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Integrated strategies for managing the implementation of the national development plan

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Abstract

Despite edifying the overall effectiveness of the process for the implementation of a national development plan, it is still implicit in the recent epistemological trends that the question as to the appropriate model for NDP's implementation seems to have been largely ignored in most of the recent studies. This research provides a critical analysis of the effectiveness of the process for the implementation of the national development plan (NDP), so as to identify the associated paradoxes and the remedial NDP's implementation framework that can be suggested.

It entailed a meta-synthesis of the theories on NDP's implementation and triangulation with the findings of the studies conducted on the approach for NDP's implementation in South Africa.

Although the results of the meta-synthesis revealed the successful NDP implementation to catalyse economic growth and development, the effective use of a six-steps' (environmental analysis, outline of vision and mission, identification of critical targets and indicators, outline of strategic actions, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation) framework for NDP's implementation was still found to be largely moderated by the overall effectiveness of the adopted risk management framework, transformational leadership, good governance and the effectiveness of the municipal oversight committees.

The study suggests a framework emphasising the essence for a coherent linkage between the five critical steps' framework for NDP's implementation with the critical success factors that inter alia include: investment in the alternative source of energy, transformational leadership, good governance, municipal capacity building and effective financial risk management.

Key phrases

development plan; government departments; implementation; integrated framework

1. INTRODUCTION

The successful implementation of a national development plan (NDP) catalyses effective performance of the contemporary complex economies (Go, Moyer, Rafa & Schuenemann 2013:6; Ndeke 2013:46). A national development plan is a country's strategic framework that outlines critical goals and objectives that must be effectively accomplished to enable a country attain the desired state of performance (Go *et al.* 2013:6; Ndeke 2013:46). It outlines critical socio-economic activities like the development of new infrastructure, the improvement of the standard and condition of living of the population and the construction of healthcare and educational facilities that must be undertaken to spur the improvement of a country's level of economic growth and development (DPME 2014:19).

To catalyse economic growth and development, most studies on NDP's implementation in South Africa and by governments across the world herald the effectiveness of the process for NDP's implementation to undertake a six steps' process that entails environmental analysis, the outline of vision, mission, goals and objectives, the identification of the performance targets and critical indicators, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and undertaking relevant corrective and improvement measures (Chandler 2014:24; Hendler & Smeddle 2009:7; Van Nieuwkerk 2013:18).

Despite the essence of such a framework in the process of NDP's implementation, the major paradoxes of NDP's implementation are often not linked to the ineffectiveness of such a framework, but lack of a supportive linkage of such a framework with certain critical success factors like strategic and transformational leadership, risk management, intergovernmental relations, good governance, the required critical resources and well-functional municipal oversight committees (Ambe & Badenhorst 2012:242; Bushra, Usman & Naveed 2011:261; Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17; Jeppesen 2010:27). Such a view echoes the opinions of most authors that link the challenges that stymie the effectiveness of NDP's implementation to factors such as lack of essential skills at the municipal level and energy crisis.

However, only a few studies seem to have explored how the process for NDP's implementation can be effectively integrated with risk management, good governance and municipal oversight committees (Andrew 2013:7; Chandler 2014:5; Cloete & Robb 2010:495; Sogoni 2010:23; Van Nieuwkerk 2013:19). It is such a conceptual gap that motives this research to undertake a critical analysis of the framework and processes used in NDP's implementation in South Africa, so to identify the associated major paradoxes and the remedial NDP's implementation framework that can be suggested.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Lack of a suitable framework that coherently integrates the process of NDP's implementation with risk management frameworks, transformational leadership and good governance affects the overall effectiveness of NDP's implementation, and the achievement of the desired positive socio-economic outcomes on the performance of the South African economy.

3. PURPOSE OF THE ARTICLE

The purpose of this article is to undertake a meta-synthesis of the effectiveness of the framework for NDP's implementation, so to identify the major paradoxes and the remedial NDP's implementation framework that can be suggested.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study uses the interpretivist research paradigm and the inductive research approach to facilitate the effective analysis and interpretation of the theories on the implementation of the national development plan (Boghossian 2011:488). This enabled the undertaking of the necessary triangulations with the approach used for NDP's implementation in South Africa, so as to identify the major paradoxes and the remedial NDP's implementation framework that can be suggested.

To accomplish this, the study uses a qualitative conceptual analysis research design to undertake a systematic literature review. It involved the probing of the four critical research questions that entailed the evaluation of (Boghossian 2011:488; Cronin, Ryan & Coughlan 2008:38; Moore 1899:59):

- What are the contemporary views in the critical models and theories on the process for effective implementation of a National Development Plan?
- What are the critical steps used for the implementation of a National Development Plan in South Africa?
- What challenges are marring the effectiveness of the approach used for the implementation of a National Development Plan in South Africa?
- Which strategic framework can be suggested for improving the effectiveness of the approach used for the implementation of a National Development Plan in South Africa?

To facilitate in-depth critical analysis and identification of themes and subthemes that provide answers to these four fundamental research questions, a meta-synthesis was used in line with Cronin *et al.'s* (2008:38) interpretation to enhance theoretical evaluation and identification of the critical models and theories on the process for effective implementation of a National Development Plan.

Some of the theories that were evaluated included the views of Jacobs and Slaus (2010:56), Milman and Short (2008:758), Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:1) on the implementation of the national development plan. From that analysis, Figure 1 was extracted to provide the critical steps for the formulation and implementation of a national development plan.

Figure 1 (Critical steps for the formulation and implementation of a national development plan) provided the theoretical foundation for the analysis and evaluation of the documents and prior papers on the critical steps in the approach used for the implementation of a National Development Plan in South Africa (DPME 2014:12; Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17; Jeppesen 2010:27; National Planning Commission 2014:6).

This was followed by the evaluation of the major paradoxes and challenges that affect the effectiveness of NDP's implementation in South Africa. The final interpretations were triangulated with the empirical findings on the critical steps in the approach used for the implementation of a National Development Plan in South Africa to not only identify the other limitations, but also the remedial NDP's implementation framework that can be suggested (see Figure 2: A strategic framework for managing the process for the implementation of the national development plan).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of conceptual analysis are presented and discussed in this section according to the two main sections that include:

- contemporary views in the critical models and theories for effective implementation of a national development plan;
- empirical findings: the implementation of the national development plan in South Africa.

The details of the analysis are as follows.

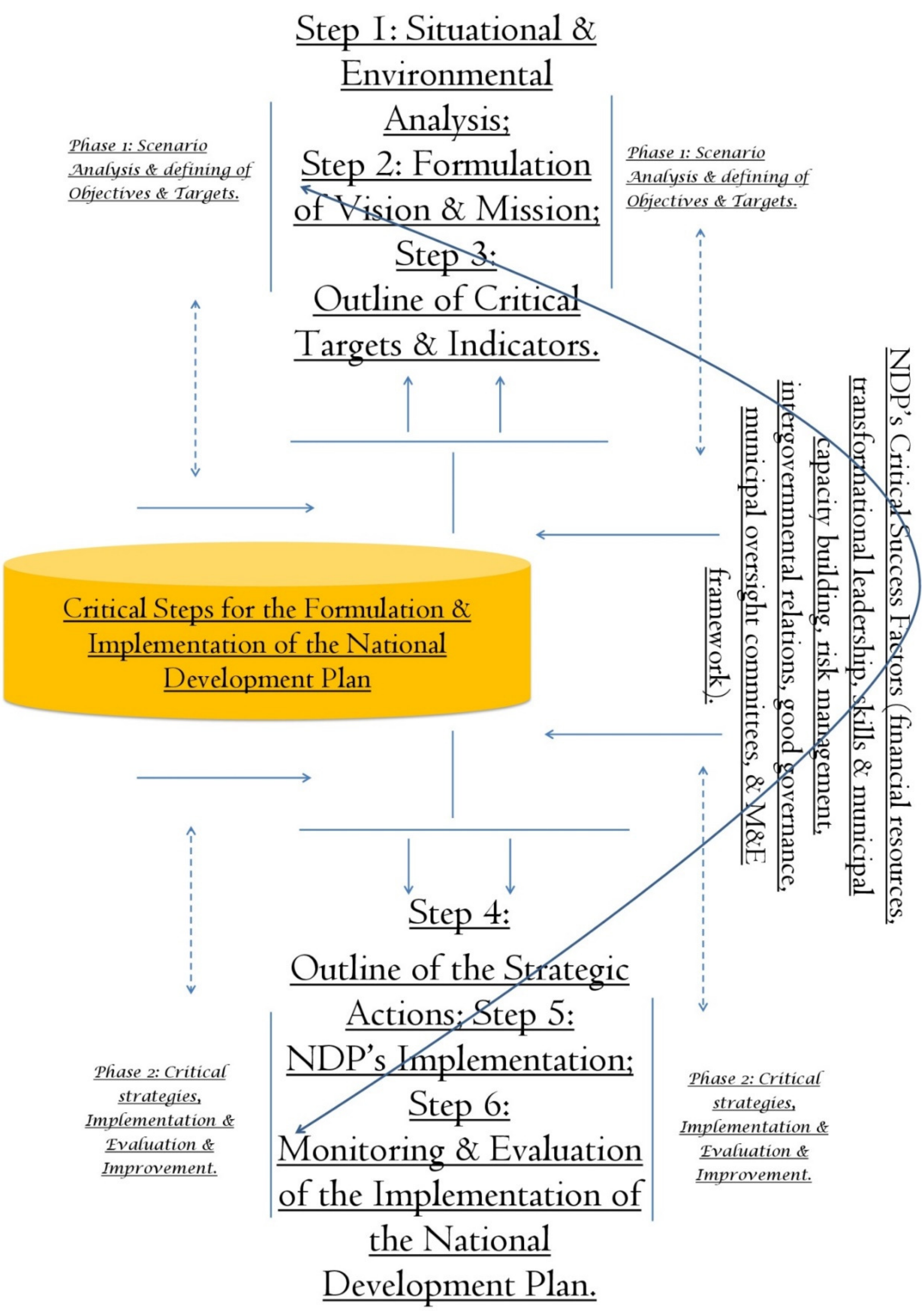

FIGURE 1: Critical steps for the formulation and implementation of a national development plan

Source**:** Researcher's own construct as derived from the interpretation of different theories (Jacobs & Slaus 2010:56; Milman & Short 2008:758; Pressman & Wildavsky 1973:1) on the implementation of the national development plan.

5.1 Contemporary views on the critical models and theories for effective NDP's implementation

A Development plan is a strategic framework outlining the vision and mission as well as the critical activities that must be effectively accomplished to influence attainment of such vision and mission (DIRCO 2013:16). Some of the critical goals outlined in the development plan often include among others, infrastructural development, education and skills development, poverty alleviations, and improvement of socio-economic living conditions and standards of the population (DIRCO 2013:16).

Other critical objectives encompass improvement of social security protection, creation of employment opportunities, provision of recreational and leisure facilities, a clean environment and adequate nutrition for the population (Milman & Short 2008:758). A development plan not only provides the vision and direction that the state must take, but also acts as the guiding rode for assessing whether all the processes of activities' accomplishment in different departments will influence the attainment of the desired objectives and goals (Milman & Short 2008:758; National Planning Commission 2014:19; Serfontein 2010:13).

For NDP's implementation to edify attainment of the desired strategic motives, theories indicate the overall effectiveness of the process for the implementation of a development plan is impacted by certain five critical steps (Milman & Short 2008:758; National Planning Commission 2014:19; Serfontein 2010:13).

5.1.1 Critical steps for NDP's formulation and implementation

In the formulation and implementation of a development plan, most public sector managers tend to apply certain five critical steps that include; environmental analysis, the formulation of vision and mission, the outline of critical targets and indicators, prescription of the strategic course of actions that must be undertaken, actual implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (Jacobs & Slaus 2010:56; Milman & Short 2008:758). The details of these steps are illustrated in Figure 1, and are discussed as follows.

- ***Step 1: Environmental analysis***

Environmental analysis requires intense incremental evaluation of the prevailing trends and forecasting to facilitate the understanding and predicting of the likely political, economic and social changes (Holden 2007:277). Such evaluations enhance not only the identification of the uncertainties and unpredictabilities that can limit effective NDP's implementation, but also the critical societal challenges that the NDP must respond to (Milman & Short 2008:758). The analysis of existing trends is often accomplished by assessing the statistics on different aspects of the governmental operation and performance (Holden 2007:277). The statistical facts for evaluation include economic trends on the state of unemployment in the country and the likely causes, and the state of infrastructure in terms of the additional kilometres of new roads constructed and tarmacked (Milman & Short 2008:758).

Other areas require the evaluation of the statistics on the new hospitals constructed, and the additional hospitals and educational facilities required vis-à-vis the changes in the demographical trends, (Milman & Short 2008:758).

Besides the use of PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological and Legal), environmental analysis is also often accomplished using SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to facilitate the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the government departments, vis-à-vis the strengths and threats associated with the changes and the likely new trends in certain factors that can mar effective implementation of different developmental programmes (Holden 2007:277).

Environmental analysis is a strategic management control process that enables managers identify threats and put in place the mitigating proactive measures (Holden 2007:277). However, recent theories imply that considering the enormous data that exist in most of the government departments, effective knowledge management is usually a prerequisite for effective environmental analysis.

Effective knowledge management influences the accuracy of data and the quality of the decisions made from such data (Holden 2007:277). It enhances ease of detailed data analysis to titillate effective identification of the areas of challenges, and determining the areas that major government efforts and resources must be directed. Effective environmental analysis and scanning enable the public sector executives access the details of the specific direction and vision that the process for NDP's implementation must aid the country to achieve (Holden 2007:277).

- ***Step 2: Formulation of vision, mission, objectives and outline of targets***

A vision is a strategic statement reflecting the desired good or better state that a government expects a country to attain within a certain stipulated duration of time (Kusek & Rist

2013:12). A vision sets the basis for the mission statement that in turn provides the basis for the formulation of the critical strategic goals and objectives that must be respectively achieved within the stipulated long and short term durations (Kusek & Rist 2013:12). Goals are usually outlined to be attained in 10 to 20 years. Objectives are aimed at being attained within the duration of 5 to ten years or before (Kusek & Rist 2013:12). The clear outline of the required goals and objectives is often followed by the outline of the critical targets and indicators that can be used in the assessment of whether the process for the implementation of all critical activities are in accord with the NDP implementation framework (Kusek & Rist 2013:12). Indicators are qualitative and quantitative symbols which if used in the process of monitoring and evaluation enable public sector executives and managers reach conclusions on whether the implementation of a particular programme has been successful (Rugg 2010:19). Indicators can be input, process, output, and outcome and impact indicators (Kusek & Rist 2013:12; Rugg 2010:19).

For the outlined goal, objectives and indicators to be effective, it must meet the criteria set out in the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) framework (Budworth & Latham 2006:22; Locke & Latham 1968:1). The SMART framework facilitates assessment of whether the set goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time- bound. Nonetheless, with all the goals, objectives and indicators outlined, conventional theories on NDP's implementation highlight that the next step requires the outline of the strategic actions and courses of actions to enhance the successful NDP's implementation (Mayer 2008:278).

- ***Step 3: Outline of strategic actions***

The clarity of the outlined strategic actions and course of actions is critical for effective NDP's implementation (Chandler 2014:33). Clearly outlined strategic course of actions facilitate the ability of all the employees in the lower levels of the governmental structures and other stakeholders to understand the required expectations and the associated responsibilities that must be accomplished to render it possible for the achievement of such expectations (Chandler 2014:33). This contributes to the reduction of resource wastage and improvement of the optimisation of the usually limited public sector resources (Chandler 2014:33). Clarity of the expected roles and responsibilities also eliminates conflicts between government departments to improve accountability and productivity of all the partners involved in the implementation of the development programmes (Van Nieuwkerk 2013:6).

Strategies for effective NDP's implementation encompass training and improving the capacity of different government departments and structures, and collaboration and partnership with different government departments, structures and stakeholders (Van Nieuwkerk 2013:6). Training and development improve the skillfulness, competencies and capacity of the managers and employees in the lower levels of the governmental structures (Van Nieuwkerk 2013:6). The improvement of the skillfulness and competencies of the lower level managers and employees is important for reason that when the NDP's formulation is completed, it is often cascaded to the lower levels of the governmental structures (Chandler 2014:33).

The ability of the municipal managers to interpret and integrate key NDP's stipulations into the integrated provincial and municipal development plans therefore depends on their overall skillfulness and competencies to do so (Chandler 2014:9). The negative implications of a poorly formulated and implemented provincial and municipal integrated development plans are often reflected in the poor translation of the key NDP's stipulation into tangible achievements that benefit the entire population (Go *et al.* 2013:6; Ndeke 2013:46). Effective collaboration and liaison between different government departments and stakeholders is therefore a prerequisite for securing the required concerted efforts from all the parties to ensure the successful NDP's implementation (Go *et al.* 2013:6; Ndeke 2013:46).

Although it is the government bureaucrats that are charged with the process for designing and implementing a national development plan, the community tend to provide the necessary evaluation and opinions on whether the NDP's implementation is being accomplished in the manner that facilitates the meeting of their needs and concerns (Chandler 2014:33; Go *et al.* 2013:6; Ndeke 2013:46). Improved level of collaboration and liaison between the government officials and the communities therefore enhances effective activities' monitoring and evaluation. This facilitates the effective identification of the major challenges so that corrections can be undertaken to spawn effectiveness of the process for NDP's implementation (Ndeke 2013:46). With all these critical strategies outlined, the next step in the process for NDP's formulation and implementation entails its actual process of implementation (Ndeke 2013:46).

- ***Step 4: Implementation of the development plan***

In the process of NDP's implementation, most public sector managers rely on the theories for policy implementation in the public sector. Reasons are attributable to the fact that a development plan is largely treated as a policy statement on what the government intends to do to achieve the greater good for the largest sections of the population (Go *et al.* 2013:6; Hendler & Smeddle 2009:7; Ndeke 2013:46). In effect, the process for the implementation of the development plan has become quite synonymous to the process for the implementation of a government policy. Unfortunately, ever since, Pressman and Wildavsky initiated the debate on the notion of the "appropriate theory" for policy implementation in 1973, the question as to what is the "appropriate theory" for policy implementation remains largely unresolved.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:1) focused on examining how a single authoritative decision was carried out, either at a single location or at multiple sites in order to understand the factors that facilitated or constrained the implementation of public policies. The conclusion of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:1) articulated the reasoning in Elmore's (1978:185) theory. In line with the thinking in the first generation theorists, Elmore's (1978:185) theory posit that the integration of certain prerequisites can significantly influence the successful policy implementation. Such prerequisites for a policy implementation encompass; stakeholders' empowerment and involvement, good governance, supporting structures, essential resources, supporting rules and regulations, effective communication and coordination of activities, strategic leadership, and the use of an effective monitoring and evaluation framework.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:1) provided the basis for understanding how policy implementations can be accomplished in the contemporary public sector organisations. However, Hill and Hupe (2002:66) argue that limiting the research on policy implementation to the assessment or the postulation of certain checklists can significantly undermine the development of theories on policy implementation. In contrast to Hill and Hupe's (2002:66) reasoning, this research concurs with Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:1) and Elmore (1978:185) that such prerequisites are critical for influencing effectiveness of the process for policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluations (Hill & Hupe 2002:66).

The effectiveness of policy implementation also depends on whether the public sector managers opt for top-down approach, or bottom-upward approach. The top-down approach dictates policy statements to the lower structures and the larger population (Hill & Hupe 2002:66). The bottom-upward approach uses a consultative approach in which the process for policy formulation and implementation emanates from the larger population and flows upwards from the lower government structures to the top for relevant decisions to be made in the context of the inputs from the lower structures and the larger population (Hill & Hupe 2002:66). Poor control and delays in the process of project and programme implementations are the major weaknesses of the bottom-upwards approach (Hill & Hupe 2002:66).

The top-down perspective of policy implementation is either not free from criticisms on the basis that the top-down models often take the statutory language as their starting point and fails to consider the significance of the actions that are taken earlier in the policy-making process (Hill & Hupe 2002:66). Top downers have been accused of seeing implementation as a purely administrative process and ignoring the political aspects or trying to eliminate them. In effect, top-down approach fails to recognise the political realities that account for policies with multiple goals, vague language and complex implementations structures (Hill & Hupe 2002:66).

- ***Step 5: Monitoring and evaluation of NDP implementation***

Monitoring and evaluation are the activities in the last step in the process for NDP's implementation (Bamberger, Rao & Woolcock 2010). Monitoring and evaluation are critical for the identification and elimination of the challenges that can mar the successful implementation of the development plan (Bamberger *et al.* 2010). Although the two concepts of "monitoring" and "evaluation" are used interchangeably, they actually differ in terms of their technical meanings (Bamberger *et al.* 2010). Monitoring is a long term process of measuring and assessing whether the process for the implementation of different community programmes are most likely to influence the achievement of the defined strategic goals and objectives (Bamberger *et al.* 2010).

Evaluation is a short term process, in which more specific assessments are undertaken to evaluate whether the process for the implementation of certain specific programmes will lead to the achievement of the desired short term objectives (Garbarino & Holland 2009). Evaluation can therefore be used as part of the technique for monitoring to assess whether the outcomes will contribute to the overall achievement of the outlined long term goals (Garbarino & Holland 2009). The three main constructs that influence the design and the overall effectiveness of the M&E frameworks used in the contemporary public sector organisations include M&E planning, assessment of the quality, reliability and validity of the M&E framework, and the implementation of M&E framework (Garbarino & Holland 2009).

Despite the values of the integration of such constructs, the limitations linked to the essence of maintaining and sustaining an M&E system on an ongoing basis can still undermine the effectiveness of M&E used in the modern public sector organisations (Lavela & Galland 2014:28). Besides these internal challenges, it is also often a challenge to establish international standards for methodological rigour, ethical practice and efficient management of the processes in M&E (Lavela & Galland 2014:28). Most of the challenges that mar the effectiveness of M&E can be effectively ameliorated if effective planning is undertaken according to the key main steps encompassing planning, implementation, analysis, dissemination of information and use (Lavela & Galland 2014:28).

5.1.2 Critical success factors: NDP's implementation

In addition to these five steps, theories indicate that effective NDP's implementation is often inherently further enhanced by the approach used for financial risk management, transformational leadership, intergovernmental relations, good governance, effectiveness of the municipal oversight committees, and the framework used in monitoring and evaluation (Bushra *et al.* 2011:261; Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17; Jeppesen 2010:27). Effective financial risk management predicts the successful implementation of different government projects and programmes. It edifies identification and elimination of the slacks in the process of the implementation of projects associated with the implementation of the national development (Jeppesen 2010:27). The end results are often reflected in the inducement of the required momentum in the pace of project implementation (Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17).

The six critical steps for financial risk management that are often integrated in the process for NDP's implementation include; step 1: risks' identification, step 2: analysis of the causing factors, step 3: analysis of the likelihood of the risk's occurrence, step 4: prioritisation of the identified risks, step 5: formulation and implementation of risk response, and step 6: continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the undertaken risk response (Liebenberg & Hoyt 2013:16; National Treasury 2009:5; Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2014:7). However, the extent to which the effectiveness of the financial risk management is able to enhance the effectiveness of the process for NDP's implementation depends on the extent to which the leadership is transformational (Bushra *et al.* 2011:261).

Transformational leadership connotes a leadership style through which the personnel with the requisite charisma plans, organises and motivates the organisation's employees to work towards the attainment of the desired strategic objectives and goals (Ghadi, Fernando & Caputi 2010:115). The positive implications of transformational leadership on the performance of the modern public sector organisations are often reflected in the improvement of the organisational adaptation to change and transformation, organisational engagement, employee motivation and organisational innovation (Fuda & Badham 2011:145; Geib & Swenson 2013:5). All these spawn the improvement of the effectiveness of change and transformations that are often related to NDP's implementation (Fuda & Badham 2011:145).

Unfortunately, other authors point that most of the managers and supervisors in the contemporary public sector organisations lack the skills and competencies to influence the improvement in the level of the organisational engagement (Hoffman, Bynum, Piccolo & Sutton 2011:779; Warrick 2011:11). Such a finding is attributable to the fact that in most of the cases, it is only a single leader who is transformational as the other leaders lack the characteristics of the transformational leadership (Hoffman *et al.* 2011:779; Warrick 2011:11).

It is further exacerbated by the fact that some of such leaders often do not take the necessary efforts to ensure that the ordinary managers and employees are developed and equipped with the necessary transformational leadership skills (Hoffman *et al.* 2011:779). Such a limitation affects the interpretation and translation of the process of NDP's implementation into tangible benefits by the municipal managers and employees (Hoffman *et al.* 2011:779).

Besides the effectiveness of transformational leadership and the values of monitoring and evaluation, theories also highlight the adherence to the principles of good governance such as accountability, transparency and responsibility to enhance the successful NDP's implementation (Ambe & Badenhorst 2012:242; Jeppesen 20 10:27). Although it is apparent from theories that such factors edify the effectiveness of the process for NDP's implementation, it is not quite certain from the practices in the South African public sector organisations that the framework presently used for NDP's implementation coherently integrates such key success factors (Ambe & Badenhorst 2012:242).

5.2 Empirical findings: the implementation of the national development plan in South Africa

To turn around the socio-economic situation in South Africa, the South African government through the Department of Performance Management and Evaluation and the National Planning Commission initiated the need and importance for a National Development Plan

(DPME 2014:19; National Planning Commission 2014:102). The National Development Plan is aimed at streamlining the process for the initiation and implementation of different developmental programmes by providing a perspective of the socio-economic situation that South Africa needs to be in within the stipulated period (National Planning Commission 2014:102). The long term goals of the South Africa's NDP are to eliminate poverty and improve the socio-economic living conditions and standards of the South African population (National Planning Commission 2014:102).

In its recent review, the Department of Performance Management and Evaluation-DPME (2014:22) highlights in its medium term strategic framework (MTSF) that the medium term period (between 2014-2019) will involve prioritising investment in infrastructural development, supporting the growth of the productive sectors of the economy and reducing redtape and unintended consequences of regulations.

Unfortunately, empirical facts imply that there are a number of inhibitors that the South African government will have to deal with and eliminate before the implementation of the National Development Plan can influence the attainment of such desired positive outcomes (Hendler & Smeddle 2009:5; Van Nieuwkerk 2013:66). Different prior studies indicate the initiatives for the successful NDP's implementation are still largely stymied by energy crisis, limited municipal capacity, lack of essential skills at the municipal levels, and the overall poor entrenchment of the concept of good governance (Hendler & Smeddle 2009:5; Meth 2007:65; Van Nieuwkerk 2013:66).

- ***Energy crisis***

Energy crisis is a hindrance that is affecting the effectiveness of the process for the implementation of different activities such as improving the level of industrialisation and the investment conditions in South Africa (Cawood, Kangwa, Macfarlane & Minnitt 2011:6). These activities are critical for ensuring the successful implementation of the National Development Plan (Cawood *et al.* 2011:6).

In a country less gifted with hydropower and other sources of energy, but with an avalanche of coal deposits, the efficient management of coal production and supply is critical for the successful implementation of the National Development Plan (Brent 2011:16). As South Africa's major source of energy, coal is a pivotal catalyst for industrialisation as well as an incantation for faster economic growth and development (Brent 2011:16).

Linked to the burgeoning of enormous employment opportunities that unlock several income generating activities for a larger chunk of the population, coal is nevertheless also an antidote for improving the general condition and standard of living of a country's population (Brent 2011:16). Despite these overall positive contributions of coal to South Africa's economy, increasingly trends are indicating that as South Africa floods the global coal market with processed coal to become the world's sixth exporter of coal, domestically, it faces acute coal shortages to the extent that within the next 150 years, it faces the risk of the depletion of the total coal deposits (Cloete & Robb 2010:495).

Coupled by the adoption of the less stringent policy on coal export, the expansion of coal extraction to the other untapped areas such as the Waterberg coalfields in Limpopo Province is still constrained by poor development of rail and road infrastructures (Andrew 2013:7). Yet, as the expansion to these untapped areas is being delayed, it is now quite apparent that coal from the existing deposits are almost near depletion, and may not last up to the year 2020 (Andrew 2013:7). This is further execrated by poor management and maintenance of Eskom's power stations that have frequently led to load shedding.

Load shedding affects the overall productivity of the country and the overall level of industrialisation which is critical for the realisation of the strategic objectives and goals which are outlined in the NDP's medium term strategic framework (MTSF) (2014-2019). The inability to support the country's electricity demand harms the growth of the economy and the rate of the new generated employment opportunities (Altman 2010:8). New investments cannot take place in the economy without the security of energy supply (Altman 2010:8). Besides inhibitors linked to energy crisis, it is also widely apparent from prior empirical studies that the initiatives for effective implementation of the National Development Plan is also being affected by the poor capacity and skills at the municipal levels (Altman 2010:8).

- ***Capacity and skills at the municipal level***

Most of the activities for the design and formulation of the National Development Plan is accomplished at the national level (Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17; Jeppesen 2010:27). However, the actual process for the implementation of all activities critical for the successful implementation of the development plan occurs at the local government level (Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17; Jeppesen 2010:27).

The ability of most of the municipalities to effectively implement most of the critical activities is still undermined by poor capacity and skills of the personnel at the municipal levels

(Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17). Some of the capacity and human resource related issues at the municipal levels are linked to the difficulty to attract and retain suitably qualified and experienced personnel (Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17). This causes the situation where most of the positions at the municipal levels are provided on the basis of three to five year renewable contracts (Chandler 2014:23).

Whether such contracts are renewed or not, the fact still remains that the poor rate of attraction and retention of suitably qualified personnel affect the desired level of stability which is required for municipalities to deliver on the objectives and goals of the national development plan (Chandler 2014:23).

As the employees and critical personnel are changed, it takes time for the new incoming personnel to continue from where the employees who have left had stopped (Van Nieuwkerk 2013:10). It is only with time that such new employees are able to gain the desired level of competence and experience. Unfortunately, by the time they attain such competence and experience, their contracts will have expired (Hommen & Rolfstam 2009:17; Jeppesen 2010:27). Although such contracts are usually renewable, organisational politics at the municipal levels may affect the renewal of such contracts (Van Nieuwkerk 2013:27). The other challenge is linked to the competition and conflict of roles between the administrative and political branches of the municipalities with the effect that most of the municipalities tend to become highly politically charged to the extent that it is not reasonably possible to accomplish all the critical activities that can influence the attainment of the objectives outlined in the national development plan (Hendler & Smeddle 2009:7).

Yet, it is also increasingly turning out that most of the policy formulations and implementations at the municipal levels are done by councillors who are often less experienced and educated (Hendler & Smeddle 2009:7). This limits the application of the technical skills which are usually essential for ensuring that all the development programmes are effectively implemented. Sogoni (2010:13) highlights that a lot of training and capacity building programmes have been conducted by the Development Bank of Southern Africa-DBSA. However, recent surveys indicate that the effectiveness of most municipalities is still undermined by poor financial management, poor infrastructure, non-compliance with procedures and regulations for supply chain management and procurement processes (Hendler & Smeddle 2009:7).

Although the challenge of the shortage of critical skills have been addressed by hiring consultants, it has of late been discovered that consultants consume a lot of funds that affect the optimisation of the limited financial resources to ensure the implementation of all activities which are critical for the realisation of the goals and objectives in the National Development Plan (Hendler & Smeddle 2009:7). In other words, challenges are not only latent in the capacity and skills at the municipal levels, but also the overall entrenchment of the concept of good governance (Hendler & Smeddle 2009:7).

- ***Poor entrenchment of good governance***

Poor entrenchment of the concept of good governance affects the process for the implementation of the national development plan (PSC 2012/2013). This is attributable to the fact that poor governance leads to the entrenchment of corruption that causes misappropriation of funds meant for the implementation of different developmental activities. It is evident in empirical facts that from financial year 2008/2009, financial misconduct increased from the sum of R100 million by 346% to R 346 million in 2009/2010 and soared in 2010/2011 by another 269% to reach, 932 million (PSC 2012/2013). In the year 2012/2013, the PSC highlights that the total funds lost to unmitigated financial risks associated with corruption hit over R 1 billion.

The implications of these financial losses that are certainly linked to unmitigated financial risks are causing significant tolls on the successful implementation of government programmes and projects (Naude & Ambe 2013). As a result of the housing backlogs, the survey conducted by the National Census in 2011 revealed that the number of shacks had risen to over 1.9 million which represented 13% of the households in South Africa, and a decrease of 3 percentage points since 1996. Evidence also implies that poor financial risks management is also affecting the provision of healthcare and education services (Equal Education 20 12:2).

Out of the 24 793 public schools in South Africa, 14% are highlighted not to have electricity, as 93% has no libraries (Equal Education 2012:2). Although in the 2013/2014 annual budget allocation, education received R233 billion, which was an increase of 15% from the previous year, strong evidence has emerged that a significant amount of the R233 billion has not gone towards the improvement of the country's education system (Equal Education 2012:4).

Stronger integration of the key principles of good governance such as accountability, transparency and responsibility is therefore critical if all the financial resources are to be optimised to enhance the financing of all the activities for the attainment of all the NDP's goals. In other words, poor entrenchment of the concept of good governance also affects the effectiveness of the financial risk management framework.

- ***Poor financial risk management***

While deriving from Section 196 of the South African Constitution, the roles and responsibilities for the implementation of a risk management strategy in all the contemporary South African public sector organisations are contained in the regulations published in terms of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 1999, as amended by the National Treasury's (2009:13) Framework for Risk Management in Public Sector organisations. The National Treasury's (2009:13) framework for risk management agitates for the creation of an enabling environment for risk management by adopting the appropriate risk management strategy, human resource capacity, and the use of the enterprise risk management framework.

It also emphasises the need for risk identification, risk assessment, risk response, communication and reporting, monitoring, and the outline of the key roles and responsibilities of the risk management committees and audit committees. The South African Government General Procurement Guidelines (2013:16) acknowledges that risk management is one of the tools and techniques which can be used for ensuring effective planning and accountability by the directors and managers in government departments.

Conventional theories on financial risk management indicate the key success factors for effective financial risk management to encompass top management's support and commitment towards risk management initiatives, the initiation and fostering of a culture of total organisational risk management, and communication and consultation of the stakeholders on risk management initiative (Henriksen & Uhlenfeldt 2006:23; Kent 2011:33; Marais, Human & Botes 2008:376).

Sadly, limited coherent integration of these key success factors in the existing regulatory framework and the National Treasury's (2009) Framework for Risk Management seems to be the major limitations marring the effectiveness of financial risk identification and mitigation in the modern South African public sector organisations.

This view echoes the PSC's (2012/13:29) revelations that since the existing framework remains ineffective for operationalising risk management in the South African public sector, a more comprehensive framework is required to support the implementation of risk management within the broader public management and strategic planning spheres (IIA 2013:5; PSC 2012/13:29). All these affect the effectiveness of financial risk management and the extent to which it is able to edify the effectiveness of the process for NDP's development (Picciotto 2011:165; Vladut 2014:60).

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical analysis indicated the five critical steps undertaken in the formulation and implementation of a development plan to entail environmental analysis, formulation of vision and mission, outline of critical targets and indicators, outline of strategic actions, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

However, it is argued through the illustration in Figure 2 that in addition to these five critical steps, it is also recommended that the government must consider integrating certain critical factors in the framework for the implementation of the national development plan. The use of a clear framework of strategic actions is one of such critical factors.

Some of the plans that will have to be contained in such a strategic framework include a plan for rural infrastructure development, investment in health and educational infrastructure, investment in transport infrastructure (efficient rail and roads interlinking provinces and SA with SADC and the rest of Africa), human resource development, improving attractiveness of the country as an investment destination, investment in reliable sources of energy, and adoption of supportive policies and legislations etc.

Although most of these plans are already reflected in the National Planning Commission's (2014:103) framework, it is quite apparent from the findings that skills and the poor capacity of most of the municipalities are major inhibitors.

This can be addressed by taking into consideration the critical success factors that are outlined in step 5 of Figure 2 to include skills development, municipal capacity building, partnership with the development institutions such as DBSA and IMF. Such initiative must also be accompanied by the adherence to the principles of good governance. Investment in the training and skills development of the personnel at the local government and municipal levels is one of the strategies that the government can also use to improve the capacity of the municipalities. The implementation of such a measure will contribute to the eradication of the skills related challenges that still mar effective performance of most of the municipalities and the successful implementation of the national development plan.

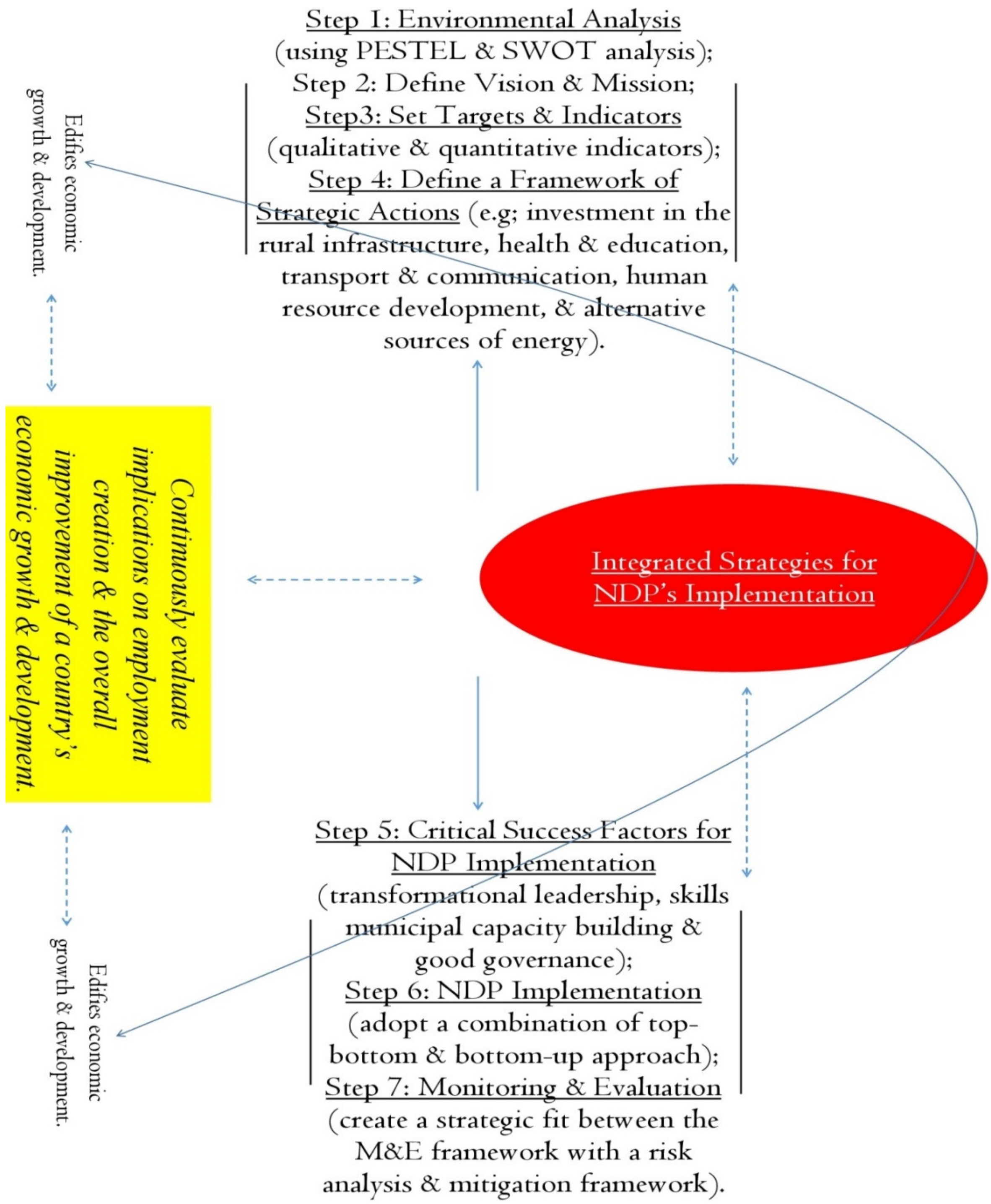

FIGURE 2: **A strategic framework for managing the process for the implementation of the national development plan**

Source: Researcher's own construct as derived from the interpretation of different theories (Jacobs & Slaus 2010:56; Pressman & Wildavsky 1973:1) on NDP's implementation and triangulation with the findings of the studies (Van Nieuwkerk 2013:66; Hendler & Smeddle 2009:5) conducted on NDP's implementation in South Africa.

Investment in the training and skills development of the personnel at the local government and municipal levels can be accomplished using two main strategies that include the design of the programmes for technical skills development on project design and implementation, financial management, monitoring and evaluation. This can be undertaken in-house.

Skills development and the improvement of the capacity of the rural municipalities can be accomplished by selecting younger students in high schools or colleges and universities who are pursuing the desired disciplines, and sponsoring and developing them through a combination of university related studies and practical experience at the designated municipalities or government projects.

It will require the identification of the areas of shortages and the learners excelling in such disciplines at school. The identification of these learners must be followed by putting them through apprenticeship development programmes through which upon graduation, the learners will be integrated as municipal employees. Such approach will enable local government and municipalities develop employees in areas of scarcity who also understand their organisational culture. As such strategies are being undertaken, it is also critical that the government considers improving the level of networking and collaboration with all the stakeholders.

Instead of using the present approach which is skewed towards top-bottom approach, it is argued in Figure 2 that in Step 6, NDP’s implementation can be accomplished using a combination of top-bottom and bottom-up approach. The use of such approach would improve community mobilisation and involvement to ensure that the process for the implementation of different but related critical activities is successful. Networking and collaboration with all the stakeholders can also provide the government with access to enormous skills and expertise in the private sector. This will contribute to the filling of the skills’ gap and the challenges of lack of sufficient resources that often affect the successful implementation of the national development plan. Networking and collaboration will also enable the government rally everyone behind critical activities that need to be successfully implemented.

Besides the improvement of networking and collaboration with all the stakeholders, the other critical strategy requires the adoption of the appropriate framework for monitoring and evaluation that links more seamlessly and coherently with a framework for financial risk management.

The adoption of such a framework will influence the identification and eradication of the challenges that usually mar effectiveness of the process of project implementation. The critical steps that must be outlined in the M&E framework include analysis and understanding of the development plan, outline of indicators, and selection of data collection methods. These steps are often accompanied by the selection of the techniques for data analysis and interpretation, and interpolation of quantitative results with qualitative results to reach logical conclusions on the inhibitors and intervention measures that can be undertaken.

Effective accomplishment of such steps must also be accompanied by the use of the four critical strategies encompassing the clear defining of the two separate processes for the concept of monitoring and the notion of evaluation, training and developing employees on the matters of monitoring and evaluation, the establishment of effective communication mechanism that fosters activities' coordination between managers and employees as well as the evaluators.

Besides the essence for sufficient funds, public sector managers will also need to ensure consistency in the implementation of M&E measures. However, the extent to which the M&E framework adopted will be effective will depend on the extent to which it is accompanied by the adoption of appropriate framework for financial risk management. The local government can use the National Treasury's (2009) framework for risk management.

The critical steps that will have to be followed include:

step 1: identification of risks,

step 2: analysis of causing factors,

step 3: analysis of the likelihood of risk's occurrence,

step 4: prioritisation of the identified risks,

step 5: formulation and implementation of risk response, and

step 6: continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the risk response.

Although the overall effectiveness of financial risk management will influence improvement in the process for the implementation of activities outlined in the national development plan, it is also critical that it is accompanied with the entrenchment of the concept of good governance in the public sector.

7. CONCLUSION

NDP's implementation is a multidimensional concept. It is concept that is not only edified by the strict adherence to the six critical steps that include environmental analysis, vision and mission formulation, the outline of critical targets and indicators, the outline of the required strategic actions, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, but also by the other critical success factors that mirror skills development and municipal capacity building, sufficient resources and the use of an effective M&E framework that seamlessly links well with a framework for risk management.

Unfortunately, research on the implementation of the national development plan in South Africa revealed the NDP's implementation process which is still strongly restricted to only the six-steps' NDP's implementation framework. Such approach was found to lead to the circumstances whereby in most of the cases, the successful NDP's implementation gets marred by the poor management of energy crisis, poor capacity and lack of essential skills at the municipal levels, and the overall poor entrenchment of the concept of good governance (Hendler & Smeddle 2009:5; Meth 2007:65; Van Nieuwkerk 2013:66).

Although this research uses the framework in Figure 2 to deal with such challenges, it is still critical that future studies examine how the overall effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation, financial risk management and the embracement of the concepts of good governance and continuous improvement would impact positively on the successful implementation of the national development plan in South Africa.

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