

Strategic Management Practices in the Public Sector a Proposed Model to be Adopted for the Progress of the Rural Development Sector of Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to critically analyze the strategic management practices within the rural development sector of Afghanistan, to further declare the struggling areas considering the strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategic evaluation within this sector. The ultimate purpose of this research is to propose a proper model for strategic management practices in the public sector more precisely the rural development sector taking into account the context of Afghanistan. This will contribute to new knowledge in the domain of public strategic management, also the findings of this research will help strategists, policymakers, and practitioners to improve their skills and attitude toward certifying proper and effective strategic management practices within the public sector, to eventually help the rural development sector of Afghanistan to successfully manage their endeavors to obtain organizational strategic and operational objectives in future.

This is the first academic research focusing comprehensively on public strategic management practices in Afghanistan institutions, addressing both the national development strategy and sector vided strategy, reaching the employees and different levels of management within rural development institutions of Afghanistan by adopting a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative. While more than 71% of the Afghan population lives in the rural area, the rural development sector of Afghanistan's vision is to meet the basic needs of the rural society by taking into consideration the sustainability concerns.

The findings of the research revealed that the rural development sector of Afghanistan use the same model as other Afghan public sector does and does not own an exclusive model, meanwhile considering the variables associated with the strategic plan formulation, implementation, and evaluation stages under scrutiny the findings reported that proper strategic management practices within MRRD are substantially limited, where the top management struggled and even sometimes failed to endorse proper strategic management practices. Therefore, as a result of the current research, a model is proposed pretend to fill this gap.

Keywords: Strategic Management, Rural Development, Public Sector, Model

1.INTRODUCTION:

There is no doubt that shifting to strategic management within public sector organizations, requires effective and strong leadership to overcome cultural and bureaucratic barriers as well as guiding public sector institutions in visionary and strategic direction.

According to the respondents within this research, the top management team was not playing an effective and important role to ensure proper and result-oriented strategic management practices as they should have, they have failed where it is reporting on their own performance, or using strategic planning as a drive to smooth decision making, and modifying the organizational structure, culture, and resource to ensure proper strategic plan implementation.

To make sure strategy is properly and effectively implemented, Strategic management comes to play, by encouraging strategic thinking, learning and action continually. In this case, top management needs to work hard and straight their efforts to implement strategic initiatives to approach strategic directions.

In this case, strategic management is the key to success and the most critical process for public sector organizations to focus on the most appropriate objectives, and achieve effectively these objectives along with desired outcomes. This part discusses the practical implications for strategists, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in strategic management practices within the Rural development sector of Afghanistan by introducing a replicable model in this agenda.

More precisely, in this section, the strength of the relationship between the proper implementation of strategic & operational objectives, and other essential variables addressing proper strategic management practices that help to achieve strategic and operational objectives will be discussed. Hoping though these variables are most closely related to the shift from traditional strategic planning to the strategic management approach. Such essential and frontline variables might help the public sector organizations to more comprehensively adopt a strategic management approach.

It is worth mentioning that these variables should not be interpreted as the most fundamental requirements but rather be as frontline and pioneering elements for an effective transition to shift from traditional strategic planning to strategic management approach and practical implications for strategists, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in strategic management practices within the public sector organizations as key to success.

2.METHODOLOGY:

This research is based on a descriptive design, and in this study cross-sectional data is used, while the research addresses the perceptions of respondents, knowing the fact that the perceptions of respondents may differ from what occurs in practice.

This research adopts structured interviews at an exploratory stage to sense the key issues in the strategic management practices of the public sector in Afghanistan before using a questionnaire to collect descriptive data.

The targeted population sample comprised top management, middle management, and first-line management officials, as well as the lower-ranking employees, from the rural development sector in Afghanistan, headquartered in the capital (Kabul). And the study aims to trace strategic management practices in the Rural development sector since 2010.

In total at the response rate of 90%, 230 questionnaires were distributed and, 205 questionnaires were returned, while 189 (80% male, 20% female) questionnaires were usable, nevertheless in some of these questionnaires, few questions were left blank or unanswered while bearing in mind the Elbanna,2009 statement that in such situation we can use the sample mean as a replacement, the return questionnaires were considered usable.

In this research, the quantitative data from the questionnaire is analyzed using SPSS software and the qualitative data from interviews is analyzed using MAXQDA. The researcher has followed all the necessary ethical procedures and processes to protect respondents' private and confidential information and responses.

In terms of quantitative data collection, the researcher has adopted a probability sampling technique, by using the standard random sampling (SRD) method to guarantee an equal probability of having any of the population as a participant.

At the same time, non-probability sampling is adopted for the qualitative data collection using structured interviews as the qualitative research instrument.

3.FINDINGS:

The quantitative findings of the research also reported that top management struggled to set good role models of strong and inspired leadership within MRRD. That is why, according to the respondents' prospect within the MRRD, top management endeavors were reported poor on using strategic planning to drive the decision-making process, as well as reporting on their performances. Meanwhile, the findings indicated that top management has significantly struggled to make necessary changes and modifications in organizational structure, human resources, and organizational culture in favor of supporting effective strategic management practices within the MRRD.

In contrast, the qualitative findings of the research reported that top managers stated that they believed leaders can be sole changers in the organization but, depend on the style and approach to motivate people and behave like a true leader to bring changes, retain changes and sustain. Also, they have argued that the last top management of the MRRD served for a couple of years and one of the main differences with the pre and post to management teams would be that they have spent almost near to 100% of the development budget all through the community development council. Meanwhile, the annual development plan was always a down-top approach, community people were the main and almost the only influencer during the finalization of the development plan. So, they argued that the top management had a strong and inspired leadership although areas of improvement within that setup can't be rejected still their leadership was inspiring.

Based on the research findings, the top management within the rural development sector of Afghanistan needs to pay more attention and more focus addressing these elements, considering the performance measure, assessing the performance data, frequently adopting modification in favor of strategic agenda, budget alignment, and resources allocation to fund strategic, adopting properly report system and appropriate individual performance appraisal, ensuring commitment at all levels and managing for a result, owning strategic plan model within the organization, ensuring proper action plan, monitoring internal and external environment to ensure proper collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, keeping strategic plan as a live document and adopting to accordingly to change, and frequently prioritizing the efforts and required accomplishment.

The variables and correlations associated with the proposed model addressing the strategic management stages and leadership elements are discussed separately in four subsections as follow:

3.1. Strategic Plan Formulation Practices

The findings of the research reported that there is a moderate positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and operational objectives implementation, and variables such as clear vision, clear mission statement, clear organizational values, clear strategic objectives, clear operational objectives, clear performance indicators, clearly prioritized performance indicators, lower grades staff involvement, local advisors' involvement, International and external advisors' involvement, invitation of employees for a workshop, all stakeholder's involvement, Strategy practitioners and experts' involvement, key external stakeholders' involvement, having sufficient financial resources, having sufficient technological resources, structured procedures using a planning manual, new ways of providing good services, operational plans for each department, and allocating the needed resources.

Whereas the findings indicated that there is a weak positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and/or operational objectives implementation, and variables such as private-sector involvement and partnership, key external stakeholders' involvement, and assigning fixed financial budget, allocating the needed resources.

Add to this, based on the research findings regarding strategic plan formulation stage addressing the quality of strategic plan formulation within the MRRD by comparing the mean of 22 strategic plan formulation variables, as shown in Table 1, it indicates that respondents have ranked 14 variables that can be considered leading frontline variables and practical implication to be strictly followed by policymakers, strategists and practitioners for effectively and properly formulating public strategic plans.

Variables	Applyin g Level (MRRD)	Mean	Variables	Applyin g Level (MRRD)	Mean
1. Clear strategic objectives	88.80%	4.30	8. New ways of providing good services	81.50%	4.07
2. Clear mission statement	89.30%	4.29	9. Clearly prioritized performance indicators	71.80%	4.04
3. Clear vision	87.20%	4.28	10. Having sufficient technological resources	78.00%	3.94
4. Clear operational objectives	86.00%	4.25	11. Structured procedures using a planning manual.	72.30%	3.88
5. Clear organizational values	85.50%	4.23	12. Local advisors' involvement	73.90%	3.82

6. Private-sector involvement and partnership	87.70%	4.17	13. International and external advisors' involvement	65.60%	3.82
7. Clear performance indicators	78.70%	4.08	14. Invitation of employees for a workshop	70.90%	3.81

Table 1: Quality of Strategic Plan Formulation

As mentioned earlier according to literature having clear strategic and operational objectives as well as clear performance indicators followed by prioritizing these indicators, will lead employees to work on objectives keeping in mind which ones are the most important to top management, and will help top management to track the organization's success in achieving the desired objectives and vision. And top managers acquire analytical, communication, social, leadership skills to set these objectives and indicators, meanwhile prioritizing them.

While having unclear strategic and operational objectives will lead to complications in strategic plan implementation. Moreover, it also mentioned earlier that in the context of literature, a clear organizational vision gives a clear picture of the organization's future and helps the employees to understand where the organization wants to go. It is obvious that sharing a clear vision among the employees within the organization departments, would motivate them to be engaged effectively in the strategic planning process, while having a clear mission statement within the public sector organizations serve as a foundation to pave the way for effective future decision making, by considering the potential needs versus the organization's main competencies. At the same time having clear organizational values help top management to influence the organizational behavior of the employees and make sure to develop the organization's status. That is why the respondents declared the strategic plan developing elements at the top of their list, also the findings of the research reported that within MRRD development of these elements was ensured to some extent.

It is also clear from the literature that as the strategic management practices in the public sector is influenced and have been adopted from the private sector so the involvement of the private sector in the strategic plan formulation process, will help the public sector top management not only obtain the knowledge and learn best practices, but also it will help the top managers to secure resources, especially financial resources and fund considering the strategic plan formulation activities. That is why the MRRD is considered close to success in this regard.

Furthermore, to ensure the achievement of the organizational strategic and operational objectives, it is vital to track manually the progress of the implementation of these objectives through using properly adequate technology and effective reporting, although it is listed in leading-edge variables for properly strategic plan formulation, it seems from the findings that MRRD has failed to secure adequate technological resources, that would cause top management to face difficulty in measuring properly the individual performances as well as in evaluating the feasibility of the proposed strategics.

Additionally, as discussed earlier the involvement of internal and external strategy practitioners, experts, advisors, and consultants while developing a strategic plan within the public sector, will help the organization ensure adopting sound vision and mission, strategic thinking, and managing conflict by doing a situational analysis to minimize the risk and maximize the opportunities, it also helps the organization to ease the desired outcomes and the approaches needed to achieve these

outcomes. Therefore, it is included by the respondents in the leading-edge variables as well as declared by the findings that were ensured properly within the MRRD.

It is worth mentioning that although developing an operational plan followed by aligning fixed budget and most importantly the involvement of lower-ranking employees according to the literature is crucial to proper and effective strategic plan formulation practices within the context of the public sector organizations but as shown in the above table, these variables are missing in the top list of leading-edge variables considering strategic plan formulation stage. Nevertheless, the invitation of employees for a workshop before revising the strategic plan is at the bottom of the list.

3.2. Strategic Plan Implementation Practices

The findings of the research reported that there is a strong positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and/or operational objectives implementation, and variables such as formulation and implementation association, control over the implementation stage. While, the findings of the research reported that there is a moderate positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and operational objectives implementation, and variables such as fair understanding of the SP before significant actions, enough training and capacity building programs, middle managers' knowledge and technical skills, Lower-level employees' familiarity with SP, implementation support by top management, having enough staffs, effectively implementation, top management commitment to the vision, top management commitment on results.

At the same time, the findings indicated that there is a weak positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and operational objectives implementation, and variables such as internal communication among all employees, effective communication with the public, a collaboration between most departments, top management forces the strategic plan internally, the lower-level employee's duties and responsibilities, vision are alignment with lower staff operations, encouraging success by reward, having proper organizational structure, enough time for strategy implementation, no competition between activities, lower-level staff commitment on objectives, Middle management commitment to the vision, lower grades staff commitment to the vision. While the findings revealed that there is a weak positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and/or operational objectives implementation, and variables such as control over the implementation stage, implementation support by middle management, the linkage between SP and the decision-making process, the linkage between SP and the decision-making process, implementation support by middle management.

Additionally, based on the research findings regarding the strategic plan implementation stage addressing the quality of strategic plan implementation within the MRRD by comparing the mean of 28 strategic plan implementation variables, as shown in Table 2, it reveals that respondents have ranked 18 variables that can be considered leading frontline variables and practical implication to be strictly followed by policymakers, strategists and practitioners for effectively and properly implementing public strategic plans.

Variables	Applying Level (MRRD)	Mean	Variables	Applying Level (MRRD)	Mean
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1. Effective communication with the public	85.40%	4.08	10. Lower grades staff commitment to vision	70.60%	3.76
2. Having enough staff	77.70%	3.93	11. Relationship with key external stakeholders.	68.60%	3.75
3. Collaboration between most departments.	76.00%	3.89	12. Enough time for strategy implementation	52.40%	3.75
4. Linkage between strategic planning and the decision-making process.	78.60%	3.83	13. Internal communication among all employees.	71.80%	3.74
5. The lower-level employee's duties and responsibilities	74.70%	3.82	14. Middle management commitment to vision	67.40%	3.68
6. Control over the implementation stage	50.50%	3.82	15. Enough trainings and capacity building programs	66.90%	3.63
7. Vision is alignment with lower staff operations.	78.80%	3.81	16. Implementation support by middle management	62.70%	3.61
8. Well understanding the strategic planning before significant actions	74.00%	3.8	17. Lower-level employees' familiarity with strategic planning	64.40%	3.6
9. Divisional managers knowledge and technical skills	68.90%	3.79	18. Top management commitment on results	61.00%	3.56

Table 2: Quality of Strategic Plan Implementation

As emphasized earlier according to literature, to increase the organization's visibility and its status as well as to influence public perception toward the organization, they need to maintain enough communication and collaboration with external stakeholders. Communication with key external stakeholders, not only helps to understand why the organization exists and how the community can benefit from the specific services they provide but also will help the organization to develop a long-term plan addressing the future needs and development of the community. At the same time, having not enough human resources addressing strategic planning implementation, will maximize the gap between plan and action because the organization would delay or omit some important activities, this might result in more workloads and pressure on each staff while the quality of work and motivation goes lower.

Therefore, MRRD has tried enough to maintain such effective communication and collaboration with the public and key external stakeholders and keep enough staff for strategic planning implementation.

Meanwhile, if the top management failed on strategic planning and the decision-making process linkage, it shows that top management is not clear on the organization's priorities nor clear on identifying the process of strategic plan implementation. Moreover, struggling with such linkage

shows that top management did not properly ensure operational plan at the department level addressing the strategic plan and paving the way for achieving effectively the strategic and operational objectives within the organization. This often gives the idea that decisions were limited to top management interest and satisfaction, even if it denied the organization's vision, whereas linking top managers' decisions with the strategic plan would prevent such paradoxes and keep the strategic plan as a live document. While, if the top management failed on the alignment of vision with lower-ranking staff operations, it shows that top management does not clearly share the vision within the organization, nor help the lower-ranking employees to put this vision into action plans, and ultimately misled them to clearly understand their roles and assignments toward fulfillment of the organizational vision.

As the findings revealed within the MRRD the top management was to some extent successful to link the strategic planning and the decision-making process as well as aligning the vision with lower-ranking staff operations.

Whereas, within the public sector organizations, not clearly understanding the strategic plan formulation process before its implementation, indicates that top management fails to properly explain the strategic management process to employees and properly clarify the expectations from them. It is crucial for every employee within the public organization, to understand the key stakeholders, organizational processes, specific activities, main objectives, performance measurement, and reporting objectives.

It's clear from the literature that the lack of required skills for the middle managers will hinder their abilities to cope with the resistance and manage effectively the changes within the public organizations. Whereas the findings of the research reported according to some of the respondents the divisional managers don't have the right knowledge nor the right technical skill for effective strategic planning. This shows that top management within the MRRD had not sufficiently equipped their middle managers with the required skills, more precisely the communication skills to link strategic plan with their routine work, to eventually achieve the MRRD strategic and operational objectives.

Additionally, it is necessary to be noticed that the need for agile management and adapting to change, should not be a result to preserve not enough time considering the strategic planning implementation, this will underrate the chance to create unique capabilities and skills needed to acquire for proper implementation. The findings reported that MRRD has failed to dedicate enough time for strategic planning implementation.

The literature suggested that the top management within the public organizations need to motivate lower-ranking employees by explaining clearly the organization's vision and the initiatives to achieve the vision if they want to minimize the employees' resistance and finally to successfully implement the plan. And the findings of the research reported that there is a remarkable agreement among the respondents that the lower-ranking employees within the MRRD were committed to attaining the organizational objectives and vision.

Although middle management commitment to vision as well as middle management supporting the implementation, and top management commitment on results is listed among leading-edge variables to quality strategic plan implementation and supported by the modern literature, the top management struggled enough to ensure such commitment, support, and managing for results, also to provide sufficient capacity building programs for lower-ranking employees. That is why within the MRRD the strategic plan was not effectively and properly implemented.

It is worth mentioning that nevertheless according to the literature organizational structure, the best possible integration of processes, structures, resources, and people, and the relationship between the groups for the formation and those for implementation are among the crucial variables for effectively and properly implementation of the strategic plan within the public organizations, in contrast, the respondents have not included these among the leading edge variables associated with effectively and properly implementing public strategic plans.

3.3. Strategic Plan Evaluation Practices

The findings of the research reported that there is a weak positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and/or operational objectives implementation, and variables such as linking the implementation with performance, monitoring performance measures, monitoring trends and internal performance, reviewing performance data on a regular basis, communicating performance information, having a solid reporting system, improving current services, the evaluation of lower staffs, having a proper strategic planning evaluation, linking performance with the processes, applying the same strategic planning process, the evaluation of middle managers, developing a proper benchmark for Strategic planning.

While the findings of the research indicated that there is a moderate positive Pearson correlation between the proper operational objective implementation, and variables such as linking performance with the processes, applying the same strategic planning process, the evaluation of middle managers, whereas and the findings of the research reported a strong positive Pearson correlation between the proper operational objective implementation.

Furthermore, based on the research findings regarding the strategic plan evaluation stage addressing the quality of strategic plan evaluation within the MRRD by comparing the mean of 13 strategic plan implementation variables, as shown in Table 3, it seems that respondents have ranked 8 variables that can be considered leading frontline variables and practical implication to be strictly followed by policymakers, strategists and practitioners for effectively and properly evaluating public strategic plans.

Variables	Applying Level (MRRD)	Mean	Variables	Applying Level (MRRD)	Mean
1. Applying the same strategic planning process	76.80%	3.84	5. Having a solid reporting system	65.40%	3.62
2. The evaluation of lower staffs	75.40%	3.74	6. Monitoring performance measures	61.40%	3.6
3. Improving current services	65.20%	3.67	7. Reviewing performance data on a regular basis	63.80%	3.57
4. The evaluation of middle managers	75.90%	3.66	8. communicating performance information	63.80%	3.55

Table 3: Quality of Strategic Plan Evaluation

Although, according to the literature, as well as the respondents owning model for the strategic planning process, improving the current services, and evaluation of lower-ranking employees as well as middle managers based on their contribution to the successful accomplishment of the strategic plan are listed as the leading-edge variable for effective and proper evaluation of strategic plan evaluation, but the findings of the research revealed that top management within MRRD has failed to appropriately maintain and ensure these practices.

Thus, based on the literature having a proper and solid reporting system within public organizations, consents resource allocation to determine organizational effectiveness and promotes accountability also, monitoring and reviewing performance measures, including internal and external trends would help organizations to update the intellectuality efforts and accomplishments toward revising the strategic plan. The research findings reported the top management within MRRD struggled to in a larger extent to ensure a solid and proper reporting system and monitor performance measures to ensure the proper implementation of the strategic plan.

Providing proper, on-time, and accurate data on employees' performance addressing the implementation of organizational objectives would help them to be punctual and realistic. Failing to act so, would negatively affect improving overall organizational performance, also the top management efforts on developing corrective plans and productivity, support decision making and conducting proper reward. The findings revealed that this was not the case within MRRD, meanwhile, the top management was unsuccessful to ensure regular and effective communication on its performance information to a wide range of external stakeholders.

Nevertheless, it is recommended for the top management within public organizations, to effectively involve lower-ranking employees in the design and implementation process of performance management to realize the employees' competencies for the purpose to enrich the linkage between strategic management and performance management. Such involvement would positively affect the desired result, and the literature emphasizes linking the implementation with performances, then linking with performance with the process as well as developing a proper benchmark for evaluating properly the strategic plan implementation. But these are missing in the top list according to respondents for leading-edge variables for effectively and properly evaluating public strategic plans.

3.4. The leadership elements

The findings of the research reported that there is a weak positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and operational objectives implementation, and variables such as top management reporting on their performances, changes in human resource practices to support the strategic plan by the top management, modifying organizational culture. Meanwhile, the findings reported that there is a moderate positive Pearson correlation between the proper strategic and/or operational objectives implementation, and variables such as set good role models by the top management, driving the decision-making processes, changes in organizational structure to support the strategic plan by the top management.

Moreover, based on the research findings regarding leadership elements addressing the excellence of leadership elements endorsement within the MRRD by comparing the mean of 6 leadership variables, as shown in Table 4, it reflects that respondents have ranked 6 variables that can be considered leading frontline variables and practical implication to be strictly followed by policymakers, strategists and practitioners for effectively and properly endorsing excellence leadership elements considering public strategic plans.

Variables	Applying Level (MRRD)	Mean	Variables	Applying Level (MRRD)	Mean
1.Top management set good role models of strong and inspired leadership.	69.70%	3.52	4.Top management had tried to modify organizational culture to make it more compatible with the strategic plan.	3.39	3.39
2.Top management uses strategic planning to drive the decision-making process.	59.00%	3.52	5.Top management had made some changes in organizational structure to support the strategic plan.	3.31	3.31
3.Top management had made some changes in human resource practices to support the strategic plan.	51.80%	3.39	6.Top management had no problem reporting on its performance.	3.28	3.28

Table 4: Excellence of leadership elements endorsement

According to the literature as well as regarding the respondents' top list for leading-edge variables considering leadership elements within the public sector organization required for effective and proper strategic plan implementation. Nevertheless, the top management within the rural development sector of Afghanistan has failed to ensure proper endorsement of excellence of leadership elements with the MRRD. That is why the strategic management practices within MRRD were not effective or proper.

4.THE PROPOSED MODEL

Keeping this in mind and considering the research findings explained earlier in findings, as well as addressing practical implications of this research, the following replicable model for strategic management practices within the public sector is proposed, as shown in *Figure 1*.

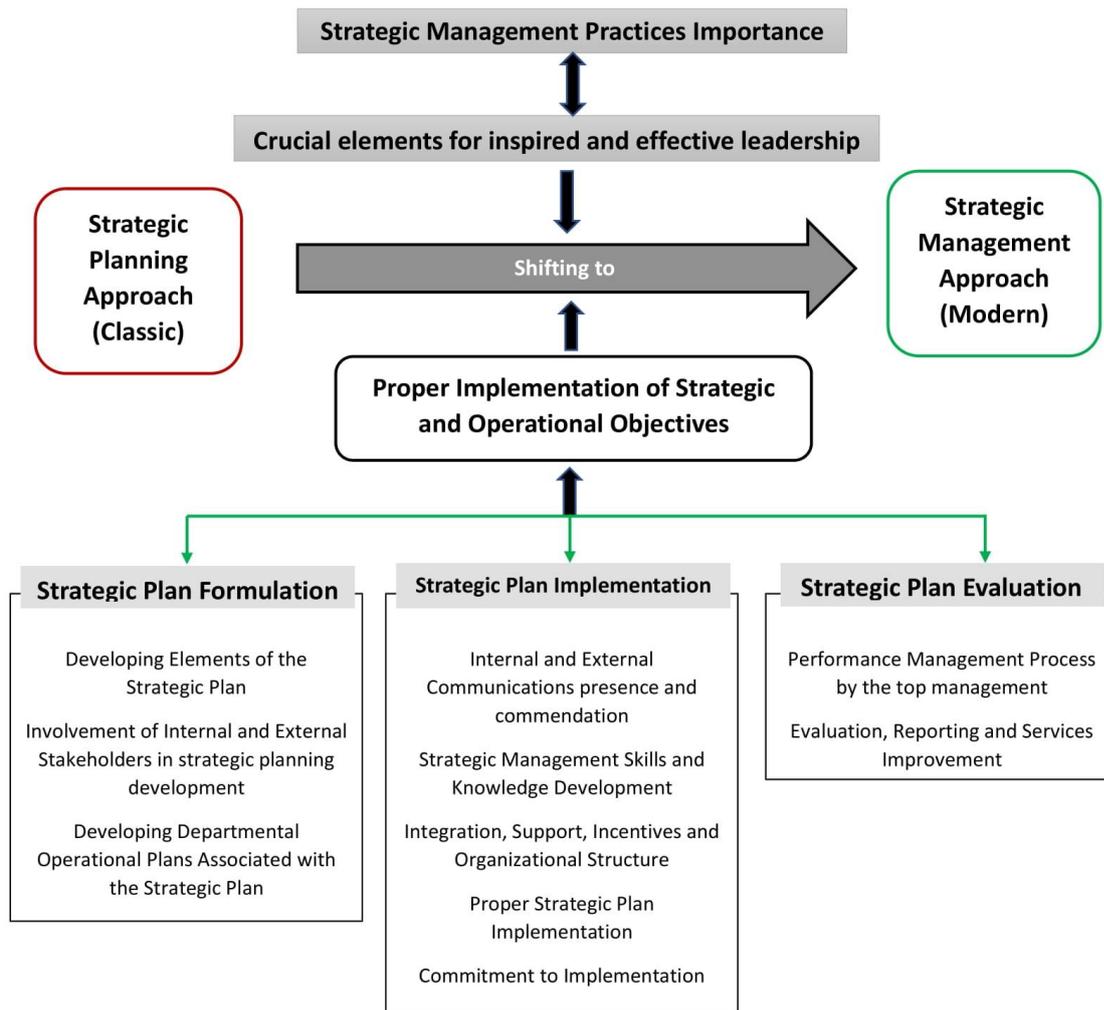


Figure 1. Proposed Strategic Management Model for Public Sector

The above model summarizes the variables that are closely related to the shift from traditional strategic planning to a strategic management approach addressing the strategic plan formulation, strategic plan implementation, and strategic plan evaluation stages. Additionally, the proposed model reflects the fact that ensuring strategic management practices' importance and, inspired and strong leadership is considered unneglectable variables that are closely related to the transition from traditional strategic planning to a strategic management approach within the public sector.

Moreover, based on the research findings, regarding the strategic management practices applying level within the rural development sector of Afghanistan, by comparing the mean of Pearson correlation for variables under proper strategic and operational objectives implementation, the respondents reflect on prioritizing the variables are listed respectively as follow:

Based on the quantitative findings, variables related to strategic plan formulation addressing the above model from strong to weak, respectively are: clearly prioritized performance indicators, clear vision, new ways of providing good services, having sufficient technological resources, having sufficient financial resources, clear strategic objectives, operational plans for each department, local advisors' involvement, structured procedures using a planning manual, all stakeholders involvement, clear organizational values, invitation of employees for a workshop, clear mission statement, international and external advisors' involvement, lower grades staff involvement, clear

performance indicators, strategy practitioners and experts' involvement, allocating the needed resources, clear operational objectives, assigning fixed financial budget, private-sector involvement and partnership, and key external stakeholders' involvement.

Also, based on the quantitative findings, variables related to strategic plan implementation addressing the above model from strong to weak, respectively are: enough trainings and capacity building programs, divisional managers knowledge and technical skills, top management commitment to vision, having enough staff, top management commitment on results, lower-level employees' familiarity with strategic planning, effectively implementation, implementation support by top management, relationship with key external stakeholders, linkage between strategic planning and the decision-making process, integration of processes, structures and sources, well understanding the strategic planning before significant actions, implementation support by middle management, the lower-level employee's duties and responsibilities, vision is alignment with lower staff operations, internal communication among all employee, lower-level staff commitment on objectives, encouraging success by reward, top management forces the strategic plan internally, having proper organizational structure, middle management commitment to vision, effective communication with the public, collaboration between most departments, lower grades staff commitment to vision, no competition between activities, relationship between formulation and implementation, enough time for strategy implementation and control over the implementation stage.

Additionally, based on the quantitative findings, variables related to strategic plan evaluation addressing the above model from strong to weak, respectively are linking performance with the processes, the evaluation of middle managers, applying the same strategic planning process, monitoring performance measures, reviewing performance data on a regular basis, monitoring trends and internal performance, the evaluation of lower staffs, links the implementation with performance, having a solid reporting system, improving current services, having a proper strategic planning evaluation, communicating performance information and developing a proper benchmark for strategic planning.

And finally, based on the quantitative findings, variables related to inspired leadership addressing the above model from strong to weak, respectively are: set good role models by the top management, driving the decision-making processes, changes in organizational structure to support the strategic plan by the top management, modifying organizational culture, changes in human resource practices to support the strategic plan by the top management and top management reporting on their performances.

5.SUMMARY

As the practical implications for strategists, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in strategic management practices within the Rural development sector of Afghanistan a replicable model in this agenda was introduced by considering the relationship between the proper implementation of strategic & operational objectives, and other essential variables addressing proper strategic management practices that help to achieve strategic and operational objectives will be discussed. Within the model, the variables that are closely related to the shift from traditional strategic planning to a strategic management approach addressing the strategic plan formulation, strategic plan implementation, and strategic plan evaluation stages were summarized and the correlations associated among these variables and the proposed model were determined.

Also, respondents have ranked 14 variables related to strategic plan formulation, 18 variables related to strategic plan implementation, 8 variables related to strategic plan evaluation, and 6

variables related to endorsing excellence leadership elements as leading-edge variables and practical implication recommended to be strictly followed by policymakers, strategists and practitioners for effectively and properly formulating, implementing and evaluating public strategic plans and endorsing excellence leadership elements considering public strategic plans.

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