.2: The organisation's planning horizon is influenced by organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level, and the availability of a strategic planning unit; and as follows:

the planning horizon is expected to be longer:

- *for large organisations than for small organisations*
- *for mature organisations than for young organisations*
- *for organisations with SPU than organisations without SPU*
- *at a corporate level rather than at a departmental level.*

4.2.4.3 The planning horizon and barriers to planning

The environment in which the organisation operates is not an isolated environment. Instead, people and organisations are very much a part of their own environment. They act, interact and in doing so create the materials that become the barriers, constraints or opportunities they face (Weick 1995, p. 31). The interconnection and interdependence between the organisation and its environment strengthen the case for taking into account the internal and external environmental barriers and their effect on the planning horizon.

In Chapter Three the external and internal barriers to the planning process were covered comprehensively under section (3.3). The intention here is to shed light on the influence of such barriers on the planning horizon. Starting with political stability and political influences as external barriers to the planning process, Hurd (1992) states that political stability affects management's ability to predict future market conditions. In addition, some political influences inhibit the planning process or prevent access to resources needed for planning (Kemp, 1990). This will limit an organisation's ability to predict future trends and resources needed for planning that will shorten the planning horizon to minimise risk.

In relation to economic external barriers such as macro-economic conditions, and the availability of macro information, it was noted that fluctuations in the macro economy such as the recent economic crises reduce public organisations' ability to plan ahead because funding is reduced on

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the one hand and availability of reliable economic information (growth forecasting information) is unpredictable on the other. In other words, the macro-economic information is not predictable/reliable or even knowable to make informed strategic decisions (Prasad and Tata, 2003) that will affect the ability to plan ahead.

Other barriers to the planning process that influence the planning horizon are the variety of external stakeholders and the ambiguity of stakeholder expectations. In the public sector there are many stakeholders that have different and conflicting requirements (Wisniewski and Olafsson, 2004; Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004). These barriers create problems that affect the ability to plan ahead and, accordingly, affect the planning horizon, such as: the variety of objectives (Wisniewski and Stewart, 2004), the ability to set realistic targets, and conflicting objectives of stakeholders (Lawton et al., 2000).

Turning to the internal barriers and their influence on the planning horizon, a number of internal barriers were noted to influence the planning horizon, such as leadership commitment, lack of financial resources, the performance management system, strategic thinking, and planners' expertise.

Leadership commitment is seen as a key element in effective strategic management. For strategic planning to be effective, there must be commitment and involvement from the top of the organisation. An effective leadership will give managers and employees the power and authority they need to make sound decisions (Paul, 2004). Moreover, effective leadership will enable the managers to overcome cognitive limitations that bind their rationality in the process of selecting a planning horizon. Therefore, the lack of leadership commitment to the planning process is expected to inhibit the planning process and shorten the planning horizon. In relation to financial resources needed for planning, without enough financial resources, long-term strategic initiatives will not be approved since the budget will be distributed on urgent short-term plans.

The performance management system is also seen as a barrier that influences the planning horizon if not properly designed. The alignment between performance measurement and strategy is at the core of most performance measurement and management methodologies (Neely et al., 1997; Dyson, 2000). The performance measurement system will allow for a better understanding of the future trends and forecasting information that will enhance planners' abilities to make strategic decisions and plan further into the future.

Bonn (2001) argues that the main strategic planning problem identified by the majority of senior executives was strategic thinking. Without strategic thinking, strategic planning is not possible, and only operational plans with short planning horizons will be created. In relation to planners' expertise in strategic planning, Whelan and Sisson (1993) reported that at the core of every strategic planning process are people. Planners have to become catalysts for change and strategic planning missionaries within the organisation. With a little creativity and innovation the planning process can be made interesting, simple, exciting, and relevant to the needs of various stakeholders. Thus experienced planners are able to produce long strategic plans when needed.

A final point to make here is that for organisations to be effective they must adapt to their environment (Robbins, 1990). Andrews (1980) supports this view by stating that strategic planning has been viewed as a means of achieving rational change in an organisation to maintain a continuing fit with its environment. The environments of organisations change continually; as environmental volatility increases for an organisation the ability to accurately forecast changes diminishes. It becomes more difficult to pre-determine the appropriate strategies within the required planning horizon for an organisation. In an environment of high volatility, the use of plans may be too constraining, causing organisational inflexibility. It is in more stable environments where forecasting is likely to be more accurate that formal strategic planning will be found to be most effective (Frederickson, 1984).

From the above discussion it is concluded that the external and internal barriers to the SPFP influence the planning horizon negatively. Thus the following proposition is formulated.

Proposition D.3: The higher the influence of the internal and/or the external barriers on the planning process the shorter is the planning horizon.

4.3 Summary

With the aim of the study being the evaluation of the Dubai public sector organisations' SPFP in terms of process formality, barriers to the process, and the quality of the process output 'strategic plan', a number of variables were identified and grouped into five categories. These are: organisational elements; strategic planning formation process; strategic plan document; internal organisational barriers and external barriers.

The conceptual framework of the present research, shown in Figure 4.3, includes all the variables presented earlier under section 4.1.1, as well as the relationships between variables that are deemed to be important to the present study aims and objectives. Each of the relationships presented in the conceptual framework will be analysed through the development of testable propositions.

Four groups of propositions have been identified in this study: each group covers one or more relations between research variables. These groups of propositions are: formality of the strategic planning formation process; barriers to SPFP; the strategic plan document produced; and the planning horizon. Each group contains a number of associated propositions totalling 14 propositions by which research questions will be answered and research aims will be satisfied.

Group (A) propositions address research aim one 'Assessment of the strategic planning formation process within public sector organisations in Dubai'. Propositions in Group (A) cover the formality of SPFP; the association between stages (steps) of the planning process; the relationship between SPFP and organisational elements; as well as the relationship between SPFP and the implementation of the strategies and plans. Group (B) propositions address research aim two 'Assessing the influence of the internal and the external barriers on the SPFP within the research context'. Two propositions were developed for that purpose: one related to the external barriers within the research context and the other to the internal barriers. Under Group (C) propositions, research aim three 'Evaluating the quality of the strategic plan document produced and its association with the planning process' is investigated, the developed propositions in this group focus on the output of the strategic planning formation process 'strategic plan document' in terms of SPD quality and its relation to the planning process as well as the influence of organisational elements on SPD quality. The last group of propositions in Group (D) is centred on the planning horizon. The developed propositions in this group are intended to satisfy research aim four 'assessing the determinants of the planning horizon within the research context'. The propositions associated with this group are expected to enrich our understanding regarding the relationship of the planning horizon with the SPFP, and the influence of organisational elements as well as planning barriers on the planning horizon.

In the following chapter the methodology adopted in order to test the underlying 14 propositions is discussed. This includes an overview of the methodology used, measurement development, data collection tools, pre-testing procedures, data collection procedures, analytical techniques, and, finally, issues relating to reliability and validity.

CHAPTER FIVE
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the methodology used to examine the theoretical model established in Chapter Four and to address the research questions discussed in Chapter One. It is thus divided into seven sections as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

In section one, the research method and the justification of the method used is presented; section two describes the data collection method, the appropriateness of the method selected, as well as the reasoning behind not selecting other methods is described; in section three the instrument design is detailed; sections four and five describe the pre-testing procedure used and the final research procedure; the data analysis techniques are explained in section six; in the final section the research rigour is presented.
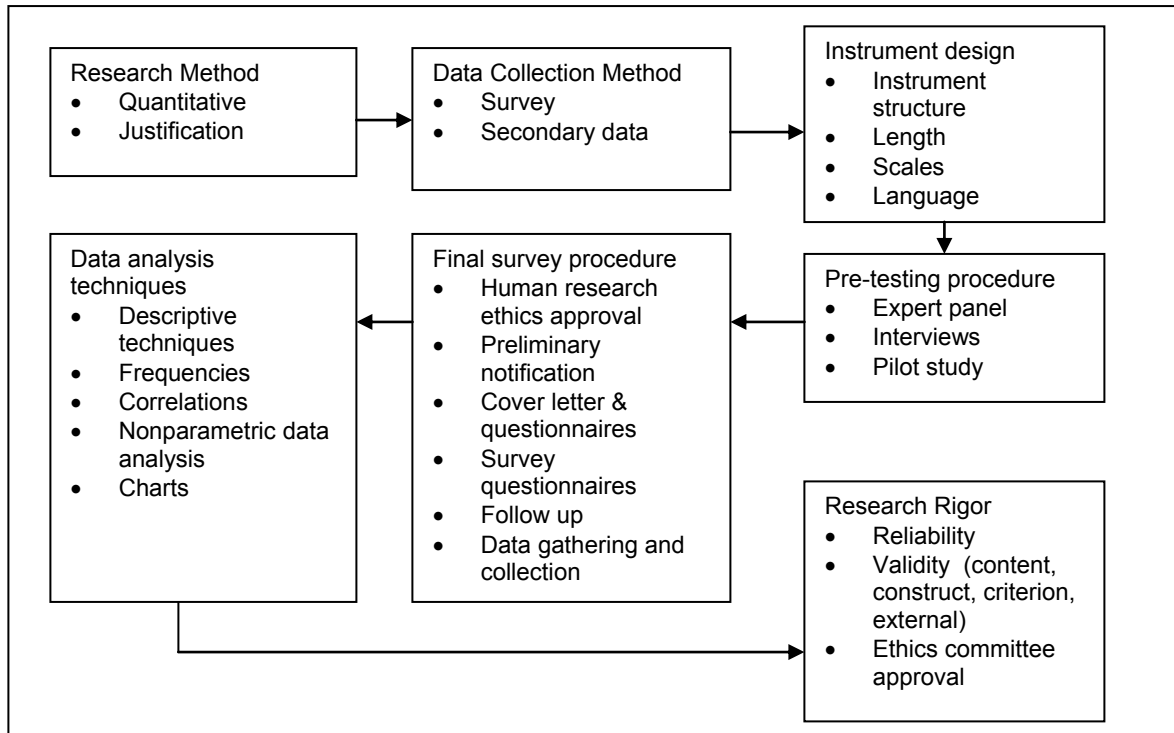
Figure 5.1: Research process of study

5.1 Research method

Drawing on the existing literature of strategic planning, this study develops a theoretical model to test the research questions identified in Chapter One and the propositions developed in Chapter Four. Punch (1998) maintains that the methods used to conduct the research should be in line with the research questions. Therefore, a quantitative approach was carried out in this study to test the propositions and to answer the research questions. Amaratunga, Baldry, Sashar and Newton (2002) maintain that applying quantitative research helps the researcher to establish statistical evidence on the strength of relationships between both exogenous and endogenous constructs. They also emphasise that the statistical results provide directions of relationships when combined with theory and literature. Hence this thesis aims to measure the underlying variables presented in the theoretical framework and test the propositions associated with it. A quantitative enquiry seems to be appropriate: as noted by Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran (2001) 'measurement of the variables in the theoretical framework is an integral part of the research and an important aspect of quantitative research design'.

In addition, according to Cohen and Manion (1980), quantitative research is used when the intention of the study is to describe through empirical statements what the case is in the real world rather than what ought to be the case. This is in alignment with the objective of this study since the objective is to describe the strategic planning formation process practice within Dubai public sector organisations, not to state what it should be. Moreover, Creswell (1994) states that quantitative research is appropriate for 'explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)' and since the developed propositions outlined in the previous chapter examine relationships between a variety of variables, the use of statistical techniques is appropriate to test the strength of relationships.

While quantitative methodology is unable to generate theory or provide in-depth explanations as qualitative enquiry does, Cavana et al. (2001) and Amaratunga et al. (2002) point out that it can verify hypotheses and provide strong reliability and validity. Added to this, this methodology has been successfully used in similar studies in the strategic management literature of O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002); Hass, Burnaby, and Bierstaker (2005); Elbanna (2008 and 2010); Luna, Ayerbe, and Torres (2008) and in many other studies.

Before presenting the appropriateness of the quantitative method for this study, it should be said that a quantitative/qualitative approach would allow for in-depth explanations and the generalisation of findings. However, a number of constraints prevented the researcher from adopting a qualitative method, as will be described in section (5.2.2).

It was noted from the literature that quantitative research is most appropriate in the current situations:

- Quantitative research is useful for segmentation. Since the aim of the research is to investigate the extent to which the strategic planning process is practised across the population of 'public sector organisations', segmentation is necessary for analysing certain groups such as large organisations in comparison to small ones, mature organisations in relation to young ones and so on (Kumar, 1996).

- When the information sought is reasonably specific and familiar to the respondents then quantitative research is suitable (Bryman, 1984). The target population for this study, as will be discussed later, is practitioners working in the public sector who hold managerial positions or have special expertise in the field of planning. Therefore, the respondents are familiar with the information sought.

- Quantitative research is useful when a quantitative answer is required (Bryman, 1984). Some quantitative answers are required in this study to describe the sample and for comparison purposes, such as the average duration of the planning horizon in years, the percentage of organisations with strategic planning units, and the percentage of organisations with strategic planning documents.

- Quantitative research is useful to quantify opinions. The study seeks to investigate the opinions of respondents in relation to internal and external barriers influencing the strategic planning formation process, and to reach conclusions on the most influential barriers to the planning process, which can be done by quantifying the respondents' opinions.

- Quantitative research is suitable to generalise the findings. Since the objective of this study is to generalise the findings of accepted propositions to the whole population, the

use of quantitative methods is deemed to be the most suitable (Chisnall, 1992; Creswell, 1994).

- The final activity for which quantitative research is especially suited is the testing of propositions and hypotheses. A number of propositions were developed in Chapter Four for the purpose of satisfying research questions and aims. The use of the quantitative method will enable the researcher to test the propositions through proper statistical tools, which can only be done using empirical investigation (Bryman, 1984).

From the above, to empirically investigate various relationships among the underlying constructs, this methodology was deemed to be the most appropriate (Churchill, 1995; Clarke, 1999; Punch, 1998).

5.2 Data collection method

Data collection methods are an integral part of research design. There are several data collection methods, each with its advantages and disadvantages. The selection of the appropriate method greatly enhances the value of the research (Sekaran, 2003, p. 223). The selection of the research method and data collection approach depends not only on the objective of the study but also on the constraints of the study (Sekaran, 2003; Punch, 1998). Taking into consideration the objective of the study and the constraints/potential constraints within the research context, the data collection method employed in this research is survey-based research supported by secondary sources of information.

5.2.1 Survey-based research – self-administered questionnaires

As the intention of this study is to investigate the strategic planning formation process within Dubai public sector organisations, a self-administered survey methodology was found to be the most appropriate tool to collect the data for the following reasons: first, it is an effective tool, especially when the investigator does not require, or has little control over occurring events (Yin, 1994). Second, it provides an accurate means of assessing sample information and enables the researcher to draw conclusions about generalising the findings from a sample of responses to the whole population (Chisnall, 1992; Creswell, 1994). Third, it is an appropriate data collection method

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when relationships between variables such as correlations need to be established to answer the research questions (Sekaran, 2003, p. 126; Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2003). Fourth, it is considered useful because it is quick, inexpensive, efficient, and can be administered to a large sample (Churchill, 1995; Sekaran, 2000). Fifth, this method has been widely used and accepted in management literature (Amaratunga et al., 2002). Sixth, a number of constraints are found within the research context that prevents the researcher from selecting additional data collection methods, such as interviews (Sekaran, 2003). This will be described in the following section.

However, a number of problems are associated with this data collection method. These can be summarised as follows: first ambiguity of questionnaires, this was overcome by testing the questionnaires used in this study to ensure the suitability of the questions and to eliminate ambiguities as recommended by Sekaran (2000); details of the procedure used is listed in sections (5.4 and 5.5). Another potential problem is the low response rate: Sekaran (2000) suggests that sending follow-up letters, providing the respondent with self-addressed, stamped return envelopes and keeping the questionnaire brief are useful ways to improve the response rate to mail questionnaires. Also, the use of an online survey was suggested to overcome this problem as suggested while pre-testing the research instrument (section 5.4). Further, lack of control over timeliness, the difficulty in determining whether the selected respondents are being truthful, and the lack of detail and depth of information are seen as other problems associated with survey methods (Hair et al., 2003). For these reasons, the guidelines recommended by Hair et al. (2003) were taken into account. First, the reliability and the validity of the scales should be tested. Second, the questionnaire should be designed in a way that is easy for the respondents to understand and free of response bias. Third, a follow-up procedure should be made to increase the response rate. Details on how each of these potential problems were addressed is covered comprehensively in pre-testing the research instrument section (5.4) and final survey procedure section (5.5).

5.2.2 Constraints to alternative methods

The use of a quantitative/qualitative approach with multi data collection methods such as questionnaires and interviews would be most suitable for the research in hand. However, as stated earlier, the choice of research method and data collection approach is dependent not only on research objectives but also on constraints/possible constraints that may arise along the way (Sekaran, 2003). This is particularly true for this study. A number of constraints within the research context guide to some extent the choice of selecting the research method and data collection

method. The constraints can be categorised in two main points: First, the ability to conduct the research interview. Second, the reliability of research interview data. In relation to the first point, the researcher, before deciding on the most appropriate data collection method, contacted eight strategic planning managers working in government departments in Dubai to arrange interviews in an attempt to assess the suitability of conducting research interviews. A number of difficulties were experienced while doing so. First, it was difficult to contact interviewees (managers) to arrange meetings: the researcher had to call five times in some cases to be able to speak to managers. Second, all managers except one refused to conduct an interview and informed the researcher that this is mainly due to confidentiality of information and their busy schedules. However, three out of seven managers stated that they might consider participating in a survey questionnaire. Third, the manager that agreed to participate informed the researcher that the questions asked should not be specific but rather general and the interview should not be recorded. The previous difficulties can be greatly due to cultural and institutional factors. For example, all public sector organisations in Dubai compete for an excellence award as required by the Dubai government. This, to a large extent, prevents knowledge sharing and transparency between public organisations and with external parties. One of the managers that refused to conduct the interview stated over the phone that 'I cannot share strategic planning information with external entities or individuals since this may reveal information that could affect our chances to win the Dubai Government Excellence Award'.

The second major constraint (reliability of research interview data) is mainly related to the knowledge and experience of the interviewee. As stated by Mukherjee (1995), experience is one of the main constraints of conducting research interviews. The Dubai government issued a government initiative to increase Emiratisation 'nationalisation' (increase the employment of local citizens), particularly at the managerial level within government departments. This has been adopted by all government departments. In fact, the nationalisation objective has been included in many strategic plans of government departments in Dubai. Due to 'nationalisation', critical managerial positions (such as strategic planning managers, department managers, VPs and EVPs) are filled with local nationals without some of them necessarily having the adequate knowledge and skills required to accommodate various managerial obligations. The employed local nationals depend heavily on experts/specialists or external consultants to perform their managerial functions. Research interviews with individuals lacking the necessary knowledge and experience will not necessarily lead to quality information since the interviewee might not be able to provide adequate

explanations. For the above reasons the adoption of qualitative research and research interviews as a data collection method is not only inapplicable within the research context, but also not reliable. Therefore, survey questionnaires as well as secondary sources of information were used as an additional source of information, as will be described next.

Before moving to the next section it is important to note that the participation of some respondents lacking the necessary expertise for a research interview, but able to answer a survey questionnaire is acceptable, since filling a research survey with multiple choice answers is much easier than conducting a research interview which may require in depth explanations. In addition the size of the sample of such respondents will not alter the overall statistical results of research survey in case their inputs were not entirely correct. However, that might not be the case for interviews, since the findings might be affected greatly if the interviewees lack necessary knowledge and expertise because there is usually limited number of participants in a research interview. Added to this, the respondents' willingness to participate in a survey questionnaire instead of research interview is greatly influenced by cultural and institutional reasons.

5.2.3 Secondary sources of data

In addition to the primary data collection method 'survey questionnaires', a secondary method 'secondary data' was used to further validate the results gained by the primary method. Sekaran (2000) states that since almost all data collection methods have some biases, collecting data through multi-methods and from multiple sources lends rigour to the research and allows for cross checks.

The secondary data were collected throughout the various phases of the research study and included a variety of information from various sources. The secondary data were classified into two main groups: sector-related data and organisation-related data. The types of data gathered under each group are:

Sector-related information:
- Dubai Government Strategic Plan 2010–2021
- Statistical Yearbook – Dubai 2008
- Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP) criteria
- Dubai Government Strategic Planning Manual – 2006.

Organisation-related information:

- Strategic plans for public sector organisations in Dubai

- Organisations' structure for public sector organisations in Dubai

- Annual reports, mandates, and publications for some public sector organisations.

The collected secondary data were analysed using content analysis and data were recorded in an evaluation format. 19 strategic plans were collected; each collected strategic plan was evaluated as per the following quality criteria: formality, clarity, measurability, objectivity, coverage, and openness. The evaluation of each quality criteria was conducted through assigning scoring system for each element under each criterion. Then total scores were added to get the sum for quality criteria and the sum for the overall strategic plan quality. The evaluation format and the results of the evaluation for each strategic plan are presented in Appendix (B.1) Data collected from secondary sources were triangulated with primary data to validate and support results of the primary data collection method as described in section (6.5.3).

To summarise, because the objective of this thesis is to evaluate the effectiveness of SPFP in terms of measuring the degree to which the steps of the process are conducted, and to investigate the relationships between various research variables through testable propositions, quantitative research (survey) supported by secondary data will create the necessary fit between the research problem / context and research method for the following reasons:

- Applying quantitative research helps the researcher to establish statistical evidence on the strength and direction of relationships between variables (Amaratunga et al., 2002).

- Quantitative research is used when the intention of the study is to describe through empirical statements what the case is in the real world rather than what ought to be the case Cohen (1980).

- Quantitative research is useful for segmentation (Kumar, 1996).

- When the information sought is reasonably specific and familiar to the respondents then quantitative research is suitable (Bryman, 1984).

- Quantitative research is useful when a quantitative answer is required (Bryman, 1984).

- Quantitative research is suitable to generalise the findings (Chisnall, 1992; Creswell, 1994).

All of the reasons stated above are necessary to satisfy research questions and fulfill research aims. Added to this, this methodology has been successfully used in similar studies in the strategic management literature O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002); Hass, Burnaby, and Bierstaker (2005); Elbanna (2008 and 2010); Dyson and Meadows (2005); Luna, Ayerbe, and Torres (2008); Floyd and Wooldridge (1992). Moreover, a number of constraints found within the research context prevent the researcher from selecting additional data collection methods, such as interviews. This is particularly related to the culture and individual perceptions about participating in an interview. Last, quantitative approach with survey questionnaires is considered useful because it is quick, inexpensive, efficient, and can be administered to a large sample (Churchill, 1995; Sekaran, 2000).

5.3 Instrument design

After identifying the appropriate data-gathering method, the next step that needs to be considered is the design of the instrument. In order for the researcher to gain a clear insight into the research aims, developing a new instrument is considered more appropriate than using previously designed instruments for a number of reasons. First, developing a new instrument will allow the researcher to link main and specific objectives of the study with certain questions or groups of questions developed specifically to serve the purpose of the study. Burns and Grove (1997) state that designing an instrument is a protracted and sometimes difficult process but the overall aim is that the final questions will be clearly linked to the research questions and will elicit accurate information that help achieve the goals of the research. Second, the present study investigates the strategic planning formation process from a variety of angles; the extent to which the process is practised (formality); the process output 'strategic plan document' quality and the internal and external barriers to the planning process. All are integral components of the research study and require the development of a specific set of questions for each of them. Third, designing a new instrument gives the researcher the flexibility to include different types of questions and to use the proper scales accordingly. Different types of scales were used while designing the instrument based on the type of enquiry needed.

The instrument designed (survey questionnaire) consists of 70 questions and an additional 9 optional open-ended questions. The questions were developed from the review of the relevant literature and are used to measure the main constructs of the study. The questionnaire is categorised into four parts as illustrated in Table 5.1. A copy of the final survey is available in Appendix (A.1).

Table 5.1 Instrument design

	Title	Sections	Questions	Open-ended Q
Part (A)	Background information	• Respondents characteristics	4	
		• Organisations' characteristics	5	
Part (B)	Strategic planning formation process	• Initiating and agreeing on SPFP	3	1
		• Organisational mandate	2	1
		• Vision development and comm.	5	1
		• Mission development and comm.	7	1
		• Assessing the environment	2	1
		• Strategic issues identification	2	
		• Strategies and plans development	5	1
		• Monitoring & control	3	1
Part (C)	Barriers to the planning process	• Internal factors	13	1
		• External factors	10	
Part (D)	Strategic plan document	• Document characteristics	2	1
		• Quality criteria	7	

Most of the questions in the developed instrument use 5-point Likert scales ranging from (1 = strongly disagree) to (5 = strongly agree). It was noted that in contemporary psychometric practice, the majority of rating scales, Likert scales, and other attitude and opinion measures contain either five or seven response categories (Bearden, Netmeyer and Mobley, 1993). In an influential review article, Miller (1956) argued that the human mind has a span of absolute judgment that can distinguish about seven distinct categories, a span of immediate memory for about seven items, and a span of attention that can encompass about six objects at a time, which suggested that any increase in the number of response categories beyond six or seven might be futile. Therefore, this study uses a 5-point Likert scale. In addition, odd numbers of response categories have generally been preferred to even numbers because they allow the middle category to be interpreted as a neutral point (Neumann and Neumann, 1981).

The Likert scales were selected because they take less time and are easy to answer (McCelland, 1994; Churchill, 1995). While the most serious drawback of the Likert scale is its lack of reproducibility (Oppenheim, 1992), it is highly desirable in numerically ordering respondents, particularly in defining attitudes (Davis and Cosenza, 1993). Different types of scales were also used while designing the instrument, for example, nominal scale was used under part 'A' asking the respondents about their organisation type, level of planning, and respondents position; in part 'B' nominal scale was also used in question (28) asking the respondents to choose from a list of strategic planning tools. Ordinal scales were used in part 'C' questions (51 & 61) asking the respondents to rank in order the most influential barriers to the planning process. In addition, a number of questions were added asking the respondents to fill in the required information, such as

question (3) establishment year, question (4) number of employees, question (63) planning horizon and others.

In addition to including a variety of scales, multi-items for each variable are also necessary to measure the variables and to establish relationships with other variables or constructs. In accordance with Peter (1979), and Han (1991), multi-items for each construct were selected to provide a comprehensive evaluation and help the researcher to overcome the shortcoming of a single item measure. Multi-item scales are considered necessary to achieve a reliable measurement of constructs (Peter, 1979), while single-item scales have been criticised by Churchill (1979) as: lacking sufficient correlation with the attribute being measured; being closely related to other attributes; having restricted variance of scale; and having unreliable responses.

In relation to the length of the questionnaires, different views were found in the literature. For instance, Frazer and Lawley (2000) outline that an instrument up to twelve pages in length is generally considered appropriate. Zikmund (2003, p. 214) recommended that 'a general rule of thumb is that questionnaires should not exceed six pages'. All the questions in this thesis, including the covering letter, were presented on six pages, within the recommended length.

Questions were also neatly organised and conveniently spaced to minimise eyestrain. Further, because the sequencing of questions can influence the nature of the respondents' answers and can lead to an error in analysis as noted by Kinnear and Taylor (1996), the questionnaire was designed to represent the goal of the research, moving from one topic to another in a logical manner, with questions focusing on the completed topic before moving to the next (Tull and Hawkins, 1990).

The wording and language used in this questionnaire were kept as simple as possible to avoid any ambiguity. As recommended by Frazer and Lawley (2000), the respondents should be able to read and understand the words used in the instrument as this will encourage them to complete the questionnaires. However, some terms such as strategic analysis and strategy maps could not be simplified since they are widely used in the literature and business field. Those terms were explained by defining them in the questionnaire.

After designing the instrument and before distributing the survey to the sample population the instrument was tested by a number of pre-test procedures. The description of each pre-test

procedure, the recommendations, and the modifications required to the instrument as a result of pre-testing will be presented next.

5.4 Pre-testing the research instrument

There is wide agreement among scholars that pre-testing is an integral part of the questionnaire development process. As Hunt, Sparkman and Wilcox (1982) stated, 'Will the instrument provide data of sufficient quality and quantity to satisfy the objectives of the research?' The benefits of pre-testing prior to conducting the field survey have been well emphasised in the literature by numerous researchers (Hunt et al., 1982; Blair and Presser, 1992; Churchill, 1995). A pre-test is defined as 'a trial run with a group of respondents used to screen out problems in the instructions or design of a questionnaire' (Zikmund, 2003, p. 229). This section outlines the pre-testing procedure to be followed in this study.

There is no general agreement about the best pre-testing procedure among scholars. Reynolds and Diamantopoulos (1998) noted that several disagreements among scholars exist in relation to the best method for pre-test administration. Overall, the methodological literature distinguishes between three types of pre-test methods (Hunt et al., 1982; Blair and Presser, 1992; Churchill, 1995; Zikmund, 2003). These are: expert panel, interviews, and pilot study. The first type 'expert panel' is when an expert panel is asked to judge the instrument in relation to certain criteria. The second type 'interviews' is where the interviewer is required to identify any obstacles, difficulties or incomprehensible questions blocking the respondents' ability to provide accurate answers. Reynolds and Diamantopoulos (1998) suggest that the personal interview is an effective means of conducting a pre-test due to the accuracy and completeness of the information generated. However, this method is subject to errors resulting from interaction between the interviewer and participants (i.e. bias introduced by interviewers). The third type 'pilot study' employs testing research instruments on a small sample of target population 'pre-testing' (Zikmund, 2003). Reynolds and Diamantopoulos (1998) found that a planned survey (pilot study) is useful because it covers all aspects of the field survey and is less likely to be affected by interaction between the respondents and the researcher. Because there are limitations to each of the pre-test types, many researchers have recommended using different combinations (i.e. Blair and Presser, 1992; Churchill, 1995). As a result, and in order to minimise any bias or error, all three types of pre-test procedures have been employed before conducting the actual field study.

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5.4.1 Expert panel procedure

The first procedure involved assessing survey questionnaires by a panel of five experts who have extensive knowledge and experience in strategic planning. The experts were selected from Dubai Electricity & Water Authority; Dubai Customs; Dubai Municipality and Dubai Health Authority. The experts hold senior managerial positions: Vice President (VP) Human Resources, Senior Manager Excellence, Director Strategic Planning, Manager Strategic Planning, and Senior Specialist Performance Management. The experts were asked to evaluate the survey questionnaires in relation to four evaluation criteria: understandability (the question is understandable and has the same meaning to different respondents); importance (the issue the question is addressing is important); relevance (the question is related to the measure/subject) and length (the length of the question asked is suitable). The experts were asked to rank each of the four evaluation criteria with a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 – Very Poor; 2 – Poor; 3 – Neither Poor nor Good; 4 – Good; 5 – Very Good), the results of expert ranking were analysed and the questions with an average rating less than 3 for any of the evaluation criteria were modified accordingly. For example, if average ranking for length criterion is less than 3, an action is taken to modify the length. The result of the expert panel ranking is available in Appendix (B.2).

5.4.2 Personal interviews' procedure

The second procedure followed Bowen and Shoemakers' (1998) suggestion in which five personal interviews were conducted. Unlike the attempt to conduct interviews as a data collection method that was faced with a number of constraints (see 5.2.2), arranging the interviews as part of the pre-testing procedure was possible because the interviewees were not asked to answer but evaluate the questions. The researcher contacted five managerial employees working in public sector organisations in Dubai and arrangements were made to interview each of them after sending a draft copy of the survey (including modifications from the first procedure). The purpose of these interviews was to ask the interviewees to identify any problems with regard to the questionnaire format, wording or design, and to address any comments or suggestions they had, and especially, that all interviewees work in public sector organisations in Dubai and are aware of the administrative and cultural issues within those organisations. As a result of this procedure it was suggested that the survey be translated from English to the Arabic language and both versions be available to choose from by respondents. Also, the interviewees had some concerns about the

distribution and collection of the research survey and suggested having the survey online which would increase the response rate as stated by three of the interviewees; another comment was to simplify the language or provide definitions for some terms such as 'strategy maps' and 'environmental analysis' which might not be understandable for some respondents. All suggestions were implemented and taken into consideration and the survey was translated into the Arabic language. The process use to translate the survey is presented in section (5.4.4).

5.4.3 Pilot study procedure

Before sending letters of formal invitation to the research survey as a pilot study, two main questions had to be answered, according to Hunt et al. (1982): 'Who should the subjects be in the pre-test?' and 'How large a sample is needed for the pre-test?' For the first question it was necessary to include subjects who were similar to those targeted in the actual survey (Churchill, 1995). Therefore, managerial employees working in Dubai public sector organisations were contacted to participate in the pilot study. In relation to the second question, there is little agreement in the literature about the appropriate sampling size (Hunt et al., 1982). For example, Zatalman and Burger (1975) did not specify size, simply recommending a 'small' sample. Others such as Boyd, Westfall and Stasch (1977) indicated that a sample of 20 is adequate. Lukas, Hair and Ortinau (2004) pointed out a size of 50 respondents allows the running of proper statistical testing procedures. For the purpose of this procedure, 22 responses were collected and analysed. The reliability of the measures was calculated through measuring Cronbach's coefficient alpha, showing that all key variables had high alpha scores exceeding (0.7), as recommended by Francis (2001). Further to the above empirical results, respondents' answers and suggestions showed that there was a need for minor modifications. For instance, the development of vision- and mission-related questions was clarified. In addition, and in conjunction with recommendations of interviewees (procedure two), the respondents recommended doing an online survey that would give the respondents the flexibility of time and location to complete the survey and improve the response rate.

5.4.4 Translation process

Given that the research is conducted within the Middle Eastern context, translation and back-translation of the instrument was undertaken as recommended by procedure two described above. Methodological authors such as Malhotra, Agarwal and Peterson (1996), and Salciuviene,

Auruskeviciene and Lydeka (2005) maintain that this procedure is important because cultural differences could result in non-equivalence, which may confound results. Two steps were conducted in translating the current instrument. First, after the original questionnaire (English version) was developed it was translated into Arabic by an accredited translator. Second, another accredited bilingual translator, whose native language is Arabic, back-translated the Arabic version to English to ensure equivalence of the questionnaire translations and adjust minor inconsistencies. According to Malhotra et al. (1996, p. 24), 'if the translator is not fluent in both languages and familiar with two cultures, direct translation of certain words and phrases may be erroneous'.

As a result of the three pre-test procedures described above, the initial survey was modified, translated and an online version was created. The final survey for this study was formulated and ready for distribution. A copy of the final survey in both languages, English and Arabic, is provided in Appendices (A.1 & A.2). In the following section the procedure used to manage the distribution and collection of the research survey will be described.

5.5 Final survey procedure

Once the appropriateness of the instrument is confirmed as a result of pre-test procedures outlined in the above section, a number of steps were adopted to conduct the final survey and collect the research data. Initially, appointments were made with employees of strategy or human resource departments of public sector organisations in Dubai, and in case appointments were not possible, phone calls were made to the relevant employees. During the meetings or phone calls the research project was discussed and organisations were formally invited to participate in the study, after which letters of formal invitation were sent to all public sector organisations in Dubai asking them to participate in the research project (see Appendix A.3). The letters of invitation were mailed/emailed to the strategic planning department/unit and in some cases the HR department and were combined with an 'information to participants' sheet' (Appendix A.4) as well as the research survey (Appendix A.1 & A.2).

The information to participants' sheet provided an explanation about the nature of the research, what is required by participants, what will be gained from participating in this study, who is entitled to participate, and confidentiality of information. All of this was also explained during the initial meeting or phone calls. It was highlighted in the letter of invitation that participation in this

study is limited to managerial employees (department/unit managers and above) and special matter experts involved in planning since the information sought requires a certain amount of managerial and planning expertise. Once the approval was granted by the strategic planning or human resources department the research survey together with 'information to participants' and 'consent form' sheets were distributed to participants in both languages – English and Arabic. Also, the participants were given the choice of completing the survey online and the link to the online survey (in both languages) was provided. Two weeks from the commencement of the distribution process a follow-up procedure was made to increase the response rate as recommended by Churchill (1995) and Cavana et al. (2001).

5.6 Data analysis techniques

In order to analyse the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 was used. This software has largely been used and accepted by researchers as a data analysis technique (Zikmund, 2003). This technique has been used to screen the data in terms of coding the data, dealing with missing data, analysis of non-response bias, as well as reliability and validity measurements. The results of these methods are available in the following chapter. SPSS was also employed to conduct preliminary data analysis including frequencies, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum value, as well as the median and quartile were conducted for research variables as needed to gain preliminary information about the sample. This information gives the reader a 'snapshot' of the data collected and used in the research.

The research propositions were also tested by using a number of widely accepted statistical tests such as Spearman's correlation, Willcoxon test, and Mann-Whitney U test (a non-parametric equivalent of the t-test). In addition, other statistical techniques were used to support the findings of the propositions' tests such as frequency distributions and descriptive statistics.

5.7 Research rigour

Once the instrument is developed and the variables are defined it is important to make sure that the instrument is indeed accurately measuring the variables it is supposed to measure and that

important dimensions and elements have not been overlooked. Validity and reliability are used to assess the 'goodness' of the measures. Validity is concerned with whether we measure the right concept while reliability is concerned with the stability and consistency of measurement (Sekaran, 2003). Reliability and validity are separate but closely related concepts. A measure may be consistent (reliable) but not accurate (valid), and alternatively, a measure may be accurate but not consistent (Holmes-Smith, Coote and Cunningham, 2006). Therefore, in order to ensure the quality of the findings and conclusions of this thesis, both reliability and validity are assessed.

5.7.1 Reliability

The reliability of a measure indicates the extent to which it is without bias and hence ensures consistency across the variable items in the instrument. It is an indication of the stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concept and 'goodness' of the measure. Internal consistency is used to assess the reliability of the summated scale where several items are summed to form a total score (Malhotraet al., 1996, p. 305). If they are reliable, the items will show consistency in their indication of the concept being measured.

The most basic method to measure internal consistency is split-half reliability. However, this method has its limitations since results rely on how the items are divided. To avoid this problem, Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha has been used. This technique estimates the degree to which the items in the scale are representative of the domain of the construct being measured. It is a measure of the internal consistency of a set of items, and is considered the most common method accepted by researchers (Nunnally, 1978; Peter, 1979; Sekaran, 2000). Added to this, Cronbach's coefficient is important in measuring multi-point scale items (such as 5-point Likert scale) (Sekaran, 2000). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each of the key research variables is presented in Appendix (B.3). The results of these calculations indicate overall reliability of all key variables; all values exceed the required levels of acceptability i.e. .70 (Francis, 2001).

In assessing reliability through Cronbach's alpha, authors suggest different levels of acceptance. For instance, Nunnally (1967) recommends that an acceptable alpha is between .50 and .60. Nunnally (1978) increased the level of acceptance and considered that the alpha should exceed the minimum of .70 for internal consistency. Similarly, Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), and Francis (2001) suggest a rule of thumb level of higher than .70, with a level as low as .60 being acceptable for new scales. While different views have been recommended about levels of acceptance, it is

generally agreed that an alpha of .70 and over is acceptable. This level was considered as the minimum for determining internal consistency of scales for this thesis.

5.7.2 Validity

Reliability alone is not sufficient to consider that an instrument is adequate (Churchill, 1979). Therefore, validity is required to validate the constructs of this thesis. According to Zikmund (2003, p. 331), validity means 'the ability of a scale to measure what is intended to be measured'. Neuman (1994) points out that the better the fit between the conceptual and operational definitions, the greater the measurement validity. Added to this, validity represents the relationship between the construct and its indicators (Punch, 1998). Three types of validity including content, construct (convergent and discriminant) and criterion validity have been examined in this thesis. These are related to the internal validity of the scales and their items. As for the purpose of the generalisability of the research findings, external validity has also been investigated.

5.7.2.1 Internal validity

Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggest there are three important aspects of a valid construct. First, the construct should be seen to be a good representation of the domain of the observable related to the construct. Second, the construct should well represent the alternative measures. Finally, the construct should be well related to other constructs of interest. Taking into account these considerations, three types of validity as stated above have been examined. These are covered next.

5.7.2.1.1 Content validity

Content validity is a subjective but systematic assessment of the extent the content of a scale measures a construct (Malhotra et al., 1996). When it appears evident to experts that the measure shows adequate coverage of the concept, the measure has face validity (Zikmund, 2003). In order to obtain content validity, this thesis follows the recommended procedures of Cooper and Schindler (1998) through evaluating the research instrument by a panel of experts and by conducting interviews, asking them to give their comments on the instrument. The interviews were conducted as part of the pre-test methods discussed earlier in section (5.4). Given that content validity has a subjective nature, it is not sufficient to provide a more rigorous empirical test (Zikmund, 2003).

Therefore, it was assured a priori to conducting the final survey as a precursor to other measures of validity.

5.7.2.1.2 Construct validity

Construct validity is directly concerned with what the instrument is actually measuring (Churchill, 1995). In other words, it refers to how well the results are achieved from employing the measure fitting the theories around which the test is designed (Sekaran, 2000). In this context, Malhotra et al. (1996) also found it necessary to consider the theoretical questions about why the scales work and what deductions can be made based on the theory. In summary, this measure of validity refers to developing correct and adequate operational measures for the concept being tested (Yin, 1994; Malhotra et al., 1996). Although measuring reliability and content validity develops 'internally consistent' sets of measurement items, still it is not sufficient for construct validity (Nunnally, 1967). Construct validity was therefore examined in this thesis by analysing both convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity examines whether the measures of the same construct are correlated highly, and discriminant validity determines that the measures of a construct have not correlated too highly with other constructs (Sekaran, 2000). A number of methods have been suggested for assessing convergent and discriminant validity: for the purpose of this thesis, convergent and discriminant validity have been assessed by performing correlation analysis.

As for discriminant validity, the estimated correlations between the factors should not be greater than .85 (Kline, 2005). This is consistent with the above discriminant validity definition of Sekaran (2000). That is, if the two factors are highly correlated (greater than .85), redundant items that show a lack of discriminant validity are deleted (Kline, 2005). Convergent validity and discriminant validity have been tested. Results shown in Appendix (B.4) indicate that measures of the same construct are correlated highly (convergent validity) and none of the constructs' measures are correlated too highly (above .85) with other constructs (discriminant validity).

5.7.2.1.3 Criterion validity

Criterion validity is the third measure of validity. It refers to the ability of measures to correlate with other standard measures of the same construct (Zikmund, 2003). It can be classified as concurrent validity or predictive validity (Sekaran, 2000) depending on the time sequence in which

the new measurement scale and the criterion measure are correlated (Zikmund, 2003). According to Peter (1981), criterion validity was commonly used in earlier research. However, its popularity has vanished with the increased use of construct validity. This is because criterion validity is synonymous with convergent validity and thus assessment of the latter would mean that the former was satisfied (Zikmund, 1994). Since convergent validity has been used as a measure within this thesis, it is therefore believed that criterion validity is also accounted for.

Before proceeding to external validity, internal validity can be enhanced by the triangulation of data gained from different methods. This thesis uses the research survey and secondary sources of data as data collection methods as described in section (5.2.3). The use of multiple methods helps to enhance validity of information and the interpretability of the findings.

5.7.2.2 External validity

While the validity discussed above relates to the internal validity of the scales and their respective items, external validity is concerned with establishing the extent to which the study findings can be generalised to other subjects or groups (Zikmund, 2003). In more specific terms, external validity is related to the generalisability of the cause-effect relationships of the research findings (Yin, 1994). Hence, evidence on external validity for this thesis has been obtained by employing a representative sample and using a real-world setting (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001; Zikmund, 2003). In summary, the validity of the constructs was established prior to testing the underlying propositions. This is important because having valid constructs provides conclusions that help generalise the results of this thesis. For this purpose, four types of validity including content, construct, criterion and external are adopted.

5.7.3 Ethics & confidentiality

The study adhered closely to ethical principles applicable to research in the social sciences. Administrative consent and informed respondent consent preceded all data-gathering activities. Respondent anonymity was protected at all times and the status of any information classified as confidential was respected. The intent of the study was always fully disclosed. The study methodology was examined and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Victoria University.

5.8 Summary

This chapter details the methodological approach used in this study starting by justifying the need for quantitative analysis to answering the research questions and testing the developed propositions. Then the data collection methods (survey questionnaires) and secondary sources of data are presented and justified; in the following section instrument design was described in terms of the number of items, type of scales used, and other important considerations relating to designing the instrument. The pre-testing process used in this study consists of three procedures: panel of experts, interviews, and pilot study. All three procedures were explained and suggestions and recommendations were listed. The management of the distribution of the research survey and data collection was presented next, followed by the statistical techniques to test research propositions. In the last section the rigorousness of the research was described and the assessment of reliability and validity were detailed.

CHAPTER SIX
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the research methodology adopted to test the proposed theoretical model to answer the research questions and aims of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to present research variable data by calculating various descriptive statistics and data analysis techniques in order to set the stage for proposition testing and discussion of findings in Chapter Seven.

The first section (6.1) presents the preparation of the data, including editing and coding prior to analysis. This is followed by section (6.2) data screening, this section details the treatment of missing data and testing data for non-response bias. The third section (6.3) discusses the response rate, and the fourth section (6.4) describes respondents and sample characteristics. In section five (6.5) data analysis and interpretation, each of the research variables will be described and analysed. Finally, section (6.6) summarises the chapter.

6.1 Data editing and coding

Following the collection of data, editing of the data was undertaken in order to ensure the completeness and consistency of the data. Editing is considered part of the data processing and analysis stage (Zikmund, 2003). Following the recommendation of Sekaran (2000), this thesis includes all respondents in the analysis who completed at least 75% of questionnaire answers, whilst those with more than 25% unanswered questions are excluded (in total, 15 surveys were excluded). Any missing data has been considered as missing values (Sekaran, 2000) and treatment of missing data is discussed in the following section.

Coding was used to assign numbers to each answer (Malhotra et al., 1996) thus allowing the transference of data from the questionnaire to SPSS. Such procedures can be undertaken either before the questionnaire is answered (pre-coding), or after (post-coding) (DeVaus, 2002). In this

thesis, a pre-coding procedure was used. Data editing procedures were undertaken after data were entered into the data file in order to detect any errors in data entry.

6.2 Data screening

As the first stage in the data analysis, data screening is useful in making sure that the data collected can be depended on and will not lead to misleading results. Two potential problems are expected to arise when employing mail survey as a data collection method. These are: missing data and non-response bias.

6.2.1 Treatment of missing data

It is uncommon to obtain data sets without some missing data (Hair et al., 2003). Two ways have been recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) to evaluate the degree to which there are missing data. The first is to evaluate the amount of missing data and the second is to evaluate the pattern of missing data. Checking the pattern of missing data has an advantage in determining whether or not missing data occur randomly or relate to specific items. That means the pattern of missing data should be randomly distributed among the questionnaires. If it is not, then the missing data will lead to biased estimates of results (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). However, if the percentage of missing data is less than 5% for all variables then there is no need to evaluate the pattern of missing data (Churchill, 1995).

The screening of the data in SPSS indicated that there were no variables that had more than 5% of missing data (Appendix C.1). Since less than 5% of missing data is considered acceptable (Churchill, 1995), there was no requirement to assess the pattern of missing data.

As there was minimal missing data (less than 5% per variable), it was decided to replace missing responses with the median for each question. The replacement of missing data with an appropriate replacement value is important because variables in this thesis are grouped, and list wise deletion of variables with missing data would result in a substantial loss of the overall sample size (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). The median is considered to be an appropriate replacement value when the Likert scale is used (Sekaran, 2003).

In addition, it is important to ensure that replacing missing values with the median did not significantly alter the distribution of variables (pre- and post-replacement). A Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to test all pairs of variables to show whether significant differences in distribution pre- and post-replacement existed (Appendix C.2). No significant difference was found for all pairs therefore it could be confidently assumed that median replacement did not alter the overall distribution of variables.

6.2.2 Non-response bias

In order to increase the response rate, a follow-up telephone call was conducted and a follow-up questionnaire was mailed approximately two weeks after the initial mailing (section 5.5). Although there is no assurance that non-response bias does not exist, a test for non-response bias by comparing the early and late respondents to the survey was conducted to support the assessment of this possibility (Innes and Mitchell 1995). Validity of the first and second mailing was assessed by using Wilcoxon signed-rank test techniques to compare the two stages of mail surveys for any significant differences. The results are shown in Appendix (C.3). Results indicate that there are no significant differences between the two groups of respondents. All values are above the level of 0.05. Therefore, evidence of non-response bias was not found and it is expected that the 147 respondents in this study are representative of the whole selected sample.

6.3 Response rate

A total of 735 questionnaires were sent to public sector organisations in Dubai between the periods of March–April 2010 targeting managerial employees (department managers and above) and subject matter experts involved in planning. In total, 162 surveys were collected, representing a 22% response rate. Surveys with more than 25% unanswered questions are excluded (in total, 15 surveys were excluded). One hundred and forty-seven usable surveys were used for data analysis and interpretations.

Twenty-two organisations participated in the research study, representing approximately 75% of the targeted organisations. The distribution of the type of organisations is representative of the targeted population (public sector organisations in Dubai). Table 6.1 shows the distribution of the

respondents as well as the distribution of organisations in the Dubai public sector as per the organisation type.

Table 6.1 Organisation-type distribution

Organisation type		Respondents distribution		Distribution in Dubai	
		Frequency	Per cent	No.	Per cent
Valid	Authority	50	34.0%	8	27.6%
	Centre	4	2.7%	1	3.4%
	Chamber	3	2.0%	1	3.4%
	Corporation	7	4.8%	2	6.9%
	Council	3	2.0%	1	3.4%
	Department	59	40.1%	11	37.9%
	Establishment	4	2.7%	1	3.4%
	Foundation	4	2.7%	1	3.4%
	Institute	6	4.1%	2	6.9%
	Municipality	7	4.8%	1	3.4%
	Total	147	100.0%	29	100.0%

A few variations exist between the percentages in Table 6.1, mainly due to the size (number of employees) in different types of organisations. For example, in Dubai the percentage of distribution for institutes is 6.9% and for municipalities it is 3.4%. However, the percentage of respondents is higher for municipalities (4.8%) than for institutes (4.1%) because municipalities have a larger number of employees than institutes.

6.4 Profile of respondents and organisations' characteristics

The respondents were analysed in terms of their position, position type, years of experience in strategic planning, and the organisational level at which they were involved in strategic planning for. The results are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Number	Percentage
Position	Advisor	7	4.8
	Analyst	2	1.4
	Assistant manager	2	1.4
	Consultant	2	1.4
	Director/Snr manager	39	26.5
	Expert/Specialist	23	15.6
	Head of unit	7	4.8
	Manager	41	27.9
	MD/CEO	3	2.0
	Planning executive	2	1.4
	VP/EVP	19	12.9
Position type	Special matter experts	36	24.5
	Managerial	111	75.5
Organisational level	Departmental (L2)	40	27.2
	Divisional (L1)	15	10.2
	Organisational (L0)	65	44.2
	Sectional/Unit (L3)	27	18.4
Years of experience in SP	0–4	29	25.0
	5–8	70	60.3
	> 8	17	14.7

In relation to respondents' positions, the highest percentage of respondents came from managers (27.9%) and directors/sr. managers (26.5%) followed by experts/specialists (15.6%) and VP/EVP (12.9%). Approximately 25% of respondents are employed as subject matter experts (analysts, specialists, experts, advisors), whereas 75% hold managerial positions. The relatively high percentage of special matter experts in the Dubai public sector is related to the dependencies of government departments on expatriates to provide assistance in senior managerial positions.

The respondents vary in terms of their involvement in strategic planning according to the organisational level. Results show that 18.4% of respondents were involved in strategic planning at the sectional/unit level, 27.2% at the departmental level and 10.2% at the divisional level. The remaining respondents were involved in strategic planning at the corporate level representing 44.2%. In relation to the experience/years in strategic planning, surprisingly only 14.7% of respondents have more than eight years' experience, and 25% have less than 5 years' experience in SP. That is mainly due to the fact that strategic planning is relatively new in developing countries and more than 35% of the organisations within the Dubai public sector are relatively young (less than 5 years old).

Examining organisational characteristics, the public sector in Dubai consists of a variety of organisational types, such as authorities, departments, centres, institutes, and councils. As indicated in Table 6.1, the distribution of the participating organisations in this study is representative of the target population. The highest participation rate came from government departments (40%), followed by authorities (34%). All remaining organisational types have a participation rate below 5%. The high participation rate for these two types of organisations within the research context is due to the large number of departments and authorities in the Dubai public sector (more than 65% of organisations) and to the large number of employees in these types of organisations. The average number of employees for authorities and departments is (4300) compared to only (2800) for other organisational types.

In addition to organisation type, Table 6.3 shows organisational characteristics in terms of establishment year (age), number of employees (size), availability of the strategic planning unit (SPU), and the establishment year of the SPU.

Table 6.3 Characteristics of organisations

Characteristics	Categories	Number	Percentage
Establishment year	less than 5 Y	52	35.4
	6–10 Y	17	11.5
	11–20 Y	31	21.0
	more than 20 Y	47	31.9
Number of employees	1–1000	55	37.4
	1001–5000	37	25.2
	5000–10000	42	28.6
	> 10000	13	8.8
Availability of SPU	NA	20	13.6
	Available	127	86.4
SPU establishment year	less than 5 Y	26	51
	6–10 Y	15	29.4
	11–20 Y	7	13.7
	more than 20 Y	3	5.9

Results shows that only half of the organisations are older than 10 years, and 35% are less than 5 years old. Therefore, 65% of the organisations are considered to be mature organisations (above 5 years) and 35% are young organisations (below 5 years), as per the definition of organisation age presented earlier under section 4.1.1.1.

In relation to the size of the organisations, which is measured by the number of employees (as discussed under section 4.1.1.1), the results indicate that 37.4% of organisations have less than 1000 employees and are rated as small organisations, and 62.6% of the organisations have more than 1000 employees and are defined as large organisations.

Organisations were also analysed for the availability of a strategic planning unit (unit, department, or section). The results show that 86% of the organisations have an SPU; this high percentage is an indication of the importance of the strategic planning function within Dubai public sector organisations. One of the requirements of the Dubai government (stated in section 1.2 Dubai Strategic Planning Manual) is to establish an SPU responsible for handling the strategic planning function; this to a large extent increases the number of SPUs in public organisations in Dubai. The results also show that more than 50% of SPUs were established less than 5 years ago (after the Dubai government initiative).

6.5 Analysis of research variables

Under this section, the research variables described earlier in Chapter 4 'Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions' will be analysed through descriptive statistics and other forms of statistical tests as required. Three groups of variables will be analysed. These are: the strategic planning formation process (SPFP) steps; internal and external barriers to SPFP and the strategic plan document quality criteria. In addition, the planning horizon will be described. Relationships between variables within the same group and with other groups will be covered extensively when testing and discussing research propositions in the following chapter.

6.5.1 The strategic planning formation process (SPFP)

As shown in Table 6.4, the mean for SPFP steps ranges from 3.52 (standard deviation – std 0.83) to 4.18 (std 0.54) while the median ranges between 3.50 (inter-quartile 1.5) to 4.25 (inter-quartile 0.75). The variation between steps mainly depends on the degree to which the steps have been conducted. The highest step conducted is establishment of an effective vision, followed by establishing an effective mission, clarifying the organisational mandate, initiating and agreeing on

the strategic planning process, and strategies and plans development, while the lowest mean is found to be for the 'monitoring and evaluation' step.

Table 6.4 Descriptive statistics for SPFP steps

Steps of SPFP	Min.	Max.	Range	Mean	Std deviation	Median	Inter-quartile
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	1	5	4	3.72	0.88	4	1.33
Clarifying organisational mandate	2	5	3	3.72	0.75	4	0.5
Establishing an effective vision	2.5	5	2.5	4.18	0.55	4.25	0.75
Establishing an effective mission	2.5	5	2.5	3.98	0.60	4	0.92
Assessing the environment	1	5	4	3.59	0.99	3.5	1.5
Strategic issues identification	1.5	5	3.5	3.59	0.88	4	1
Strategies and plans development	1.25	5	3.75	3.59	0.89	3.75	1
Monitoring & evaluation	1.67	5	3.33	3.53	0.83	3.67	1

N = 147

The overall mean for all steps is 3.74 (std 0.61) while the median for all steps is 3.80 (inter-quartile 0.81). The steps above median level are: initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process; clarifying the organisational mandate; establishing an effective vision; establishing an effective mission; and strategic issues identification. While the steps below the median level are: assessing the environment, strategies and plans development and monitoring & evaluation.

Reponses to the first step of the SPFP 'initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process' show that the mean response is 3.72 with a standard deviation of (std 0.87) and median of 4.00 (inter-quartile 1.33); this step ranks in the middle in comparison with other steps of SPFP in terms of the degree to which it is practised. More than 73% of respondents agree (answered 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree') that an agreement was reached among main stakeholders about the purpose of strategic planning before starting the process of strategic planning. Also, results show that approximately 65% believe that an agreement was reached among the main stakeholders about who should be involved in the process of strategic planning compared to only 17% who don't agree (answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly Disagree'). In relation to agreeing on the steps of the planning process, 58% of respondents state that the steps of the strategic planning formation process were agreed on and documented before starting the process, compared to 20% who did not agree.

Moving on to the next step 'clarifying organisational mandate' it was found that this step has a mean of 3.72 (std 0.75) and a median of 4.00 (inter-quartile 0.5). More than 79% of respondents agreed that the interpretation of what is required/or forbidden by the mandate is clear. However, only 52% of respondents state that the organisation's formal and informal mandates were clearly communicated among the participants in the strategic planning process.

The following two steps: establishing an effective vision and establishing an effective mission were analysed in term of their existence, communication, and revision. Table 6.5 presents the results for the vision and mission statements.

Table 6.5 Vision and mission results

			Vision		Mission	
			Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
Existence	No		17	11.6	23	15.6
	Yes		130	88.4	124	84.4
*Communication	Internal organisation's members	No	7	4.8	7	4.8
		Yes	130	88.4	136	92.5
	External Stakeholders	No	26	17.7	37	25.2
		Yes	69	46.9	57	38.8
Revision	No		125	85.0	112	76.2
	Yes		22	15.0	35	23.8

 *Communication results: No (disagree/s. disagree); Yes (agree/s. agree)

The results show that 130 respondents representing 88% confirm the availability of a vision statement compared to 84% for the mission statement. In relation to communicating the vision and mission statements, the results indicate some differences between the results of vision and mission on the one hand and between internal communication (internal organisational members) and external communication (external stakeholders) on the other. For example, 88% of respondents agreed that the vision has been communicated to internal organisational members, compared to only 47% who agreed that it was communicated to external stakeholders. In the case of the mission statement, 93% agreed that the mission statement has been communicated to internal organisational members compared to only 39% to external stakeholders. In comparing internal communication between vision and mission statements, few variances exist (88% compared to 93%). The increase in the case of the mission statement is understandable because the mission is more detailed and more closely related to internal organisational members operations than the vision statement. However, communicating the mission to external stakeholders is less than that for the vision: 39% compared to 47%. This is mainly because the vision is usually shorter and broader and easier to communicate.

Results of the 'assessing the environment' step indicate that 72% of respondents believe that a comprehensive strategic analysis was conducted as part of the strategic planning process and only 10% did not agree. The respondents were asked to indicate which of the strategic analysis tools were used in the strategic analysis phase. Results presented in Figure (6.1) show that SWOT analysis is the most widely used strategic analysis tool with 88% of respondents using it. This was followed by benchmarking, used by 60% of respondents, then comes PESTLE analysis (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental), gap analysis, and stakeholders' analysis with a usage range of 40%–50%. The lowest strategic tool used is value chain analysis and Porters' factor analysis that is used by only 10% of respondents. The result of this study varies with that of Elbanna (2010), who found that the three most used strategic planning tools are pro forma financial statements, cost-benefit analyses, and SWOT analyses with 76, 79, and 77 per cent of respondents respectively saying that their organisations use these tools. The difference from Elbanna's findings is mainly because the Elbanna sample organisations included both public and private organisations in Dubai and the private sector analysis tools were more focused on financial analysis (Elbanna, 2010).
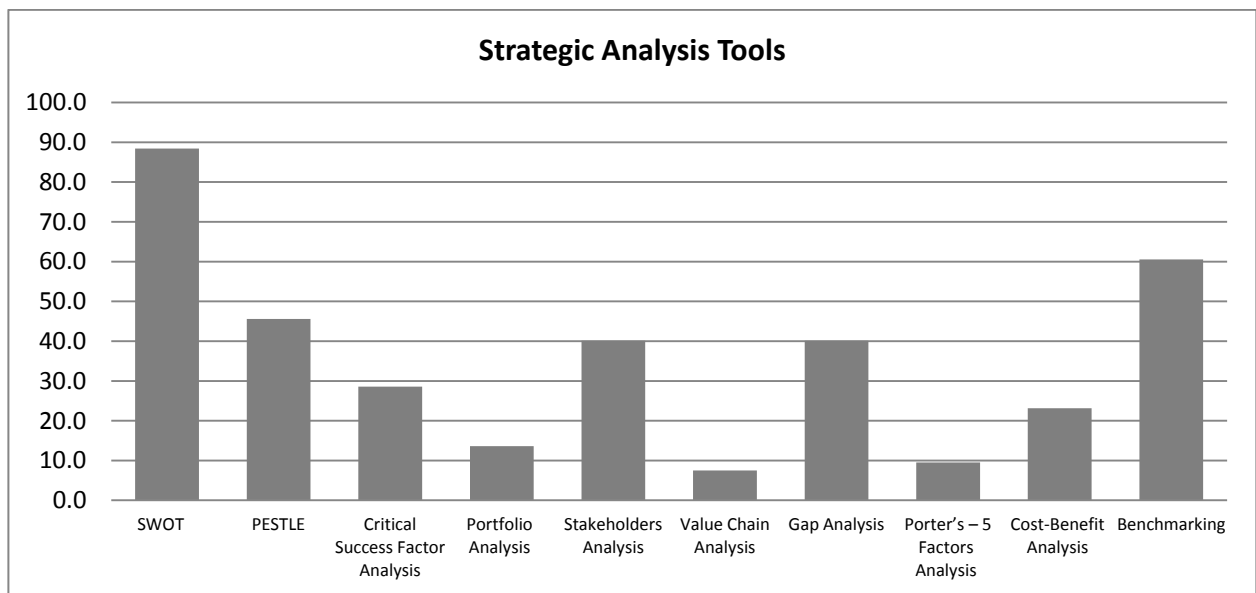
Figure 6.1 Strategic analysis tools

The strategic analysis tools are used to scan the internal and external environment and to identify any strategic issues that may impact the organisation. The respondents' answers to strategic issues identification show that 62% of respondents state that the strategic issues facing their organisation,

division, or department have been clearly identified and 56% confirm that the strategic issues were used to formulate the strategies and plans.

The mean of the following step 'strategies and plans development' is 3.59 (std 0.89) and the median is 3.75 (inter-quartile 1.0). Respondents' answers for this step show that 81% of respondents agreed that strategies and plans were developed. However, only 54% state that strategy maps have been formulated. In relation to current and new strategies, 65% of respondents agreed that during the SPFP it was decided what current strategies should be retained, improved, or stopped. Also, 66% of respondents agreed that in the SPFP, decisions were made to initiate new strategies and plans, and the execution time and responsibility of execution were determined.

The last step in the SPFP is 'monitoring and evaluation'. The result of this step, as indicated earlier, is the lowest among other steps of SPFP. Monitoring frequency results presented in Table 6.6 show that only 16.3% monitor the execution of their plans on a monthly basis and 58.5% of respondents monitor the execution on a quarterly basis, compared to 18.4% on a yearly basis and 6.8% less frequently.

Table 6.6 Monitoring frequency

	Frequency	Per cent
Never	1	.7
Less Frequently	9	6.1
Yearly	27	18.4
Quarterly	86	58.5
Monthly	24	16.3

In relation to evaluating the performance of strategies and plans, results indicate that 56% agreed that the outcomes of strategies and plans have been evaluated, and if evaluated, only 55% of respondents believe that strategies, systems, policies, or goals will be revised as a result of the evaluation process.

6.5.2 External and internal barriers

The external and internal barriers' results are presented in Tables 6.7 and 6.8. The results of external barriers show variations between different barriers. The highest barrier noted is the unavailability of macro information with a mean of 3.47 (std 1.04), followed by the macro economy, ambiguity of external stakeholders expectations and the turbulent environment. The lowest external barriers found are rapid technological developments with a mean of 2.63 (std 1.04) and political instability with a mean of 2.81 (std 1.27).

Table 6.7 External barriers descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std deviation	Median	Inter-quartile
Overall external barriers	3.14	.74	3.22	1.11
Political influences	3.05	1.12	3.00	2.00
Macro economy	3.43	1.22	4.00	2.00
Political instability	2.81	1.27	3.00	2.00
Turbulent environment	3.36	1.14	4.00	2.00
Rapid technology development	2.63	1.04	2.00	1.00
Linkage to country's strategic plan	3.04	1.15	3.00	2.00
Unavailability of macro information	3.47	1.04	4.00	1.00
Ambiguity of external stakeholders expectations	3.41	1.11	4.00	2.00
Variety of external stakeholders	3.10	1.07	3.00	2.00

N = 147

The mean for the overall external barriers is 3.14 (std 0.74) with a median of 3.22 (inter-quartile 1.11). Five barriers are below the overall mean and median level. These are political influences, political instability, rapid technological development, linkage to the country's strategic plan, and the variety of external stakeholders. The barriers above mean and median level are macro economy, turbulence environment, unavailability of macro information, and the ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations.

The respondents were also asked to rank the external barriers by deciding from a list of external barriers five barriers with the highest influence on SPFP. The results of the respondents' ranking are shown in Figure 6.2.
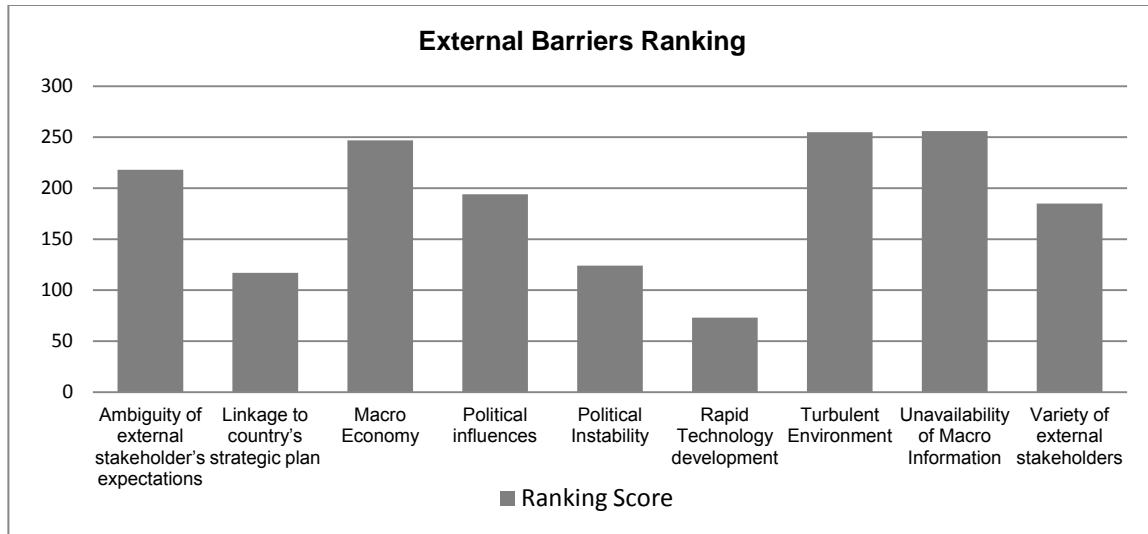
Figure 6.2 External barriers ranking

The highest four external barriers found are consistent with the previous findings, with the exception of the fifth barrier political influences instead of a variety of external stakeholders (however the variation between the two is minimal).

In relation to internal barriers, twelve internal barriers are analysed. Results are presented in Table 6.8. The mean for the overall internal barriers is 3.40 (std 0.74) with a median of 3.33 (inter-quartile 0.92).

Table 6.8 Internal barriers descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std deviation	Median	Inter-quartile
Overall internal barriers	3.40	.74	3.33	.92
Organisational culture	3.73	1.18	4.00	2.00
Organisational structure	3.26	1.23	4.00	2.00
Organisation's mandate	3.03	1.12	3.00	2.00
Strategic planning procedures	3.27	1.19	3.00	2.00
Weak strategic thinking	3.73	1.14	4.00	2.00
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	3.22	1.16	3.00	2.00
Internal processes/regulations	3.41	.92	4.00	1.00
Planner's expertise	3.51	1.14	4.00	1.00
Employees resistance to change	3.90	1.05	4.00	2.00
Lack of financial resources	3.30	1.28	3.00	2.00
IT infrastructure	2.94	1.10	3.00	2.00
Performance management system	3.54	1.15	4.00	1.00

N = 147

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As in the case of external barriers, internal barriers show some variations in respondents' results. Only information technology (IT) infrastructure had a mean below 3.00. The highest internal barriers seen by respondents are employee resistance to change, followed by organisational culture and weak strategic thinking, and then the performance management system. The lowest internal barriers are IT infrastructure and organisational mandate.

The ranking of the five internal barriers with the highest influence on SPFP is shown in Chart 6.3. The five most influential internal barriers found are (in order): organisational culture; weak strategic thinking; employee's resistance to change; strategic planning procedure and lack of financial resources.
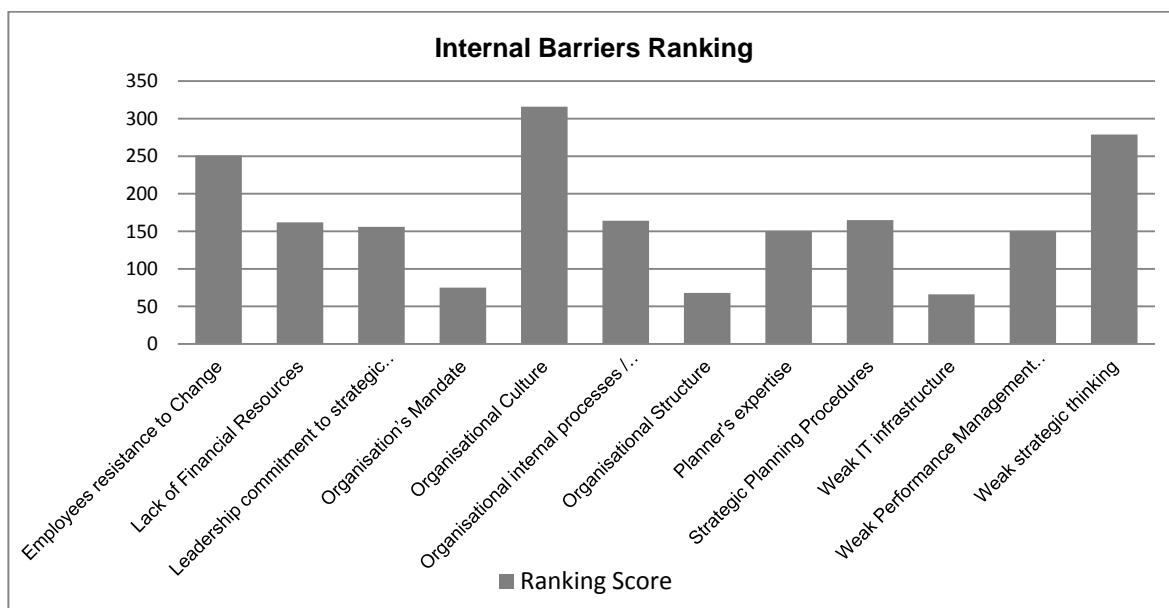
Figure 6.3 Internal barriers ranking

Some variations between the results of ranking and the results of Table 6.8 exist. However, the first three internal barriers are the same, the fourth and fifth barriers change from being performance management systems, and planner's expertise, to strategic planning procedure, and lack of financial resources. This variation is understandable since respondents came from a variety of organisations with different characteristics and the internal barriers for some types of organisations might not be the same as for others. A detailed examination into the external and internal barriers in relation to organisational characteristics will be explained under propositions B.1 and B.2 in the following chapter.

6.5.3 Strategic plan document quality criteria

As described in section (4.1.1.3), seven quality criteria were identified. Respondents' results for each of these quality criteria are presented in Table 6.9. Respondents were asked first if a strategic plan document was formulated: 126 respondents answered 'yes' and 21 answered 'no'. Therefore, the number of responses for this part of the study is 126. Only respondents who have a strategic plan document are included.

Table 6.9 Quality criteria statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
SPD quality	1.7	5.0	3.83	0.66	3.86	0.61
Formality (SPD)	1.0	5.0	4.13	0.96	4.00	1.00
Clarity	1.0	5.0	4.17	0.87	4.00	1.00
Measurability	1.0	5.0	3.79	0.93	4.00	0.63
Objectivity	2.0	5.0	3.8	0.94	4.00	2.00
Coverage	2.0	5.0	3.77	0.85	4.00	1.00
Openness	1.0	5.0	3.59	0.98	4.00	1.00
Consistency	1.0	5.0	3.56	0.87	4.00	1.00

N = 126

The mean for the quality criteria ranges from 3.55 (std 0.87) for consistency criterion to 4.17 (std 0.87) for clarity criterion with an overall mean of 3.8 (std 0.66). The formality criterion results shows 82% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the strategic plan is formally documented (including all parts of a strategic plan document), with only 9% who disagree with that. In addition, 88% of respondents agreed that the strategic objectives and strategies in the strategic plan are clearly stated and not ambiguous. However, respondents' results to the rest of the evaluation criteria show a lower agreement rate. For example, 75% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the strategic objectives in their strategic plans are measurable and can be monitored and evaluated. Results of 'objectivity' criterion showed even lower results with only 65% of respondents agreeing that the desired outcomes for the strategic goals in their strategic plans are highlighted and clearly stated. The coverage criterion results also show a relatively low rate compared to other quality criteria with only 64% of respondents agreeing that the strategic objectives in the strategic plan cover all the critical factors identified in the analysis phase. When respondents were asked about the openness (transparency) of their intended strategies, only 61% stated that the strategies in the

strategic plan are openly disseminated and not hidden. Finally, results of consistency showed that 61% of respondents agreed that strategic consistency is more important than strategic flexibility for their organisation.

Secondary data were collected and analysed as stated in section (5.2.3). The evaluation format and the results of the evaluations are presented in Appendix (B.1). The results gained from the secondary data support the respondents' primary results. The overall quality criteria results gained from secondary data have a mean of 3.6 compared to 3.8 from primary data. Also, consistency between the rankings of the quality criteria was found. The highest quality criterion noted in both the primary and secondary data is formality of the strategic plan document followed by clarity, objectivity, and measurability and then comes coverage and openness. The only exception is the ranking of objectivity and measurability since measurability scored higher than objectivity in the secondary data. More detailed analysis of quality criteria as per organisational characteristics will be provided in the following chapter. Also, the relation of quality criteria to the process formality of SPFP and steps of the planning process will be covered while discussing propositions C.1 and C.2.

Results of the 'planning horizon' show that the average number of years for planning is 3.67. Most of the strategic plans formed are for less than five years. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents indicate that their planning horizon is between one to five years and only 31% above five years. This is mainly because the planning horizon varies as per the organisation type and characteristics as will be discussed in proposition D.2. Also, the internal and external barriers may influence the planning horizon, which will also be described while discussing proposition D.3.

6.6 Summary

The chapter starts by describing the process used to edit and code data and then treatment of missing data was explained. Responses with less than 75% completion rate were excluded and questions with missing data were treated by replacing missing values with the median. None of the questions were found to have more than 5% missing data. Non-response bias was calculated for responses at different stages of data collection. Results using the Wilcoxon test indicate that there is no significant difference in the answers of respondents at different stages of survey completion. The total number of usable surveys ready for data analysis and interpretation was 147 surveys.

The respondents were analysed in terms of their position, position type, experience of years in strategic planning, and the organisational level at which they were involved in strategic planning. In addition, organisations were categorised in terms of organization type, establishment year (age), number of employees (size), availability of the strategic planning unit (SPU), and the establishment year of the SPU.

The last part of this chapter provides descriptive statistics for three groups of variables. These are: the strategic planning formation process (SPFP) steps; internal and external barriers to SPFP and the strategic plan document quality criteria. Each variable was described in terms of mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum Values, median and inter-quartile, in addition, frequency statistics for different variables were provided. Tables and charts were also illustrated to explain some variables or groups of variables as in the case of internal and external barriers and in the case of strategic planning tools.

This chapter has set the stage for the following chapter: 'Propositions findings and discussions'. In the next chapter each of the propositions presented in Chapter Four will be addressed using different statistical tests then the findings will be presented followed by discussions.

CHAPTER SEVEN
PROPOSITIONS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

In Chapter Four 'Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions', four groups of propositions were developed, totaling 14 propositions, with each group intended to address one or more of the research questions and aims outlined in Chapter One. In this chapter, propositions are tested using survey results and the findings are discussed. A number of statistical tests are used to address each proposition, including Spearman's correlation and the Mann-Whitney U test. In addition, results obtained in Chapter Six are used to support proposition testing and are referred to when necessary. Discussion of each group of propositions starts by presenting the associated research aims and research questions followed by a graphical representation of the conceptual framework highlighting the propositions under investigation. For each proposition, the necessary tests are conducted to support, partially support or reject the proposition; this is followed by proposition discussion which explains the reasoning behind the findings and the relationship with other propositions' findings.

This chapter is rather long due to the need to measure and test all fourteen propositions. A similar focus for each proposition, showing associated tables and findings followed by discussions, allows the reader to focus on the propositions he or she is interested in.

7.1 Group (A) propositions – strategic planning formation process

As discussed earlier under section (4.2.1), seven propositions have been developed under Group (A) covering the formality of SPFP, the association between stages (steps) of the planning process, the relationship between SPFP and organisational elements, as well as the relationship between SPFP and the implementation of strategies and plans. The results and findings of Group (A) propositions are intended to satisfy research aim one 'Assessing the strategic planning formation process within Dubai public sector organisations', and to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent is a formal strategic planning formation process (SPFP) practised within public sector organisations in Dubai?

- Is there a relationship between the formality of SPFP and the formulation of the strategic plan documents?
- Is there any association between the steps of the SPFP?
- Is there any variation in the strategic planning formation process across the different types of organisations within the research context?
- What is the relationship between the formality of the planning process and the implementation of strategies and plans?

Figure 7.1 shows Group (A) propositions (highlighted) within the conceptual framework of the present study.
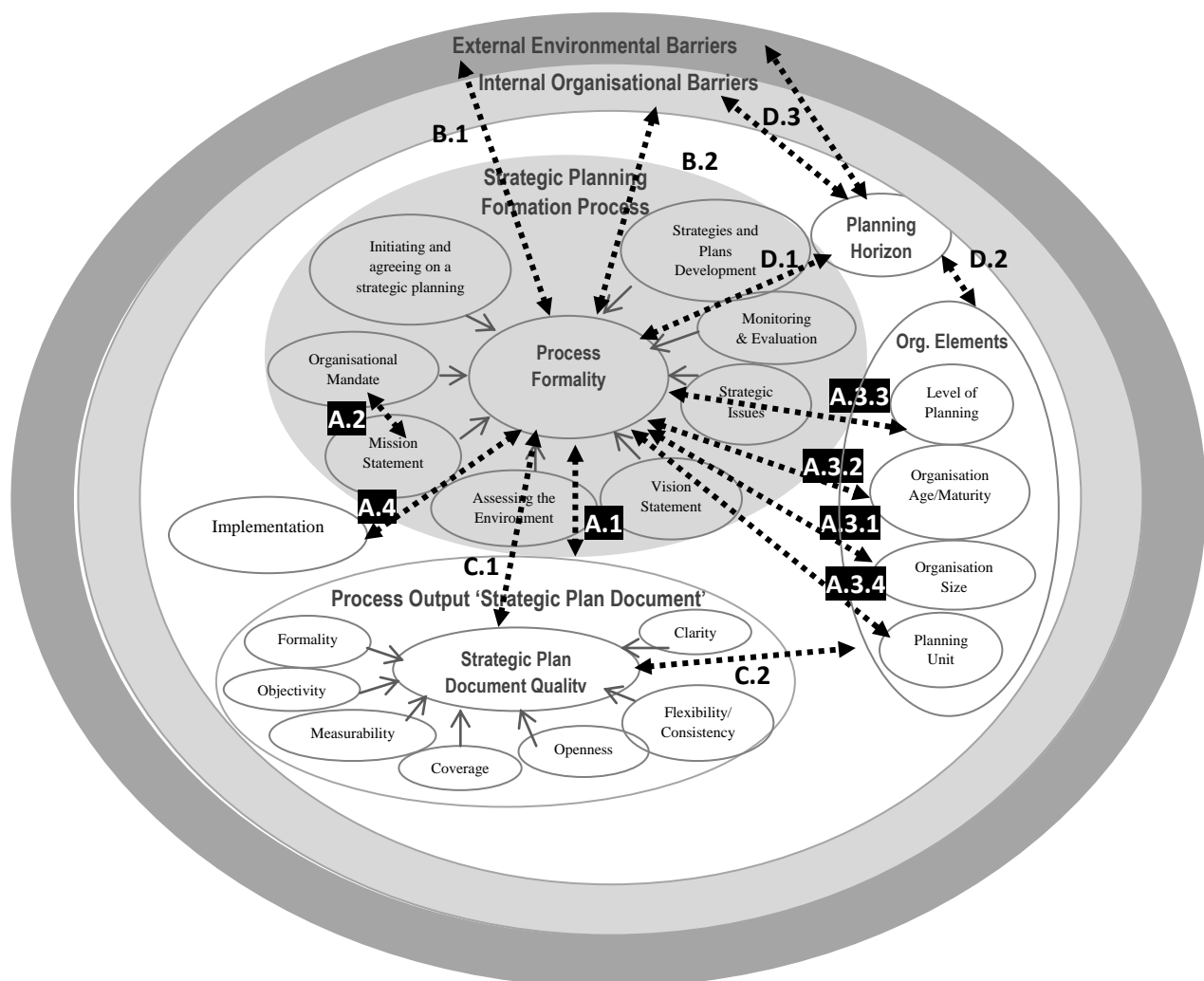
Figure 7.1: Conceptual framework – Group (A) SPFP propositions

7.1.1 The formality of the strategic planning formation process and its relation to the formulation of strategic plan documents

Based on the discussions found in the literature regarding the measurement of the formality of SPFP (section 4.2.1), two measurement methods were noted: the measurement of formality as the extent to which the steps of the planning process are conducted (process formality), and the measurement of formality as the formulation of a strategic plan document. The relationship between the two measurement methods is tested through the development of proposition A.1.

Proposition A.1: Organisations practising a high process formality in their SPFP are more likely to formulate strategic plan documents than organisations with low process formality.

To test proposition A.1, the formality of the strategic planning formation process (SPFP), according to the two measurement methods is calculated, then comparisons and statistical tests are applied.

According to the proposed measurement of formality (section 4.2.1), process formality is a measure of the degree to which the steps of SPFP have been conducted. Therefore, to measure process formality, first the degree to which each step in the planning process has been conducted is measured. Table 7.1 shows the results for each step and the overall process formality result.

Table 7.1 SPFP steps descriptive statistics

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
Process formality (SPFP)	2.31	4.90	3.74	0.61	3.80	0.81
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	1.00	5.00	3.72	0.88	4.00	1.33
Clarifying organisational mandate	2.00	5.00	3.72	0.75	4.00	0.50
Establishing an effective vision	2.50	5.00	4.18	0.55	4.25	0.75
Establishing an effective mission	2.50	5.00	3.98	0.60	4.00	0.92
Assessing the environment	1.00	5.00	3.59	0.99	3.50	1.50
Strategic issues identification	1.50	5.00	3.59	0.88	4.00	1.00
Strategies and plans' development	1.25	5.00	3.59	0.89	3.75	1.00
Monitoring & evaluation	1.67	5.00	3.53	0.83	3.67	1.00

N = 147

As shown in Table 7.1, the process formality (PF) mean is (3.74, std 0.61) and the median (3.80, inter-quartile 0.81). This shows that the extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised in Dubai public sector organisations is above the mean and median midpoints; this is in agreement with the results of Elbanna (2010) who found that organisations in Dubai adopt a formal approach to strategic planning. However, studies in other contexts showed different formality results, for example, Stone and Brush (1996) reported that few non-profit organisations use a formal planning process while strategic planning. Other studies (Young and Sleeper, 1988) also reported that fewer than 50% of organisations use a formal planning process that extends beyond annual operational goals and budgets and that among those that did plan, the process was informal, unstructured and irregular.

Measuring the formality of SPFP according to the planning commitment (written or unwritten strategic plans) as indicated by Robinson and Pearce (1983) and Bracker et al. (1988) shows that 126 of the responses state that they have a written strategic plan compared to only 21 who did not. This amounts to 85% of the whole sample, which is consistent with the findings of Elbanna (2010) who found that 82.3% of organisations in UAE (79% private, 86% public) have a written strategic plan.

To test proposition A.1, the relationship between the process formality and the formulation of a strategic plan document (SPD), process formality, and the associated steps of the planning process have been compared between organisations with SPD and organisations without SPD; a Mann-Whitney U test is used to determine whether a significant difference exists between different groups. The results of the test are presented in Tables 7.2 and 7.3.

The results of Table 7.2 show that the mean rank for process formality and all of the planning process steps are higher in organisations with SPD than in organisations without SPD. However, the differences vary between each pair: the significance of the difference is shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.2 Mean ranks and sum of ranks for organisations with and without SPD

Formulation of strategic plan document (SPD)		N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Process formality*	No SPD	21	46.79	982.5
	SPD	126	78.54	9895.5
	Total	147		
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	No SPD	21	51.81	1088
	SPD	126	77.7	9790
	Total	147		
Clarifying organisational mandate	No SPD	21	60.62	1273
	SPD	126	76.23	9605
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective vision	No SPD	21	46.95	986
	SPD	126	78.51	9892
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective mission	No SPD	21	50.19	1054
	SPD	126	77.97	9824
	Total	147		
Assessing the environment	No SPD	21	51.74	1086.5
	SPD	126	77.71	9791.5
	Total	147		
Strategic issues identification	No SPD	21	55.55	1166.5
	SPD	126	77.08	9711.5
	Total	147		
Strategies and plans development	No SPD	21	51.1	1073
	SPD	126	77.82	9805
	Total	147		
Monitoring & evaluation	No SPD	21	68.69	1442.5
	SPD	126	74.88	9435.5
	Total	147		

Process formality is the sum of all 8 steps.

Table 7.3 indicates that a significant difference exists between process formality results for organisations with a strategic plan document compared to organisations without a strategic plan document at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). The same was found in all steps of the planning process except for the strategic issues identification step which showed a significant difference at 0.05 level (2-tailed) and for clarifying organisational mandate step and monitoring and evaluating step which show no significant difference. This indicates that organisations with a formal strategic planning process are more likely to formulate a strategic plan document than organisations practising a less formal strategic planning process. Therefore, proposition A.1 is supported. This directional relationship between process formality of SPFP and the formulation of SPD is a result of bi-directional influences between the two variables. From one side process formality influence

the formulation of SPD and from the other side the need (or requirement) to formulate a SPD may enhance a more formal planning process.

Table 7.3 Mann-Whitney U test for organisations with and without SPD

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Process formality	751.5	982.5	–3.164	0.002
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	857	1088	–2.603	0.009
Clarifying organisational mandate	1042	1273	–1.599	0.11
Establishing an effective vision	755	986	–3.178	0.001
Establishing an effective mission	823	1054	–2.774	0.006
Assessing the environment	855.5	1086.5	–2.616	0.009
Strategic issues identification	935.5	1166.5	–2.199	0.028
Strategies and plans development	842	1073	–2.694	0.007
Monitoring & evaluation	1211.5	1442.5	–0.624	0.532

Despite the fact that process formality will encourage the formulation of strategic plan documents (proposition A.1), measuring the formality of SPFP in terms of written and unwritten strategic plans is not suitable for this study. The research in hand requires a more comprehensive measure of formality for reasons stated earlier under section (4.2.1.1). Therefore, the measure of formality as the extent to which the steps of the planning process are conducted is used for the remainder of the discussions.

The high formality result noted in Table 7.1 is mainly the result of Dubai government initiatives and public sector reform programs. As stated earlier, the Dubai government has issued a government requirement to all public sector organisations in Dubai to strategically plan ahead and it issued a strategic planning manual for that purpose. The planning function is monitored regularly by the executive office (responsible for overseeing public organisations' practices). In addition, a number of awards and excellence programs have been initiated by the Dubai government, such as the Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP), and the Human Development Award (HDA). Government departments are required to participate in these programs and winners are recognised.

Another related yet different reason for the high formality result is legitimacy and resource acquisition. Stone and Brush (1996) indicate that formal planning is necessary for the attainment of

external legitimacy and essential to resource acquisition. Furthermore, managers increasingly perceive that they must plan (or present a plan) to be taken seriously (Wolch, 1990). For this reason, it is expected that some public sector organisations in Dubai used formal planning processes because they perceived them to be necessary for external validation, legitimacy and funding. In other words, formal strategic planning is used for resource acquisition rather than resource allocation (Stone and Brush, 1996).

Other reasons for the relatively high formality result are the increased public demand for public services, and the increase of public expectations for better services in Dubai. As noted in Chapter Two, Dubai is growing at an unprecedented rate. With an increasing growth rate, demand for public services increases, and also, with high quality life standards expectations for better services are increased. This, to a great extent, increases the need for public sector organisations to strategically plan to satisfy demand and expectations.

Despite the high formality results, the extent to which a formal planning process is practised does not imply better performance, nor does it imply better-developed strategies. It simply shows that organisations in Dubai are practising a formal strategic planning process to a greater extent than a non-formal process. A study by Robinson and Pearce (1983) showed that there was no relationship between a formal strategy and financial performance. Frederickson and Mitchell (1984) also found no relationship between planning comprehensiveness and financial performance. However, the literature does suggest that there are non-financial benefits deriving from a formal planning process such as, enhanced understanding of corporate priorities (Hofer and Schendel, 1978; McDonald, 1982); increased executive confidence in the company's future (Higgins and Finn, 1977); enhanced awareness of global problems, and internal strengths and weaknesses (Al-Bazzaz and Grinyer, 1980; McDonald, 1982); and better overall coordination, implementation, and control of company strategy (Bryson, 2004).

7.1.2 Association between the steps of the planning process

In section 4.2.1.2, it is proposed that the steps of the planning process, though not necessarily in a linear order, are highly associated. Each step is dependent on the completion of the other steps. Therefore, the following proposition was formulated:

Proposition A.2: A strong association exists between the 'consecutive steps' of the strategic planning formation process.

To test proposition A.2, Spearman's correlation between the steps of the SPFP was calculated. The results (Table 7.4) show that a strong positive correlation exists between the consecutive steps of the planning process. For example, the correlation between step (E) assessing the environment and step (F) strategic issue identification is found to be 0.589**, significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7.4 SPFP steps Spearman's rho correlations

			A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A	Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	Correlation coefficient	1.000						
		sig. (2-tailed)	.						
B	Clarifying organisational mandate	Correlation coefficient	.472**	1.000					
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.					
C	Establishing an effective vision	Correlation coefficient	.430**	.458**	1.000				
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.				
D	Establishing an effective mission	Correlation coefficient	.422**	.631**	.706**	1.000			
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.			
E	Assessing the environment	Correlation coefficient	.440**	.322**	.374**	.344**	1.000		
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.		
F	Strategic issues identification	Correlation coefficient	.643**	.486**	.559**	.514**	.589**	1.000	
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.	
G	Strategies and plans' development	Correlation coefficient	.627**	.500**	.538**	.554**	.576**	.758**	1.000
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
H	Monitoring & evaluation	Correlation coefficient	.554**	.475**	.305**	.537**	.352**	.561**	.485**
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Also, the correlation between step (F) and step (G) strategies and plan development is found to be 0.758**, at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). In addition, it was noted that the correlation between all the steps of the planning process are strongly positively correlated at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). This result shows that the steps of the planning process complement each other and that the process is not necessarily linear.

This result is expected to have some managerial implications, including commitment to initiate the planning process, since starting the process will create the momentum necessary to complete the steps. Each completed step will enhance the initiation and thus the completion of the following step. Also, the high associations between SPFP steps imply that the planning process should be looked at as a whole, not as a part, and that the steps of the process serve one purpose.

7.1.3 The strategic planning formation process and organisational elements

The strategic planning process is influenced by a number of organisational elements, such as organisation size, organisational age (maturity), organisational level, and the existence of a strategic planning unit (SPU). Four propositions were developed in section (4.2.1.3) to test the relationship between process formality and each of the organisational elements.

7.1.3.1 Process formality and organisation size

The following proposition was developed in Chapter Four to test the relationship between process formality and organisation size.

Proposition A.3.1: The extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised is higher for large organisations than for small organisations within the research context (Dubai public sector).

To test proposition A.3.1, the formality of the strategic planning formation process, as well as the steps of the planning process, were calculated for large and small organisations. The results are shown in Table 7.5. The results of the process formality for large organisations (mean = 3.89, median = 3.94) are higher than for small organisations (mean = 3.48, median = 3.54). Also, the results indicate that the extent to which the SPFP steps have been practised is higher for large organisations than for small ones. This was found to be true for all steps of the planning process. However, the degree to which the SPFP steps vary across large and small organisations is different.

Table 7.5 Descriptive statistics for process formality and SPFP steps as per organisation size

	Large					Small				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
Process formality (SPFP)	92	3.89	.50	3.94	.55	55	3.48	.69	3.54	1.19
Steps of SPFP:										
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	92	3.92	.82	4.00	1.34	55	3.39	.88	3.33	1.00
Clarifying organisational mandate	92	3.80	.72	4.00	.50	55	3.60	.78	3.50	1.00
Establishing an effective vision	92	4.29	.50	4.50	.75	55	4.00	.58	4.00	.75
Establishing an effective mission	92	4.11	.56	4.08	.83	55	3.75	.60	3.75	.75
Assessing the environment	92	3.72	.99	4.00	1.50	55	3.38	.98	3.50	1.50
Strategic issues identification	92	3.79	.76	4.00	1.00	55	3.25	.97	3.00	1.50
Strategies and plans' development	92	3.79	.67	4.00	.50	55	3.27	1.10	3.50	1.50
Monitoring & evaluation	92	3.74	.69	4.00	.92	55	3.18	.92	3.00	1.67

In an attempt to investigate whether the variance between the process formality of large organisations is significantly different from the process formality of small organisations, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted between the two groups of organisations (large and small). Also the same test was used to identify whether SPFP steps for large organisations are significantly different from those of small organisations. The results are presented in Tables 7.6 and 7.7.

Table 7.6 Ranks for process formality and SPFP steps for large and small organisations

	Size	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Process formality (SPFP)	Small	55	57.42	3158
	Large	92	83.91	7720
	Total	147		
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	Small	55	58.2	3201
	Large	92	83.45	7677
	Total	147		
Clarifying organisational mandate	Small	55	67.35	3704
	Large	92	77.98	7174
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective vision	Small	55	59.93	3296
	Large	92	82.41	7582
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective mission	Small	55	58.75	3231
	Large	92	83.12	7647
	Total	147		
Assessing the environment	Small	55	64.98	3574
	Large	92	79.39	7304
	Total	147		
Strategic issues identification	Small	55	59.26	3259.5
	Large	92	82.81	7618.5
	Total	147		
Strategies and plans' development	Small	55	61.09	3360
	Large	92	81.72	7518
	Total	147		
Monitoring & evaluation	Small	55	58.15	3198.5
	Large	92	83.47	7679.5
	Total	147		

Table 7.6 shows that the mean ranks for process formality and for all steps of SPFP in large organisations are higher than those found for small organisations. Table 7.7 shows that all the items (process formality and all steps of the planning process) except for the 'clarifying organisational mandate' step are significantly higher in large organisations than in small organisations at 0.01 levels (2-tailed), and 0.05 level (2-tailed) for 'assessing the environment' step. Therefore, the findings support proposition A.3.1.

Table 7.7 Mann-Whitney U test for large and small organisations

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Process formality (SPFP)	1618	3158	–3.651	0.000
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	1661	3201	–3.51	0.000
Clarifying organisational mandate	2164	3704	–1.506	0.132
Establishing an effective vision	1756	3296	–3.131	0.002
Establishing an effective mission	1691	3231	–3.366	0.001
Assessing the environment	2034	3574	–2.007	0.045
Strategic issues identification	1719.5	3259.5	–3.326	0.001
Strategies and plans' development	1820	3360	–2.875	0.004
Monitoring & evaluation	1658.5	3198.5	–3.529	0.000

Grouping variable: size

The results are consistent with other studies in the Middle Eastern context, such as (Yusuf and Saffu, 2009) and in other contexts such as (Stone, 1989; Young and Sleeper, 1988; Al-Bazzaz and Grinyer, 1980) who provided strong evidence of a positive relationship between organisational size and the use and/or formality of planning.

The reasoning behind the high formality of planning for large organisations is the ability to improve coordination and control through planning (Mintzberg, 1994b). Large organisations tend to have greater structural complexity than small organisations, making effective coordination more difficult (Robbins, 1990). This is particularly true for large public sector organisations in Dubai, which tend to have complex organisational structures as noted from the collected secondary data.

Another potential reason is the planning incidence. Risseeuw and Masurel (1994) note that larger firms have a greater incidence of planning than smaller firms due to the ability of large organisations to access more resources (Barney, 1991; Yusuf and Saffu, 2009). On the other hand, small organisations have fewer slack resources and are likely to have less diverse environments (Robbins, 1990). In Dubai, large public sector organisations are expected to have a greater planning incidence than small ones for a number of reasons, such as access to resources, political influences, variety of external stakeholders' expectations, and the importance and criticality of large public sector organisations' operations.

7.1.3.2 Process formality and organisation age

The relationship between process formality and organisation age will be determined by proposition A.3.2, developed in section 4.2.1.3.

Proposition A.3.2: The extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised is higher for young organisations than mature organisations in the Dubai public sector.

The formality and the associated steps of the planning process were calculated for both mature and young organisations and the results are shown in Table 7.8. Young organisations are found to have a greater process formality than mature ones. Also, the degree to which the steps of SPFP are practised is higher for young organisations than mature organisations. This was found to be true for all steps of the planning process.

Table 7.8 Descriptive statistics as per organisation age

	Mature					Young				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
Process formality (SPFP)	95	3.63	0.58	3.70	0.85	52	3.94	0.61	3.99	0.68
Steps of SPFP:										
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	95	3.55	0.86	3.67	1.00	52	4.03	0.84	4.17	1.34
Clarifying organisational mandate	95	3.60	0.71	3.50	1.00	52	3.95	0.76	4.00	1.00
Establishing an effective vision	95	4.12	0.52	4.00	0.75	52	4.31	0.57	4.50	0.75
Establishing an effective mission	95	3.89	0.57	3.92	0.75	52	4.13	0.63	4.17	0.83
Assessing the environment	95	3.47	0.96	3.50	2.00	52	3.81	1.03	4.00	1.50
Strategic issues identification	95	3.46	0.85	3.50	1.00	52	3.83	0.91	4.00	1.50
Strategies and plans' development	95	3.48	0.91	3.75	1.25	52	3.80	0.83	4.00	0.69
Monitoring & evaluation	95	3.47	0.81	3.67	1.00	52	3.63	0.86	4.00	1.33

To investigate the differences between young organisations and mature ones in relation to process formality and SPFP steps, a Mann-Whitney U test was made to test if any significant difference exist. Tables 7.9 and 7.10 indicate that mean ranks for all items in young organisations are higher than for those in mature ones.

Table 7.9 Ranks for process formality and SPFP steps for young and mature organisations

	Age	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Process formality (SPFP)	Young	52	89.41	4649.50
	Mature	95	65.56	6228.50
	Total	147		
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	Young	52	89.41	4649.50
	Mature	95	65.56	6228.50
	Total	147		
Clarifying organisational mandate	Young	52	87.52	4551.00
	Mature	95	66.60	6327.00
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective vision	Young	52	85.13	4427.00
	Mature	95	67.91	6451.00
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective mission	Young	52	85.94	4469.00
	Mature	95	67.46	6409.00
	Total	147		
Assessing the environment	Young	52	83.94	4365.00
	Mature	95	68.56	6513.00
	Total	147		
Strategic issues identification	Young	52	85.92	4468.00
	Mature	95	67.47	6410.00
	Total	147		
Strategies and plans' development	Young	52	84.05	4370.50
	Mature	95	68.50	6507.50
	Total	147		
Monitoring & evaluation	Young	52	81.04	4214.00
	Mature	95	70.15	6664.00
	Total	147		

The statistical test presented in Table 7.10 shows that the distribution of process formality for young organisations is significantly different from that of mature organisations at the 0.01 significant level (2-tailed), which means that the median for both groups is significantly different from each other, which demonstrates the proposition in hand (A.3.2).

In relation to the steps of the strategic planning process, findings also demonstrate statistically that a significant difference exists for all steps of the planning process between the two groups of organisations (young and mature) at 0.05 significant levels (2-tailed). The only exception found is for the 'monitoring and evaluation' step, which has a higher result for young organisations (mean = 3.63, median = 4.00) compared to mature organisations (mean = 3.48, median = 3.67), but the difference is not significant.

Table 7.10 Mann-Whitney U test for young and mature organisations

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Process formality (SPFP)	1668.5	6228.5	–3.247	0.001
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	1668.5	6228.5	–3.276	0.001
Clarifying organisational mandate	1767	6327	–2.927	0.003
Establishing an effective vision	1891	6451	–2.371	0.018
Establishing an effective mission	1849	6409	–2.521	0.012
Assessing the environment	1953	6513	–2.118	0.034
Strategic issues identification	1850	6410	–2.575	0.01
Strategies and plans' development	1947.5	6507.5	–2.142	0.032
Monitoring & evaluation	2104	6664	–1.5	0.134

Grouping variable: age

The comparisons between young and mature organisations within the research context are important due to the relatively high number of young organisations in the Dubai public sector. The results in section 6.4 show that, in Dubai, approximately 45% of public sector organisations are less than 10 years old and 35% are less than 5 years old. This high percentage of young organisations is due to the fact that the UAE is a relatively new country that gained its independence in 1971. In addition, the government of Dubai has established a large number of new public sector organisations within the last 10 years in an attempt to improve public services.

Mature public sector organisations in Dubai, representing approximately 65% of respondent results, experience lower process formality than their counterparts (young organisations). This can be related to organisational inertia. As explained by Leonard-Barton (1992), age can affect performance and the ability of an organisation to change by inducing organisational inertia. Also, he pointed out that when firms focus on core capabilities, they bring on core rigidities that make it difficult to adapt to changes in their environment, as in the case of aged firms where processes are codified and mechanisms are formalised. Moreover, old age may make knowledge, abilities, and skills obsolete and induce organisational decay (Agarwal and Gort, 2002).

The high process formality results for young organisations can also be explained from the growth perspective. Miller and Cardinal (1994) found a positive relationship between strategic planning and firm growth. Strategic planning is a process that helps organisations to identify strategic issues, forecast the future, and prepare for the future, to help organisations to grow (Zimmerer and Scarborough, 1996). Young organisations are continuously seeking to grow, whereas mature

organisations' need for growth is much lower as indicated by Evans (1987), who states that firms' growth decreases with firm age and that it does so at a diminishing rate.

In addition to the above reasons in support of the findings, the intensity of planning was found to be more so in young organisations than mature ones. As firms become older, their planning intensity diminishes slightly (Risseeuw and Masurel, 1994). Also, younger firms need to plan to withstand uncertainties (Mathews and Scott, 1995). Delmar and Shane (2003) noted three motives of planning in newly formed organisations. These are: objective-setting in young organisations has greater motivational properties than relative performance goals in mature ones. Second, planning is more effective when the time span between planning and feedback is short. Third, planning is more valuable when the ratio of assumption to actual information is higher. When people do not have a track record of past performance to use as a guide, other tools become more important in evaluating the accuracy of assumptions. Because new ventures are new, much of the information on which founders make decisions takes the form of unproven assumptions rather than past results.

7.1.3.3 Process formality and organisational planning level

The relationship between process formality and the organisational planning level will be investigated through the following proposition.

Proposition A.3.3: The extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised is higher at the corporate level than the departmental level for public sector organisations in Dubai.

To test proposition A.3.3, descriptive statistics were calculated for process formality and for each of the strategic planning formation process steps at both organisational levels (corporate and department). Results shown in Table 7.11 indicate that process formality at the corporate level (mean = 3.94, median = 3.97) is higher than process formality at the departmental level (mean = 3.58, median = 3.71). Also, the steps of the planning process were found to be more practised at the corporate level than at sub-levels.

Table7.11 Descriptive statistics as per organisational level

	Corporate level					Departmental level				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
Process formality (SPFP)	65	3.94	0.49	3.97	0.69	82	3.58	0.65	3.71	1.08
Steps of SPFP:										
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	65	3.93	0.72	4.00	1.00	82	3.55	0.96	3.67	1.33
Clarifying organisational mandate	65	3.90	0.76	4.00	1.00	82	3.59	0.71	3.50	1.00
Establishing an effective vision	65	4.29	0.51	4.50	0.75	82	4.10	0.56	4.25	0.75
Establishing an effective mission	65	4.09	0.50	4.00	0.54	82	3.89	0.66	3.75	1.02
Assessing the environment	65	3.85	0.90	4.00	1.50	82	3.38	1.02	3.50	2.00
Strategic issues identification	65	3.88	0.74	4.00	0.75	82	3.36	0.92	3.00	1.00
Strategies and plans' development	65	3.94	0.66	4.00	0.75	82	3.32	0.96	3.50	1.25
Monitoring & evaluation	65	3.65	0.74	3.67	0.67	82	3.43	0.88	3.67	1.33

To test the significance of the differences noted, a Mann-Whitney U test was carried out for process formality and for SPFP steps at both organisational levels. Significant differences for the two groups are presented in Table 7.12, which shows that the formality of the planning process at the corporate level is significantly higher than that at the departmental level at 0.01 levels (2-tailed). Variances of the steps of the planning process show that the differences for some steps are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), such as assessing the environment, strategic issues identification, and strategies and plans' development; others are significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) except for the monitoring and evaluation step, with no significant difference.

Table 7.12 Mann-Whitney U test for the corporate and departmental level

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Process formality (SPFP)	1799.0	5202.0	−3.378	.001
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	2036.5	5439.5	−2.473	.013
Clarifying organisational mandate	2037.0	5440.0	−2.517	.012
Establishing an effective vision	2088.0	5491.0	−2.275	.023
Establishing an effective mission	2139.0	5542.0	−2.056	.040
Assessing the environment	1960.5	5363.5	−2.778	.005
Strategic issues identification	1787.5	5190.5	−3.508	.000
Strategies and plans' development	1631.0	5034.0	−4.080	.000
Monitoring & evaluation	2307.0	5710.0	−1.412	.158

Grouping variable: organisational level

The results in Table 7.13 show that mean ranks for process formality and all steps of the planning process are higher at the corporate level than at the departmental level.

Table 7.13 Ranks for process formality and SPFP steps for the corporate and departmental level

	Organisational level	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Process formality (SPFP)	Departmental level	82	63.44	5202.00
	Corporate level	65	87.32	5676.00
	Total	147		
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	Departmental level	82	66.34	5439.50
	Corporate level	65	83.67	5438.50
	Total	147		
Clarifying organisational mandate	Departmental level	82	66.34	5440.00
	Corporate level	65	83.66	5438.00
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective vision	Departmental level	82	66.96	5491.00
	Corporate level	65	82.88	5387.00
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective mission	Departmental level	82	67.59	5542.00
	Corporate level	65	82.09	5336.00
	Total	147		
Assessing the environment	Departmental level	82	65.41	5363.50
	Corporate level	65	84.84	5514.50
	Total	147		
Strategic issues identification	Departmental level	82	63.30	5190.50
	Corporate level	65	87.50	5687.50
	Total	147		
Strategies and plans' development	Departmental level	82	61.39	5034.00
	Corporate level	65	89.91	5844.00
	Total	147		
Monitoring & evaluation	Departmental level	82	69.63	5710.00
	Corporate level	65	79.51	5168.00
	Total	147		

The findings of proposition A.3.3 can be explained based on a number of factors: some are general and others are related to the context of the study. The benefits of strategic planning in public sector organisations covered under section (2.2.2) are more related to the corporate level than the departmental level. For example, with the use of strategic planning, public sector organisations can

better manage the relationship with other entities within the system of public organisations (Kettle, 2002). Also, strategic planning at the corporate level enhances the ability to manage the interconnectedness of the public sector with the private sector (Cleveland, 2002). Promoting strategic thinking, acting, and learning is another important benefit of formal strategic planning (Bryson, 2004); although this benefit can be experienced at the departmental level, it has more impact at the corporate level. Another important benefit of formal planning at the corporate level is increased legitimacy, as stated by Stone and Brush (1996). Pressures for legitimacy from both internal and external sources are likely to lead to formal strategic planning.

Within the research context, the Dubai government has issued a government requirement for all public sector organisations to initiate a strategic planning process at the corporate level and cascade the planning activities down to the departmental levels (sections 6.2–6.4, Strategic Planning Manual – Executive Council 2006). This, to a large extent, increased the formality of the planning process at both the corporate and departmental levels as indicated by Table 7.11. However, since the 'top down' conventional strategic planning approach is emphasised, strategic planning at a corporate level drives the development of strategic planning at lower levels by cascading the strategic objectives. Also, the executive office of the Dubai government (responsible for overseeing public sector organisations' practices) monitors the strategic planning process at the corporate level but not the departmental level. All of these factors have led to a more formalised planning process at the corporate level than the departmental level within the research context.

7.1.3.4 Process formality and the availability of the strategic planning unit

The following was proposed in Chapter Four to test the relationship between process formality and the availability of the strategic planning unit (SPU).

Proposition A.3.4: The extent to which a formal strategic planning formation process is practised is higher in organisations with a strategic planning unit than in organisations without a strategic planning unit.

A snapshot on Table 7.14 shows that organisations with strategic planning units SPU (or departments) are experiencing, to a higher extent, a formal planning process rather than organisations without SPU. Process formality results for the first group (mean = 3.87, median = 3.93) compared to the second group (mean = 2.93, median = 2.76) clearly indicate the differences.

Also, at the steps level, it is noticeable that all steps are more practised for organisations with an SPU rather than organisations without.

Table 7.14 Descriptive statistics as per the availability of the strategic planning unit (SPU)

	SPU					No SPU				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
Process formality (SPFP)	127	3.87	0.51	3.93	0.61	20	2.93	0.54	2.76	0.26
Steps of SPFP:										
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	127	3.86	0.79	4	1.34	20	2.82	0.88	3	1
Clarifying organisational mandate	127	3.81	0.72	4	0.5	20	3.18	0.69	3.25	1
Establishing an effective vision	127	4.24	0.51	4.25	0.5	20	3.81	0.63	3.75	0.88
Establishing an effective mission	127	4.06	0.57	4	0.83	20	3.46	0.57	3.42	0.57
Assessing the environment	127	3.72	0.96	4	1.5	20	2.8	0.83	2.75	1.25
Strategic issues identification	127	3.76	0.77	4	1	20	2.5	0.79	2	1
Strategies and plans' development	127	3.78	0.72	4	0.5	20	2.4	0.96	2.25	1.19
Monitoring & evaluation	127	3.7	0.72	4	0.67	20	2.47	0.64	2.33	0.59

Results of the Mann-Whitney U test between the two groups of organisations shown in Tables 7.15 and 7.16 indicate that mean ranks between the two groups are extremely different (much higher for organisations with SPU). Process formality for organisations with SPU is significantly different than for organisations without SPU at 0.01 levels (2-tailed). In addition, all steps of the planning process vary significantly between the two groups at 0.01 levels (2-tailed). Therefore, the results support proposition A.3.4.

Table 7.15 Ranks for process formality and SPFP steps for organisations with SPU and without SPU

Availability of strategic planning unit (SPU)		N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Process formality (SPFP)	No SPU	20	24.98	499.50
	SPU	127	81.72	10378.50
	Total	147		
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	No SPU	20	33.58	671.50
	SPU	127	80.37	10206.50
	Total	147		
Clarifying organisational mandate	No SPU	20	44.05	881.00
	SPU	127	78.72	9997.00
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective vision	No SPU	20	47.48	949.50
	SPU	127	78.18	9928.50
	Total	147		
Establishing an effective mission	No SPU	20	38.75	775.00
	SPU	127	79.55	10103.00
	Total	147		
Assessing the environment	No SPU	20	41.18	823.50
	SPU	127	79.17	10054.50
	Total	147		
Strategic issues identification	No SPU	20	28.23	564.50
	SPU	127	81.21	10313.50
	Total	147		
Strategies and plans' development	No SPU	20	28.48	569.50
	SPU	127	81.17	10308.50
	Total	147		
Monitoring & evaluation	No SPU	20	25.38	507.50
	SPU	127	81.66	10370.50
	Total	147		

The existence of a strategic planning unit (SPU) is expected to facilitate the planning process within the organisation, and to coordinate the planning effort with external stakeholders. Also, the SPU communicates the process outcomes such as vision and mission statements and corporate values, as well as conducting strategic planning workshops and training. An important point to make here is that the relationship between the SPU and the formality of SPFP can be a two-way causality having a planning unit enhance formality, or formality causes the need for SPU.

Table 7.16 Mann-Whitney U test for organisations with SPU and without SPU

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Process formality (SPFP)	289.5	499.5	–5.540	.000
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	461.5	671.5	–4.609	.000
Clarifying organisational mandate	671.0	881.0	–3.478	.001
Establishing an effective vision	739.5	949.5	–3.029	.002
Establishing an effective mission	565.0	775.0	–3.992	.000
Assessing the environment	613.5	823.5	–3.750	.000
Strategic issues identification	354.5	564.5	–5.302	.000
Strategies and plans' development	359.5	569.5	–5.204	.000
Monitoring & evaluation	297.5	507.5	–5.558	.000

Grouping variable: availability of SPU

Within the research context, the Dubai government emphasised that each public sector organisation should establish a strategic planning unit in the organisational structure and this has been noted under section 1.2 (Strategic Planning Manual – Executive Council 2006). The purpose of this requirement is to improve the strategic planning practice, since strategic planning is relatively new to public management within the research context. Therefore, specialised units with qualified planners should facilitate the process throughout the organisation. Another reason is to improve coordination and control internally across organisational units, and externally with other government entities and with the executive office of the Dubai government. The third reason for initiating such a requirement is to standardise the planning process across various public organizations for monitoring and control purposes.. As stated earlier under proposition A.1, formalisation of the planning process does not imply a better strategic planning practice. In fact, it is expected that due to the formalisation of the planning process, innovation and creativity are reduced (Mintzberg, 1994b).

7.2.4 Process formality and implementation

Under section 4.2.1.4 the relationship between process formality and implementation of strategies and plans was covered and the following proposition A.4 was developed.

Proposition A.4: The formality of the strategic planning formation process will enhance the implementation of strategies and plans.

The overall respondents' results regarding the implementation of strategies and plans showed a mean value of 3.43 (std 0.99). The implementation results varied across different sampled organisations as will be explained shortly.

In order to test proposition A.4, the relationship between the formality (process formality) of SPFP and implementation should be tested. This is done by testing the correlation between the two variables. Table 7.17 shows the correlation between process formality and implementation as well as the correlation between the steps of SPFP and implementation.

Table 7.17 Spearman's correlations between SPFP and implementation

			Implementation
Spearman's rho	Process formality (SPFP)	Correlation coefficient	.580[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	Correlation coefficient	.426[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Clarifying organisational mandate	Correlation coefficient	.334[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Establishing an effective vision	Correlation coefficient	.365[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Establishing an effective mission	Correlation coefficient	.375[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Assessing the environment	Correlation coefficient	.487[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Strategic issues identification	Correlation coefficient	.511[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Strategies and plans' development	Correlation coefficient	.534[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Monitoring & evaluation	Correlation coefficient	.518[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results indicate that a strong positive correlation was found between the process formality as well as all steps of the planning process and implementation at 0.01 level (2-tailed). A strong positive correlation indicates that the higher the formality of the planning process, the more the implementation of strategies and plans. The strong association is mainly due to the fact that the implementation process will allow for adaptive learning; such learning will lead to a better understanding of SPFP, which will feed into the new round of strategic planning (Bryson, 2004, p. 238). This feedback loop strengthens the association between formation and implementation. However, a strong positive correlation does not imply causality between the variables: it just implies a strong association.

To test proposition A.4 further, two groups of respondents were formed: one with a high process formality and the other with a low process formality. The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to test differences in implementation between the two groups; results are shown in Tables 7.18 and 7.19.

Table 7.18 Ranks for implementation in organisations with high and low process formality

		N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Implementation	Low process formality	75	55.59	4169.50
	High process formality	72	93.17	6708.50
	Total	147		

Table 7.19 Mann-Whitney U test for implementation in organisations with high and low process formality

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Implementation	1319.5	4169.5	–5.681	.000

Grouping variable: process formality (SPFP)

Implementation results were found to be significantly different between organisations with high process formality and organisations with low process formality at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). These findings, together with correlation results, indicate that process formality enhances the implementation of strategies and plans. Therefore, proposition A.4 is supported. It should be stated, however, that because the results for the implementation were based on the views of the respondents, it could be that those in organisations with formal plans were just more conscious of the implementation of strategies and plans (so thought there was more implementation), whereas those in informal environments might well have been implementing but not recognising them as strategies and plans in a formal sense.

In order to investigate whether the implementation is influenced by organisational elements, descriptive statistics of implementation for different organisational elements were made. The results are shown in Table 7.20. Implementation in large organisations is found to be greater than that in small ones with a mean of 3.54 and 3.24 respectively; in relation to organisation age, implementation in young organisations exceeded that in mature organisations with 3.56 and 3.36 mean values respectively. Moving on to the organisational level, respondents state that implementation at the corporate level is more than that at the departmental level (mean values 3.68

and 3.23 respectively); also the implementation for organisations with a strategic planning unit (SPU) is much greater than those without SPU (mean values 3.58 and 2.45 respectively).

Table 7.20 Descriptive statistics for implementation (as per organisational elements)

		N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
Size	Large	92	3.54	.857	4.00	1.00
	Small	55	3.24	1.170	4.00	2.00
Age	Mature	95	3.36	.956	3.00	1.00
	Young	52	3.56	1.056	4.00	1.00
Org. level	Corporate level	65	3.68	.850	4.00	1.00
	Department level	82	3.23	1.058	3.00	1.00
Availability of SPU	SPU	127	3.58	.904	4.00	1.00
	No SPU	20	2.45	.999	2.50	1.00

In order to investigate whether significant differences exist between the different values of implementation as per organisational elements, the Mann-Whitney U test was made and results are stated in Tables 7.21 and 7.22.

Table 7.21 Ranks for implementation as per organisational elements

			N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Implementation		Small	55	68.89	3789.00
	Size	Large	92	77.05	7089.00
		Total	147		
		Young	52	80.34	4177.50
	Age	Mature	95	70.53	6700.50
		Total	147		
	Organisation level	Department level	82	66.10	5420.00
		Corporate level	65	83.97	5458.00
		Total	147		
	Availability of SPU	No SPU	20	36.88	737.50
		SPU	127	79.85	10140.50
		Total	147		

Table 7.22 Mann-Whitney U test for implementation as per organisational elements

	Grouping variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Implementation	Size	2249.0	3789.0	−1.195	.232
Implementation	Age	2140.5	6700.5	−1.418	.156
Implementation	Organisational level	2017.0	5420.0	−2.684	.007
Implementation	Availability of SPU	527.5	737.5	−4.455	.000

Results of the above tables indicate that despite the variations in implementation results for large and mature organisations compared to small and young organisations respectively, no significant differences exist, therefore organisation size and/or age have no effect on implementation. However, the differences in implementation results as per organisational level, and the availability of SPU, is found to be significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The implementation of strategies and plans completes the cycle of strategic planning. Implementing the developed strategic initiatives, programs, projects, and action plans will bring life to strategies and will create the desired tangible values. A number of benefits are associated with the implementation of strategies and plans. These are: first, creating public value, this is seen as the main benefit of implementation in public sector organisations. Another important benefit is the ability to evaluate the strategies (Patton, 1997) since, without implementation, evaluating whether strategic goals have been achieved will not be possible. A third potential benefit is that the implementation process will also allow for adaptive learning, such learning will lead to a better understanding of SPFP. The fourth expected benefit is the increased support for organisational leadership (Burns, 2003). When strategies and plans are successfully implemented and benefits are realised, that would increase the legitimacy and confidence of employees and the community with leadership and organisation in general.

7.2 Group (B) propositions – external and internal barriers to the strategic planning formation process

Under section 4.2.2, two propositions were developed: the first, addressing the relationship between external barriers and the formality of the strategic planning formation process; the second,

addressing the relationship between internal barriers and the formality of SPFP. In this section, the propositions will be tested and the findings will be discussed for the purpose of satisfying research aim two 'Evaluating the influence of external (contextual) and internal (organisational) barriers on the SPFP' and to answer the research questions:

- What is the influence of internal and external barriers on the planning process?
- Do organisational characteristics moderate the influence of external and internal barriers on the SPFP?

Figure 7.2 shows Group (B) propositions (highlighted) within the conceptual framework of the present study.
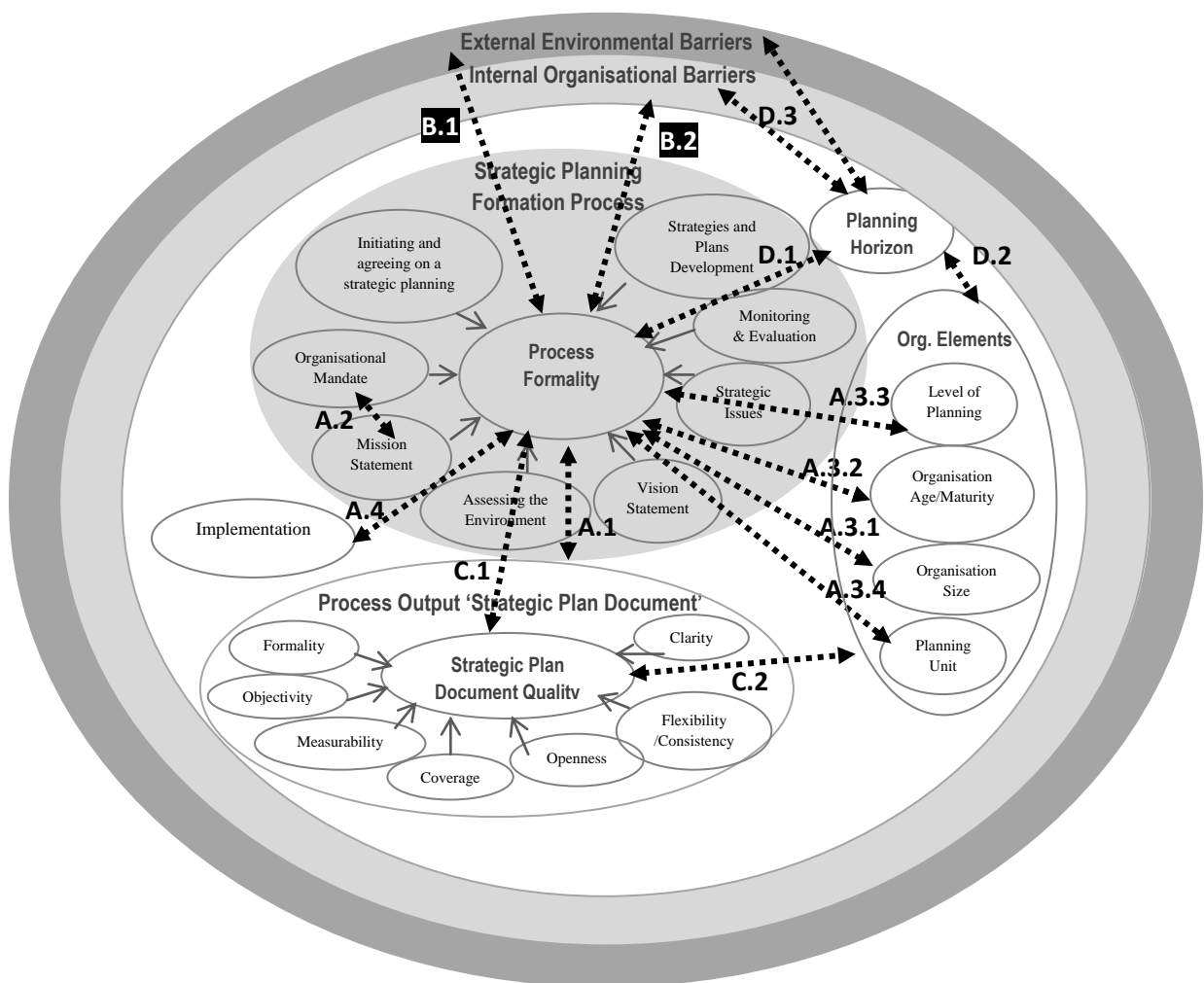
Figure 7.2: Conceptual framework – Group (B) barriers propositions

7.2.1 External barriers to the strategic planning formation process

Based on the discussions conducted under section 4.2.2.1, proposition B.1 was formulated and addresses the relationship between external barriers and the process formality of the SPFP.

Proposition B.1: The greater the influence of external barriers to the planning process the lower the formality of SPFP.

In Chapter Six, external barrier results were shown under Table 6.7, and results show that the average influence of external barriers is 3.14 on a scale of 5 (std 0.74) and median 3.22; the ranking of the external barriers was also shown in Figure 6.2 and discussed under section 6.5.2.

To test proposition B.1, correlation between external barriers (and each of its items) and process formality was calculated and the results are presented in Table 7.23. Surprisingly, results indicate that no significant correlation was found between external barriers (and any of their items) and process formality, except for rapid technology development (external barrier), which has (surprisingly and contrary to expectation) a positive significant correlation with process formality at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The correlation found for rapid technology development indicates that respondents in Dubai public sector organisations see rapid technological development as an opportunity to improve the strategic planning process rather than a barrier to it.

Table 7.23 Correlations between external barriers and process formality

			Process formality (SPFP)
Spearman's rho	Overall external barriers	Correlation coefficient	.004
		sig. (2-tailed)	.966
	External barrier items:		
	Political influences	Correlation coefficient	−.050
		sig. (2-tailed)	.550
	Macro economy	Correlation coefficient	.084
		sig. (2-tailed)	.313
	Political instability	Correlation coefficient	.018
		sig. (2-tailed)	.827
	Turbulent environment	Correlation coefficient	.102
		sig. (2-tailed)	.220
	Rapid technology development	Correlation coefficient	.176[*]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.033
	Linkage to country's strategic plan	Correlation coefficient	−.094
		sig. (2-tailed)	.257
	Unavailability of macro information	Correlation coefficient	.046
		sig. (2-tailed)	.577
	Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	Correlation coefficient	−.065
		sig. (2-tailed)	.432
	Variety of external stakeholders	Correlation coefficient	−.077
		sig. (2-tailed)	.352

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To test whether process formality is different for organisations impacted by high external barriers compared to organisations with low external barriers, a Mann-Whitney U test was calculated between the two groups. The results in Tables 7.24 and 7.25 show that process formality mean ranks for organisations impacted by low external barriers are somewhat higher than that for organisations with high external barriers. However, no significant difference was noted. From the correlation and variance test results, proposition B.1 is not supported.

Table 7.24 Ranks for external barriers

	Influence of external barriers	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Process formality (SPFP)	High EB influence	70	72.47	5073.00
	Low EB influence	77	75.39	5805.00
	Total	147		

Table 7.25 Mann-Whitney U test external barriers

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Process formality (SPFP)	2588.0	5073.0	−.415	.678

Grouping variable: influence of external barriers

The findings can be explained as follows:

The external barriers to the strategic planning formation process are expected to produce two contradictory effects. First, the external barriers will act as barriers to the planning process and reduce the formality of the planning process; this assumption was the basis for formulating proposition B.1 (covered comprehensively under section 4.2.2.1) and expected to have a negative correlation between external barriers and process formality. Second, the opposite effect is that external barriers might enhance the strategic planning formation process, in other words, act as a catalyst for planning. This is because planning is intended to help organisations face or adapt to external strategic issues (which might also be the external barriers). This will generate a positive correlation between external barriers and process formality. The two contradicting effects produced by external barriers on process formality resulted in having neither a negative nor positive correlation between them. To elaborate further, an example such as a turbulent environment is needed.

A turbulent environment is used because it accommodates many of the external barriers for this study. The literature on the turbulent environment and its relationship to the formalised planning process produced different conclusions (Chae and Hill, 2000). On the one hand (the negative effect of external barriers on planning formality), researchers argued that planning formality and the comprehensiveness of planning is negatively associated with uncertainty in the external environment. Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984) found that planning comprehensiveness in unstable environments was negatively related to return on assets. Similarly, Fredrickson (1984) found that planning comprehensiveness was positively related to performance in stable environments. Within the research context (UAE), Elbanna (2010) reported that environmental uncertainty was found to be an obstacle to strategic planning in the UAE. In light of the above, the literature suggests a negative correlation between external barriers and planning formality.

However, if we turn to the other side (the positive effect of external barriers on planning formality), the literature includes studies supporting a positive relationship between planning formalisation and environmental uncertainty. For example, Lindsay and Rue (1980) found that firms in more complex environments were more likely to use formal planning. Similarly, Kukalis (1991) found that greater levels of environmental complexity were associated with more extensive planning. Bantel (1993) also found environmental complexity to be positively related to strategic planning formality. In the same vein, Lindsay and Rue (1980) introduced firm size into the equation and found that large firms in fast-changing environments were more likely than small firms to use formal planning. From this group literature a positive correlation is expected between external barriers and formality of the planning process. From the above discussion it can be concluded that between the two opposite sides of the conclusions, the correlation between the external barriers and formality of the planning process will be lost. This is in line with Boulton et al. (1982) who reported that uncertainty did not consistently impact strategic planning.

A step further was taken to determine whether any correlation exists between external barriers and process formality as per organisational characteristics. Correlation was tested for different organisations (as per size, age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU). The results of Table 7.26 show that none of the organisation types were found to have a significant correlation between external barriers and planning formality although 'young' organisations show some effect relative to external barriers.

Table 7.26 Correlations for external barriers and process formality as per organisational elements

Spearman's rho				Process formality (SPFP)
External barriers	Size	Large	Correlation coefficient	−.005
			sig. (2-tailed)	.966
		Small	Correlation coefficient	.116
			sig. (2-tailed)	.397
	Age	Mature	Correlation coefficient	.078
			sig. (2-tailed)	.454
		Young	Correlation coefficient	−.241
			sig. (2-tailed)	.086
	Organisational level	Corporate level	Correlation coefficient	−.082
			sig. (2-tailed)	.515
		Departmental level	Correlation coefficient	.038
			sig. (2-tailed)	.733
	Availability of strategic plan document	SPU	Correlation coefficient	.077
			sig. (2-tailed)	.392
		No SPD	Correlation coefficient	.137
			sig. (2-tailed)	.565

To determine if the influence of overall external barriers or any of its items (barriers) is significantly different across various organisation types covered in the study, a Mann-Whitney U test was made. The results are presented in Table 7.27 (all associated tables are available in Appendix D.1).

Table 7.27 Mann-Whitney U test results for external barriers as per organisational elements

	Size		Age		Organisational level		Availability of SPU	
	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
External barriers	−1.83	0.068	−1.71	0.088	−0.1	0.928	−1.86	0.063
External barrier items:								
Political influences	−1.95	0.051	−1.11	0.265	−0.2	0.85	−1.25	0.21
Macro economy	−1.64	0.101	−2.99	**0.003**	−0.6	0.539	−0.71	0.477
Political instability	−1.72	0.086	−0.67	0.504	−1	0.339	−1.19	0.233
Turbulent environment	−0.75	0.454	−2.47	**0.014**	−0.8	0.404	−1.16	0.245
Rapid technology development	−0.46	0.649	−0.42	0.677	−0.7	0.509	−0.03	0.978
Linkage to country's strategic plan	−1.02	0.306	−1	0.319	−0.1	0.937	−1.03	0.303
Unavailability of macro information	−0.76	0.449	−0.72	0.475	−0.7	0.462	−0.48	0.63
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	−1.77	0.078	−1.51	0.131	−0.3	0.777	−2.31	**0.021**
Variety of external stakeholders	−0.95	0.341	−0.62	0.533	−0.7	0.486	−1.54	0.123

Data is extracted from Tables 1 to 8, Appendix D.1.

Results indicate that no significant variance was found for overall external barriers between different groups of organisations. However, between mature and young organisations a significant variance was found for the macro economy and the turbulent environment. The influence of the macro economy and the turbulent environment on the planning process for young organisations is significantly higher than that for mature organisations. This is because 'young' organisations are changing faster and are more responsive to external environmental factors. Also, a significant variance was found for 'ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations' barrier between organisations with SPU and organisations without SPU; this is expected because one of the main functions of SPU is to coordinate strategic planning efforts with external stakeholders and to communicate their requirements to the organisation.

7.2.2 Internal barriers to the strategic planning formation process

Based on the discussions conducted under section 4.2.2.2, proposition B.2 was formulated to address the relationship between internal barriers and the process formality of SPFP.

Proposition B.2: The greater the influence of internal barriers to the planning process the lower the formality of SPFP.

In Chapter Six, internal barrier results were shown under Table 6.8. Results show that the average influence of internal barriers is 3.40 on a scale of 1 to 5 (std 0.74) and median 3.33, the ranking of the influence of each internal barrier was also shown in Figure 6.3, and discussed under section 6.5.2.

To test proposition B.2, the correlation between overall internal barriers (and each of the internal barrier items) and the process formality was calculated and the results are presented in Table 7.28. A strong negative correlation was found between overall internal barriers and the process formality at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), which is in accordance with proposition B.2. However, results of the correlation between internal barrier items and process formality show some differences. Seven internal barriers as shown in Table 7.28 have a significant negative correlation with process formality at 0.01 level (2-tailed); whereas three internal barriers (organisational structure, leadership commitment to strategic planning, performance management system) show a significant negative correlation with process formality at 0.05 level (2-tailed); and two internal barriers (lack of financial resources, IT infrastructure) show a negative correlation without being significant. The

'lack of a financial resources' barrier result indicates that despite the global economic recession and its impact on Dubai, respondents within public sector organisations in Dubai did not see a lack of financial resources as a barrier to planning. In fact, a lack of financial resources may be a good reason to undertake formal planning. Also, the IT infrastructure within Dubai public sector organisations is not seen as a barrier to planning by respondents which either implies that well developed IT systems are deployed within government departments or that the lack of IT does not stop formal planning.

Table 7.28 Correlations between internal barriers and process formality

			Process formality (SPFP)
Spearman's rho	Overall internal barriers	Correlation coefficient	−.351[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Internal barrier items:		
	Organisational culture	Correlation coefficient	−.281[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	Organisational structure	Correlation coefficient	−.189[*]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.022
	Organisation's mandate	Correlation coefficient	−.229[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.005
	Strategic planning procedures	Correlation coefficient	−.315[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Weak strategic thinking	Correlation coefficient	−.393[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Leadership commitment to strategic planning	Correlation coefficient	−.208[*]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.011
	Internal processes/regulations	Correlation coefficient	−.229[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.005
	Planners' expertise	Correlation coefficient	−.295[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Employees resistance to change	Correlation coefficient	−.272[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	Lack of financial resources	Correlation coefficient	−.102
		sig. (2-tailed)	.217
	IT infrastructure	Correlation coefficient	−.051
		sig. (2-tailed)	.542
	Performance management system	Correlation coefficient	−.201[*]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.015

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In addition to the correlation statistical test, a variance test was conducted to evaluate whether a significant difference exists between the process formality for organisations influenced with high internal barriers compared to organisations influenced with low internal barriers. The Mann-Whitney U test was formed between the two groups and the results in Tables 7.29 and 7.30 show that process formality for organisations influenced with low internal barriers is significantly larger than the process formality for organisations influenced with high internal barriers at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). From the above findings, proposition C.2 is supported.

Table 7.29 Ranks for internal barriers

	Influence of internal barriers	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Process formality (SPFP)	High IB influence	71	60.56	4299.50
	Low IB influence	76	86.56	6578.50
	Total	147		

Table 7.30 Mann-Whitney U test for internal barriers

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Process formality (SPFP)	1743.5	4299.5	–3.700	.000

Grouping variable: influence of internal barriers

The relationship between internal barriers and process formality was also looked at in terms of organisational elements. In order to determine if any correlation exists between internal barriers and process formality, correlations were tested for different organisations as to size, age, organisational level, and the availability of a strategic planning unit (SPU). The results of Table 7.31 show that in relation to organisation size, both large and small organisations were found to have a significant negative correlation between internal barriers and process formality at 0.01 level (2-tailed). In relation to organisation age, young organisations showed a significant negative correlation but mature organisations showed a weak negative correlation (not significant).

Organisational level results showed that a significant correlation was found at the departmental level, but not at the corporate level. Also a significant negative correlation was found for organisations with SPU, and a weak negative correlation was found for organisations without SPU.

Table 7.31 Correlations for internal barriers and process formality as per organisational elements

Spearman's Correlation				Process formality (SPFP)
Internal barriers	Size	Large	Correlation coefficient	−.353[**]
			sig. (2-tailed)	.001
		Small	Correlation coefficient	−.541[**]
			sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Age	Mature	Correlation coefficient	−.189
			sig. (2-tailed)	.066
		Young	Correlation coefficient	−.430[**]
			sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	Organisational level	Corporate level	Correlation coefficient	−.199
			sig. (2-tailed)	.111
		Departmental level	Correlation coefficient	−.364[**]
			sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	Availability of strategic plan document	SPU	Correlation coefficient	−.236[**]
			sig. (2-tailed)	.008
		No SPD	Correlation coefficient	−.284
			sig. (2-tailed)	.225

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In order to understand the above correlation results, the influence of overall internal barriers and each of its items was tested for any significant variances as per organisational elements; results are shown in Table 7.32 (associated tables are available in Appendix D.2).

In relation to organisation size, no significant differences were noted for overall internal barriers (or any of the internal barriers items) between large and small organisations. This indicates that large and small public sector organisations in Dubai are experiencing the same influence of internal barriers on their planning process.

Moving on to organisation age, Table 7.32 (and associated tables in Appendix D.2) results show that the overall internal barriers for mature organisations are significantly higher than for young organisations at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). This is due to the fact that mature organisations find it difficult to adapt to changes in their internal environment because mature organisations generally focus on core capabilities and by doing so they bring on core rigidities which will affect the organisation's ability to adapt and change (Leonard-Barton, 1992). This is particularly true where processes are codified and mechanisms are formalised. Barton added that age could affect performance and the ability of an organisation to change by inducing organisational inertia. Moreover, old age may make knowledge, abilities, and skills obsolete and induce organizational

decay (Agarwal and Gort, 2002). Therefore, mature firms are consequently less flexible and are less likely to react to changed management initiatives and less likely to respond to external and internal barriers.

Table 7.32 Mann-Whitney U test results for internal barriers as per organisational elements

	Size		Age		Organisational level		Availability of SPU	
	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Internal barriers	−1.37	.170	-3.21	.001	-3.80	.000	-3.64	.000
Internal barrier items:								
Organisational culture	−1.21	.227	−2.32	.020	−1.18	.237	−2.05	.040
Organisational structure	−1.17	.244	−3.43	.001	−2.64	.008	−2.47	.013
Organisation's mandate	−1.09	.276	−1.78	.075	−3.54	.000	−3.02	.003
Strategic planning procedures	−.44	.658	−3.59	.000	−3.20	.001	−3.18	.001
Weak strategic thinking	−.71	.477	−2.28	.022	−3.16	.002	−3.84	.000
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	−.20	.838	−2.78	.005	−2.27	.023	−2.62	.009
Internal processes/regulations	−1.00	.316	−1.79	.074	−2.68	.007	−2.18	.029
Planners' expertise	−.36	.718	−2.05	.040	−3.03	.002	−1.88	.060
Employees resistance to change	−.04	.966	−.92	.359	−1.96	.050	−2.02	.044
Lack of financial resources	−.54	.592	−.33	.744	−1.46	.144	−1.86	.062
IT infrastructure	−.22	.827	−.89	.375	−1.31	.192	−1.66	.097
Performance management system	−1.82	.068	−1.99	.046	−2.27	.023	−2.37	.018

Data is extracted from Tables 1 to 8, Appendix D.2.

In relation to organisational level, the results of Table 7.32 (and associated tables in Appendix D.2) indicate that the influence of the overall internal barriers is significantly higher at a departmental level than at a corporate level at 0.01 significant levels (2-tailed). One of the reasons behind this result is the capability of middle level managers; planning at the department level is left to middle level managers who, in theory, should have the ability to deal with change, the required planning skills, and the leadership capabilities to push the planning exercise forward. Within the research context, middle level managers may lack some of these capabilities, especially if we note that the average experience for middle managers is 5.7 years. This is supported by the results of Table 7.32

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where leadership commitment and planners' experience barriers showed a significant variance between departmental and corporate levels. In addition, planning at the departmental level could more directly impact employees which may provoke employee resistance to change and reveal employees' weak strategic thinking. The results in Table 7.32 support this assumption since employee resistance to change and weak strategic thinking were found to be significantly higher at the department level rather than the corporate level. The last expected reason behind the high influence of overall internal barriers on the departmental level is related to specific issues in the internal departmental processes and regulations, planning procedures, and performance management systems, all of which barriers were found to be significantly higher at the departmental level than the corporate level.

Moving on to the last organisational element (availability of SPU), organisations with strategic planning units were also compared to organisations without SPU in terms of the influence of internal barriers on their planning process. The results shown in Table 7.32 (and associated tables in Appendix D.2) indicate that the internal barriers are significantly higher for organisations without SPU over organisations with SPU at 0.01 significant levels (2-tailed). This finding is expected. As noted under section 4.2.1.3, the main functions of the SPU are to facilitate the planning process; follow up on the achievement of the different steps of the process; gain the commitment of main internal stakeholders; coordinate with external stakeholders; communicate process outcomes such as vision and mission statements, corporate values, and coordinate various activities, meetings, and other administrative requirements for the completion of the process; as well as conduct strategic planning workshops and training. All SPU activities are expected to moderate the influence of internal barriers such as resistance to change, weak strategic thinking, lack of leadership commitment to strategic planning, and weak strategic planning procedures.

From the above discussion it was found that a significant (negative) correlation exists between the influence of internal barriers and the formality of the strategic planning process; also it was noted that the correlation strength varies across various organisational characteristics. In addition, the influence of internal barriers was found to vary significantly according to the organisation age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU, but not according to organisation size.

7.3 Group (C) propositions – strategic plan document

Two propositions were developed in Group (C) as described under section 4.2.3. Proposition C.1 addresses the relationship between process formality and the quality of the strategic plan document (SPD); Proposition C.2 addresses the influence of organisational elements on the quality of the produced strategic plans as shown in Figure 7.3. In this section, propositions will be tested and findings will be analysed to satisfy research aim three 'Evaluating the quality of the strategic plan document produced and its association with the formality of the planning process', and to answer the following :

-   Is there any association between the formality of the planning process and the quality of the strategic plan documents produced?
-   Do organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU affect the quality of the produced strategic plan document?
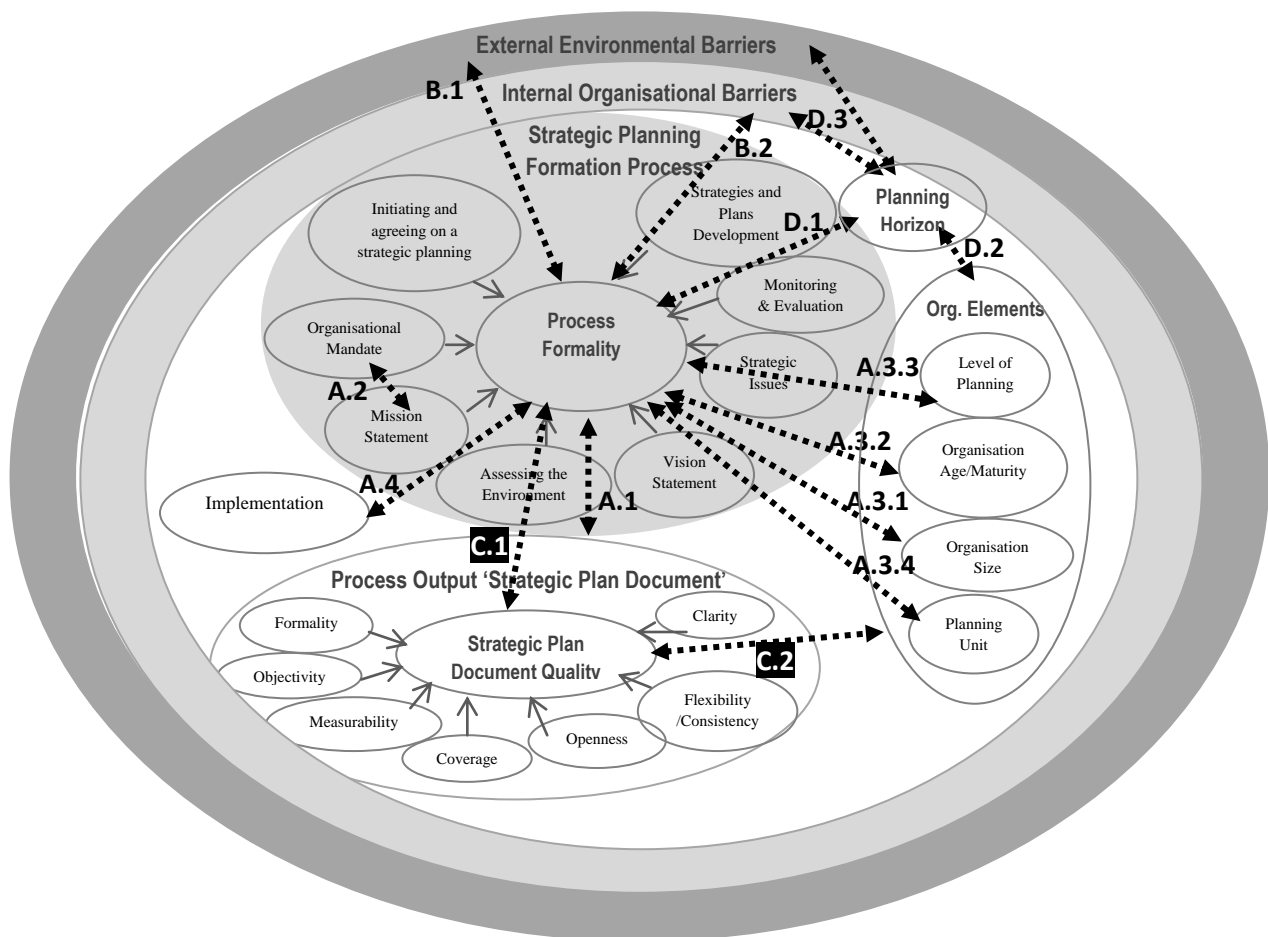
Figure 7.3: Conceptual framework – Group (C) SPD propositions

7.3.1 The process formality and the quality of the strategic plan document

In section 4.2.3.1, the relationship between process formality and the strategic plan document quality was investigated and proposition C.1 was formed.

Proposition C.1: The higher the formality of SPFP the better the quality of the strategic plan document produced.

The quality of the strategic plan document (SPD) is measured by seven quality criteria found to be important quality determinants as described under section 3.2.5. The results of SPD quality and each of the quality criteria is presented in Table 6.9.

In order to test proposition C.1, it is necessary first to determine if any correlation exists between process formality and the quality of SPD. Table 7.33 shows the correlation between process formality and the quality of SPD as well as the correlation with each of the quality criteria. Results indicate a strong positive correlation at 0.01 significant levels (2-tailed) between process formality and document quality and all quality criteria, except for consistency criterion at 0.05 significant levels (2-tailed). The results are consistent with proposition C.1.

Table 7.33 Correlations between process formality and SPD quality

			Process formality (SPFP)
Spearman's rho	SPD quality	Correlation coefficient	.704[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Quality criteria:		
	Formality (SPD)	Correlation coefficient	.520[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Clarity	Correlation coefficient	.387[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Measurability	Correlation coefficient	.587[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Objectivity	Correlation coefficient	.612[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Coverage	Correlation coefficient	.576[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Openness	Correlation coefficient	.524[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Consistency	Correlation coefficient	.186[*]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.037

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
List-wise N = 126

After verifying the strong positive correlation (association), it is important at this stage to test the causality effect and whether organisations with high process formality are more likely to produce quality strategic plan documents than organisations with low process formality. The results of the two groups were calculated and compared. Table 7.34 shows the results of SPD quality as well as each of the quality criteria for both groups. Results indicate that the SPD quality and each of its quality criteria are higher for organisations practising high process formality than organisations with low process formality; the quality of SPD has a mean of 4.21 and median of 4.11 for organisations with high process formality compared to 3.47 and 3.57 respectively for organisations with low process formality.

Table 7.34 Descriptive statistics for SPD quality according to process formality

	High process formality					Low process formality				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
SPD quality	62	4.21	.51	4.11	.61	64	3.47	0.59	3.57	.83
Quality criteria:										
Formality (SPD)	62	4.50	.67	5.00	1.00	64	3.77	1.07	4.00	2.00
Clarity	62	4.48	.62	5.00	1.00	64	3.89	0.98	4.00	.75
Measurability	62	4.27	.63	4.00	1.00	64	3.33	0.94	4.00	1.75
Objectivity	62	4.27	.75	4.00	1.00	64	3.34	0.88	3.00	1.00
Coverage	62	4.16	.77	4.00	1.00	64	3.39	0.75	3.00	1.00
Openness	62	4.03	.81	4.00	1.00	64	3.17	0.95	3.00	1.00
Consistency	62	3.74	.81	4.00	1.00	64	3.38	0.90	4.00	1.00

To test whether differences between the two groups are significant so assumptions can be made about the influence of process formality on producing a quality strategic plan document, a variance test was made. Tables 7.35 and 7.36 show the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for variances between the two groups.

Table 7.35 Ranks for SPD quality

	Process formality (SPFP)	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
SPD quality	Low	64	41.33	2645.00
	High	62	86.39	5356.00
	Total	126		
Formality (SPD)	Low	64	50.70	3244.50
	High	62	76.72	4756.50
Clarity	Low	64	52.51	3360.50
	High	62	74.85	4640.50
Measurability	Low	64	46.30	2963.50
	High	62	81.25	5037.50
Objectivity	Low	64	46.43	2971.50
	High	62	81.12	5029.50
Coverage	Low	64	48.23	3087.00
	High	62	79.26	4914.00
Openness	Low	64	48.55	3107.50
	High	62	78.93	4893.50
Consistency	Low	64	56.52	3617.00
	High	62	70.71	4384.00

Results indicate that mean ranks for overall quality and all quality criteria are higher for organisations with high process formality than organisations with low process formality and the difference is significant at 0.01 levels (2-tailed) except for consistency criterion which was found to be significant at 0.05 levels (2-tailed). The result confirms the influence of process formality on producing a quality strategic plan document. Therefore, proposition C.1 is supported.

Table 7.36 Mann-Whitney U test for SPD quality as per process formality

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
SPD quality	565.0	2645.0	–6.97	.000
Formality (SPD)	1164.5	3244.5	–4.31	.000
Clarity	1280.5	3360.5	–3.79	.000
Measurability	883.5	2963.5	–5.96	.000
Objectivity	891.5	2971.5	–5.60	.000
Coverage	1007.0	3087.0	–5.08	.000
Openness	1027.5	3107.5	–4.98	.000
Consistency	1537.0	3617.0	–2.37	.018

Grouping variable: process formality

The findings of proposition C.1 are mainly caused by the high correlation between the steps of the SPFP and the quality criteria for the strategic plan document as shown in Table 7.37. The high association (positive correlation) is found to be at 0.01 significant levels (2-tailed) for all pairs of variables except for the 'establishment of effective mission' and 'clarity' (pair), which shows a correlation at 0.05 significant levels (2-tailed), and also 'consistency' criterion which shows a weak

positive correlation with all SPFP steps, and correlation at 0.05 level (2-tailed) with 'strategic issue identification' steps. The difference in consistency criterion results is mainly due to the fact that consistency is not seen by some respondents as necessary for their organisation, and flexibility is deemed to be more important for their organisations. This is in alignment with Parnell and Lester (2003) who state that whether an organisation chooses to adopt a consistent strategy or chooses whether to promote flexibility is a managerial decision based on a number of institutional or environmental factors (explained under section 3.2.4.7).

Table 7.37 Spearman's correlations between SPD quality criteria and SPFP steps

SPFP Steps		Strategic Plan Document Quality Criteria							
		OQ	F	C	M	O	CO	P	CS
Initiating and Agreeing on the Strategic Planning Process	Correlation Coefficient	.449**	.375**	.304**	.406**	.417**	.403**	.342**	.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.303
Clarifying Organizational Mandate	Correlation Coefficient	.505**	.354**	.333**	.394**	.406**	.396**	.412**	.140
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.118
Establishing an Effective Vision	Correlation Coefficient	.498**	.436**	.239**	.352**	.425**	.446**	.326**	.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.007	.000	.000	.000	.000	.073
Establishing an Effective Mission	Correlation Coefficient	.453**	.330**	.215*	.331**	.460**	.398**	.349**	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.016	.000	.000	.000	.000	.515
Assessing the Environment	Correlation Coefficient	.493**	.421**	.274**	.456**	.419**	.381**	.320**	.129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002	.000	.000	.000	.000	.149
Strategic Issues Identification	Correlation Coefficient	.684**	.526**	.393**	.560**	.606**	.641**	.468**	.220*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.013
Strategies and Plans Development	Correlation Coefficient	.611**	.477**	.280**	.439**	.575**	.610**	.446**	.172
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.055
Monitoring & Evaluation	Correlation Coefficient	.537**	.283**	.256**	.507**	.498**	.394**	.519**	.134
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.004	.000	.000	.000	.000	.134
Quality Criteria: OQ=overall qiality; F=Formality; C=Clarity; M=Measurability; O=Objectivity; CO=Coverage; P=Openness; CS=Consistency									

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Listwise N=126

The high correlation between the steps of the SPFP and quality criteria is justifiable and understandable. For example, when organisations conduct, to a high extent, the 'monitoring and

evaluation' step, it is expected that the measurability of the strategic plan will be high because during the planning process the KPIs and performance measures have been formulated, which will enable the measurability of objectives within the strategic plan and this justifies the high correlation between the two variables (0.507**).

Also, when organisations conduct all the necessary steps of the planning process it is logical that the SPD 'formality' criterion (the strategic plan document includes all essential parts) will be higher because all parts have been completed in the strategic planning process and ready to be included in the SPD. The same applies to the 'coverage' and 'objectivity' criteria with the 'strategic issues identification' step and 'strategies and plans development' step. Once strategic issues have been identified this will enable the organisation to formulate strategic objectives to address those issues, which means the coverage criterion (as defined) is more likely to be met. This is validated by the high correlation result between the two variables (0.641**). Moreover, when strategies and plans are developed, it is more likely that the desired outcomes are clearly stated (objectivity criterion), therefore a high correlation (0.575**) was found between the two variables.

The high quality strategic plan documents produced in Dubai public sector organisations (as stated in Table 6.9 results) are the result of two main factors. First, public sector organisations in Dubai practise a high formal strategic planning process (this was explained in proposition A.1), and since process formality influences the formation of a quality strategic plan (as described in proposition C.1) then high quality strategic plans are expected to be formulated within Dubai public sector organisations.

Second, taking into consideration government requirements within the research context, the Dubai government has issued requirements to all public sector organisations to prepare strategic plan documents. In addition, the Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP) necessitates that all public sector organisations should have strategic plans, including vision and mission statements, values, strategies and policies, as well as a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the overall strategy (DGEP 2007, assessment guidelines). For example, under DGEP requirements, component '9' states that strategic objectives in the strategic plans should be monitored regularly and assessed for implementation. Also Chapter Six in the strategic plan manual (issued by the Dubai government) describes the importance of measurability and how to measure strategic objectives by setting the right KPIs. In addition, under the guidelines of the Dubai Government Excellence Program (DGEP) the coverage quality criterion (strategic objectives cover the identified critical issues) was

one of the evaluation criteria for assessing the government entities' strategic plans. This is indicated under component 2.3 of DGEP Guidelines (DGEP Guidelines – 2007).

An important note to make before proceeding to the following proposition is that the formality of the planning process as well as the formation of a quality strategic plan document does not necessarily lead to effective planning 'considering organisations' future needs' (Mintzberg, 1994b, p. 32), especially when the formality of the planning process and the SPDs produced are influenced by government requirements, as in the case of the Dubai public sector. It is believed that this, to a large extent, diverts the intention of planning from being a means to creating public value to being a means to gain legitimacy.

In line with the above, planning intentions should focus on identifying alternative courses of action and on creating more opportunities for the organisation rather than producing quality strategic plans. This is in line with Thompson (1990) who argues that the planning document is the least valuable output of the planning exercise. He states that 'Rather than trying to produce a watertight document covering the next ten years, planning should be more cerebral and visionary than detailed, formal and quantitative'. Sawyer states that 'formal systems are only a means to an end – they do not cause planning to occur, and can prevent it when their emphasis is too much on form instead of substance' (Sawyer, 1983). Therefore, for the strategic plan to be a valuable output of the planning process, the planning process should encourage managers and employees in general to think strategically. A strategic plan then becomes a document that is, in essence, an input into detailed planning by others (Mellalieu, 1992).

7.3.2 The quality of the strategic plan document and organisational elements

To determine the effect of organisational elements on the quality of the strategic plan produced, proposition C.2 was formulated.

Proposition C.2: The quality of the strategic plan document produced is influenced by organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level, and the availability of a strategic planning unit.

The quality of a strategic plan document (SPD) is measured by seven quality criteria as described under section 3.2.5. The results of SPD quality and of each quality criterion are presented in Table 6.9. In order to test whether organisational elements influence the quality of the strategic plan document produced, responses were tested according to four organisational elements. These are: size, age, organisational level, and the availability of the SPU. Results and discussions are presented next (associated mean ranks tables are available in Appendix D.3).

In relation to organisation size, the quality of SPD produced as well as the quality criteria, were measured for each group of organisations (large and small). Results presented in Table 7.38 show that large organisations' results for document quality and each of the quality criteria are slightly higher than small organisations' results. However, tests showed that the differences between the results are not significant.

Table 7.38 Descriptive statistics for SPD quality as per organisation size

Size	Large					Small				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
SPD quality	84	3.89	.63	3.93	.68	42	3.72	.72	3.86	.97
Quality criteria:										
Formality (SPD)	84	4.27	.855	4.00	1.00	42	3.83	1.102	4.00	2.00
Clarity	84	4.23	.812	4.00	1.00	42	4.10	.983	4.00	1.00
Measurability	84	3.88	.813	4.00	.00	42	3.62	1.125	4.00	1.25
Objectivity	84	3.83	.942	4.00	2.00	42	3.74	.939	4.00	1.00
Coverage	84	3.81	.843	4.00	1.00	42	3.69	.869	4.00	1.00
Openness	84	3.64	.940	4.00	1.00	42	3.50	1.065	4.00	1.00
Consistency	84	3.56	.91	4.00	1.00	42	3.55	.80	4.00	1.00

This is shown in Table 7.39, which indicates that the organisation's size has no influence on the quality of SPD produced and any of the quality criteria. The only exception found is for formality (SPD) criterion that shows a higher result for large organisations at 0.05 significant level (2-tailed). The high formality (SPD) result for large organisations is related to the compliance of large organisations to government requirements that are believed to be more imposed on large organisations than small ones.

Table 7.39 Mann-Whitney U test for SPD quality as per organisation size

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
SPD quality	1555.0	2458.0	−1.089	.276
Formality (SPD)	1367.5	2270.5	−2.210	.027
Clarity	1670.5	2573.5	−.534	.593
Measurability	1591.5	2494.5	−.992	.321
Objectivity	1667.5	2570.5	−.525	.600
Coverage	1641.5	2544.5	−.676	.499
Openness	1656.5	2559.5	−.593	.553
Consistency	1754.0	2657.0	−.056	.955

Grouping variable: size

Moving to organisation age, the results of Table 7.40 indicate that the SPD quality for mature organisations is clearly higher than for young organisations. Also, all quality criteria were found to be higher for young organisations compared to mature ones except for consistency.

Table 7.40 Descriptive statistics for SPD quality as per organisation age

Age	Mature					Young				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
SPD quality	81	3.70	.65	3.86	.57	45.00	4.06	.63	4.00	.86
Quality criteria:										
Formality (SPD)	81	3.94	.98	4.00	1.00	45	4.47	.84	5.00	1.00
Clarity	81	4.07	.89	4.00	1.00	45	4.38	.81	5.00	1.00
Measurability	81	3.67	.92	4.00	1.00	45	4.02	.92	4.00	1.00
Objectivity	81	3.62	.90	4.00	1.00	45	4.13	.92	4.00	1.00
Coverage	81	3.60	.80	4.00	1.00	45	4.07	.86	4.00	1.50
Openness	81	3.48	.98	4.00	1.00	45	3.80	.97	4.00	1.50
Consistency	81	3.56	.87	4.00	1.00	45	3.56	.89	4.00	1.00

The differences were also tested using the Mann-Whitney U test to determine the significance level. The results of Table 7.41 indicate that the document quality for young organisations is significantly higher than that for mature organisations at 0.01 levels (2-tailed); this confirms the influence of organisation age on producing a quality strategic plan document. The quality criteria results also indicate that formality, objectivity, and coverage showed a significant difference at 0.01 levels (2-tailed), whereas clarity and measurability showed a significant difference at 0.05 levels (2-tailed), and openness and consistency criterions showed no significant differences between young and mature organisations.

Table 7.41 Mann-Whitney U test for SPD quality as per organisation age

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
SPD quality	1231.0	4552.0	–3.033	.002
Formality (SPD)	1191.5	4512.5	–3.460	.001
Clarity	1432.5	4753.5	–2.191	.028
Measurability	1411.0	4732.0	–2.327	.020
Objectivity	1244.5	4565.5	–3.093	.002
Coverage	1275.5	4596.5	–2.968	.003
Openness	1505.5	4826.5	–1.721	.085
Consistency	1796.0	5117.0	–.147	.883

Grouping variable: age

The quality of strategic plan documents as well as quality criteria were also analysed according to the organisational level. Table 7.42 shows that the mean and median results for the quality of the planning document are higher at the corporate level than the departmental level (4.03 and 4.00 compared to 3.65 and 3.71 respectively). The same was found for quality criteria, except for consistency. This implies that the organisational level is an important determinant of the quality of the strategic plan produced. However, this conclusion cannot be verified without proving statistically that the differences in the results are significant. To do so, a Mann-Whitney U test was made.

Table 7.42 Descriptive statistics for SPD quality as per organisational level

Organisation level	Corporate level					Department level				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
SPD quality	60	4.03	.59	4.00	.57	66	3.65	.67	3.71	.61
Quality criteria: Formality (SPD)	60	4.30	.91	4.50	1.00	66	3.97	.99	4.00	1.25
Clarity	60	4.30	.87	4.00	1.00	66	4.08	.87	4.00	1.00
Measurability	60	3.95	.95	4.00	1.00	66	3.65	.90	4.00	1.00
Objectivity	60	4.10	.92	4.00	1.00	66	3.53	.88	4.00	1.00
Coverage	60	4.12	.74	4.00	1.00	66	3.45	.83	3.00	1.00
Openness	60	3.93	.82	4.00	.00	66	3.29	1.0	3.00	1.00
Consistency	60	3.53	.85	4.00	1.00	66	3.58	.90	4.00	1.00

The results of Table 7.43 show that document quality at the corporate level is significantly higher than at the departmental level at 0.01 levels (2-tailed). In relation to quality criteria, results of objectivity, coverage and openness showed significant difference at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); formality and measurability results varied at 0.05 levels (2-tailed). However, clarity and consistency did not show any significant difference between the two groups. From the above it is concluded that the quality of SPD is expected to be higher at the corporate level than the departmental level.

Table 7.43 Mann-Whitney U test for SPD quality as per organisational level

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
SPD quality	1195.5	3406.5	−3.860	.000
Formality (SPD)	1573.0	3784.0	−2.141	.032
Clarity	1646.5	3857.5	−1.797	.072
Measurability	1586.0	3797.0	−2.138	.033
Objectivity	1273.0	3484.0	−3.630	.000
Coverage	1139.0	3350.0	−4.377	.000
Openness	1275.0	3486.0	−3.673	.000
Consistency	1948.0	3778.0	−.170	.865

Grouping variable: organisational level

The last organisational element under investigation is the availability of an SPU. The results for organisations with SPU and organisations without SPU in relation to SPD quality are presented in Table 7.44. Results indicate that organisations with SPU clearly have a higher quality SPD than organisations without SPU. This was found to be true for all quality criteria.

Table 7.44 Descriptive statistics for SPD quality as per availability of SPU

Availability of SPU	SPU					No SPU				
	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile	N	Mean	SD	Median	Inter-quartile
SPD quality	111	3.92	.60	4.00	.72	15.00	3.15	.71	3.00	1.43
Quality criteria:										
Formality (SPD)	111	4.24	.86	4.00	1.00	15	3.27	1.28	3.00	2.00
Clarity	111	4.27	.76	4.00	1.00	15	3.53	1.30	4.00	3.00
Measurability	111	3.94	.82	4.00	.00	15	2.73	1.0	2.00	2.00
Objectivity	111	3.89	.90	4.00	2.00	15	3.13	.99	3.00	2.00
Coverage	111	3.84	.84	4.00	1.00	15	3.27	.80	3.00	1.00
Openness	111	3.70	.92	4.00	1.00	15	2.80	1.10	3.00	2.00
Consistency	111	3.59	.86	4.00	1.00	15	3.33	.98	4.00	2.00

To determine the significance of the difference between the results, variance was tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. The results in Table 7.45 indicate a significant difference in the SPD quality between the two groups at 0.01 level (2-tailed). This was also found for all quality criteria except for consistency.

Table 7.45 Mann-Whitney U test for SPD quality as per availability of SPU

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
SPD quality	341.5	461.5	–3.726	.000
Formality (SPD)	459.5	579.5	–3.026	.002
Clarity	565.5	685.5	–2.219	.026
Measurability	336.0	456.0	–4.154	.000
Objectivity	489.0	609.0	–2.720	.007
Coverage	547.0	667.0	–2.292	.022
Openness	455.0	575.0	–3.033	.002
Consistency	716.5	836.5	–.951	.342

Grouping variable: availability of SPU

It was noted from the results of all organisational elements that the consistency criterion was found to have no significant variances between any of the organisational groups identified above. This is because some organisations choose to adopt a consistent strategy whereas others promote flexibility depending on a number of institutional or environmental factors. Parnell and Lester (2003) provide the grounds on which proponents of strategic consistency and strategic flexibility base their decisions. These are presented under section (3.2.4.7).

7.4 Group (D) propositions – planning horizon

Three propositions were developed in Group (D) as described under section 4.2.4 and shown in Figure 7.4. Proposition D.1 investigates the relationship between process formality and the planning horizon (PH); proposition D.2 assesses the influence of organisational elements on PH; proposition D.3 determines whether the external or the internal barriers influence the PH. In this section, propositions will be tested, results will be analysed, and findings will be discussed to answer research questions detailed in Chapter One.

- What is the relationship between the process formality and the planning horizon?

- Are planning horizons influenced by organisational elements and barriers to the planning process?

And to satisfy research aim four 'assessing the determinants of the planning horizon within the research context'.
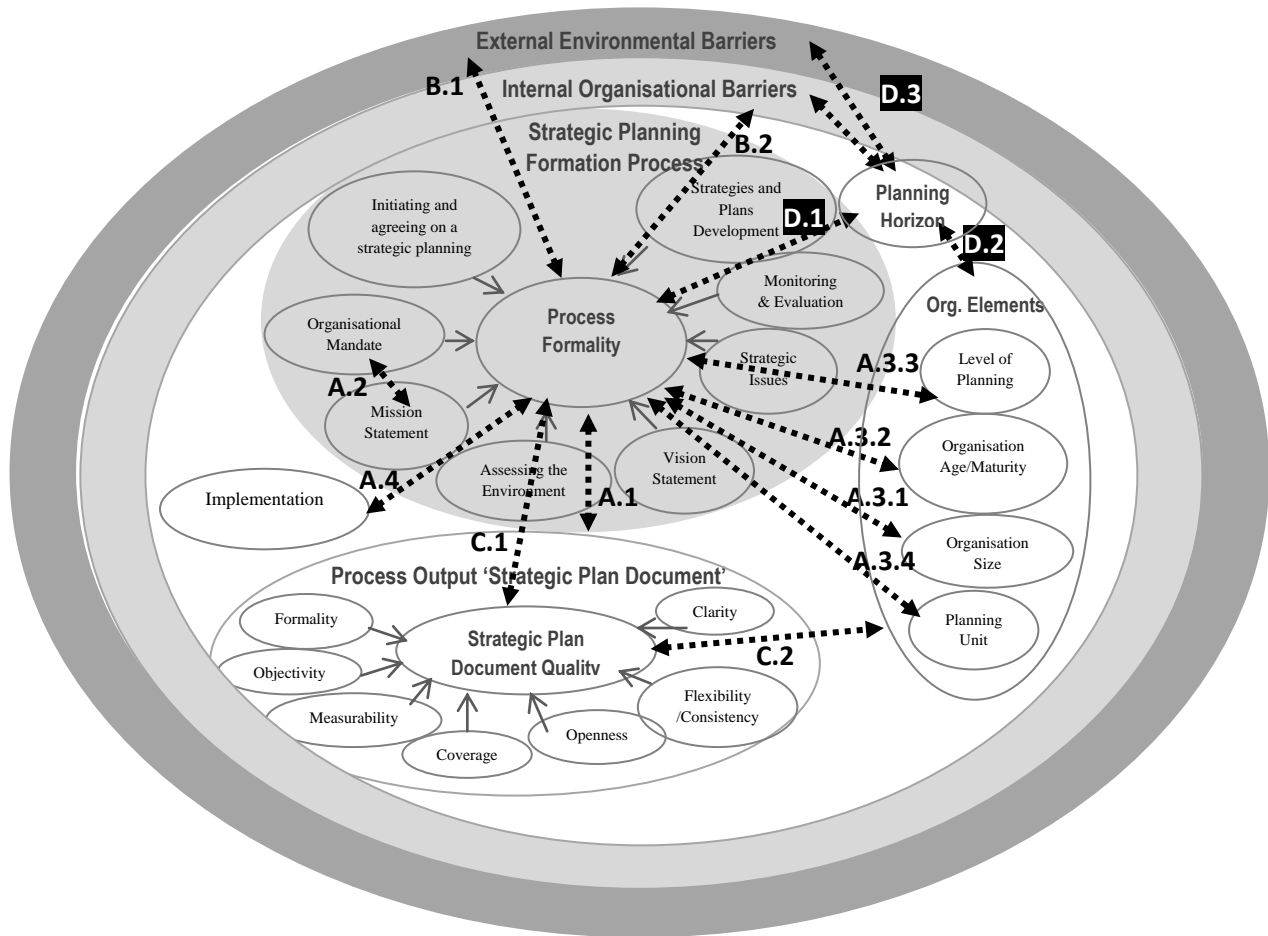
Figure 7.4: Conceptual framework – Group (D) planning horizon propositions

7.4.1 The formality of SPFP and the planning horizon

The relationship between the formality of the planning process with other variables of the present study such as the quality of SPD and the external and internal barriers were covered in the previous sections. The intention here is to investigate the relationship between the process formality of SPFP and the planning horizon-PH through testing the following proposition developed in section 4.2.4.1.

Proposition D.1: Organisations practising a formal strategic planning formation process tend to have a longer planning horizon.

Proposition D.1 was tested by measuring the correlation between the process formality of SPFP and the planning horizon. The results presented in Table 7.46 show that a strong positive correlation was found between the two variables at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). The results confirm the association between the process formality and the planning horizon.

Table 7.46 Correlation between the planning horizon and process formality

			Planning horizon
Spearman's rho	Process formality (SPFP)	Correlation coefficient	.534[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
		N	126

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To determine whether organisations with a high process formality (SPFP) have a longer planning horizon than organisations with a low process formality, two groups have been categorised (organisations with a high process formality and organisations with a low process formality). The planning horizon was calculated for both groups as indicated in Table 7.47. The results show that the average planning horizon for organisations practising high formal SPFP is higher than that for organisations practising less formal planning process – 4.11 years compared to 3.23 years respectively.

Table 7.47 Planning horizon descriptive statistics (years)

	Planning horizon		
	N	Mean	SD
Low process formality	64	3.23	1.47
High process formality	62	4.11	0.98

To determine whether the results of the planning horizon between the two groups varies significantly, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. The planning horizon results shown in Tables 7.48 and 7.49 indicate that the mean rank for organisations with a high process formality is higher than that for organisations with a low process formality.

Table 7.48 Ranks for planning horizon

	Process formality (SPFP)	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Planning horizon	Low	64	49.87	3191.50
	High	62	77.57	4809.50
	Total	126		

Table 7.49 Mann-Whitney U test for planning horizon

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Planning horizon	1111.5	3191.5	–4.387	.000

a. Grouping variable: process formality (SPFP)

In addition, a significant difference at 0.01 levels (2-tailed) is found between the two groups which lead to the conclusion that organisations practising high process formality in their strategic planning formation process tend to plan further into the future than organisations practising low process formality. This is in line with Covin (1991) and Das (1986, p. 69) who argue that organisations having formal strategic planning systems tend to have longer planning horizons.

A planning horizon's relationship to process formality is based on the fact that planners and managers involved in the selection of a planning horizon are bound in their choice of planning horizon by time, cost and availability of information; in other words, they operate within a context of bounded rationality (Harrison, 1987). In addition, individual managers are also influenced in their choice of a planning horizon by personality differences that manifest themselves in different degrees of willingness to accept risk (March and Shapira, 1987). The formality of the strategic planning process is expected to enhance the rationality of planners in making strategic decisions and reduce the risk associated with planning by following a structured formalised process; this will enable planners to plan further into the future.

7.4.2 The planning horizon and organisational elements

From the discussion regarding various organisational elements and their influence on the planning horizon presented under section 4.2.4.2, it is proposed that:

Proposition D.2: The organisation's planning horizon is influenced by organisational elements, such as size, age, organisational level, and the availability of a strategic planning unit; and as follows:

The Planning Horizon is expected to be longer:

- *for large organisations than for small organisations*
- *for mature organisations than for young organisations*
- *at corporate level than at departmental level*
- *for organisations with SPU rather than organisations without SPU.*

To test whether the planning horizon (PH) is influenced by organisational elements, the planning horizon was calculated for each group under each organisational element (size, age, organisational level, and availability of SPU). Results shown in Table 7.50 indicate that the average planning horizon for large organisations is longer than average PH for small ones (3.94 years compared to 3.12 years respectively).

Table 7.50 Descriptive statistics for the planning horizon as per organisational elements

Planning horizon						
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Size	Large			Small		
	84	3.94	1.339	42	3.12	1.109
Age	Mature			Young		
	81	3.58	1.254	45	3.82	1.435
Organisational level	Corporate large			Department large		
	60	4.35	1.132	66	3.05	1.169
Availability of SPU	SPU			No SPU		
	111	3.86	1.249	15	2.27	.961

In relation to organisation age, PH for young organisations is longer than that for mature organisations (3.82 years compared to 3.58 years respectively). Also, at corporate level the average planning horizon is 4.35 years compared to 3.05 years for the departmental level. Finally, PH for organisations with SPU is longer than PH for organisations without SPU (3.86 years compared to 2.27 years respectively). The results of Table 7.50 show that organisational elements influence the planning horizon. However, to determine whether the influence is significant, another test is needed.

A Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the variances in the results found in Table 7.50. Results shown in Tables 7.51 and 7.52 confirm that PH for large organisations varies significantly compared to PH for small organisations at 0.01 significant levels (2-tailed). This is consistent with Larsen (1998) who states that companies selecting short planning horizons are more likely to be small companies rather than large ones; however, within the research context, a study conducted by Al Shaikh (2001) on organisations operating in UAE found that there were no significant differences between length of plans in small and large firms.

Table 7.51 Ranks for PH as per organisational elements

	Size	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Planning horizon	Small	42	48.80	2049.50
	Large	84	70.85	5951.50
	Total	126		
	Age	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Planning horizon	Young	45	66.03	2971.50
	Mature	81	62.09	5029.50
	Total	126		
	Organisational level	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Planning horizon	Department large	66	46.42	3063.50
	Corporate large	60	82.29	4937.50
	Total	126		
	Availability of SPU	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Planning horizon	No SPU	15	25.80	387.00
	SPU	111	68.59	7614.00
	Total	126		

In relation to other organisational elements, the PH for organisations with SPU is significantly higher than that for organisations without SPU at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). Also, the PH at corporate level is found to be significantly higher than that at the departmental level at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). However, the PH between mature and young organisations was found not to be significant. From the above it can be concluded that the planning horizon is influenced by organisational elements such as size, availability of SPU and organisational level but not organisational age. The finding of this study is not consistent with that of Al Shaikh (2001) who concluded that there are no significant differences between mean lengths of plans in the different types of companies under study and that the length of the plans is independent of the type of company.

Table 7.52 Mann-Whitney U test for PH as per organisational elements

	Grouping variable	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Planning horizon	Size	1146.5	2049.5	−3.293	.001
Planning horizon	Age	1708.5	5029.5	−.598	.550
Planning horizon	Organisational level	852.5	3063.5	−5.675	.000
Planning horizon	Availability of SPU	267.0	387.0	−4.390	.000

The influence of organisation age on the planning horizon was found to be insignificant. This is explained as follows. It was expected based on discussions preceding the development of proposition D.2 in section 4.2.4.2 that the organisation's age will influence the planning horizon and that mature organisations will have longer planning horizons than young ones. However, because PH is influenced positively by the formality of the strategic planning process as stated in proposition D.1, and since process formality is higher for young organisations than mature ones, it is expected that the influence of organization age on PH is moderated by process formality. Therefore, no significant difference is found for PH between mature and young organisations.

7.4.3 The planning horizon and barriers to planning

Based on the discussions presented in section 4.2.4.3 regarding the influence of external and internal barriers on the planning process within the Dubai public sector, the following was proposed:

Proposition D.3: The higher the influence of the internal and/or the external barriers on the planning process the shorter is the planning horizon.

To investigate the relationship between external and internal barriers and the planning horizon, it is essential first to test whether any correlation exists. A Spearman's correlation test is use to determine such a relationship and the results presented in Table 7.53 show that a strong negative relationship (−0.261∗∗) exists between internal barriers and the planning horizon. However, the relationship between external barriers and the planning horizon did not show any significant correlation.

Table 7.53 Correlations between the planning horizon and planning barriers

			Planning horizon
Spearman's rho	Internal barriers	Correlation coefficient	−.261[**]
		sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	External barriers	Correlation coefficient	−.007
		sig. (2-tailed)	.941

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

List-wise N = 126

To analyse the findings further, two groups of organisations were categorised as per the influence of each of the external barriers and the internal barriers; descriptive statistics are presented in Table 7.54 and the results of the planning horizon for organisations influenced with high internal barriers was found to be 3.44 years compared to 3.88 years for organisations influenced with low internal barriers.

Table 7.54 Descriptive statistics for PH according to the influence of internal and external barriers

Planning horizon (years)						
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Influence of internal barriers		High			Low	
	61	3.44	1.533	65	3.88	1.053
Influence of external barriers		High			Low	
	61	3.70	1.453	65	3.63	1.193

In relation to external barriers, surprisingly and contrary to expectations, the results of the planning horizon for organisations influenced by high external barriers were found to be slightly higher than for organisations with low external barriers (3.70 years compared to 3.63 years). The results were further tested for significant differences between the two groups for each of the internal barriers and external barriers. Tables 7.55 and 7.56 show the results of a Mann-Whitney U test between each group.

Table 7.55 ranks for PH as per internal and external barriers

	Influence of internal barriers	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Planning horizon	Low	65	70.13	4558.5
	High	61	56.43	3442.5
	Total	126		
	Influence of external barriers	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Planning horizon	Low	65	63.55	4131.0
	High	61	63.44	3870.0
	Total	126		

In relation to the internal barriers, the difference between PH for organisations influenced by low internal barriers compared to those influenced by high internal barriers was found to be significant at 0.05 levels (2-tailed). However, the difference between PH for organisations influenced with high external barriers compared to PH for organisations with low external barriers was found to be insignificant. From the above discussion it can be concluded that the planning horizon is influenced by internal barriers and the higher the influence of internal barriers the shorter the planning horizon. However, the PH is not influenced by the external barriers.

Table 7.56 Mann-Whitney U test PH and planning barriers

		Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Planning horizon	Internal barriers[a]	1551.5	3442.5	−2.168	.030
	External barriers[b]	1979.0	3870.0	−.018	.986

a. Grouping variable: influence of internal barriers
b. Grouping variable: influence of external barriers

The findings of proposition D.3 can be explained based on the findings of previous propositions as follows: the relationship between process formality and the planning horizon was tested under proposition D.1 and findings indicate that organisations practising a high formal strategic planning formation process tend to have a longer planning horizon. In addition, the relationship between process formality and each of the external and internal barriers was tested under propositions B1 and B2 respectively. Findings indicate that the influence of the external barriers on the planning process did not affect the process formality, but in relation to internal barriers it was found that the higher the influence of the internal barriers to the planning process, the lower the formality of SPFP.

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The findings of this proposition (D.3) are in alignment with previous findings since the internal barriers were found to influence the planning horizon because the higher the influence of internal barriers, the lower the formality of the strategic planning process (proposition B.2), and the lower the process formality, the shorter the planning horizon (proposition D.1). In relation to external barriers, the influence of external barriers did not affect the planning horizon because the process formality that affects the planning horizon (proposition D.1) is not influenced by external barriers (findings of proposition B.1). From the above discussion, proposition D.3 is partially supported.

7.5 Findings and their relation to research questions, existing knowledge and the contributions sought

The aim of this section is to tie the research findings more directly with research aims and questions, to link back the findings with existing literature, and to set the stage for the managerial and theoretical contributions which will be presented in the following chapter.

Four groups of propositions were presented in this chapter, each containing a set of propositions. Seven propositions are developed and tested under Group (A) covering the formality of SPFP and its relationship to the formulation of SPD, the association between steps of the planning process, the relationship between SPFP and organisational elements, and the relationship between SPFP and the implementation of strategies. The results and findings of Group (A) propositions are intended to satisfy research aim one 'Assessing the strategic planning formation process within Dubai public sector organisations'.

Findings suggest that Dubai public sector organisations practise a high formal planning process with an overall mean of 3.74 (on a scale of 5). Also, it is found that 85% of the research sample has written strategic plan documents. This is consistent with previous studies in UAE and shows that more organisations believe in the benefits of strategic planning (Elbanna, 2010). In addition, it is concluded that process formality influences the formulation of the strategic plan document at 0.01 significance level. This supports existing literature in relation to strategic planning formality measure where the relation between planning commitment (measured by written plans (Bracker et al., 1988)) and planning completeness (measured by the completion of the planning process steps (Pearce et al., 1987)) are expected to be positive. These results are related to two research questions under research aim one. These are 'To what extent is a formal strategic planning formation process

(SPFP) practised within public sector organisations in Dubai?' and 'Is there a relationship between the formality of SPFP and the formulation of the strategic plan documents?'

Findings also indicate that a very significant positive correlation exists between all steps of the SPFP. The result reaffirms the fact that the steps of the planning process complement each other, and the completion of one step will generate the necessary momentum to initiate the following step, which may then feed back into the preceding one. This is consistent with Bryson (2004) who states that some steps in the planning process depend on the findings of preceding steps and that the steps may overlap, or they may happen in parallel and the whole process may even go back and forth (Bryson, 2004, p. 52; Kaplan, 1996). The finding of this proposition is intended to answer the third research question under this group 'Is there any association between the steps of the SPFP?'

In relation to the fourth research question 'Is there any variation in the strategic planning formation process across the different types of organisations within the research context?' results show that the formality of SPFP is influenced by the elements of organisational size, age, organisation level, and the availability of a strategic planning unit (SPU). Process formality for large organisations is found to be higher than that for small organisations. This is consistent with Robbins (1990) who claims that large organisations tend to have high process formality to improve coordination and control across the organisation structure. This is particularly true for large public sector organisations in Dubai, which predominantly have complex organisational structures as noted from the secondary data. It was also noted from the findings that mature public sector organisations in Dubai (representing approximately 65% of respondents' results) have a lower process formality than their counterparts. This is consistent with Leonard-Barton (1992) who state that age can affect performance and the ability of an organisation to change by inducing organisational inertia. Also the finding supports the argument that old age may make knowledge, abilities, and skills obsolete and induce organisational decay (Agarwal and Gort, 2002). In addition, findings show that process formality at the corporate level is significantly higher than that at the departmental level. This is in agreement with the theory in this field. Kettle (2002) noted that with the use of strategic planning at corporate level, public sector organisations can better manage the relationship with other entities within the system of public organisations. Also, strategic planning at the corporate level enhances the ability to manage the interconnectedness of the public sector with the private sector (Cleveland, 2002). Another important benefit of formal planning at the corporate level is increased legitimacy. As stated by Stone and Brush (1996) pressures for legitimacy from both internal and external sources are likely to lead to formal strategic planning. Still, within the findings that relate to

research question four it is found that organisations with an SPU are experiencing, to a higher extent, a formal planning process. This is because the existence of an SPU is expected to facilitate and formalise the planning process which is in alignment with Dubai government requirements.

The last proposition under this group relates to research aim one and research question five 'What is the relationship between the formality of the planning process and the implementation of strategies and plans?'. Findings show a strong positive correlation between process formality (as well as each step in the process) and the implementation of strategies and plans. Thus it is concluded that the formality of SPFP enhances the implementation of strategies and plans. The positive correlation found supports the claim that the implementation process will allow for adaptive learning, and such learning will lead to a better understanding of SPFP which will feed into the new round of strategy formation (Bryson, 2004, p. 238). In addition the finding is in alignment with Mintzberg et al. (1998) who noted that effective strategy-making connects acting to thinking, which in turn connects implementation to formulation.

For research aim two 'Evaluating the influence of external (contextual) and internal (organisational) barriers on the SPFP' two propositions were developed and tested to satisfy the following research questions:
- What is the influence of internal and external barriers on the planning process?
- Do organisational characteristics moderate the influence of external and internal barriers on the SPFP?

It is concluded from the results, contrary to expectations, that the external barriers do not influence the formality of the SPFP. Results showed no significant correlation between the influence of external barriers and process formality, nor a significant difference between process formality for organisations influenced with high external barriers and organisations influenced with low external barriers. In addition, the influence of external barriers on different groups of organisations categorised according to size, age, organisational level, and the existence of SPU did not show any significant differences. On the other hand a strong negative correlation exists between internal barriers and process formality (SPFP). Therefore, it is concluded that the higher the influence of internal barriers to the planning process, the lower the formality of SPFP. In addition, findings indicate that both large and small organisations have a significant negative correlation between internal barriers and process formality. However, only young organisations showed a significant

negative correlation. Thus, it is concluded that the influence of internal barriers differs across different groups of organisations within the Dubai public sector and that the difference is significant for organisations categorised by age, organisational level and the availability of SPU, but not organisation size

The third group of propositions focuses on research aim three 'Evaluating the quality of the strategic plan document produced and its association with the planning process'. and address the following research question 'Is there any association between the formality of the planning process and the quality of the strategic plan documents produced?'. The findings indicate that the higher the formality of SPFP, the better the quality of the strategic plan document produced. This conclusion is based on two findings. First, the high positive correlation found between process formality and the quality of SPD. Second, the results for SPD quality are found to be significantly higher for organisations practising high process formality than in organisations with low process formality. This is in alignment with Whelan and Sisson, (1993) who state that the quality of the strategic plan produced is a reflection of the goodness of the process itself. They added that the design of the planning process and the commitment to complete the steps of the process can affect the content of the process output 'strategic plan document'.

The last group of propositions tested in this chapter relates to planning horizon. The findings generated from testing group propositions are intended to satisfy research aim four 'assessing the determinants of the planning horizon within the research context'. The results demonstrate that organisations practising a formal SPFP have a longer planning horizon. Thus it is concluded that process formality influences PH positively. This is based on both the significant correlation found between process formality and the planning horizon, and the significant difference for the length of plans between organisations practising high formal SPFP compared to the ones practising low formal SPFP. The result is directly linked to the following research question 'What is the relationship between process formality and the planning horizon?'. The finding is consistent with existing knowledge. Rhyne (1985) states that the planning horizon for individual firms can vary depending on environmental and organisational factors. Das (1986, p. 69) added that a five-year planning horizon is probably most common among organisations having formal strategic planning systems. Added to this Harrison (1995) state that the determinant of a planning horizon is influenced by a number of factors and is dependent on how far into the future the organisation

needs to plan? And on how far into the future is management willing and able to plan? The positive relationship found between SPFP and PH is in alignment with existing literature in the field.

7.6 Summary

In Chapter Seven, research aims are fulfilled and research questions are answered. Four groups of propositions were covered. Each group of propositions starts by presenting the associated research aims and research questions followed by a graphical representation of the conceptual framework. Then propositions were tested and findings were discussed.

In Group (A), seven propositions have been tested covering the formality of SPFP: the association between stages (steps) of the planning process, the relationship between SPFP and the organisational elements, as well as the relationship between SPFP and the implementation of strategies and plans.

Findings of Group (A) propositions indicate that organisations practising a high process formality in their SPFP are more likely to formulate strategic plan documents than organisations with low process formality. A strong association was found to exist between the 'consecutive steps' of the strategic planning formation process. Other important findings under this group are the influence of organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level and availability of SPU on the formality of the strategic planning process. In addition, process formality was found to enhance the implementation of strategies and plans.

Under Group (B), two propositions were developed. The first addresses the relationship between external barriers and the formality of the strategic planning formation process. The second addresses the relationship between internal barriers and the formality of SPFP. Findings indicate that the higher the influence of internal barriers on the planning process, the lower the formality of SPFP. However, the influence of external barriers did not affect the formality of the planning process.

Two propositions were developed in Group (C). The first addresses the relationship between process formality and the quality of the strategic plan document (SPD) and each of its quality criteria. The second assesses the influence of organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level and availability of the strategic plan unit (SPU) on producing quality strategic plans. Findings show that the higher the formality of SPFP, the better the quality of the strategic

plan document produced. Another important finding noted is the influence of organisational elements such as age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU on the quality of the SPD produced but not the organisational size.

Under Group (D), three propositions were developed to investigate the relationship between process formality and the planning horizon (PH), to assess the influence of organisational elements on PH, and to determine whether the external or the internal barriers influence the PH. Findings show that organisations practising a formal strategic planning formation process tend to have a longer planning horizon. Also, it was found that the organisation's planning horizon is influenced by organisational elements such as size, organisational level, and the availability of SPU, but not organizational age. Results concerning the relationship between planning barriers and the planning horizon showed that the higher the influence of internal barriers on the planning process, the shorter is the planning horizon. However, the external barriers did not affect the planning horizon.

The next chapter presents conclusions about propositions, provides contributions and implications for theory and practice, and discusses the key findings and the limitations of this thesis. In addition, some suggestions for future research opportunities will also be provided.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

The aim of this study is to discover the nature and the extent of the strategic planning formation process within the Dubai public sector and to analyse the various influences and the outputs of the planning process. The research questions were addressed by testing 14 propositions shown in the conceptual framework (Chapter Four). Data were gathered from 22 organisations representing approximately 75 per cent of the Dubai public sector. One hundred and forty-seven surveys were collected through a mail questionnaire. The analysis and interpretation of data (Chapter Six) led to testing propositions and deriving findings (Chapter Seven).

This chapter is divided into six sections. In the next section, conclusions about research propositions are drawn, followed by answers to the research questions and then an overview of the Dubai public sector strategic planning formation process is presented. Next, theoretical contributions and the managerial implications of the thesis are described. The limitations of the thesis are set out, and finally, 'future research' on this topic is suggested.

8.1 Conclusions about the propositions

The research propositions are tested and thoroughly discussed in Chapter Seven. Figure 8.1 shows the results of the research propositions within the conceptual framework of the study. Three types of results are shown: confirmed propositions, indicated with a bold line; partially confirmed propositions, indicated with a dotted line; and not confirmed propositions, indicated with a gray line. In addition, a summary of proposition results is shown in Table 8.1 for easy tracking. Next, conclusions for each group of propositions are presented.
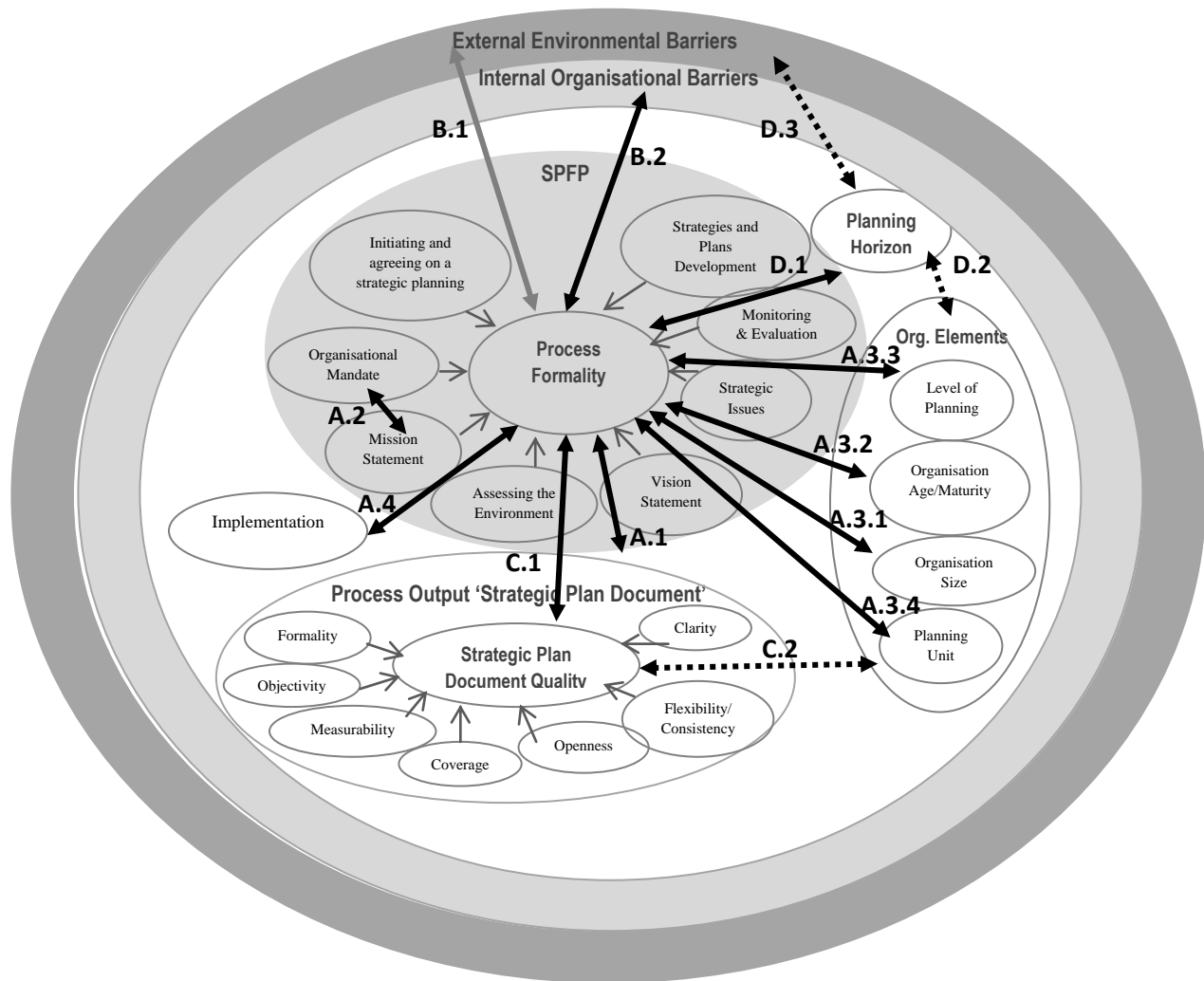
Figure 8.1: Conceptual framework showing results of research propositions

8.1.1 Conclusions about the strategic planning formation process (Group A)

Seven propositions are developed and tested under Group (A) (Table 8.1) covering the formality of SPFP and its relationship to the formulation of SPD, the association between steps of the planning process, the relationship between SPFP and organisational elements, and the relationship between SPFP and the implementation of strategies.

Proposition A.1 tests the extent to which the steps of the planning process have been conducted within Dubai public sector organisations (process formality), and the influence of process formality

on the formulation of the strategic plan documents. Findings suggest that Dubai public sector organisations practise a high formal planning process with an overall mean of 3.74 (on a scale of 5). Also, it is found that 85% of the research sample has written strategic plan documents. This is consistent with previous studies in UAE and shows that more organisations believe in the benefits of strategic planning. In addition, it is concluded that process formality influences the formulation of the strategic plan document at 0.01 significance level. However, this influence as stated in section (7.1.1) can be bi-directional.

The formality results in the Dubai public sector are related to Dubai government initiatives and reform programs; legitimacy and resource acquisition; and the increased public demand and expectations for better public services. However, the high formality results do not imply better performance, nor do they imply better-developed strategies (Robinson and Pearce, 1983). They simply demonstrate that organisations in Dubai are practising a relatively high formal strategic planning process.

Proposition A.2: Because it was expected that the consecutive steps of the SPFP are highly associated, this proposition examines the association between the steps of the planning process. Findings indicate that a very significant positive correlation exists between all consecutive steps of the SPFP. The result reaffirms the fact that the steps of the planning process complement each other, and the completion of one step will generate the necessary momentum to initiate the following step, which may then feed back into the preceding one. In addition, the findings show a significant correlation between all steps of the planning process. This supports the argument that the process is not necessarily linear and can be iterative.

Proposition A.3: Results show that the formality of SPFP is influenced by the elements of organisational size, age, organisation level, and the availability of a strategic planning unit (SPU). Process formality for large organisations is found to be higher than that for small organisations at 0.01 significance level (2-tailed). Large organisations tend to have high process formality to improve coordination and control across the organisation structure since they tend to have greater structural complexity than small organisations, which makes effective coordination more difficult (Robbins, 1990). This is particularly true for large public sector organisations in Dubai, which predominantly have complex organisational structures as noted from the secondary data. Another potential reason for the high process formality result is the greater number of planning incidents that occur for large organisations compared to small ones (Risseeuw and Masurel, 1994).

It was also found that young organisations have a higher planning formality than mature ones. This indicates that mature public sector organisations in Dubai (representing approximately 65% of respondents' results) have a lower process formality than young ones due to a number of reasons discussed previously in section (7.1.3.2), such as: organisational inertia, organisational decay, organisational growth, intensity of planning in young organisations, and finally, younger firms need to plan to withstand uncertainties. Thus it is concluded that organisation age influences the formality of the planning process.

For the organisational level and its influence on the formality of SPFP, results indicate that process formality at the corporate level is significantly higher than process formality at the departmental level at 0.01significance level. This supports the proposition. A number of factors lead to this conclusion. First, the benefits of strategic planning in public sector organisations are more related to the corporate level than the departmental level. These benefits include: managing relationships with external stakeholders, managing the interconnectedness with the private sector, promoting strategic thinking, and increasing legitimacy. Another reason is the Dubai government requirement to initiate the strategic planning process at the corporate level and cascade the planning activities down to departmental levels. This emphasis on 'top down' strategic planning at the corporate level drives the development of planning at the lower levels by cascading the strategic objectives. In addition, strategic planning at the corporate level is monitored regularly by the Dubai government executive office.

Moreover, it was expected that the extent to which a formal SPFP is practised would be higher in organisations with a strategic planning unit (SPU) than in organisations without. Results affirm the proposition by showing that organisations with an SPU are experiencing, to a higher extent, a formal planning process at 0.01 significance level (2-tailed). This is because the existence of an SPU is expected to facilitate and formalise the planning process. The high percentage of SPUs in Dubai public organizations is due to the government requirement for public sector organisations to establish a strategic planning unit responsible for driving the planning process.

Table 8.1 Propositions results

Propositions	Results
Organisations practising a high process formality in their SPFP are more likely to formulate strategic plan documents than organisations with low process formality (A.1)	Confirmed
A strong association exists between the 'consecutive steps' of the strategic planning formation process (A.2)	Confirmed
The extent to which a formal SPFP is practised is higher:	
• for large organisations than small organisations within the research context (Dubai public sector) (A.3.1)	Confirmed
• for young organisations than for mature organisations (A.3.2)	Confirmed
• at the corporate level than departmental level (A.3.3)	Confirmed
• for organisations with a strategic planning unit (SPU) than in organisations without an SPU (A.3.4)	Confirmed
The formality of the strategic planning formation process will enhance the implementation of strategies and plans (A.4)	Confirmed
The greater the influence of external barriers to the planning process the lower the formality of SPFP (B.1)	Not confirmed
The higher the influence of internal barriers to the planning process the lower the formality of SPFP (B.2)	Confirmed
The higher the formality of SPFP the better the quality of the strategic plan document produced (C.1)	Confirmed
The quality of the strategic plan document produced is influenced by the organisational elements' size, age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU (C.2)	Partially confirmed
• Organisation size	Not confirmed
• Organisation age	Confirmed
• Organisational level	Confirmed
• Availability of SPU	Confirmed
Organisations practising a formal strategic planning formation process tend to have a longer planning horizon (D.1)	Confirmed
The organisation's planning horizon is influenced by organisational elements (D.2). The planning horizon is expected to be longer:	Partially confirmed
• for large organisations than for small organisations	Confirmed
• for mature organisations than for young organisations	Not confirmed
• at corporate level than at departmental level	Confirmed
• for organisations with SPU than organisations without SPU	Confirmed
The higher the influence of the internal and external barriers on the planning process, the shorter is the planning horizon (D.3)	Partially confirmed
• The higher the influence of internal barriers on the planning process, the shorter is the planning horizon	Confirmed
• The higher the influence of the external barriers on the planning process the shorter is the planning horizon	Not confirmed

Proposition A.4: The relationship between process formality and the implementation of strategies and plans is tested by this proposition. Findings show a strong positive correlation between process formality (as well as each step in the process) and the implementation of strategies and plans at the 0.01 significance level. Thus it is concluded that the formality of SPFP enhances the implementation of strategies and plans. The implementation is also found to be influenced by two organisational elements: the organisational level and the availability of an SPU. However, the implementation is not found to be influenced by organisation size and age in the Dubai public sector. The reasoning behind the influence of organisational elements on implementation requires more detailed analysis beyond the scope of this study.

8.1.2   Conclusions about the external and internal barrier (Group B)

Two propositions are developed and tested to address the influence of external and internal barriers on the formality of the SPFP (Table 8.1). It is concluded from the results of proposition B.1, and contrary to expectations, that the external barriers do not influence the formality of the SPFP. Results showed no significant correlation between the influence of external barriers and process formality, nor a significant difference between process formality for organisations influenced with high external barriers and organisations influenced with low external barriers.

This is considered to be the result of producing two contradictory effects by external barriers. Firstly, they act as barriers to the planning process and reduce the formality of the planning process. This assumption was the basis for formulating proposition B.1 and was expected to lead to a negative correlation between external barriers and process formality. Second, the external barriers might enhance the formality of SPFP, in other words, act as a catalyst for planning. Once a potential external barrier appears in the organisation's external environment, the organisation may react through a formal planning process to withstand uncertainty and to overcome the potential external barriers. This would generate a positive correlation between external barriers and process formality. The two contradicting effects produced by potential external barriers on process formality are considered to result in there being neither a negative nor a positive correlation between them in this study.

It is also concluded that the influence of external barriers on different groups of organisations categorised according to size, age, organisational level, and the existence of SPU did not show any significant differences. However, exceptions were noted for some external barriers, such as the

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'macro economy' and the 'turbulent environment', which are found to be significantly higher for young organisations than for mature ones. Also, the 'ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations' barrier is found to be significantly higher for organisations without an SPU than for organisations with one.

For internal barriers, a strong negative correlation exists between them and process formality (SPFP) at 0.01 level (2-tailed). Moreover, organisations influenced by high internal barriers practise a lower process formality than organisations influenced by low internal barriers. Therefore, it is concluded that the higher the influence of internal barriers to the planning process, the lower the formality of SPFP.

In addition, the correlation between internal barriers and process formality is assessed according to the four organisational elements. The findings indicate that both large and small organisations have a significant negative correlation between internal barriers and process formality at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). However, in relation to organisation age, only young organisations showed a significant negative correlation. Moreover, results showed that a significant correlation is found at the departmental level and not the corporate level, and for organisations with SPU and not for organisations without SPU.

It is also concluded that the influence of internal barriers differs across different groups of organisations within the Dubai public sector and that the difference is significant for organisations categorised by age, organisational level and the availability of SPU, but not organisation size as described in section 7.2.2.

8.1.3   Conclusions about the strategic plan document produced (Group C)

Two propositions were developed and tested in this group to address the relationship between process formality and the quality of the strategic plan document (SPD) as well as the influence of organisational elements on producing quality strategic plans (Table 8.1).

It is concluded from the findings of proposition C.1 that the higher the formality of SPFP, the better the quality of the strategic plan document produced. This conclusion is based on two findings. First, the high positive correlation found between process formality and the quality of SPD.

Second, the results for SPD quality are found to be significantly higher for organisations practising high process formality than in organisations with low process formality at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The quality results of the SPD for Dubai public sector organisations are a result of two factors. First, organisations in the Dubai public sector practise a high formal strategic planning process, and since process formality influences the quality of the strategic plans produced (as results proved), high quality strategic plans are expected to be formulated within the research context. Second, the Dubai government requires all public sector organisations to prepare strategic plan documents and to satisfy the quality measures stated in the strategic plan manual.

Proposition C.2: It was expected that organisational elements would influence the quality of the strategic plan document produced. Results show that young organisations produce a better-quality strategic plan document than mature ones, and plans produced at the corporate level are found to be significantly better than those produced at the departmental level. Results also indicate that organisations with SPU produce a better-quality SPD than organisations without SPU. However, no significant difference is noticed between the quality of plans for small organisations compared to large ones. Thus it is concluded that the quality of the strategic plan document produced is influenced by organisational age, organisational level, and the availability of the SPU, but not the organisational size.

Despite the fact that the quality of SPD differs across different organisations within Dubai, both the formality of the planning process and the formation of a quality strategic plan document do not necessarily lead to effective planning 'considering organisations' future needs', especially when the formality of the planning process and the quality of the document produced are influenced by Dubai government requirements. It is believed that this, to a large extent, diverts the intention of planning from being a means to creating public value to being a means to gain legitimacy.

8.1.4   Conclusions about the planning horizon (Group D)

Three propositions are tested covering the relationship between process formality and the planning horizon (PH), the influence of organisational elements on PH, as well as the influence of planning barriers on PH (Table 8.1).

The results of proposition D.1 demonstrate that organisations practising a formal SPFP have a longer planning horizon. Thus it is concluded that process formality influences PH. This is based on both the significant correlation found between process formality and the planning horizon, and the significant difference for the length of plans between organisations practising high formal SPFP (4.11 years) compared to organisations practising low formal SPFP (3.23 years). The conclusion is explained by the fact that planners and managers involved in setting the planning horizon are limited in their choice by time, cost and the availability of information. In other words, they operate within a context of bounded rationality (Harrison, 1987). The formality of the strategic planning process enhances the rationality of planners in making strategic decisions and enables planners to plan further into the future.

The results of proposition D.2 showed a longer planning horizon for large organisations than small ones. Also, the PH at the corporate level was found to be longer than at the departmental level, and for organisations with SPU longer than for organisations without SPU. However, no significant difference was found for the PH between young and mature organisations. Therefore, an organisation's planning horizon is influenced by the organisational elements of size, organisational level, and the availability of SPU but not organisational age.

The planning horizon for mature organisations is not found to be longer than that for young organisations as expected when the proposition was developed. This is because young organisations within the Dubai public sector are practising a higher formal strategic planning process than mature ones, and since high process formality leads to a longer PH, the PH for mature organisations is not found to be longer than that for young organisations.

Finally, a strong negative correlation is found between internal barriers and the PH, but no significant correlation is found between external barriers and the horizon (proposition D.3). In addition, it was found that organisations influenced with high internal barriers have a significantly shorter planning horizon than those influenced by low ones. Therefore, it is concluded that the higher the influence of the internal barriers on the planning process, the shorter is the planning horizon. In alignment with previous conclusions: internal barriers influence the planning horizon because the higher their influence, the lower the formality of the strategic planning process, and in turn, the shorter the PH. On the other hand, the influence of external barriers does not affect the planning horizon because external barriers have no influence on process formality (proposition B.1); therefore, process formality does not affect the planning horizon.

8.2 Answers to research questions

The reasons for the research stated in Chapter One are the foundation by which the research aims and questions were developed. There are difficulties associated with strategic planning in public sector organisations (Rainey et al., 1976): the suitability of the Western management framework for Middle Eastern countries is questioned (Haines, 1988); there are gaps in the strategic planning literature and especially, within the research context (Elbanna, 2010); the findings of different studies in Dubai are inconsistent (Al Shaikh, 2001); and finally, there have been changes to the external and internal environments of the public sector in Dubai. A number of areas are addressed in this research in response to the above reasons. These comprise the assessment of the formality of the strategic planning formation process (SPFP); evaluating the influence of organisational characteristics on the planning process; determining the external (contextual) and internal (organisational) barriers and their influence on the formality of the process, assessing the quality of the strategic plan document (SPD) produced as well as the determinants of the planning horizon (PH).

Research aims and questions were developed to satisfy each of these areas. Answers to research questions are embedded in the propositions' findings (Chapter 7) and in the previous section. This section highlights the answers to the research questions and links each research question with related propositions. Table 8.2 lists the answers to the research questions and the related propositions.

Table 8.2 Answers to research questions

Research questions	Answers	Related proposition
To what extent is a formal strategic planning formation process (SPFP) practised within public sector organisations in Dubai?	High formal SPFP is practised with an overall mean of 3.74 on a scale of 1–5 and with 85% of the research sample having written strategic plan documents	A.1
Is there a relationship between the formality of SPFP and the formulation of the strategic plan documents?	Organisations practising a high process formality are more likely to formulate strategic plan documents	A.1
Is there any association between the steps of the SPFP?	A strong association exists between the 'consecutive steps' of the strategic planning formation process	A.2
Is there any variation in the strategic planning formation process across the different types of organisations within the research context?	The strategic planning formation process is influenced by organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level, and the availability of a strategic planning unit	A.3.1–A.3.4
What is the relationship between the formality of the planning process and the implementation of strategies and plans?	The formality of the strategic planning formation process enhances the implementation of strategies and plans	A.4
What is the influence of internal and external barriers on the planning process?	The higher the influence of internal barriers to the planning process the lower the formality of SPFP. External barriers did not influence the formality of SPFP	B.1 & B.2
Do organisational characteristics moderate the influence of external and internal barriers on the SPFP?	Organisational elements such as (size, age, organisational level and availability of SPU) do not moderate the influence of external barriers (with the exception of a few external barrier items)	B.1
	Organisational elements moderate the influence of internal barriers. The influence of internal barriers differs significantly according to organisational age, organisational level and the availability of SPU but not organisation size	B.2
What are the evaluation criteria for a quality strategic plan document?	Seven quality criteria were found to be the determinants of quality SPD. These are: formality, clarity, measurability, coverage, objectivity, consistency, and openness	C.1
Is there any association between the formality of the planning process and the quality of strategic plan documents produced?	The higher the formality of SPFP the better the quality of SPD produced	C.1
Do organisational elements such as size, age, organisational level and the availability of SPU affect the quality of the produced strategic plan document?	The quality of the strategic plan document produced is influenced by the organisational age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU, but not organisational size	C.2
What is the relationship between process formality and the planning horizon?	Organisations practising a formal strategic planning formation process tend to have a longer PH	D.1
Are planning horizons influenced by organisational elements and barriers to the planning process?	The organisation's planning horizon is influenced by organisational size, organisational level, availability of SPU, but not organisational age	D.2
	The organisation's planning horizon is influenced by internal barriers, not external ones	D.3

8.3 Evaluating the effectiveness of strategic planning process within Dubai public sector

Dubai public sector organisations have paid considerable attention to strategic planning in the last decade; this is mainly due to government requirements and initiatives in the direction of new public management. In April 17, 2007, Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice-President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai, announced the strategy of the UAE which highlights the overall direction of the UAE Government for the next three years. The strategy covers six major areas, one of which is government sector development. In an unusual step in the Arab region, Sheikh Al Maktoum instructed all ministries and governmental organizations within less than one year to develop three-year strategic plans considering the overall strategy of the UAE.

The results from this research are intended among other things to evaluating the effectiveness of strategic planning process in Dubai. Results suggests that the extent to which the steps of the SPFP are practised is found to be high for Dubai public sector organisations with an overall mean of 3.74 in a scale of one to five (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree); ranging from 3.52 for 'monitoring and evaluation' to 4.18 for 'establishing effective vision'. A strong positive correlation is shown to exist between all consecutive steps of the SPFP in Dubai.

The results of SPFP steps showed that 73% of respondents agree (agree or strongly agree) that an agreement was reached among the main stakeholders about the purpose of strategic planning before starting the process. However, only 52% of respondents agree that the organisation's formal and informal mandates are clearly communicated among the participants in the planning process. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents confirm the availability of a vision statement compared to 84% for a mission statement, with the mission being less communicated to external stakeholders than the vision.

Dubai public sector organisations use different strategic tools while analysing the environment with more emphasis on the use of some tools than others. The most frequent tool used is SWOT analysis followed by benchmarking, PESTlE analysis (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental), Gap analysis, and Stakeholders' analysis. The lowest use of strategic tools is Value Chain analysis and Porters' factors analysis, which are used by only 10% of respondents. Moreover, 62% of respondents state that the strategic issues are clearly identified and 56% confirm that the strategic issues are used to formulate the strategies and plans.

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It is also found that 85% of public sector organisations in Dubai have a written strategic plan document and these organisations are found to practise, to a higher extent, a formal planning process than the ones without written strategic plans.

However, the findings are not consistent across all organizational types within Dubai public sector. The formality of SPFP in Dubai is influenced by organisational size, age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU. Large and young organizations were found to practise more formal process of strategic planning than small and mature ones. In addition the formality of the planning process is found to be higher at the corporate level than departmental level and for organizations with SPU than the ones without.

It was also found that the formality of the SPFP enhances the implementation of strategies and plans. However, it is believed that some public sector organisations in Dubai used a formal planning process because they perceived it to be necessary for external validation, legitimacy and funding, in other words, for resource acquisition rather than resource allocation.

SPFP in the Dubai public sector is influenced by a number of external and internal barriers. The most influential external barriers are the macro economy, unavailability of macro information, the turbulent environment, and the ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations. Whereas the most influential internal barriers found are organisational culture, weak strategic thinking, and employees' resistance to change. In addition, the internal barriers within the Dubai public sector influence the formality of the planning process. Organisations influenced by high internal barriers are found to practise a less formal strategic planning process. However, the external barriers do not affect the planning process within Dubai.

Public sector organisations in Dubai produce quality strategic plan documents with an average (for all quality criteria) of 3.83 in a scale of one to five; this was found to be strongly associated with the formality of the SPFP. In addition, the quality of the SPDs in Dubai is influenced by organisational age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU, but not with organisational size. Moreover, the average planning horizon in Dubai organisations is found to be 3.7 years, with 69% of the sample indicating a planning horizon of less than five years. PH is influenced by the formality of SPFP; organisations practising high formality had an average PH of 4.1 years compared to only 3.2 years for organisations practising low process formality. In addition, the

planning horizon is influenced by organisational size, organisational level, and the availability of SPU but not organisational age. Finally, the PH for Dubai public sector organisations is influenced (shortened) by internal barriers, but not significantly by external barriers.

In summary, the strategic planning formation process in Dubai public sector is considered to be effective in terms of the formality of the planning process and the quality of strategic plan document produced as determined by a set of quality criteria. However, it should be noted that having a formalised planning process does not necessarily lead to planning (that is considering organisations' future needs) neither does it necessarily lead to the production of the required strategies. Organisations might be engaged in planning without a formalised process of planning. Mintzberg (1994b, p. 32) states that 'A major assumption in the strategic planning literature is that the strategy formation is a planning process, designed or supported by planners, to plan, in order to produce a plan. In contrast to this assumption, an organization can plan (consider its future) without engaging in a formalized planning procedure, even if it produces plans; alternately, an organization can engage in a formalized planning procedure yet not plan (consider its future)'.

8.4 Theoretical contributions

This thesis focuses on the formation of strategic planning within the public sector setting in Dubai. Therefore, the findings of this thesis offer important contributions and implications for theory and management to improve the effectiveness of strategic planning in the research context and beyond. This thesis has led to a number of contributions for the Dubai public sector in particular and (argued contributions) to public sector strategic planning literature in general. The main theoretical contributions of this thesis are:

First, the Conceptual Model: The novel conceptual framework developed for this research includes all variables believed necessary for the strategic planning formation process. The framework develops a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the variables influencing the planning process and can be used as a model for the SPFP. Variable relationships are largely confirmed (Figure 8.1).

Second, Process Formality: Whereas most previous studies used written and unwritten strategic plans as a measure of strategic planning formality (Bracker et al., 1988), this study applies a more

comprehensive measure to assess the formality of the strategic planning process, which is 'process formality'. The use of process formality that is 'the extent to which the steps of the planning process are conducted' enables the researcher to deeply investigate variable relationships and to assess the planning process itself rather than the process output. The findings support existing literature in relation to the measures of planning formality (written plans (Bracker et al., 1988) and the completion of the planning process steps (Pearce et al., 1987)) and the positive relationship between those measures.

Third, relationships between main research variables: This research validates the relationships between important variables in public sector strategic planning within the research context. This thesis empirically assessed the relationships between process formality and each of the external and internal barriers, as well as the influence of process formality on strategic plan document quality, and the planning horizon. These relationships are new areas to the body of knowledge within the Middle Eastern context.

Fourth, the Strategic Plan Document quality criteria: Determinants of the strategic plan document quality are not fully described in the strategic planning literature. This thesis provides a novel list of quality criteria by which the quality of an SPD can be assessed. The quality criteria drawn from various frameworks in the literature on document quality are used to determine the SPD quality.

Fifth, formality of planning and the quality of strategic plan document: Findings suggest that the quality of strategic plan document produced is influenced by the formality of planning process. The results drawn from this study support existing knowledge in this area found by Whelan and Sisson (1993) who stated that the quality of the strategic plan produced is a reflection of the goodness of the process itself. The planning process, the design of the planning process and the commitment to complete the steps of the process can affect the content of the process output 'strategic plan document' (Whelan and Sisson, 1993).

Sixth, external and internal planning barriers: This thesis identifies the various external and internal barriers influencing the planning process within the Dubai public sector. The most influential external and internal barriers are also determined. This adds to the body of strategic planning knowledge in developing countries.

Seventh, the influence of external and internal barriers on the formality of the planning process: This study provides interesting findings regarding the influence of external and internal barriers on the formality of the planning process. In relation to external barriers, results shows neither negative nor positive effect of external barriers on formality of SPFP, this indicate that the external barriers do not influence the formality of SPFP. This finding to a large extent supports existing knowledge and is consistent with (Chae and Hill, 2000) who state that the literature on the turbulent environment and its relationship to the formalised planning process produced different conclusions. On the one hand, a number of scholars reported a negative effect of external barriers on planning formality, Fredrickson and Mitchell (1984) Fredrickson (1984) and within the research context, Elbanna (2010). On the other side, a number of scholars are in favor of a positive effect of external barriers on planning formality, such as Lindsay and Rue (1980), Kukalis (1991), and Bantel (1993). In relation to internal barriers, findings provide strong evidence that internal barriers influence to a large extent the formality of SPFP.

Eighth, organisational elements: This thesis provides justified answers to the influence of organisational elements, such as size, age, organisational level, and the availability of SPU on the formality of SPFP, and on the quality of the strategic plan document produced and the planning horizon. No previous study in the Middle Eastern context has attempted to investigate the influence of such organisational elements empirically.

Ninth, organisational characteristics and planning formality: findings suggest that organisation size influence the formality of planning process, large organizations tend to have more formal planning process than small ones. This is consistent with existing literature (Stone, 1989; Young and Sleeper, 1988). In addition, this study confirms the influence of organisation age on planning processes. The extent to which a formal SPFP is practiced is higher in young organizations than mature ones. The results are in alignment with existing knowledge in the area, such as Leonard-Barton (1992) who pointed out that age can affect performance and the ability of an organisation to change by inducing organisational inertia (Leonard-Barton, 1992); and with Evans (1987) who states that organisational growth decrease for mature firms.

Tenth, Planning formality at different organisational levels: this thesis is believed to be the first to investigate planning formality at different organisational levels at least within Middle Eastern context. Findings show that organizations practice more formal strategic planning process at corporate level than at departmental levels. However, care should be taken to generalize this

finding since the factors contributing to this finding such as political influences, government requirements, and accountability of planning function relates to the context and to the sector of the study.

Eleventh, Implementation of strategies and plans: Even though this thesis focuses on the formulation part of strategic planning, findings proves a strong positive bidirectional relation between the formality of SPFP and implementation. This is in line with Mintzberg et al. (1998) who noted that effective strategy-making connects acting to thinking, which in turn connects implementation to formulation. They added that we think in order to act, but we also act in order to think.

Twelfth, planning horizon: This study provides two theoretical contributions in relation to planning horizon. First, organisations practising high formal strategic planning process tend to plan further into the future than organisations practising low process formality. This is in line with Covin (1991) and Das (1986, p. 69) who argue that organisations having formal strategic planning systems tend to have longer planning horizons. Second, planning horizon is influenced by organizational size but not age. The findings regarding organization size is in line with existing literature such as Harrison (1995) and Larsen et al. (1998) who emphasised that organisational characteristics, such as size, type and age are strong determinants of the planning horizon. However, a study by Al-Shaikh (2001) on planning horizons in UAE firms showed that there is no significant difference between the planning horizons of large and small firms. In relation to organisation age, findings imply that age has no influence on planning horizon. This result is not consistent with previous study of Larsen et al. (1998).

In summary, these new theoretical contributions to strategic planning can be used by researchers to develop further knowledge of public sector organizations in UAE and, potentially, more widely.

8.5 Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, this thesis provides a number of important implications for top management and department managers within public sector organisations, particularly in Dubai, and for policy and decision makers within the Dubai government.

First, top management and department managers within public sector organisations are encouraged to initiate the SPFP to obtain the many ensuing benefits (section 3.1.1). In addition, the commitment to initiate the planning process will create the momentum necessary to complete the steps of the SPFP; each completed step will enhance the initiation and thus the completion of the following step.

Second, top management and department managers in Dubai public sector organisations should manage and encourage performing all necessary steps of the planning process since results from this study show some variations in performing necessary steps. This applies especially the ones with low results such as the monitoring and evaluation step. This should be enhanced by developing appropriate performance management system and performance measures. The monitoring and evaluation of plans and strategies should occur during and after the implementation. The desired outcome of this step is to maintain good strategies, modify or eliminate less successful ones, and evaluate policies, plans, and projects to decide on the appropriate course of action for the coming period (Bryson, 2004).

Third, the management team within Dubai public sector organisations should encourage the use and utilization of various strategic planning tools while analyzing the internal and external environment. Results indicate that only SWOT analysis and Benchmarking are used by more than 50% of research sample; whereas critical success factors analysis, value chain analysis, Porters' factor analysis, portfolio analysis, and cost-benefit analysis are used by less than 30% of research sample. This is a critical gap in the Dubai public sector and indicates a weakness in detecting strategic issues. The use of various strategic planning tools would improve the planning process and its related strategies. This study lends support to the argument of Stonehouse and Pemberton (2002) that a lack of awareness of the relevant tools of strategic planning may be a fundamental reason for their underutilization by strategy makers.

Fourth, top management and department managers within Dubai public sector should enhance the communication of mission and vision statements with external stakeholders. Findings show weak communication of mission and vision statements. Enhancing the communication with external stakeholders will allow for better coordination and control with main suppliers and partners, transparent discussions over various political issues, and support for strategic decisions by main funders.

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Fifth, since the formality of the planning process is found in this study to enhance the formulation of SPD as well as enhancing the quality of the SPD produced, the management team and line managers should support the completion of SPFP by providing the necessary resources and support. However, these managers should recognise that the formality of the planning process as well as the formulation of a quality strategic plan document does not necessarily lead to effective strategic thinking and planning. Therefore, management must support the formulation of a strategic plan that can be used as an input to detailed planning by others (Mellalieu, 1992).

Sixth, another important managerial implication is the implementation of strategies and plans. The management team can enhance the implementation of strategies and plans by formalising the planning process, keeping in mind that the extent to which a formal planning process is practised does not imply better performance nor does it imply better-developed strategies. However, the management team can expect a number of non-financial benefits deriving from a formal planning process such as: enhancing the understanding of corporate priorities; awareness of potential problems, recognising internal strengths and weaknesses; and better overall coordination, implementation, and control of company strategy.

Seventh, the top management team and line managers should pay attention to internal and external barriers to the planning process. Findings of the research showed a strong influence of internal barriers to the formality of the planning process as well as to the quality of SPD produced. In addition internal barriers are found to shorten the planning horizon. Therefore, the corporate management team and line managers should moderate the influence of internal barriers, such as employee resistance to change and weak employee strategic thinking, by educating the employees about the importance of strategic planning and linking employee benefits with organisational objectives. In addition, management teams and leadership in the Dubai public sector should support a culture of change and promote innovation and creativity. For external barriers, findings indicate that they did not show a strong influence on the practice of SPFP within Dubai nor on the quality of SPD and PH. Nevertheless, good practice suggests that decision makers in Dubai government organisations should take the initiative to enhance public sector organisations' ability to face external barriers such as: the availability of macro information by providing reliable information to public sector organisations; ambiguity of external stakeholders, by enhancing the communication between different public sector organisations; and political influences, by reducing the political pressures placed on public organisations.

Eighth, in consideration of organisational characteristics, both the corporate management team and the Dubai government policymakers should take into consideration organisational characteristics while planning or setting the requirements for strategic planning. Findings showed that organisation size, age, organisation level, as well as the availability of SPU are highly associated with the formality of SPFP, the quality of SPD, as well as the planning horizon within the Dubai public sector organisations. Therefore, the management team within each organisation should consider the influence of organisational characteristics on strategic planning in order to efficiently manage the planning process. In addition, policymakers within the Dubai government should set the planning requirements that suit organisational elements in order for the planning process to be effective. Moreover, monitoring and evaluating the strategic planning process internally by each organisation, and externally by the Dubai government, should be determined through well-defined performance measures taking into consideration the specific organisational characteristics.

Ninth, in conjunction with the previous point, findings indicate some weaknesses in the strategic planning process for small and mature organizations in Dubai public sector. Therefore, management team within small public sector organizations in Dubai should strengthen the formality of SPFP, the quality of the process output "strategic plan document' and better manage the implementation of strategies and plans. In relation to mature organisations, managers are encouraged to efficiently handle issues relating to organisational inertia (Leonard-Barton, 1992) and organisational decay (Agarwal and Gort, 2002), by doing so, mature organizations can better adapt to changes in their internal and external environment.

The following two implications are based on personal experience and exposure to the Dubai public sector over several years and on research experience, rather than research evidence.

Tenth, policymakers within the Dubai government are encouraged to enhance the quality of the planning process through developing strategic thinking, acting and learning, rather than resting upon government requirements for the completion of the planning process and the formulation of an SPD. These policymakers should also allow for some flexibility for public sector organisations to decide on the appropriate strategic planning framework rather than mandating certain frameworks such as the Balanced Scorecard, and set government requirements accordingly. Providing flexibility in the strategic planning process is argued to improve creativity and innovation.

Eleventh, policy makers within Dubai government and leadership with public sector organisations in Dubai have a responsibility in creating a culture that allows for knowledge sharing and better use of Islamic work ethics. Inputs gained from senior official during the curse of this research indicate a conservative protective thinking especially in relation to sharing strategic information. While this can be justified, sharing of knowledge is encouraged by Islamic work ethics and is an important way of developing and learning from others experience. In addition, although the Islamic culture has a strong influence on the practices of individuals and their perceptions; Islamic ethics in business are not understood and integrated efficiently. For example, according to Islam, the God urges people to plan first of all and then submit to his will. However some public officials in Dubai were not concerned about planning and feel that the future can only be known by God thus there is no need to plan. Such perceptions might affect the quality of the planning process and must be handled effectively.

With care, the managerial implications arising from the present work are believed to be applicable beyond the Middle East to many developing countries. Some implications may be applicable in Western situations

8.6 Limitations

While this thesis makes contributions to the body of strategic planning literature, it has several limitations that need to be identified. These are discussed below in terms of the research context, sample size, research method, and the analytical technique used to perform the analysis.

First, regarding the research context: Research has been conducted on Dubai public sector organisations: different cultural contexts globally or even within the Middle East may yield different results. Therefore, caution about generalising the results of this thesis should be taken. In addition, the theoretical context of the research is the strategic planning formation process; the implementation phase of the planning process was not fully investigated. This limits the scope of the study and reduces the implications for organisations' performance.

Second, sample size: Even though 75% of Dubai public sector organisations participated in the research, only 147 usable surveys were gathered, representing a 22% response rate. This rate is acceptable; however, results may have been different if the response rate had been higher.

Third, the research method: A quantitative research method using survey questionnaires was adopted for this research. The use of a quantitative-qualitative approach with multi data collection methods such as questionnaires and interviews would have been the most suitable for the research at hand. However, due to a number of constraints, particularly cultural aversion to interviews (section 5.2.2), only the quantitative method was used.

Fourth, the statistical tests used for this research are nonparametric: This is the most appropriate for Likert scale data (Conover, 1980). Despite the acceptability and strength of nonparametric tests (Crichton, 1998), some researchers argue that parametric tests are stronger.

8.7 Recommendations and suggestions for future research

The research, while attempting to add to public sector strategic planning literature, left a number of important areas outside its scope and these areas require further research by scholars. These can be summarised as follows:

Researchers are encouraged to research strategic planning in other Middle Eastern public sectors. While Middle Eastern countries may share similar cultural environments, they differ greatly in their political and economic environments. Researching a variety of Middle Eastern public sectors would allow for generalising the findings.

The implementation of strategic planning in the Middle Eastern public sector is an important area that lacks the necessary attention and research from scholars. This thesis has focused on the formation phase of the planning process. Researching the implementation phase through a longitudinal study will allow for better understanding of the cause-effect relationship and will yield interesting implications for management and practice.

Another interesting area to be researched is the relationship between strategic planning and organisational performance. Hambrick (1980) suggested that the most important issue to address, from a research standpoint, is the relationship between strategic planning and organisational performance. According to Hahn and Powers (1999), studies examining the link between formal strategic planning and organisational performance have elicited mixed results. Even though this

area is well established in the strategic management literature in Western countries, it's still an unexplored area within the Middle Eastern context.

Finally, the researcher, through this thesis, attempted to close some gaps and open some doors into new areas in the Middle Eastern public sector strategic planning literature, hoping to encourage further research. The results and findings of this thesis alone will not do justice to this broad research context.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.1

Research Survey

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategic Planning within the Middle Eastern Public Sector

Part A: Background information

Q. 1) Please specify whether you are an internal employee or an external consultant.
(If you are an external consultant, fill the survey in relation to the organisation you provide services/advice for.)

  _1_ Internal employee   _2_ External consultant   _3_ Other (specify)
…………………………………………………

Q. 2) Your organisation type

 _1_ Authority   _2_ Department   _3_ Foundation   _4_ Centre
      _5_ Corporation   _6_Administration   _7 _ Council   _8_
Other (specify) …………………………………………..

Answer the following in relation to your organisation/or the organisation you provide services for:

Q. 3) When was it formed (in the year)? …………………………………………………

Q. 4) What is the approximate no. of employees?…………………………………..

Q. 5) In your organisation, is there a strategic planning unit/section/or department?

_1_Yes   _2_ No

Q. 6) If yes, when was it formed? …………………………………………

Q. 7) This question will be referred to in other questions – please answer.

e) At which organisational level were you a part of the strategic planning formation process?
  (If involved in more than one level, chose the higher one.)

_1_ (L0) Corporate   _2_ (L1) Example: Division   _3_ (L2) Example: Department
_4_ Other (specify)…………………………………………………..

Q. 8) What best describes your position in the organisation?

_1_ MD/CEO　　　　_2_ VP/EVP　　　　_3_ Snr Manager/Director　　　　_4_ Manager　　　　_5_ Expert/Specialist　　　　　　　_6_ Other (specify) ……………………………

Q. 9) What's your experience in strategic planning in years? ………………………

Part B: Strategic Planning Formation Process

Initiating and agreeing on a strategic planning process					
10 An agreement was reached among main stakeholders about the purpose of strategic planning before starting the process of strategic planning	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
11 An agreement was reached among the main stakeholders about who should be involved in the process of strategic planning	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
12 The steps of the strategic planning formation process were agreed on and documented before starting the process	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
Optional (1). Please provide more information if necessary:					
Organisational Mandate					
13 In your organisation, the interpretation of what is required/forbidden by the mandate is clear	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
14 The organisation's formal and informal mandates were clearly communicated among the participants in the strategic planning process	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
Optional (2). Please provide more information if necessary:					
Vision Statement					
15 A vision statement was developed for the organisational level you were involved in (corporate, division, or department, based on your answer to question 'e') _1_ Yes　　　　_2_ No　　　　If no, why:					
16 The vision statement clarifies organisational visionary goals and the organisation's position in the future	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	5	4	3	2	1
The vision statement is widely circulated and communicated among …	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17　　　　　　　　　　　　Internal organisation's members	5	4	3	2	1
18　　　　　　　　　　　　External stakeholders	5	4	3	2	1
19 The current vision statement should be revised or modified _1_ Yes　　　　_2_ No　　　　If yes, why:					
Optional (3). Please provide more information if necessary:					

Mission Statement

20	A mission statement was developed for the organisational level you were involved in (corporate, division, or department, based on your answer to question 'e') _1_ Yes _2_ No If no, why:					

	The developed mission statement:	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
21	Clarifies the purpose of existence	5	4	3	2	1
22	Clarifies the optimum goals	5	4	3	2	1
23	Provides a framework by which strategies are formulated	5	4	3	2	1

	The vision statement is widely circulated and communicated among …	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
24	Internal organisation's members	5	4	3	2	1
25	External stakeholders	5	4	3	2	1

26	The current mission statement should be revised or modified _1_ Yes _2_ No If yes, why:

Optional (4). Please provide more information if necessary:

Assessing the Environment & Strategic Issues

27	A comprehensive strategic analysis was conducted as part of the strategic planning process (Strategic analysis: an examination of the possible or probable effects the internal 'organisational' and/or external 'environmental' forces and conditions have on the organisation's success)	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	4	3	2	1

28	What types of internal and external environmental analysis tools were used? – chose from the following list: 1. SWOT 2. PESTEL 3. Critical success factor analysis 4. Portfolio analysis 5. Stakeholders' analysis 6. Value chain analysis 7. Gap analysis 8. Porter's – 5 factors analysis 8. Cost-benefit analysis 10. Benchmarking, others Specify…… ….

29	Strategic issues facing your organisation, division, or department have been clearly identified	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	4	3	2	1

30	The strategic issues were used to formulate the strategies and plans	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	4	3	2	1

Optional (5). Please provide more information if necessary:

Strategies and Plans Development

31	Strategies and plans were developed for the organisational level you were involved in (corporate, division, or department level, based on your answer to question 'e')	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	4	3	2	1

32	A strategy map was developed for the organisational level you were involved in (a strategy map is a visual, single-page representation of the four components of an organisation's strategy, the relationships between an organisation's financial, customer, internal process, and learning and growth perspectives (Kaplan, 2004))	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	4	3	2	1

33	During the strategic planning formation process, it was decided what current strategies should be kept, improved, or stopped	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	4	3	2	1

34	During the strategic planning formation process, it was decided	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

	what new strategies and plans should be initiated, when, why, and by whom			**Disagree**		
		5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
35	The developed strategies and plans were implemented successfully	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**

Optional (6). Please provide more information if necessary:

Monitoring & Evaluation

36	The execution of the strategies and plans are monitored …	**monthly**	**quarterly**	**yearly**	**Less frequently**	**never**
		5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
37	The outcomes of the strategies and plans have been evaluated	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
38	Some of the strategies, systems, policies, and goals were revised as a result of the evaluation process	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
		5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**

Optional (7). Please provide more information if necessary:

Part C: Barriers & Obstacles to the Strategic Planning Formation Process

Internal Factors

	The following internal factors are seen as barriers or obstacles to the strategic planning formation process:	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
39	Organisational culture	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
40	Organisational structure	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
41	Organisation's mandate	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
42	Strategic planning procedures	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
43	Weak strategic thinking	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
44	Leadership commitment to strategic planning	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
45	Organisational internal processes/regulations	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
46	Planners' expertise	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
47	Employees resistance to change	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
48	Lack of financial resources	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
49	Weak IT infrastructure	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
50	Weak performance management system	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
51	Which of the internal organisational factors are seen as the most influential barriers or obstacles to the strategic planning formation process (in order), enter code: 1st ( ) 2nd ( ) 3rd ( ) 4th ( ) 5th ( )					

External Factors

	The following external factors are seen as barriers or obstacles to the strategic planning formation process:	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

52	Political influences	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
53	Macro economy	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
54	Political instability	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
55	Turbulent environment	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
56	Rapid technology development	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
57	Linkage to country's strategic plan	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
58	Unavailability of macro information	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
59	Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
60	Variety of external stakeholders	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
61	Which of the external organisational factors are seen as the most influential barriers or obstacles to the strategic planning formation process (in order), enter code: 1st ( ) 2nd ( ) 3rd ( ) 4th ( ) 5th ( )					
Optional (8). Please provide more information if necessary:						

Part D: Strategic Plan Document

62 A 'strategic plan document' was formulated at the organisational level you were involved in? _1_ Yes _2_ No

63 If yes, what is the time horizon …………………….. years

	Please rate your strategic plan through the following evaluation criteria:	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Neither Agree Nor Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
64	Formality: the strategic plan in my organisation is formally documented (including all parts of a strategic plan document)	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
65	Clarity: the strategic objectives and strategies in the strategic plan are clearly stated	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
66	Measurability: the strategic objectives are measurable and can be monitored and evaluated	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
67	Objectivity: the desired outcomes are clearly stated and understood in the strategic plan	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
68	Coverage: the strategic objectives in the strategic plan cover all the critical factors identified in the analysis phase	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
69	Openness: the strategies in your organisational strategic plan are openly disseminated and not hidden	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
70	Consistency vs flexibility: in your organisation, strategic consistency is more important than strategic flexibility	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Optional (9). Please provide more information if necessary:						

…………Thank you ………….

Appendix A.2

Research Survey (Arabic version)

الإستبيان الخاص بالمشروع البحثي

تقييم مدى فعالية التخطيط الاستراتيجي في القطاع العام بالشرق الأوسط – الإمارات العربية المتحدة

الجزأ الأول: معلومات عامة

1) يرجى تحديد ما إذا كنت موظفا أو خبير استشاري خارجي؟
(إذا كنت خبير استشاري خارجي ،قم بملئ الإستبيان بالنسبة للمؤسسة التي قدمت خدمات لها)

موظف ☐   إستشاري خارجي ☐

غير ذلك ، حدد: ....

2) نوع المؤسسة التي تعمل بها

مجلس ☐   إدارة ☐   مؤسسة ☐   مركز ☐   محميه ☐   قسم ☐   هيئه ☐   وزارة ☐

غير ذلك ، حدد: ....

بالنسبة للمؤسسة التي تعمل بها

3) متى تم إنشاؤها (عام) ....

4) ما هو العدد التقريبي للموظفين...

5) في مؤسستك ، هل هناك وحدة / قسم / أو إدارة تخطيط استراتيجي؟

نعم _1_   _2_ لا   6) إن أجبت بنعم ، متى تم إنشاؤها: ....

هذا السؤال ستتم الإشارة إليه لاحقا من قبل أسئلة أخرى ، الرجاء الإجابة

7) مساهمتك بعملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي تخص أي مستوى إداري (إن ساهمت بأكثر من مستوى إداري ، إختار المستوى الأعلى)

مستوى الأقسام أو الوحدات(L3) ☐   مستوى الإدارة(L2) ☐   مستوى القطاع(L1) ☐   مستوى المؤسسة(L0) ☐

8) المسمى / مركزك الوظيفي

خبير / أخصائى ☐   مدير ☐   مديرأول ☐   نائب الرئيس / نائب الرئيس التنفيذي ☐   العضو المنتدب والرئيس التنفيذي ☐   وزير ☐

غير ذلك: ....

9) خبرتك العملية بالتخطيط الإستراتيجي (بالسنوات): ....

الجزأ الثاني: تكوين عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي

						بدأ عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم التوصل الى اتفاق بين أصحاب العلاقة الرئيسيين (Main Stakeholders) حول الغرض من التخطيط الاستراتيجي قبل البدء في عملية التخطيط الاستراتيجي؟	10
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم التوصل الى اتفاق بين أصحاب العلاقة الرئيسيين حول من يجب أن يكون جزءا في عملية التخطيط الاستراتيجي	11
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم الاتفاق علىالخطوات الخاصة بتشكيل عملية التخطيط الاستراتيجي وتم توثيقها قبل البدء بعملية التخطيط	12
1	2	3	4	5		
					إختياري1 : الرجاء ذكر أي معلومات أخرى خاصة ببدأ عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي	

						مرسوم إنشاء المؤسسة وتشريعاتها :
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	بالمؤسسة التي تعمل بها هناك صورة واضحة لنطاق عمل المؤسسة ككل ، من حيث المطلوب عمله (منصوص عليها بتشريعلت ومرسوم إنشاء المؤسسة أو الممنوع عمله،	13
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تشريعات عمل المؤسسة المنصوص \المتعارف عليها تم تداولها ومناقشتها بوضوح من قبل المشاركين بعملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي	14
1	2	3	4	5		

						بيان "الرؤية" :
	إن أجبت بلا ، لماذا :		لا	نعم	تم وضع "الرؤية" للمستوى الإداري الذي شاركت بعملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي له (المؤسسة، القطاع ، الإدارة ، أو القسم إعتماد على إجابتك للسؤال " ع ") ؟	15
			2	1		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	الرؤية توضح الغايات المستقبلية و الموقع الذي تطمح المؤسسة للوصول إليه	16
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	يتم نشر و تداول الرؤية بشكل فعال من قبل.....	17
1	2	3	4	5	الموظفين الداخليين	
1	2	3	4	5	أصحاب العلاقة الخارجيين (Stakeholders)	18
	إن أجبت بنعم ، لماذا :		لا	نعم	يجب مراجعة وتعديل الرؤية الحالية	19
			2	1		
					إختياري3 : الرجاء ذكر أي معلومات أخرى خاصة ببيان "الرؤية":	

						بيان "الرسالة" :
	إن أجبت بلا ، لماذا :		لا	نعم	تم وضع "الرسالة" للمستوى الإداري الذي شاركت بعملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي له (المؤسسة ، القطاع ، الإدارة ، أو القسم إعتماد على إجابتك للسؤال " ع ") ؟	20
			2	1		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	الرسالة بالمؤسسة التي تعمل بها توضح...	21
1	2	3	4	5	الغرض من وجود المؤسسة	

1	2	3	4	5	الأهداف المثلى لها	22
1	2	3	4	5	الإطار العام لإستراتيجياتها	23

لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	يتم نشر و تداول الرسالة بشكل فعال من قبل.....	24
1	2	3	4	5	الموظفين الداخليين	
1	2	3	4	5	أصحاب العلاقة الخارجيين (Stakeholders)	25

إن أجبت بنعم ، لماذا :		لا	نعم	يجب مراجعة وتعديل الرسالة الحالية	26
		2	1		

إختياري 4: الرجاء ذكر أي معلومات أخرى خاصة ببيان "الرسالة":

تحليل البيئة الداخلية والخارجية :						
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم عمل تحليل إستراتيجي شامل للبيئة الداخلية والخارجية بالمؤسسة التي تعمل بها كجزء من عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي (التحليل الإستراتيجي: هو دراسة وتحليل كافة العوامل أو المؤثرات الداخلية والخارجية المحتملة والتي قد تأثر على أداء المؤسسة ونجاحها)	27
1	2	3	4	5		
تحليل نقاط القوة والضعف والفرص (SWOT) والمخاطر				1	ما هي أنواع أو أدوات التحليل الإستراتيجي الداخلي والخارجي المستخدمة بالمؤسسة التي تعمل بها غير ذلك:	28
تحليل العوامل السياسية والإقتصادية (PESTEL) والإجتماعية والتكنولوجية				2		
تحليل الفجوة (Gap Analysis)				3		
تحليلCritical Success Factor Analysis عوامل الحسم \ النجاح				4		
تحليل القوى Porter's – 5 Factors Anal الخمسة				5		
Portfolio Analysis				6		
Value Chain Analysis				7		
Cost-Benefit Analysis (تحليل التكلفة والفائدة)				8		
تحليل أصحاب Stakeholders Analysis (العلاقة)				9		
المقارنات المعيارية(Benchmarking)				10		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم تحديد القضايا الإستراتيجية (Strategic Issues) التي تواجه المستوىالإداري الخاص بك بوضوح	29
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم إستخدام القضايا الإستراتيجية المحددة (Strategic Issues) لبناء الإستراتيجيات والخطط المستقبلية	30
1	2	3	4	5		

إختياري5 : الرجاء ذكر أي معلومات أخرى خاصة بتحليل البيئة الداخلية والخارجية

الإستراتيجيات والخطط						
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم عمل الإستراتيجيات والخطط المستقبلية للمستوى الإداري الذي شاركت بعملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي له (المؤسسة ، القطاع ، الإدارة ، أو القسم إعتماد على إجابتك على السؤال " ع") ؟	31
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم عمل خريطة إستراتيجية للمستوى الإداري الذي شاركت بعملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي له الخريطة الإستراتيجية: هي رؤية موضحة على شكل خريطة تربط المعايير الأربعة للإستراتيجية وهي معيار التعلم والنمو ، العمليات الداخلية ، أصحاب العلاقة ، والمعيار المالي	32
1	2	3	4	5		

لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	خلال عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي تم الإتفاق على إبقاء أو تحسين أو توقيف الإستراتيجيات المستخدمة	33
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	خلال عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي تم الإتفاق على الإستراتيجيات والخطط المستقبلية التي يجب تبنيها وتم تحديد وقتها والمسؤول عن تنفيذها	34
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	تم تنفيذ الإستراتيجيات والخطط بنجاح	35
1	2	3	4	5		

إختياري6 : الرجاء ذكر أي معلومات أخرى خاصة بالإستراتيجيات والخطط

					المراقبة والتقييم :	
لا تتم المراقبة	أكثر من سنوي	سنوي	ربعي	شهري	تتم مراقبة تنفيذ الإستراتيجيات والخطط بشكل	36
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	يتم تقييم مخرجات (النتائج النهائية) الإستراتيجيات والخطط	37
1	2	3	4	5		
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	بناء على عملية التقييم ، تم تعديل بعض الإستراتيجيات أو الأنظمة أو الأهداف	38
1	2	3	4	5		

إختياري7: الرجاء ذكر أي معلومات أخرى خاصة بالمراقبة والتقييم

الجزأ الثالث: العقبات التي تواجه عملية تكوين التخطيط الإستراتيجي

					العوامل الداخلية :	
لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	العوامل الداخلية التالية تعتبر عقبات تعترض عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي بمؤسستك	
1	2	3	4	5	ثقافة المؤسسة	39
1	2	3	4	5	الهيكل التنظيمي	40
1	2	3	4	5	التشريعات المؤسسية	41
1	2	3	4	5	إجراءات التخطيط الإستراتيجي	42
1	2	3	4	5	ضعف التفكير الإستراتيجي	43
1	2	3	4	5	عدم إلتزام القيادة بالتخطيط الإستراتيجي	44
1	2	3	4	5	العمليات الداخلية للمؤسسة	45
1	2	3	4	5	خبرة المخططين	46
1	2	3	4	5	مقاومة الموظفين للتغيير	47
1	2	3	4	5	عدم توفر التمويل اللازم	48
1	2	3	4	5	ضعف البنية التحتية لأنظمة المعلومات	49
1	2	3	4	5	ضعف نظام إدارة الأداء المؤسسي	50
الخامس	الرابع	الثالث	الثاني	الأول	ما هي العوامل(العقبات) الداخلية الأكثر تأثيرا سلبيا على عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي – أدخل الرمز لكل عامل حسب الترتيب	51

لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	العوامل الخارجية التالية تعتبر عقبات تعترض عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي بمؤسستك	
1	2	3	4	5	التأثيرات السياسية	52
1	2	3	4	5	الاقتصاد الكلي	53
1	2	3	4	5	عدم الاستقرار السياسي	54
1	2	3	4	5	عدم ثبات البيئة الخارجية	55
1	2	3	4	5	التطور السريع للتكنولوجيا	56
1	2	3	4	5	الربط مع الخطة العامة للإمارة	57
1	2	3	4	5	عدم توفر المعلومات الخارجية	58
1	2	3	4	5	غموض توقعات أصحاب العلاقة (Stakeholders) الخارجيين	59
1	2	3	4	5	تنوع أصحاب العلاقة (Stakeholders) الخارجيين	60
الخامس	الرابع	الثالث	الثاني	الأول	ما هي العوامل(العقبات) الخارجية الأكثر تأثيرا سلبيا على عملية التخطيط الإستراتيجي - أدخل الرمز لكل عامل حسب الترتيب	61

العوامل الخارجية :

إختياري8 : الرجاء ذكر أي عوامل أخرى مؤثرة وغير مذكورة أعلاه

الجزأ الرابع: وثيقة الخطة الإستراتيجية

وثيقة الخطة الإستراتيجية

63) إن أجبت بنعم ، ما هي الفترة الزمنية لها	لا	نعم	62) بالمؤسسة التي تعمل بها هل تم تكوين وثيقة للخطة الإستراتيجية ؟
	2	1	

لا أوافق بشده	لا أوافق	لا أوافق ولا غير موافق	أوافق	أوافق بشده	**يرجى تقييم " وثيقة الخطة الاستراتيجية " من خلال معايير التقييم التالية :**	
1	2	3	4	5	الرسمية: وثيقة الخطة الإستراتيجية بالمؤسسة التي تعمل بها تحتوي على كل الأجزاء المكونة لوثيقة خطة إستراتيجية رسمية وهي: التحليل الإستراتيجي ، الأهداف الإستراتيجية ، المبادرات والإستراتيجيات الرئيسية ، مؤشرات الأداء الرئيسية	64
1	2	3	4	5	الوضوح: تم ذكر الأهداف الإستراتيجية والإستراتيجيات بوضوح بوثيقة الخطة الإستراتيجية	65
1	2	3	4	5	القياس: الأهداف الإستراتيجية المذكورة بوثيقة الخطة يمكن قياسها وبالتالي يمكن مراقبة تنفيذها وتقييمها	66
1	2	3	4	5	الموضوعية: الغايات المرجوة والمخرجات المطلوبة من الأهداف الإستراتيجية تم ذكرها بوضوح بوثيقة الخطة الإستراتيجية	67
1	2	3	4	5	التغطية : الأهداف الاستراتيجية في وثيقة الخطة الاستراتيجية تغطي جميع العوامل الحاسمة التي تم تحديدها في مرحلة التحليل	68
1	2	3	4	5	الانفتاح (الشفافية) : الاستراتيجيات المرتبطة بالخطة الاستراتيجية يتم نشرها علنا (الشفافية) وغير مخفية	69
1	2	3	4	5	الاتساق مقابل المرونة : في مؤسستك الاتساق الاستراتيجي هو أكثر أهمية من المرونة الاستراتيجية	70

إختياري9 : الرجاء ذكر أي معلومات أخرى خاصة بمجمل الإستبيان

.... شكرا ....

<div style="background:#d9d9d9">**CONSENT FORM**</div>

We would like to invite your respective organisation to take part in a study into '**Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategic Planning within the Middle Eastern Public Sector**'. Your participation will enrich our understanding about the research project and will enable us to achieve the research aims.

Please refer to the attached sheet **'Information to participants involved in research'** for an explanation about the nature, scope, confidentiality, benefits of participating, and other issues related to the research project.

CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I certify that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the above-mentioned study, and I give my permission to the researcher to distribute the survey to staff members.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Organisation:

Name:

Signature:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to:

Dr Ian Sadler   Dr Alex Manzoni

School of Management & Information Systems   School of Management & Information Systems

Tel: +61 3 9919 1279   Tel: +61 4 1235 1998

Email: ian.sadler@vu.edu.au   Email: alex.manzoni@vu.edu.au

Basel Shahin
Tel: +971 50 1542248
Email: Basel.Shahin@live.vu.edu.au

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics & Biosafety Coordinator, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 phone (03) 9919 4148.

Information to Participants Involved in Research

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INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

</div>

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: **Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategic Planning within the Middle Eastern Public Sector.** This project is being conducted by a student researcher [Basel Shahin] as part of a [Doctor of Business Administration Degree] at Victoria University under the supervision of [Dr Ian Sadler] from the [School of Management & Information Systems].

Project explanation

The purpose of this study is to uncover the practices of strategic planning formation within Middle Eastern public sector organisations, particularly in Dubai; the research is expected to strengthen our understanding about the appropriate use of strategic planning formation approaches, the potential barriers or obstacles to the process, and the quality of process output 'strategic plan'.

Three types of assessments will be covered in the research project:

- Assessing the detailed steps of the strategic planning formation process
- Identification of external 'environmental' and internal 'organisational' factors influencing the strategic planning process and considered to be an obstacles or barriers to the process
- Assessing the process output 'strategic plan'.

What will I be asked to do?

Each participant is required to fill in the research survey to the best of his/her understanding.

What will I gain from participating?

Benefits from participating in the survey include: a full analysis of organisations' strategic planning formation process; benchmarking of organisations' current practices with other public organisations; identification of main barriers & obstacles for each participating organisation. In addition to that, a copy of the final research thesis will be provided to the strategic planning unit.

CONFIDENTIALITY – How will the information I give be used?

The information given by the participants will be used for statistical analysis and comparisons. No particular organisation's name or a particular participant's name will be mentioned or referred to in any way. The information given by participants will be used in strict confidentiality.

What are the potential risks of participating in this project?

No risks are associated with participating in the project. You may decide not to participate or withdraw from participating at any time.

How will this project be conducted?

This project will be conducted through a research survey (questionnaire); each part of the research survey will address a particular type of assessment. Three assessments constitute this research: strategic planning formation process; barriers and obstacles to the process; and process output (strategic plan). The research sample will be limited to managerial staff (department managers and above); the following approach will be used to fill in the survey and consent form:

- Receive the survey and the consent form via the contact person.
- Sign the consent form and fill in the survey.
- Instructions on how to fill in the survey will be attached and a contact list will be provided for any enquiries.
- Return the survey and consent form to the researcher.
- Respond to any follow-ups made by the researcher or contact person.

The data gathered from the research survey will be analysed, interpreted, and presented without referring to any particular organisation or participant.

Who is conducting the study?

Victoria University

Melbourne – Australia

Dr Ian Sadler

School of Management & Information Systems

Tel: +61 3 9919 1279

Email: ian.sadler@vu.edu.au

Basel Shahin
Tel: +971 50 1542248
Email: Basel.Shahin@live.vu.edu.au

Appendix B.1
Evaluation of strategic plan documents

Criteria	Full strategic plans					Brief strategic plans														Average
	Org. 1	Org. 2	Org. 3	Org. 4	Org. 5	Org. 6	Org. 7	Org. 8	Org. 9	Org. 10	Org. 11	Org. 12	Org. 13	Org. 14	Org. 15	Org. 16	Org. 17	Org. 18	Org. 19	
Formality: The strategic plan in my organisation includes all parts of a formal strategic plan such as: strategic analysis, goals, objectives, strategies, main initiatives, and KPIs. (1=yes, 0=No, NA= can't decide)																				
Strategic analysis	1	1	1	0	0	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Vision	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	NA	1	NA	1	NA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Mission	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	NA	1	1	1	NA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Values	1	1	1	1	1	1	NA	NA	1	NA	1	NA	1	1	1	1	1	1	NA	
Strategic goals/main objectives	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	NA	1	1	1	1	1	NA	1	1	1	
Strategies to achieve goals/initiatives	1	1	1	1	1	0	NA	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	1	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	
KPIs	1	0	0	1	0	0	NA	NA	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Formality score	5.00	4.29	4.29	4.29	3.57	3.57														4.17
Clarity: the strategic objectives and strategies in the strategic plan are clearly stated (1 = To a very low extent; 5 = To a very high extent; NA = Can't decide)																				
The objectives are understandable.	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	3	4	5	4	5	4	
The objectives can be distinguished easily.	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	
Each objectives focuses on a separate element.	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	4	
Clarity score	4.67	4.67	4.67	4.67	4.67	3.67	4.33	3.67	4.00	3.67	3.67	4.00	3.33	3.67	3.00	3.67	3.67	3.67	3.67	3.95
Measurability: the strategic objectives are measurable and can be monitored and evaluated. (1 = To a very low extent; 5 = To a very high extent; NA = Can't decide)																				
The strategic objectives have KPIs.	5	2	NA	5	3	NA	NA	NA	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
The KPIs represent the output and outcomes of the objectives.	4	2	NA	4	3	NA	NA	NA	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
The KPIs can be measured.	5	3	NA	4	3	NA	NA	NA	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Measurability score	4.67	2.33		4.33	3.00				4.00											3.67
Objectivity: the desired outcomes are clearly stated and understood in the strategic plan. (1 = To a very low extent; 5 = To a very high extent; NA = Can't decide)																				
The desired outcomes are stated/understood from the objectives.	4	4	4	3	2	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	
The outcomes represent the purpose of the objectives.	4	5	3	3	3	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	
Objectivity score	4.00	4.50	3.50	3.00	2.50														3.50	3.50
Coverage: the strategic objectives in the strategic plan cover all the critical factors identified in the analysis phase. (1 = To a very low extent; 5 = To a very high extent; NA = Can't decide)																				
Critical factors are clearly stated.	5	5	3	3	3	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
The objectives address the critical factors & strategic priorities/strategic gaps.	4	4	3	3	3	4	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
All critical factors have strategic objectives or initiatives or goals.	5	4	2	2	2	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Coverage score	4.67	4.33	2.67	2.67	2.67	3.33														3.39
Openness: the strategies in your organisational strategic plan are openly disseminated (transparent) and not hidden. (1 = Yes; 0 = No; NA = Can't decide)																				
The strategic plan is available to the public on the website.				X																
Only a brief (reduced version) strategic plan is available to the public on the website.					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
The strategic plan can be requested easily.																				
The strategic plan can only be collected through an official request.	X	X	X		X				X				X					X	X	
It cannot be given to an external party.						X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X			
Openness score	2	2	2	5	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	3.21
Total score	4.17	3.69	2.85	3.99	3.40	4.52	3.67	3.33	4.00	3.33	3.33	3.50	3.67	3.33	3.00	3.33	3.33	3.83	3.72	3.58

Score (1–5) 1 = Does not satisfy the requirements; 5 = Fully satisfies the requirement; NA = No available information to do the assessment

Appendix B.2

Item #	Item description	Expert panel assessment as per each evaluation criteria																							
Part B	Formation Process	Understandability						Importance						Relevance to Measure						Length Suitability						total	Mean
BA	Initiating and agreeing on a strategic planning process	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Score		
BA1	An agreement was reached among main stakeholders about the purpose of strategic planning before starting the process of strategic planning?	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	4	4	5	5	5	4.6	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	4	3	4	4	3	3.6	17.8	4.45
BA2	An agreement was reached among the main stakeholders about who should be involved in the process of strategic planning	5	4	4	4	5	4.4	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	5	4	5	4.2	18.4	4.6
BA3	The specific consequent steps of the strategic planning formation process were agreed on before starting the process?	5	4	5	4	3	4.2	5	4	2	5	4	4	4	4	3	5	5	4.2	4	3	5	3	3	3.6	16	4
BA4	The specific consequent steps of the strategic planning formation process were formally documented before starting the process?	4	4	5	4	4	4.2	3	4	2	3	5	3.4	2	1	2	2	3	2	5	3	5	4	4	4.2	13.8	3.45
BB	Organizational Mandate																										
BB1	The organization's formal and informal mandates were clearly communicated among the participants in the strategic planning process.	2	2	5	5	4	3.6	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	4	4	5	5	4	4.4	4	4	5	4	3	4	16.8	4.2
BB2	In your organization, the interpretation of what is required /or forbidden by the mandate is clear?	5	4	5	3	2	3.8	5	4	5	5	3	4.4	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	17.6	4.4
BC	Mission Statement																										
BC1	Stakeholder's analysis was conducted as part of the strategic planning process.	2	3	1	2	3	2.2	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	4	4	5	4	5	4.4	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	16.2	4.05
BC2	A mission statement was developed for the organizational level you was involved in (Corporate, Division, or Department) based on your answer to question A7	5	4	5	5	1	4	5	5	5	4	2	4.2	4	4	5	4	3	4	5	4	5	4	2	4	16.2	4.05
BC3	The mission statement clarifies the purpose of the organizational level you was involved in	5	5	5	5	3	4.6	5	4	5	5	4	4.6	4	5	5	5	4	4.6	4	5	5	5	4	4.6	18.4	4.6
BC4	The mission statement should be revised	1	5	3	4	2	3	5	5	5	4	3	4.4	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	17.2	4.3
BD	Assessing the Environment																										
BD1	An environmental analysis was conducted as part of the strategic planning process.	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	4	4	5	4	5	4.4	18.6	4.65
BD2	What types of internal and external environmental analysis tools were used:	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	19.2	4.8
BD3	Decision makers use the results of the environmental analysis to identify distinctive competencies and strategic success factors.	5	4	5	2	5	4.2	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	4.6	18.4	4.6
BE	Strategic Issues																										
BE1	The strategic issues facing your organization, division, or department (based on your answer to A7) have been clearly identified	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	4	4	5	5	5	4.6	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	18.6	4.65
BE2	The strategic issues were used as the base for building the strategies and plans	5	5	5	3	5	4.6	1	5	5	5	5	4.2	1	5	5	5	5	4.2	5	5	5	5	5	5	18	4.5
BF	Strategies and Plans Development and Adoption																										
BF1	Strategies and plans were developed for the organizational level you was involved in (corporate, divisional, or departmental level)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	4.6	4	5	5	5	4	4.6	4	5	5	4	4	4.4	18.6	4.65
BF2	Strategy statement was developed for the organizational level you was involved in (corporate, divisional, or departmental level)	5	3	2	1	2	2.6	4	3	5	5	2	3.8	5	2	5	4	2	3.6	5	4	5	4	4	4.4	14.4	3.6
BF3	Strategy maps were developed for the organizational level you was involved in (corporate, divisional, or departmental level)	5	4	5	1	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	3	5	4	5	4.4	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	17.8	4.45
BF4	During the strategic planning formation process, It was clear: 1. What current strategies should be kept, 2. What current strategies should be improved, 3. What current strategies should be stopped? 4. What strategies should be initiated?	5	4	5	3	5	4.4	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	18.4	4.6
BF5	A formal strategic plan was developed for the organizational level you was involved in (corporate, divisional, or departmental level)	2	4	5	4	5	4	3	3	2	4	4	3.2	3	2	2	1	3	2.2	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	14.2	3.55
BF6	The strategic plan was adopted and approved by the board or top management.	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	4	5	5	4	5	4.6	4	5	5	4	5	4.6	3	5	5	5	5	4.6	18.6	4.65
BG	Organizational Vision																										
BG1	A Vision statement was developed for the organizational level you was involved in (Corporate, Division, or Department) based on your answer to Question A7	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	19.4	4.85
BG2	The vision statement in BG1 covers mission, core values, main goals, ethical standards, success factors.	5	4	5	5	4	4.6	2	3	5	5	1	3.2	3	3	5	4	1	3.2	5	4	5	5	4	4.6	15.6	3.9
BG3	The vision statement is widely circulated and communicated among organization's members.	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	19.4	4.85
BG4	The vision statement is widely circulated and communicated among stakeholders.	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	19	4.75
BG5	The vision statement should be changed or modified.	1	4	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	4	5	4.4	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	18.2	4.55

Code	Item	Understandability						Importance						Relevance to Measure						Length Suitability						total	Mean
		R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Total Score		
BH	**Strategies and Plans Implementation**																										
BH1	The developed strategies and plans were implemented successfully	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	19.8	4.95
BH2	A mutual understanding was created among implementers regarding what strategies and plans needs to be done, when, why, and by whom?	3	2	3	2	2	2.4	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	16.8	4.2
BH3	The strategies and plans are reviewed regularly	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	2	2	1	2	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	16.8	4.2
BI	**Assessing the Strategies and Plans**																										
BI1	The outcomes of the strategic goals have been evaluated as a result of the implementation	5	3	5	5	3	4.2	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	4	5	5	4	4.6	5	4	5	5	4	4.6	18.2	4.55
BI2	Some of the strategies, systems, policies, and goals were revised as a result of the evaluation process.	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	4	5	5	5	4	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	19.2	4.8
B13	How often the strategic plan is reviewed?	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	19.6	4.9
BI4	What is the time frame for your current strategic plan?	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	3	4.6	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	19	4.75
Part C	**Barriers & Obstacles to the formation Process**																										
CA	The following Internal Factors (CA1 to CA12) are seen as barriers or obstacles to the strategic planning formation process																										
CA1	Lack of Financial Resources	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	4.6	3	5	5	4	5	4.4	5	5	5	5	5	5	19	4.75
CA2	Organization's Mandate	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	3	4	5	5	5	4.4	3	5	5	4	5	4.4	5	5	5	5	5	5	18.6	4.65
CA3	Strategic Planning Procedures	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	5	4	5	3	4	4.2	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	18.6	4.65
CA4	Employee's weakness in strategic thinking	5	5	5	4	1	4	5	3	3	3	4	3.6	5	5	5	5	3	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	17.2	4.3
CA5	Employee's lacking of strategic planning expertise	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	19.6	4.9
CA6	Organizational Culture	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	4	4	5	5	4	4.4	4	5	5	5	4	4.6	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	18.6	4.65
CA7	Organizational Structure	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	4	5	5	4	4.6	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	18.8	4.7
CA8	Organizational internal processes / regulations	5	5	5	5	3	4.6	5	4	5	3	4	4.2	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	18.4	4.6
CA9	Lack of Leadership's commitment to strategic planning	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	20	5
CA10	Employees resistance to Change	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	3	3	3	5	3.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	18.6	4.65
CA11	Weak IT infrastructure	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	3	4	2	4	3	3.2	3	5	5	5	4	4.4	5	5	5	5	5	5	17.2	4.3
CA12	Weak Performance Management System	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	3	5	5	4	3	4	3	5	5	5	4	4.4	5	5	5	5	5	5	18.2	4.55
CA13	Which of the above internal factors (CA1 to CA14) are seen as the most influential barriers or obstacles to the planning process (in order): Rank1 ( ), Rank2 ( ), Rank3 ( ), Rank4 ( ), and Rank5 ( ).	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	5	5	5	3	4.6	18.8	4.7
CB	The following External Factors (CB1 to CB6) are seen as barriers or Obstacles to the strategic planning formation process																										
CB1	Political influences	5	4	5	3	5	4.4	4	4	5	5	5	4.6	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	18.6	4.65
CB2	Linkage to the country's strategic plan (i.e. Emirate Strategic Plan … etc.)	5	4	5	3	5	4.4	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	18.8	4.7
CB3	Rapid changes to the external environment	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	19.2	4.8
CB4	Unavailability of Macro Information	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	4	5	5	5	5	4.8	4	5	5	4	5	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	19	4.75
CB5	Ambiguity of expectations by external stakeholders	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	19.2	4.8
CB6	Variety of external stakeholders	5	4	5	3	3	4	3	5	5	5	3	4.2	3	5	5	5	3	4.2	5	5	5	5	5	5	17.4	4.35
CB7	Which of the above External factors (CB1 to CB6)are seen as the most influential barriers or obstacles to the strategic planning process (in order) : Rank1 ( ), Rank2 ( ), Rank3 ( ), Rank4 ( ), and Rank5 ( ).	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	5	5	4	4	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	19.2	4.8
Part D	**Strategic Plan Document**																										
	Please rate your <u>Organization's</u> strategic plan through the following evaluation criteria																										
D1	Formality: the strategic plan in my organization is formally documented (including all parts of a strategic plan document)	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	19.4	4.85
D2	Clarity: the strategic objectives and strategies in the strategic plan are clearly stated	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	5	5	5	4	5	4.8	19.4	4.85
D3	Measurability: the strategic objectives are measurable and can be monitored and evaluated	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	20	5
D4	Objectivity: the desired outcomes are clearly stated and understood in the strategic plan.	5	4	5	5	5	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.8	5	5	5	5	5	5	19.6	4.9
D5	Coverage: the strategic objectives in the strategic plan covers all the critical factors identified in the analysis phase.	5	4	5	4	3	4.2	5	4	5	5	4	4.6	5	4	5	5	4	4.6	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	18	4.5
D6	Openness: the strategies in your organizational strategic plan are openly disseminated and not hidden	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	5	4	5	4	4	4.4	5	4	5	4	4	4.4	5	4	5	4	4	4.4	17.8	4.45
D7	Consistency vs. Flexibility: In your organization strategic consistency is more important than strategic flexibility	5	4	5	3	2	3.8	5	4	5	5	2	4.2	4	4	5	5	3	4.2	5	4	5	4	3	4.2	16.4	4.1
	For all survey questionnaires	**Understandability**					4.41	**Importance**					4.51	**Relevance to Measure**					4.50	**Length Suitability**					4.71	18.13	4.53

Appendix B.3

Table B.3 Reliability statistics for key variables	
Variable	**Cronbach's alpha***
Initial agreement	.777
Organisational mandate	.739
Vision statement	.738
Mission statement	.790
Assessing strategic issues	.760
Strategies and plans' development	.863
Monitoring, evaluation and control	.745
Process formality	.888
Internal barriers	.874
External barriers	.836
Quality of strategic planning document	.843
*The conventional value = 0.7	

Table. B.4 Spearman correlation (discriminant and convergent validity)

	Constructs	Items	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	IB	EB	Q
A	Initiating and agreeing on the SPFP	Q10	.784**	.393**	.275**	.249**	.370**	.419**	.450**	.378**	−.204*	.057	.257**
		Q11	.916**	.379**	.444**	.397**	.361**	.526**	.504**	.463**	−.160	.049	.338**
		Q12	.758**	.455**	.413**	.471**	.481**	.725**	.654**	.599**	−.181*	-.024	.527**
B	Clarifying org. mandate	Q13	.391**	.851**	.433**	.530**	.242**	.372**	.372**	.338**	-.276**	-.057	.423**
		Q14	.516**	.926**	.504**	.623**	.382**	.539**	.610**	.471**	−.292**	-.112	.549**
C	Establishing an effective vision	Q16	.311**	.285**	.763**	.349**	.226*	.368**	.347**	.195*	−.152	-.138	.337**
		Q17	.288**	.423**	.647**	.627**	.230*	.444**	.355**	.396**	−.165	-.177	.365**
		Q18	.410**	.473**	.782**	.654**	.304**	.481**	.455**	.302**	−.203*	-.011	.380**
D	Establishing an effective mission	Q21	.343**	.454**	.449**	.684**	.156	.371**	.391**	.395**	−.218*	-.082	.378**
		Q22	.445**	.416**	.578**	.730**	.147	.471**	.412**	.454**	-.174	-.069	.358**
		Q23	.532**	.558**	.553**	.710**	.305**	.533**	.528**	.495**	-.328**	-.089	.414**
		Q24	.240**	.428**	.556**	.747**	.236**	.281**	.403**	.421**	−.184*	-.090	.349**
		Q25	.266**	.533**	.499**	.796**	.251**	.341**	.398**	.450**	-.260**	-.032	.308**
E	Assessing the environment	Q27	.488**	.480**	.371**	.298**	.712**	.650**	.561**	.282**	−.171	.090	.574**
		Q28	.331**	.202*	.242**	.226*	.901**	.390**	.450**	.304**	−.119	.036	.297**
F	Strategic issues ident.	Q29	.576**	.417**	.509**	.450**	.561**	.942**	.723**	.499**	−.317**	.016	.669**
		Q30	.681**	.529**	.570**	.507**	.536**	.956**	.750**	.549**	−.297**	-.052	.633**
G	Strategies and plans' development	Q31	.421**	.341**	.411**	.349**	.511**	.562**	.715**	.256**	−.320**	.079	.460**
		Q32	.574**	.542**	.443**	.524**	.465**	.678**	.893**	.480**	−.314**	-.043	.516**
		Q33	.590**	.572**	.483**	.492**	.492**	.700**	.827**	.605**	−.362**	-.042	.608**
		Q34	.562**	.373**	.472**	.509**	.544**	.704**	.848**	.492**	−.263**	.078	.526**
H	Monitoring & evaluation	Q36	.416**	.150	.239**	.273**	.271**	.300**	.381**	.631**	−.134	-.033	.293**
		Q37	.549**	.453**	.344**	.548**	.356**	.554**	.524**	.886**	−.219*	.020	.545**
		Q38	.517**	.510**	.341**	.591**	.267**	.492**	.398**	.904**	−.238**	.013	.519**
IB	Internal barriers	Q39	−.198*	−.188*	−.172	−.174	−.132	−.136	−.148	−.261**	.627**	.081	−.205*
		Q40	−.155	−.169	−.176	−.160	−.060	−.128	−.139	−.152	.670**	-.028	−.159
		Q41	−.097	-.243**	−.157	−.177	−.052	−.185*	-.247**	−.033	.727**	.209*	−.135
		Q42	−.189*	-.236**	−.161	−.191*	-.249**	-.342**	-.409**	−.196*	.621**	.072	−.292**
		Q43	-.286**	-.320**	−.177	-.340**	-.206*	-.347**	-.327**	−.342**	.727**	.102	−.313**
		Q44	−.170	−.209*	−.184*	−.179	−.155	−.208*	−.187*	−.129	.685**	.038	−.179
		Q45	−.149	-.278**	−.212*	−.225*	.020	-.250**	-.314**	−.165	.617**	.093	−.267**
		Q46	-.238**	-.308**	−.220*	−.280**	−.094	-.335**	−.340**	−.250**	.615**	.074	−.378**
		Q47	−.110	-.291**	−.225*	−.291**	−.032	-.247**	-.258**	−.212*	.648**	.184*	−.291**
		Q48	−.008	−.127	−.027	−.131	−.020	−.116	−.092	−.071	.519**	.317**	−.017
		Q49	.017	−.032	−.018	−.016	−.081	−.063	−.086	.087	.428**	.162	−.034
		Q50	−.108	−.151	−.158	−.205*	−.090	−.171	-.242**	−.116	.665**	.130	−.248**
EB	External barriers	Q52	-.062	−.112	−.213*	−.086	.014	−.098	−.043	.043	.205*	.769**	.034
		Q53	.123	.020	.042	.060	.161	.146	.135	.021	−.058	.730**	.125
		Q54	.006	-.004	−.123	−.007	.046	−.051	−.018	.051	.115	.770**	.085
		Q55	.046	−.013	−.002	.009	.133	.085	.029	.035	−.050	.630**	.039
		Q56	.158	.063	−.031	.087	.111	.125	.153	.219*	.126	.549**	.254**
		Q57	.055	−.222*	−.136	−.192*	.008	−.123	−.085	.081	.253**	.533**	−.108
		Q58	.057	.024	−.060	−.042	.023	.028	.095	−.024	.043	.536**	−.122
		Q59	-.018	−.080	−.068	−.145	.066	.029	−.030	−.146	.169	.704**	−.063
		Q60	-.108	−.122	−.122	−.192*	.011	−.023	−.060	−.215*	.146	.589**	−.068
Q	Quality of the SPD	Q64	.362**	.381**	.418**	.334**	.399**	.517**	.481**	.291**	−.234*	−.001	.665**
		Q65	.309**	.349**	.236**	.204*	.280**	.413**	.310**	.295**	-.256**	.039	.589**
		Q66	.411**	.430**	.347**	.353**	.432**	.554**	.442**	.518**	-.285**	-.012	.806**
		Q67	.419**	.437**	.422**	.483**	.395**	.598**	.579**	.507**	−.280**	-.024	.838**
		Q68	.420**	.436**	.461**	.439**	.361**	.644**	.618**	.397**	−.262**	-.044	.775**
		Q69	.354**	.432**	.333**	.374**	.302**	.459**	.447**	.516**	-.249**	-.042	.684**
		Q70	.088	.143	.161	.052	.125	.223*	.177	.146	.009	.085	.406**

Discriminant validity: none of the constructs' measures are correlated too highly (above .85) with other constructs as shown in **white cells.**
Convergent validity: measures of the same constructs are correlated highly in **grey cells**.

Appendix C.1

Table C.1 Percentage of missing data				
	Total no.	Filled	Missing data	
			Count	Per cent
Q10	147	146	1	0.7%
Q11	147	145	2	1.4%
Q12	147	146	1	0.7%
Q13	147	146	1	0.7%
Q14	147	145	2	1.4%
Q15	147	145	2	1.4%
Q16	147	142	5	3.4%
Q17	147	144	3	2.0%
Q18	147	143	4	2.7%
Q19	147	141	6	4.1%
Q20	147	147	0	0.0%
Q21	147	142	5	3.4%
Q22	147	142	5	3.4%
Q23	147	141	6	4.1%
Q24	147	143	4	2.7%
Q25	147	141	6	4.1%
Q26	147	142	5	3.4%
Q27	147	147	0	0.0%
Q28	147	147	0	0.0%
Q29	147	146	1	0.7%
Q30	147	145	2	1.4%
Q31	147	146	1	0.7%
Q32	147	146	1	0.7%
Q33	147	146	1	0.7%
Q34	147	146	1	0.7%
Q35	147	145	2	1.4%
Q36	147	147	0	0.0%
Q37	147	146	1	0.7%
Q38	147	145	2	1.4%
Q39	147	147	0	0.0%
Q40	147	146	1	0.7%
Q41	147	146	1	0.7%
Q42	147	146	1	0.7%
Q43	147	146	1	0.7%
Q44	147	146	1	0.7%
Q45	147	146	1	0.7%
Q46	147	145	2	1.4%
Q47	147	147	0	0.0%
Q48	147	145	2	1.4%
Q49	147	146	1	0.7%
Q50	147	146	1	0.7%
Q52	147	144	3	2.0%
Q53	147	144	3	2.0%
Q54	147	144	3	2.0%
Q55	147	144	3	2.0%
Q56	147	144	3	2.0%
Q57	147	143	4	2.7%
Q58	147	143	4	2.7%
Q59	147	143	4	2.7%
Q60	147	143	4	2.7%
Q63	126	125	1	0.8%
Q64	126	126	0	0.0%
Q65	126	124	2	1.6%
Q66	126	124	2	1.6%
Q67	126	126	0	0.0%
Q68	126	125	1	0.8%
Q69	126	124	2	1.6%
Q70	126	125	1	0.8%

Appendix C.2
Table C.2 Wilcoxon test – pre and post replacing missing data

	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
MEDIAN (Q10) – Q10	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q11) – Q11	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q12) – Q12	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q13) – Q13	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q14) – Q14	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q15) – Q15	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q16) – Q16	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q17) – Q17	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q18) – Q18	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q19) – Q19	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q20) – Q20	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q21) – Q21	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q22) – Q22	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q23) – Q23	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q24) – Q24	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q25) – Q25	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q26) – Q26	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q27) – Q27	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q28) – Q28	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q29) – Q29	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q30) – Q30	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q31) – Q31	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q32) – Q32	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q33) – Q33	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q34) – Q34	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q35) – Q35	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q36) – Q36	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q37) – Q37	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q38) – Q38	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q39) – Q39	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q40) – Q40	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q41) – Q41	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q42) – Q42	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q43) – Q43	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q44) – Q44	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q45) – Q45	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q46) – Q46	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q47) – Q47	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q48) – Q48	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q49) – Q49	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q50) – Q50	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q52) – Q52	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q53) – Q53	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q54) – Q54	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q55) – Q55	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q56) – Q56	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q57) – Q57	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q58) – Q58	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q59) – Q59	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q60) – Q60	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q63) – Q63	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q64) – Q64	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q65) – Q65	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q66) – Q66	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q67) – Q67	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q68) – Q68	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q69) – Q69	.000[a]	1.000
MEDIAN (Q70) – Q70	.000[a]	1.000

a. The sum of negative ranks equals the sum of positive ranks.

Appendix C.3
Table C.3 Non-response bias test

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Initiating and agreeing on the strategic planning process	2277.00	3708.00	−.871	.384
Clarifying organisational mandate	2139.00	3570.00	−1.459	.144
Communicating the vision	2395.00	3826.00	−.396	.692
Establishing an effective vision	2465.50	3896.50	−.104	.917
Mission development	2391.00	3822.00	−.413	.680
Mission communication	2258.00	3689.00	−.961	.337
Establishing an effective mission	2284.00	3715.00	−.837	.403
Assessing the environment	2361.00	3792.00	−.530	.596
Strategic issues identification	2226.50	3657.50	−1.094	.274
Strategies and plans' development	2362.00	3793.00	−.526	.599
Monitoring & evaluation	2168.00	3599.00	−1.318	.187
Implementation	2019.50	3450.50	−.950	.336
Process formality (SPFP)	2276.00	3707.00	−.867	.386
Organisational culture	2223.00	6688.00	−1.144	.253
Organisational structure	2398.00	3829.00	−.395	.693
Organisation's mandate	2431.00	6896.00	−.252	.801
Strategic planning procedures	2176.50	3607.50	−1.318	.188
Weak strategic thinking	2296.00	6761.00	−.820	.412
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	2465.50	6930.50	−.106	.916
Internal processes/regulations	2456.50	6921.50	−.149	.881
Planners' expertise	2323.50	6788.50	−.710	.478
Employees resistance to change	2469.50	3900.50	−.092	.927
Lack of financial resources	2397.50	3828.50	−.387	.698
IT infrastructure	2284.00	3715.00	−.871	.384
Performance management system	2430.00	6895.00	−.255	.799
Internal barriers	2442.50	3873.50	−.196	.845
Political influences	2367.00	6832.00	−.520	.603
Macro economy	2229.50	6694.50	−1.089	.276
Political instability	2455.00	6920.00	−.149	.882
Turbulent environment	2236.00	6701.00	−1.072	.284
Rapid technology development	2397.00	3828.00	−.412	.680
Linkage to country's strategic plan	2446.00	3877.00	−.188	.851
Unavailability of macro information	2381.50	6846.50	−.474	.636
Ambiguity of external stakeholders expectations	2143.50	6608.50	−1.454	.146
Variety of external stakeholders	2187.00	6652.00	−1.274	.203
External barriers	2256.50	6721.50	−.948	.343
Formulation of strategic plan document (SPD)	2386.00	3817.00	−.699	.485
Planning horizon	1624.00	4945.00	−.842	.400
Formality (SPD)	1762.00	2752.00	−.231	.817
Clarity	1502.00	2492.00	−1.488	.137
Measurability	1503.00	2449.00	−1.385	.166
Objectivity	1554.50	2544.50	−1.342	.180
Coverage	1663.50	2609.50	−.552	.581
Openness (transparency)	1553.50	2499.50	−1.053	.292
Consistency	1635.00	2625.00	−.826	.409
Quality of the strategic plan document	1370.50	2231.50	−1.388	.165

Appendix D.1

Table 1 Ranks size

	Size	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Political influences	Small	55	82.54	4539.5
	Large	92	68.9	6338.5
	Total	147		
Macro economy	Small	55	81.22	4467
	Large	92	69.68	6411
	Total	147		
Political instability	Small	55	81.6	4488
	Large	92	69.46	6390
	Total	147		
Turbulent environment	Small	55	77.26	4249.5
	Large	92	72.05	6628.5
	Total	147		
Rapid technology development	Small	55	75.9	4174.5
	Large	92	72.86	6703.5
	Total	147		
Linkage to country's strategic plan	Small	55	78.48	4316.5
	Large	92	71.32	6561.5
	Total	147		
Unavailability of macro information	Small	55	77.21	4246.5
	Large	92	72.08	6631.5
	Total	147		
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	Small	55	81.73	4495
	Large	92	69.38	6383
	Total	147		
Variety of external stakeholders	Small	55	78.16	4299
	Large	92	71.51	6579
	Total	147		
External barriers	Small	55	82.27	4525
	Large	92	69.05	6353
	Total	147		

Table 2 Size test statistics[a]

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Political influences	2060.5	6338.5	−1.953	.051
Macro economy	2133.0	6411.0	−1.640	.101
Political instability	2112.0	6390.0	−1.716	.086
Turbulent environment	2350.5	6628.5	−.749	.454
Rapid technology development	2425.5	6703.5	−.455	.649
Linkage to country's strategic plan	2283.5	6561.5	−1.024	.306
Unavailability of macro information	2353.5	6631.5	−.758	.449
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	2105.0	6383.0	−1.765	.078
Variety of external stakeholders	2301.0	6579.0	−.952	.341
External barriers	2075.0	6353.0	−1.825	.068

a. Grouping variable: size

Table 3 Ranks age

	Age	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Political influences	Young	52	79.09	4112.5
	Mature	95	71.22	6765.5
	Total	147		
Macro economy	Young	52	87.73	4562
	Mature	95	66.48	6316
	Total	147		
Political instability	Young	52	77.1	4009
	Mature	95	72.31	6869
	Total	147		
Turbulent environment	Young	52	85.23	4432
	Mature	95	67.85	6446
	Total	147		
Rapid technology development	Young	52	75.82	3942.5
	Mature	95	73.01	6935.5
	Total	147		
Linkage to country's strategic plan	Young	52	69.44	3611
	Mature	95	76.49	7267
	Total	147		
Unavailability of macro information	Young	52	77.16	4012.5
	Mature	95	72.27	6865.5
	Total	147		
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	Young	52	80.9	4207
	Mature	95	70.22	6671
	Total	147		
Variety of external stakeholders	Young	52	76.85	3996
	Mature	95	72.44	6882
	Total	147		
External barriers	Young	52	82.1	4269
	Mature	95	69.57	6609
	Total	147		

Table 4 Age test statistics[a]

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Political influences	2205.5	6765.5	−1.114	.265
Macro economy	1756.0	6316.0	−2.985	.003
Political instability	2309.0	6869.0	−.669	.504
Turbulent environment	1886.0	6446.0	−2.465	.014
Rapid technology development	2375.5	6935.5	−.416	.677
Linkage to country's strategic plan	2233.0	3611.0	−.996	.319
Unavailability of macro information	2305.5	6865.5	−.715	.475
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	2111.0	6671.0	−1.509	.131
Variety of external stakeholders	2322.0	6882.0	−.623	.533
External barriers	2049.0	6609.0	−1.709	.088

a. Grouping variable: age

Table 5 Ranks organisational level

	Organisational level	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Political influences	Dep. L	82	74.57	6114.5
	Corp. L	65	73.28	4763.5
	Total	147		
Macro economy	Dep. L	82	72.14	5915.5
	Corp. L	65	76.35	4962.5
	Total	147		
Political instability	Dep. L	82	71.09	5829
	Corp. L	65	77.68	5049
	Total	147		
Turbulent environment	Dep. L	82	71.49	5862.5
	Corp. L	65	77.16	5015.5
	Total	147		
Rapid technology development	Dep. L	82	75.9	6223.5
	Corp. L	65	71.61	4654.5
	Total	147		
Linkage to country's strategic plan	Dep. L	82	74.24	6087.5
	Corp. L	65	73.7	4790.5
	Total	147		
Unavailability of macro information	Dep. L	82	71.85	5892
	Corp. L	65	76.71	4986
	Total	147		
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	Dep. L	82	73.15	5998
	Corp. L	65	75.08	4880
	Total	147		
Variety of external stakeholders	Dep. L	82	76.1	6240
	Corp. L	65	71.35	4638
	Total	147		
External barriers	Dep. L	82	73.72	6045
	Corp. L	65	74.35	4833
	Total	147		

Table 6 Organisational level test statistics[a]

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Political influences	2618.5	4763.5	−.188	.850
Macro economy	2512.5	5915.5	−.614	.539
Political instability	2426.0	5829.0	−.956	.339
Turbulent environment	2459.5	5862.5	−.835	.404
Rapid technology development	2509.5	4654.5	−.660	.509
Linkage to country's strategic plan	2645.5	4790.5	−.079	.937
Unavailability of macro information	2489.0	5892.0	−.736	.462
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	2595.0	5998.0	−.283	.777
Variety of external stakeholders	2493.0	4638.0	−.697	.486
External barriers	2642.0	6045.0	−.090	.928

a. Grouping variable: organisational level

Table 7 Ranks availability of SPU

	Availability of SPU	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Political influences	No SPU	20	84.68	1693.5
	SPU	127	72.32	9184.5
	Total	147		
Macro economy	No SPU	20	80.1	1602
	SPU	127	73.04	9276
	Total	147		
Political instability	No SPU	20	84.3	1686
	SPU	127	72.38	9192
	Total	147		
Turbulent environment	No SPU	20	83.88	1677.5
	SPU	127	72.44	9200.5
	Total	147		
Rapid technology development	No SPU	20	74.23	1484.5
	SPU	127	73.96	9393.5
	Total	147		
Linkage to country's strategic plan	No SPU	20	82.78	1655.5
	SPU	127	72.62	9222.5
	Total	147		
Unavailability of macro information	No SPU	20	77.98	1559.5
	SPU	127	73.37	9318.5
	Total	147		
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	No SPU	20	93.68	1873.5
	SPU	127	70.9	9004.5
	Total	147		
Variety of external stakeholders	No SPU	20	87.15	1743
	SPU	127	71.93	9135
	Total	147		
External barriers	No SPU	20	90.4	1808
	SPU	127	71.42	9070
	Total	147		

Table 8 Availability of SPU test statistics[a]

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Political influences	1056.5	9184.5	−1.254	.210
Macro economy	1148.0	9276.0	−.711	.477
Political instability	1064.0	9192.0	−1.193	.233
Turbulent environment	1072.5	9200.5	−1.163	.245
Rapid technology development	1265.5	9393.5	−.028	.978
Linkage to country's strategic plan	1094.5	9222.5	−1.029	.303
Unavailability of macro information	1190.5	9318.5	−.482	.630
Ambiguity of external stakeholders' expectations	876.5	9004.5	−2.306	.021
Variety of external stakeholders	1007.0	9135.0	−1.544	.123
External barriers	942.0	9070.0	−1.856	.063

a. Grouping variable: availability of SPU

Appendix D.2

Table 1 Ranks size

	Size	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Organisational culture	Small	55	68.81	3784.5
	Large	92	77.1	7093.5
	Total	147		
Organisational structure	Small	55	68.96	3793
	Large	92	77.01	7085
	Total	147		
Organisation's mandate	Small	55	69.24	3808
	Large	92	76.85	7070
	Total	147		
Strategic planning procedures	Small	55	72.06	3963.5
	Large	92	75.16	6914.5
	Total	147		
Weak strategic thinking	Small	55	70.9	3899.5
	Large	92	75.85	6978.5
	Total	147		
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	Small	55	73.1	4020.5
	Large	92	74.54	6857.5
	Total	147		
Internal processes/regulations	Small	55	69.75	3836
	Large	92	76.54	7042
	Total	147		
Planners' expertise	Small	55	72.44	3984
	Large	92	74.93	6894
	Total	147		
Employees resistance to change	Small	55	74.18	4080
	Large	92	73.89	6798
	Total	147		
Lack of financial resources	Small	55	71.63	3939.5
	Large	92	75.42	6938.5
	Total	147		
IT infrastructure	Small	55	74.95	4122.5
	Large	92	73.43	6755.5
	Total	147		
Performance management system	Small	55	66	3630
	Large	92	78.78	7248
	Total	147		
Internal barriers	Small	55	67.77	3727.5
	Large	92	77.72	7150.5
	Total	147		

Table 2 Size test statistics[a]

	Mann–Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Organisational culture	2244.500	3784.500	−1.209	.227
Organisational structure	2253.000	3793.000	−1.166	.244
Organisation's mandate	2268.000	3808.000	−1.090	.276
Strategic planning procedures	2423.500	3963.500	−.443	.658
Weak strategic thinking	2359.500	3899.500	−.711	.477
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	2480.500	4020.500	−.204	.838
Internal processes/regulations	2296.000	3836.000	−1.003	.316
Planners' expertise	2444.000	3984.000	−.362	.718
Employees resistance to change	2520.000	6798.000	−.042	.966
Lack of financial resources	2399.500	3939.500	−.537	.592
IT infrastructure	2477.500	6755.500	−.219	.827
Performance management system	2090.000	3630.000	−1.822	.068
Internal barriers	2187.500	3727.500	−1.373	.170

a. Grouping variable: size

Table 3 Ranks age

	Age	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Organisational culture	Young	52	63.58	3306
	Mature	95	79.71	7572
	Total	147		
Organisational structure	Young	52	58.5	3042
	Mature	95	82.48	7836
	Total	147		
Organisation's mandate	Young	52	65.86	3424.5
	Mature	95	78.46	7453.5
	Total	147		
Strategic planning procedures	Young	52	57.58	2994
	Mature	95	82.99	7884
	Total	147		
Weak strategic thinking	Young	52	63.6	3307
	Mature	95	79.69	7571
	Total	147		
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	Young	52	61.18	3181.5
	Mature	95	81.02	7696.5
	Total	147		
Internal processes/regulations	Young	52	66.09	3436.5
	Mature	95	78.33	7441.5
	Total	147		
Planners' expertise	Young	52	64.73	3366
	Mature	95	79.07	7512
	Total	147		
Employees resistance to change	Young	52	69.89	3634.5
	Mature	95	76.25	7243.5
	Total	147		
Lack of financial resources	Young	52	72.49	3769.5
	Mature	95	74.83	7108.5
	Total	147		
IT infrastructure	Young	52	69.96	3638
	Mature	95	76.21	7240
	Total	147		
Performance management system	Young	52	64.87	3373
	Mature	95	79	7505
	Total	147		
Internal barriers	Young	52	58.76	3055.5
	Mature	95	82.34	7822.5
	Total	147		

Table 4 Age test statistics[a]

	Mann–Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Organisational culture	1928.000	3306.000	–2.323	.020
Organisational structure	1664.000	3042.000	–3.434	.001
Organisation's mandate	2046.500	3424.500	–1.783	.075
Strategic planning procedures	1616.000	2994.000	–3.593	.000
Weak strategic thinking	1929.000	3307.000	–2.284	.022
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	1803.500	3181.500	–2.785	.005
Internal processes/regulations	2058.500	3436.500	–1.786	.074
Planners' expertise	1988.000	3366.000	–2.051	.040
Employees resistance to change	2256.500	3634.500	–.917	.359
Lack of financial resources	2391.500	3769.500	–.327	.744
IT infrastructure	2260.000	3638.000	–.887	.375
Performance management system	1995.000	3373.000	–1.991	.046
Internal barriers	1677.500	3055.500	–3.214	.001

a. Grouping variable: age

Table 5 Ranks organisational level

	Organisational Level	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Organisational culture	Dept. L	82	77.49	6354.5
	Corp. L	65	69.59	4523.5
	Total	147		
Organisational structure	Dept. L	82	81.84	6711
	Corp. L	65	64.11	4167
	Total	147		
Organisation's mandate	Dept. L	82	84.65	6941
	Corp. L	65	60.57	3937
	Total	147		
Strategic planning procedures	Dept. L	82	83.64	6858.5
	Corp. L	65	61.84	4019.5
	Total	147		
Weak strategic thinking	Dept. L	82	83.48	6845.5
	Corp. L	65	62.04	4032.5
	Total	147		
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	Dept. L	82	80.88	6632
	Corp. L	65	65.32	4246
	Total	147		
Internal processes/regulations	Dept. L	82	81.84	6710.5
	Corp. L	65	64.12	4167.5
	Total	147		
Planners' expertise	Dept. L	82	83.01	6807
	Corp. L	65	62.63	4071
	Total	147		
Employees resistance to change	Dept. L	82	79.79	6542.5
	Corp. L	65	66.7	4335.5
	Total	147		
Lack of financial resources	Dept. L	82	78.45	6433
	Corp. L	65	68.38	4445
	Total	147		
IT infrastructure	Dept. L	82	77.91	6389
	Corp. L	65	69.06	4489
	Total	147		
Performance management system	Dept. L	82	80.87	6631
	Corp. L	65	65.34	4247
	Total	147		
Internal barriers	Dept. L	82	85.88	7042
	Corp. L	65	59.02	3836
	Total	147		

Table 6 Organisational level test statistics[a]

	Mann–Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Organisational culture	2378.500	4523.500	−1.182	.237
Organisational structure	2022.000	4167.000	−2.638	.008
Organisation's mandate	1792.000	3937.000	−3.539	.000
Strategic planning procedures	1874.500	4019.500	−3.202	.001
Weak strategic thinking	1887.500	4032.500	−3.160	.002
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	2101.000	4246.000	−2.269	.023
Internal processes/regulations	2022.500	4167.500	−2.684	.007
Planners' expertise	1926.000	4071.000	−3.028	.002
Employees resistance to change	2190.500	4335.500	−1.962	.050
Lack of financial resources	2300.000	4445.000	−1.462	.144
IT infrastructure	2344.000	4489.000	−1.305	.192
Performance management system	2102.000	4247.000	−2.272	.023
Internal barriers	1691.000	3836.000	−3.803	.000

a. Grouping variable: organisational level

Table 7 Ranks availability of SPU

	Availability of SPU	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
Organisational culture	No SPU	20	91.15	1823
	SPU	127	71.3	9055
	Total	147		
Organisational structure	No SPU	20	94.8	1896
	SPU	127	70.72	8982
	Total	147		
Organisation's mandate	No SPU	20	99.73	1994.5
	SPU	127	69.95	8883.5
	Total	147		
Strategic planning procedures	No SPU	20	101.08	2021.5
	SPU	127	69.74	8856.5
	Total	147		
Weak strategic thinking	No SPU	20	106.58	2131.5
	SPU	127	68.87	8746.5
	Total	147		
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	No SPU	20	96.48	1929.5
	SPU	127	70.46	8948.5
	Total	147		
Internal processes/regulations	No SPU	20	92.05	1841
	SPU	127	71.16	9037
	Total	147		
Planners' expertise	No SPU	20	89.85	1797
	SPU	127	71.5	9081
	Total	147		
Employees resistance to change	No SPU	20	90.85	1817
	SPU	127	71.35	9061
	Total	147		
Lack of financial resources	No SPU	20	90.05	1801
	SPU	127	71.47	9077
	Total	147		
IT infrastructure	No SPU	20	88.1	1762
	SPU	127	71.78	9116
	Total	147		
Performance management system	No SPU	20	94.25	1885
	SPU	127	70.81	8993
	Total	147		
Internal barriers	No SPU	20	106.18	2123.5
	SPU	127	68.93	8754.5
	Total	147		

Table 8 Availability of SPU test statistics[a]

	Mann–Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)
Organisational culture	927.000	9055.000	–2.051	.040
Organisational structure	854.000	8982.000	–2.472	.013
Organisation's mandate	755.500	8883.500	–3.022	.003
Strategic planning procedures	728.500	8856.500	–3.177	.001
Weak strategic thinking	618.500	8746.500	–3.836	.000
Leadership commitment to strategic planning	820.500	8948.500	–2.619	.009
Internal processes/regulations	909.000	9037.000	–2.185	.029
Planners' expertise	953.000	9081.000	–1.882	.060
Employees resistance to change	933.000	9061.000	–2.018	.044
Lack of financial resources	949.000	9077.000	–1.863	.062
IT infrastructure	988.000	9116.000	–1.661	.097
Performance management system	865.000	8993.000	–2.368	.018
Internal barriers	626.500	8754.500	–3.640	.000

a. Grouping variable: availability of SPU

Appendix D.3

Table 1 Ranks size

	Size	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
SPD quality	Small	42	58.52	2458
	Large	84	65.99	5543
	Total	126		
Formality (SPD)	Small	42	54.06	2270.5
	Large	84	68.22	5730.5
	Total	126		
Clarity	Small	42	61.27	2573.5
	Large	84	64.61	5427.5
	Total	126		
Measurability	Small	42	59.39	2494.5
	Large	84	65.55	5506.5
	Total	126		
Objectivity	Small	42	61.2	2570.5
	Large	84	64.65	5430.5
	Total	126		
Coverage	Small	42	60.58	2544.5
	Large	84	64.96	5456.5
	Total	126		
Openness	Small	42	60.94	2559.5
	Large	84	64.78	5441.5
	Total	126		
Consistency	Small	42	63.26	2657
	Large	84	63.62	5344
	Total	126		

Table 2 Ranks age

	Age	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
SPD quality	Young	45	76.64	3449
	Mature	81	56.2	4552
	Total	126		
Formality (SPD)	Young	45	77.52	3488.5
	Mature	81	55.71	4512.5
	Total	126		
Clarity	Young	45	72.17	3247.5
	Mature	81	58.69	4753.5
	Total	126		
Measurability	Young	45	72.64	3269
	Mature	81	58.42	4732
	Total	126		
Objectivity	Young	45	76.34	3435.5
	Mature	81	56.36	4565.5
	Total	126		
Coverage	Young	45	75.66	3404.5
	Mature	81	56.75	4596.5
	Total	126		
Openness	Young	45	70.54	3174.5
	Mature	81	59.59	4826.5
	Total	126		
Consistency	Young	45	64.09	2884
	Mature	81	63.17	5117
	Total	126		

Table 3 Ranks organisational level

	Organisational level	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
SPD quality	Department L.	66	51.61	3406.5
	Corporate L.	60	76.58	4594.5
	Total	126		
Formality (SPD)	Department L.	66	57.33	3784
	Corporate L.	60	70.28	4217
	Total	126		
Clarity	Department L.	66	58.45	3857.5
	Corporate L.	60	69.06	4143.5
	Total	126		
Measurability	Department L.	66	57.53	3797
	Corporate L.	60	70.07	4204
	Total	126		
Objectivity	Department L.	66	52.79	3484
	Corporate L.	60	75.28	4517
	Total	126		
Coverage	Department L.	66	50.76	3350
	Corporate L.	60	77.52	4651
	Total	126		
Openness	Department L.	66	52.82	3486
	Corporate L.	60	75.25	4515
	Total	126		
Consistency	Department L.	66	63.98	4223
	Corporate L.	60	62.97	3778
	Total	126		

Table 4 Ranks availability of SPU

	Availability of SPU	N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
SPD quality	No SPU	15	30.77	461.5
	SPU	111	67.92	7539.5
	Total	126		
Formality (SPD)	No SPU	15	38.63	579.5
	SPU	111	66.86	7421.5
	Total	126		
Clarity	No SPU	15	45.7	685.5
	SPU	111	65.91	7315.5
	Total	126		
Measurability	No SPU	15	30.4	456
	SPU	111	67.97	7545
	Total	126		
Objectivity	No SPU	15	40.6	609
	SPU	111	66.59	7392
	Total	126		
Coverage	No SPU	15	44.47	667
	SPU	111	66.07	7334
	Total	126		
Openness	No SPU	15	38.33	575
	SPU	111	66.9	7426
	Total	126		
Consistency	No SPU	15	55.77	836.5
	SPU	111	64.55	7164.5
	Total	126		