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AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE SUCCESSFUL ADOPTION AND PRACTICE OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FUND (D.D.F): A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FUND MATABELELAND NORTH PROVINCE IN ZIMBABWE.

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ABSTRACT
This dissertation has been embarked upon to identify the factors that act as impediments to the successful adoption and practice of strategic management and to recommend ways of lessening their effect. The study has been motivated by the realisation that despite the practice of strategic management in quasi government institutions, there are still problems of organizational performance. The study takes on single-case, cross-sectional case study approach at District Development Fund (DD.F). The major respondents are the Provincial Coordinator, six Heads of Departments, twelve District Heads and fifty four employees from different divisions. The use of secondary sources of data is also made such as District Development Fund Act Number 58 of 1981 and Circulars. The main instruments of data collection are the questionnaire and semi structured interviews. Observation is also used, though to a limited degree. The study uses the variables identified in literature and other past research works on the subject as the basis for its investigation. The research conducted at D.D.F confirms that some of the potential impediments to strategic management outlined in literature could be an impediment to the adoption and practice of strategic management, while other variables have not been found to be very critical. Strategic planning is a well understood concept at D.D.F. Strategic plans are developed meticulously and follow all the recommended steps such as setting of organisational goals and objectives. Strategic planning has therefore not been found to be a factor that could contribute to ineffective strategic management at D.D.F Communication or dissemination of information comes out as one of the major barriers to effective strategic management at D.D.F. There seems to be an information barrier between top management and employees. It is noted that the leaders do not communicate effectively with junior employees. These negative attributes therefore are potential barriers to effective strategic planning. This tends to negatively affect buy-in and ownership of the strategic plan. Communication is therefore confirmed as being a potential barrier to successful strategic planning. There is overwhelming evidence that resource constraints negatively affect strategic management at D.D.F. This is further compounded by the fact that resources are not effectively used to meet strategic requirements. Lack of financial resources has been found to be particularly problematic as it tends to affect the availability of other resources. It is concluded that inadequate resources are a barrier to successful strategic management. D.D.F has been found to have commendable recruitment and training and development policies. These policies are however not complemented by performance evaluation
and reward systems that would ensure that management and staff exerts their energies towards the attainment of the Fund’s goals and objectives. For this, reason human resources management is found to be a potential barrier to effective strategic management at D.D.F. Participation in strategic planning at D.D.F has a negative impact. There is overwhelming agreement that top management, lower levels management and employees do not participate in strategic planning. Such a situation is bound to affect the ownership of the plan by the sidelined employees thereby adversely affecting its implementation. Lack of participation by employees is therefore a barrier to effective strategic management. Respondents have generally passed a vote of confidence in the leadership role of D.D.F. Employees are also not convinced that the leadership provides them with the necessary resources for them to accomplish their tasks. Employee participation in decision making also does not seem to be actively encouraged. These negative traits in D.D.F’s culture have a potential to adversely affect strategic management. It is concluded that there are negative cultural practices at D.D.F that are potential barriers to strategic management. Strategic performance monitoring and evaluation systems seem to be absent at D.D.F. For strategic management to be a success it is necessary to have performance measurement and evaluation systems that have in-built feedback mechanisms. Evaluation and control is therefore as Strong barrier to effective strategic management at D.D.F. In conclusion, most of the barriers to successful management that are identified in the literature have been confirmed to be in existence at D.D.F barring just a few. Recommendations have been made on to reduce or eliminate the effects of these impediments. The limitations of this particular study are acknowledged and recommendations are made on how future studies could be conducted so as to bring out more generalisable results.