

How Has Strategic Planning Evolved over Twenty-Five Years of Tanzania Development Vision 2025? A Systematic Review of Changing Understandings and Practices in the Public Sector

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ABSTRACT: Strategic planning has become an integral component of public-sector reforms across many developing countries, yet relatively little is known about how its meaning and practice evolve over long periods of national transformation. This paper examines how strategic planning has changed throughout the implementation of Tanzania Development Vision 2025 by synthesising evidence from studies published between 1999 and 2026. The review reveals that strategic planning has undergone four major transitions. First, it evolved from being largely a reform-driven administrative requirement into a broader strategic management tool aimed at enhancing organisational performance and service delivery. Second, planning practices gradually shifted from highly centralised and compliance-oriented approaches towards more participatory and execution-focused processes. Third, stakeholder engagement, employee involvement, communication, and human resource alignment increasingly emerged as critical factors influencing strategy implementation. Finally, despite improvements in planning sophistication, persistent institutional challenges including limited resources, fragmented coordination mechanisms, weak

monitoring systems, restricted local autonomy, and political interference continued to constrain implementation effectiveness. In general, the findings suggest that Tanzania's public sector has progressively moved from document-centred planning towards execution-centred strategic management. However, the development of institutional capabilities has not kept pace with rising strategic ambitions. By tracing the evolution of strategic planning over the twenty-five-year life span of Vision 2025, this study contributes to strategic management scholarship by demonstrating how long-term national visions shape the diffusion, adaptation, and maturation of strategic management practices in the public sector. The findings also provide valuable lessons for the implementation of Tanzania Development Vision 2050 and for strategic reforms in developing economies more broadly.

Keywords: *Strategic planning; public sector; Tanzania Development Vision 2025; understandings, practices*

1. Introduction

Strategic planning has emerged as one of the most widely adopted management practices in both public and private organisations. Over the past four decades, governments across the world have increasingly embraced strategic planning as a means of improving organisational performance, strengthening accountability, enhancing resource mobilisation and allocation, and aligning institutional activities with broader development priorities (George, 2020; Vandersmissen & George, 2024). In the public sector, this growing emphasis on strategic planning has been closely associated with public-sector reforms inspired by the principles of New Public Management, which advocate performance orientation, managerial autonomy, efficiency, and results-based governance (Clarke & Wood, 2001).

In Tanzania, strategic planning gained prominence during the public-sector reforms of the 1990s and acquired stronger institutional significance following the adoption of Tanzania Development Vision 2025 in 1999 (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1999). The Vision articulated the country's long-term aspirations of attaining middle-income status, improving the quality of life, promoting good governance, fostering competitiveness, and building a resilient and sustainable economy. Achieving these

ambitions required public institutions to move beyond conventional administrative routines and embrace strategic approaches capable of aligning resources, policies, and organisational actions with national priorities.

During the subsequent twenty-five years, strategic planning became deeply embedded across ministries, departments, agencies, local government authorities, tertiary education institutions, schools, health institutions, and state-owned enterprises (Rugeiyamu, 2024; Uledi & Chachage, 2023). Through institutional strategic plans, sector development programmes, medium-term expenditure frameworks, and performance management systems, planning became a central feature of public administration. As strategic planning spread across the public sector, its meaning and application also evolved considerably. What initially appeared as a formal requirement associated with administrative reforms gradually developed into a broader managerial approach concerned with organisational performance, stakeholder engagement, employee participation, communication, implementation capabilities, and strategic learning (Nnko, 2023; Nnko, 2024).

Despite its widespread adoption, evidence from different sectors points to a persistent gap between planning and implementation. Public institutions continue to grapple with inadequate financial resources, weak institutional capacities, fragmented planning systems, limited autonomy, ineffective monitoring mechanisms, and insufficient stakeholder involvement (Salum *et al.*, 2017; Kinemo, 2020; Jiyenze *et al.*, 2025). These recurring challenges raise important questions regarding how strategic planning itself has evolved over time and whether changes in planning practices have translated into stronger strategic management capabilities and improved organisational outcomes.

Although previous studies have examined strategic planning within specific sectors and institutions, existing evidence remains fragmented and largely cross-sectional. Much of the literature focuses on isolated organisational contexts, providing limited understanding of how strategic planning has changed throughout the entire implementation period of Tanzania Development Vision 2025. Consequently, little is known about the broader evolutionary trajectory through which strategic planning has moved from a reform instrument to a more comprehensive strategic management capability within the public sector.

This paper addresses that gap by systematically reviewing the evolution of strategic planning in Tanzania's public sector over the twenty-five years of Vision 2025 implementation. Specifically, the study seeks to answer four questions:

- i. How has the understanding of strategic planning evolved during the implementation of Tanzania Development Vision 2025?
- ii. How have strategic planning practices changed across public-sector institutions over time?
- iii. What factors have facilitated or constrained the evolution of strategic planning practices?
- iv. What lessons can be drawn for Tanzania Development Vision 2050 and future public-sector reforms?

By adopting a longitudinal perspective, this study contributes to strategic management literature in three important ways. First, it provides a process-oriented understanding of how strategic management practices evolve under long-term national development frameworks. Second, it extends public-sector strategic management scholarship by illustrating how institutional contexts shape the transition from planning-oriented systems to execution-oriented strategic capabilities. Third, it generates insights that may inform policymakers and public managers seeking to strengthen strategy implementation under Tanzania Development Vision 2050 and similar development agendas in emerging economies.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a systematic literature review approach to examine how strategic planning has evolved in Tanzania's public sector during the implementation of Tanzania Development Vision 2025. A systematic review is particularly appropriate for consolidating fragmented knowledge, identifying recurring patterns, and generating broader theoretical insights from diverse bodies of evidence (Vandersmissen & George, 2024). Given the multidisciplinary and sector-specific nature of strategic planning research

in Tanzania, this approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how planning practices, perceptions, and implementation processes have changed over time.

2.2 Search Strategy and Sources of Evidence

The review draws on peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral dissertations, working papers, and policy-related studies published between 1999 and 2026. Relevant studies were identified through Google Scholar, institutional repositories, university databases, ResearchGate, and academic journals. Particular attention was given to studies focusing on public-sector institutions, including ministries, executive agencies, local government authorities, educational institutions, health organisations, public enterprises, and national development programmes.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included in the review if they met three conditions. First, they had to address issues related to strategic planning, strategic management, development planning, or strategy implementation. Second, they had to focus on Tanzania or contain substantial empirical evidence derived from Tanzanian public-sector institutions. Third, they had to provide findings relevant to the period covered by Tanzania Development Vision 2025. Studies focusing exclusively on private-sector organisations without clear implications for public administration were excluded. Likewise, publications lacking conceptual or empirical relevance to strategic planning were omitted from the review.

2.4 Data Extraction and Analysis

Information extracted from each study included the research context, institutional setting, methodological approach, principal findings, implementation challenges, and implications for strategic planning practices. The evidence was subsequently analysed using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of common patterns and changes across sectors and time periods.

Five broad themes emerged from the synthesis. These themes include evolution of the understanding of strategic planning; institutional diffusion and adoption of strategic planning practices; stakeholder participation and employee engagement; strategy implementation challenges and organisational capabilities; and strategic planning and

organisational performance. These themes provided the analytical lens through which the evolution of strategic planning under Tanzania Development Vision 2025 was examined.

2.5 Quality Considerations and Limitations

The studies reviewed encompass a wide range of methodological approaches. These approaches are qualitative research, mixed-method studies, case studies, quantitative analyses, and doctoral dissertations. This diversity enriches the evidence base and provides insights from multiple sectors and institutional settings. At the same time, variations in methodological rigour and uneven sectoral coverage introduce certain limitations.

Another limitation relates to the temporal distribution of the literature. Evidence from recent years is considerably more abundant than studies conducted during the early stages of Vision 2025 implementation. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as a synthesis of dominant patterns and emerging trends rather than as statistically representative estimates of the entire public sector.

Nevertheless, the breadth of sectors covered and the diversity of institutional contexts represented in the reviewed studies provide a sufficiently robust foundation for understanding how strategic planning has evolved throughout the twenty-five-year implementation period of Tanzania Development Vision 2025.

3. Theoretical Background and Historical Evolution

3.1 Theoretical Background

Understanding how strategic planning has evolved in Tanzania's public sector requires moving beyond the traditional view of planning as a purely technical or administrative exercise. Contemporary strategic management scholarship increasingly recognises strategy as a dynamic and continuous process involving organizational learning, stakeholder engagement, resource alignment, adaptation, and execution (George, 2020; Vandersmissen & George, 2024). This broader perspective provides an appropriate foundation for understanding how strategic planning has changed during the implementation of Tanzania Development Vision 2025.

3.2 Strategic Management Theory

Strategic Management Theory provides the overarching lens for this study. The theory views strategy as a deliberate process through which organisations define their long-term direction, align resources, coordinate activities, and pursue desired outcomes. From this perspective, strategic planning is not simply about producing documents; rather, it is about creating coherence between organisational aspirations and actions.

In Tanzania, the growing emphasis on strategic planning reflected broader efforts to improve efficiency, accountability, and service delivery across public institutions (Kanju, 2018; Uledi & Chachage, 2023). Over time, strategic planning gradually shifted from being viewed as an administrative requirement to becoming a managerial instrument intended to enhance organizational performance and support the achievement of development goals (Nnko, 2023).

3.3 Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory offers additional insights into why strategic planning became so widespread across Tanzania's public sector. According to this perspective, organisations often adopt structures and practices because they are regarded as legitimate or are encouraged by external pressures, rather than solely because they guarantee superior performance.

The rapid spread of strategic planning across ministries, local government authorities, schools, tertiary education institutions, health institutions, and public enterprises can largely be understood within this institutional context. Public-sector reforms, government directives, legal frameworks, and development partners collectively encouraged organisations to adopt strategic planning practices (Clarke & Wood, 2001; Luvanda, 2016). Consequently, strategic planning initially emerged more as a reform requirement than as an internally driven management capability. Over time, however, it became increasingly integrated into routine management processes.

3.4 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory emphasises that organisational success depends on the ability to engage and coordinate diverse groups whose interests affect or are affected by

organisational activities. Effective strategy implementation therefore requires participation, communication, and collaboration among various stakeholders.

Evidence from Tanzania suggests that stakeholder engagement has become increasingly important in shaping strategic outcomes. Studies indicate that communication, employee involvement, partnerships, and collaborative arrangements contribute positively to strategy implementation and organisational performance (Salum *et al.*, 2017; Uledi *et al.*, 2026). More recent evidence shows that stakeholder participation has gradually evolved from symbolic consultation to more substantive forms of engagement characterised by dialogue, shared responsibilities, and continuous interaction.

3.5 Resource-Based View and Human Capital Perspectives

The Resource-Based View argues that organizational performance depends on the effective deployment of valuable resources and capabilities. Similarly, human capital perspectives emphasize that employee competencies, commitment, knowledge, and adaptability are central to organizational success.

Recent studies in Tanzania increasingly highlight the importance of employee involvement, training, adaptability, and organisational learning in strengthening strategy execution (Nkone, 2025; Sahi, 2025; Chindengwike, 2025). These findings suggest that the success of strategic planning depends not only on the quality of the plans themselves, but also on the capabilities available to implement them. In other words, organisations do not achieve results because they possess strategic plans; they achieve results because they possess the people and competencies necessary to translate plans into action.

3.6 Dynamic Capabilities Perspective

The Dynamic Capabilities perspective extends traditional strategic management thinking by emphasising the ability of organisations to adapt, integrate, and reconfigure resources in response to changing environments. This perspective is particularly relevant to Tanzania's experience because Vision 2025 was implemented over a period characterised by changing economic conditions, institutional reforms, technological developments, and shifting policy priorities.

Increasingly, studies suggest that effective strategy implementation depends on adaptability, continuous learning, collaboration, and communication rather than merely the existence of formal plans (George, 2020; Nkone, n.d.). Thus, strategic planning has progressively evolved from a document-oriented exercise to a capability-driven process that emphasises execution and organisational responsiveness.

3.7 Public Value Perspective

Public Value Theory provides another important perspective by emphasising that public organisations exist primarily to create value for society rather than maximise financial returns. Under this approach, strategic planning serves as a mechanism through which institutions align their activities with citizens' needs and broader development aspirations.

The aspirations embodied in Tanzania Development Vision 2025 including improved quality of life, good governance, economic competitiveness, and social transformation reflect a broader commitment to public value creation (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1999). Consequently, strategic planning in Tanzania has increasingly been viewed not merely as a managerial tool, but as an instrument for advancing national development priorities and improving societal well-being.

When considered collectively, these theoretical perspectives suggest that strategic planning should be understood as an evolving organisational capability rather than a static planning exercise. Contemporary strategic management thinking increasingly emphasises execution, learning, communication, stakeholder engagement, and resource mobilisation as integral components of strategy rather than supplementary considerations (George, 2020; Vandersmissen & George, 2024). Against this background, this review conceptualises the evolution of strategic planning in Tanzania as a gradual transition from compliance-oriented planning towards execution-oriented strategic management.

4. Historical Evolution of Strategic Planning under Tanzania Development Vision 2025

The evolution of strategic planning in Tanzania's public sector cannot be understood in isolation from the broader political, economic, and administrative reforms that shaped the country during the implementation of Tanzania Development Vision 2025. Over the last twenty-five years, strategic planning has undergone a gradual transformation marked by

changing priorities, institutional arrangements, and managerial philosophies. Four broad phases are particularly evident.

4.1 Laying the Foundations: Reform and Institutionalisation (Late 1990s–Early 2000s)

The roots of contemporary strategic planning in Tanzania can be traced to the public-sector reforms introduced during the 1990s. Influenced by the principles of New Public Management, these reforms sought to improve efficiency, accountability, and service delivery by promoting managerial autonomy and results-oriented governance (Clarke & Wood, 2001; Luvanda, 2016).

The adoption of Tanzania Development Vision 2025 in 1999 marked a turning point in this transformation. The Vision articulated the country's long-term aspirations and provided a strategic framework for national development (Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1999). Importantly, the formulation of the Vision itself involved broad consultations with stakeholders, reflecting an early appreciation of participation and collective ownership in development planning (Rugeiyamu, 2024).

During this period, strategic planning was largely perceived as a reform instrument designed to strengthen organisational direction and modernise public administration. Ministries, departments, and agencies gradually began introducing strategic plans as part of wider efforts aimed at improving governance and public-sector performance.

4.2 Expansion and Institutional Diffusion (2000–2015)

The second phase witnessed the rapid spread of strategic planning throughout the public sector. Sector reforms in education, health, local government, and higher education accelerated the adoption of strategic plans across a wide range of institutions.

Local government reforms encouraged decentralisation and participatory planning, while sector development programmes incorporated strategic frameworks into policy implementation processes. Public universities, schools, technical institutions, and state-owned organisations increasingly embraced strategic planning as a means of guiding institutional transformation (Raphael, Tundui and Mshumbusi 2018; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2023a).

Although strategic planning became widely institutionalised during this period, implementation was often driven by compliance requirements rather than genuine strategic thinking. In many organisations, employees played a limited role in plan formulation, and communication about strategic priorities remained weak (Kinemo, 2020). Consequently, strategic planning frequently became associated with the preparation of documents rather than with effective execution.

4.3 The Rise of Performance Orientation and Strategy Execution (2015–2020)

By the mid-2010s, attention increasingly shifted from plan formulation to implementation. Public organisations gradually recognised that the mere existence of strategic plans was insufficient to guarantee organisational performance.

Studies conducted during this period highlighted growing concerns about implementation effectiveness, resource allocation, coordination mechanisms, and performance management systems (Salum, 2017; Chagalima *et al.*, 2021). Monitoring and evaluation gained prominence, while accountability mechanisms became increasingly integrated into strategic management processes.

Evidence from the education sector, health institutions, and public enterprises showed that the quality of implementation had a significant influence on organisational performance and service delivery outcomes (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2023b; Uledi & Chachage, 2023). Nevertheless, longstanding challenges including inadequate financial resources, weak coordination, fragmented systems, and limited organisational autonomy continued to undermine implementation efforts.

4.4 Towards Capability-Based and Participatory Strategic Management (2020–2026)

The most recent phase reflects a more sophisticated understanding of strategic planning. Increasingly, attention has shifted towards the organisational capabilities required to support successful implementation. Employee engagement, leadership, communication, organisational learning, stakeholder participation, and adaptability have become central themes within contemporary literature (Nnko, 2024; Jiyenze *et al.*, 2025; Uledi *et al.*, 2026).

Studies conducted in local government authorities, tertiary education institutions, health institutions, and public agencies suggest that strategic planning is gradually becoming more participatory and execution-oriented. Human resource development, employee awareness, collaboration, and continuous learning are increasingly recognised as essential ingredients for successful strategy implementation (Mhame *et al.*, 2022; Sahi, 2025; Chindengwike, 2025).

Despite these improvements, many of the challenges identified in earlier periods have persisted. Financial constraints, fragmented coordination systems, political interventions, inadequate monitoring mechanisms, and limited institutional autonomy continue to impede implementation across sectors (Jawa, 2025; Kasuwi, 2025; Mchome, 2025). This suggests that although planning practices have become more sophisticated, the development of institutional capacities has not always progressed at the same pace.

4.5 From Planning Documents to Strategic Capabilities

Viewed from a longitudinal perspective, the experience of Vision 2025 reveals a gradual but important transition in the nature of strategic planning within Tanzania's public sector. Strategic planning evolved from a reform-driven requirement to an institutionalised management practice, later becoming increasingly performance-oriented and, more recently, capability-based and execution-focused.

This trajectory illustrates a broader shift from treating strategic plans as static documents towards viewing strategy as a continuous organisational capability. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that the challenge facing Tanzania as it embarks on Vision 2050 is no longer whether strategic plans exist, but whether institutions possess the capabilities necessary to implement them effectively.

Ultimately, the twenty-five-year experience of Vision 2025 demonstrates that the future of strategic management in the public sector lies not in producing more plans, but in strengthening the institutional capacities, leadership systems, learning mechanisms, and collaborative arrangements that enable plans to be translated into meaningful development outcomes.

5. Results

5.1 Evolution of Strategic Planning under Tanzania Development Vision 2025

The review demonstrates that strategic planning in Tanzania's public sector underwent significant transformation throughout the twenty-five years of implementing Development Vision 2025. Although strategic planning had already begun to emerge before the Vision was adopted, its purpose, institutional coverage, implementation approaches, and performance orientation evolved considerably over time. Four broad phases can be identified from the literature.

Table 1: Evolution of Strategic Planning Practices during the Vision 2025 Era

Period	Dominant Understanding	Main Practices	Major Constraints	Illustrative Evidence
1999–2005	Reform and modernisation instrument	Introduction of strategic plans through public-sector reforms	Weak institutional capacity and centralised structures	Government of Tanzania (1999); Clarke and Wood (2001)
2005–2015	Compliance and institutional planning	Expansion into ministries, schools, tertiary education institutions, health institutions and LGAs	Limited ownership, weak communication and low participation	Ginwas (2011); Raphael, Tundui and Mshumbusi, 2018
2015–2020	Performance and implementation orientation	Increased emphasis on execution, monitoring and accountability	Resource shortages, fragmented coordination and political interference	Salum (2017); Changelima <i>et al.</i> (2021)
2020–2026	Capability-based and participatory strategic management	Employee engagement, communication, collaboration and organisational learning	Persistent fiscal and institutional constraints	Nnko (2024); Jiyenze <i>et al.</i> (2025); Uledi <i>et al.</i> (2026)

Generally, strategic planning gradually shifted from being viewed primarily as a formal planning document to being recognised as a mechanism for enhancing organisational performance, strengthening stakeholder coordination, and improving strategy execution.

5.2 Changing Understanding of Strategic Planning

One of the clearest developments concerns the changing meaning attached to strategic planning itself. Earlier reforms and studies portrayed strategic planning largely as a

mechanism for setting organisational direction and producing formal strategic documents. Such thinking reflected the broader public-sector reforms inspired by New Public Management and administrative modernisation initiatives (Government of Tanzania, 1999; Clarke & Wood, 2001).

As reforms matured, strategic planning increasingly came to be understood as a tool for performance management and resource alignment. Institutions began to associate strategic planning with organisational effectiveness, accountability, and service delivery improvement (Kanju, 2018; Kinemo, 2020).

Recent literature presents an even broader perspective. Strategic planning is now frequently linked to organisational learning, employee engagement, communication systems, adaptability, and collaborative governance (George, 2020; Nnko, 2024). This progression suggests that strategic planning has evolved from a document-centred activity to a capability-centred management process.

5.3 Expansion and Institutionalisation across Sectors

The review further shows that strategic planning became deeply embedded across most sectors of the public service. Ministries, executive agencies, local government authorities, public tertiary education institutions, schools, hospitals, utilities, and regulatory institutions increasingly adopted strategic planning frameworks as part of their routine management systems (Raphael, Tundui and Mshumbusi, 2018; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2023a; Jiyenze *et al.*, 2022).

Strategic plans became closely linked to budgeting systems, annual action plans, monitoring frameworks, and sector reforms. In the health sector, planning frameworks progressively aligned national priorities with international commitments (Nabyonga-Orem & Asamani, 2023). Likewise, education reforms incorporated strategic planning into school governance and institutional management structures (Opalo, 2023).

Nevertheless, the widespread adoption of strategic planning did not necessarily guarantee successful implementation. Many organisations exhibited strong compliance with planning requirements while lacking the organisational capabilities required to translate plans into tangible outcomes (Nnko, 2023).

5.4 Emergence of Participation and Stakeholder Orientation

Another important development concerns the growing emphasis on participation and stakeholder involvement. During the earlier years, planning processes were largely driven by senior management and technical experts, with relatively limited involvement of employees and other stakeholders (Raphael, Tundui and Mshumbusi, 2018).

Over time, however, studies increasingly highlighted the importance of communication, collaboration, and stakeholder participation in improving implementation outcomes (Salum *et al.*, 2017). More recent evidence suggests that participation has become institutionalised through workshops, committees, task forces, feedback mechanisms, and communication platforms that encourage employee involvement and shared ownership (Nnko, 2024; Uledi *et al.*, 2026). This shift reflects a movement away from highly centralised approaches towards more inclusive and collaborative strategic management systems.

5.5 Human Capital and Organisational Capability as Emerging Priorities

The literature also reveals growing recognition that successful implementation depends on the quality of plans and on the capabilities that organisations possess. Human resources, leadership competencies, communication systems, and organisational learning increasingly appear as critical determinants of strategy execution (Nkone, 2025; Sahi, 2025).

Recent studies indicate that employee skills, training, adaptability, motivation, and organisational culture play essential roles in determining whether strategic objectives are achieved (Mhame *et al.*, 2022; Mchome, 2025). Consequently, attention has shifted from identifying what organisations intend to do toward understanding how they can build the capabilities needed to implement their strategies successfully.

5.6 Persistent Challenges

Despite the gradual maturation of strategic planning practices, many implementation challenges have remained remarkably persistent throughout the Vision 2025 period. Across sectors, studies consistently identify several constraints, including inadequate financial resources, weak human-resource capacity, limited institutional autonomy, fragmented planning systems, poor coordination, political directives, weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, limited stakeholder awareness, and ineffective communication. Local

government authorities also continue to face revenue constraints and dependence on central government support (Kinemo, 2020; Nabyonga-Orem & Asamani, 2023; Rugeiyamu, 2024; Jawa, 2025). These recurring challenges suggest that while strategic planning systems have become more sophisticated, implementation capacity has not always evolved at the same pace.

6. Discussion

6.1 From Strategic Planning to Strategic Management

The findings indicate that strategic planning in Tanzania has undergone a fundamental transformation during the implementation of Development Vision 2025. In the early years, strategic planning largely reflected administrative reform requirements associated with New Public Management principles. Planning was viewed mainly as a technical exercise aimed at strengthening accountability and organisational direction. Over time, however, strategic planning evolved into a broader management process encompassing implementation, performance monitoring, communication, organisational learning, and adaptation. This trajectory is consistent with contemporary strategic management thinking, which increasingly emphasises execution and strategic capabilities rather than merely producing plans (George, 2020; Vandersmissen & George, 2024). The Tanzanian experience therefore illustrates a gradual transition from traditional planning towards a more comprehensive strategic management approach.

6.2 Institutionalisation Outpaced Capability Development

A notable paradox emerges from the evidence. Strategic planning became highly institutionalised across public organisations, yet implementation problems persisted throughout the Vision period. This pattern suggests that the diffusion of strategic planning occurred more rapidly than the development of the organisational capabilities necessary to support implementation. In many institutions, strategic plans became mandatory documents, while challenges relating to skills, communication, leadership, coordination, and resource mobilisation remained unresolved. Consequently, institutionalisation alone did not necessarily translate into improved organisational performance. The evidence implies that the effectiveness of strategic planning depends not only on formal adoption but also on the capabilities available to support implementation.

6.3 Participation Became Increasingly Meaningful

The review further reveals that stakeholder participation evolved substantially over time. In earlier periods, participation tended to be limited to plan formulation and often served symbolic purposes. More recent studies indicate that communication, collaboration, employee involvement, and shared ownership have become increasingly important throughout the implementation process. This evolution reflects a growing appreciation that strategic outcomes depend on interactions among multiple actors rather than solely on decisions made by top management. Participation has therefore moved beyond procedural compliance and emerged as an important driver of implementation effectiveness.

6.4 Strategy Execution Has Become the Central Challenge

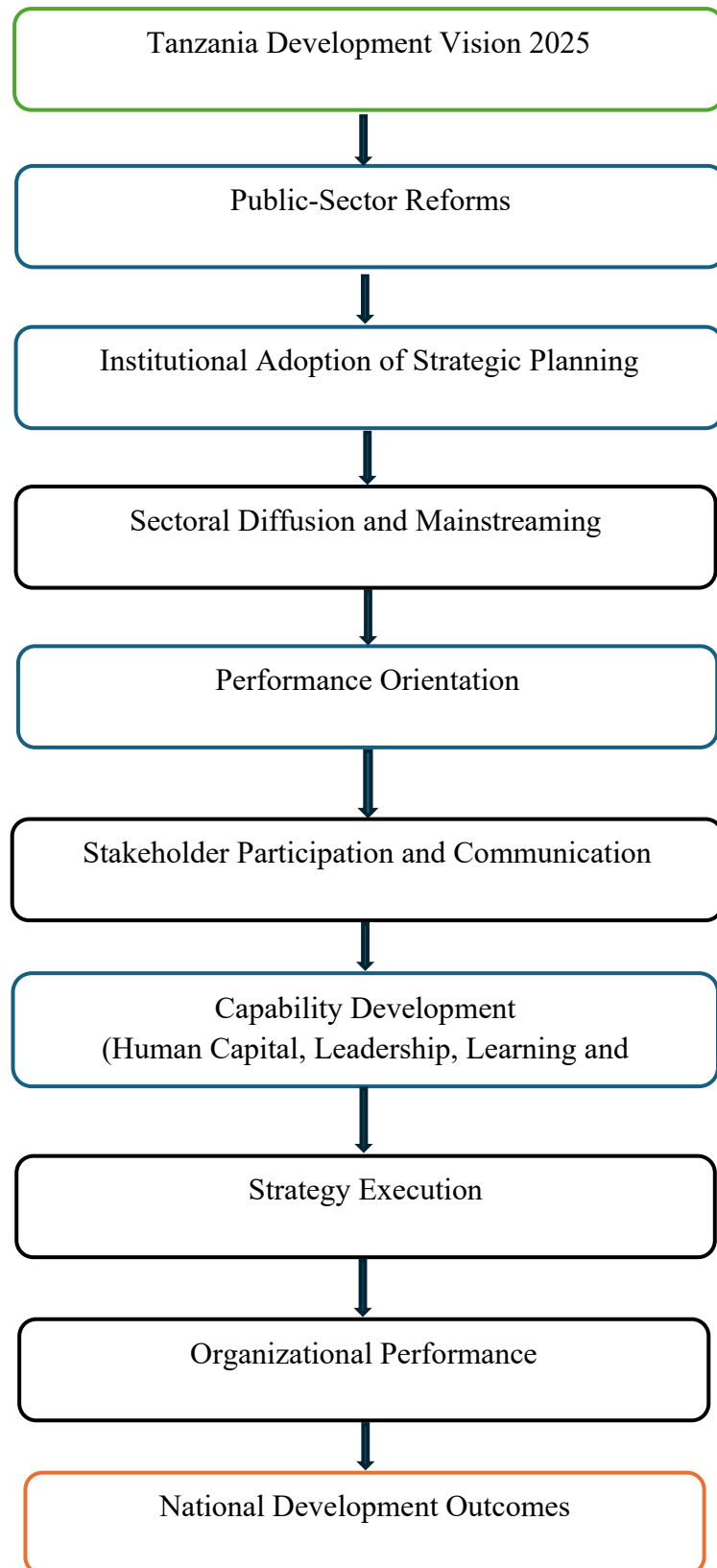
The evidence suggests that the major challenge facing Tanzania's public sector is no longer the absence of strategic plans. Instead, the critical issue concerns the ability of organisations to implement those plans effectively. Most institutions now possess strategic plans, yet translating them into measurable outcomes remains difficult. Weak resource mobilisation, inadequate coordination, limited monitoring capacity, communication problems, and leadership challenges continue to undermine implementation efforts. Accordingly, the strategic challenge confronting public organisations has shifted from plan formulation to strategy execution.

6.5 Lessons for Vision 2050

The experiences accumulated during the implementation of Vision 2025 provide important lessons for the next phase of national development. Future reforms should focus less on producing additional planning documents and more on strengthening strategic capabilities. Particular attention should be directed towards organisational learning, leadership development, human-capital investment, change management, digital monitoring systems, resource mobilisation, adaptive governance, and cross-sector collaboration. Without strengthening these foundations, the existence of strategic plans alone is unlikely to deliver transformative outcomes.

7. Integrative Framework: The Evolutionary Strategic Planning Capability Framework

Based on the evidence synthesised in this review, the study proposes the Evolutionary Strategic Planning Capability Framework (ESPCF) to explain the progression of strategic planning practices in Tanzania's public sector over the Vision 2025 period.



The framework suggests that strategic planning evolves through interconnected stages. Public-sector reforms create the conditions for adopting strategic planning. Strategic plans

subsequently become institutionalised and spread across sectors. As organisations mature, attention shifts towards performance management, stakeholder engagement, and capability development.

Eventually, organisational capabilities act as the bridge between planning and successful execution. Thus, the realisation of national development aspirations depends not simply on the existence of strategic plans but on the capacities that enable organisations to implement them effectively.

Accordingly, a central proposition emerging from this review is that the evolution of strategic planning in Tanzania's public sector reflects a transition from compliance-oriented planning towards capability-based strategic management, where organisational capabilities mediate the relationship between strategic planning and organisational performance.

8. Theoretical Contributions

This review makes several contributions to the strategic management literature. First, it demonstrates that the evolution of strategic planning in developing-country public sectors is neither linear nor purely administrative. Instead, strategic planning emerges as an evolving process shaped by institutional reforms, organisational learning, stakeholder engagement, and the gradual development of implementation capabilities. In doing so, the study extends much of the existing strategic management literature, which has largely been informed by experiences from advanced economies and private-sector organisations.

Second, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of strategic planning cannot be explained solely by the presence of strategic plans. Rather, organisational capabilities including leadership, communication, employee engagement, adaptability, and learning. These capabilities serve as the mechanisms through which strategic intentions are translated into performance outcomes. This observation reinforces the view that strategy execution should not be treated merely as the final stage of the planning process, but as a strategic capability in its own right.

Third, the review highlights an important transition in the Tanzanian public sector from document-oriented planning towards capability-driven strategic management. Earlier approaches focused predominantly on plan preparation and resource allocation, whereas

contemporary practices place increasing emphasis on organisational learning, human capital development, stakeholder relationships, and implementation effectiveness.

Finally, this study proposes the Evolutionary Strategic Planning Capability Framework (ESPCF) as a context-sensitive explanation of how strategic management systems mature within public institutions. Unlike conventional models that depict strategic planning as a sequence of formulation, implementation, and evaluation, the framework conceptualises strategic management as an evolutionary process influenced by reforms, participation, learning, and capability building. In this regard, the framework offers a fresh perspective for understanding strategic management in developing-country contexts.

9. Implications for Strategic Management Theory

The findings carry several implications for strategic management scholarship. First, the review reinforces the growing argument that organisational performance depends less on the existence of strategic plans and more on the capabilities that support their execution. In increasingly dynamic and uncertain environments, effective strategy implementation requires organisations that are capable of learning, adapting, and responding to emerging challenges.

Second, the findings provide further support for the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities perspectives. Human capital, leadership, communication, organisational learning, and adaptability emerge as valuable strategic assets that enable public organisations to convert plans into meaningful results. These capabilities should therefore be regarded as central components of strategic management rather than as supplementary considerations.

Third, the evidence lends support to Stakeholder Theory by demonstrating that communication, participation, and collaboration are not peripheral activities but important determinants of implementation effectiveness. Strategic success in public organisations is shaped by interactions among employees, communities, development partners, and policy actors rather than by managerial decisions alone.

Furthermore, the review suggests that Institutional Theory provides only a partial explanation of strategic planning practices. Although reform pressures and the search for

legitimacy contributed to the widespread adoption of strategic planning, implementation outcomes depended largely on internal organisational capabilities. Consequently, institutional conformity and capability development should be viewed as complementary rather than competing explanations of strategic effectiveness. Generally, these findings point towards a more integrated understanding of strategic management, one that recognises the importance of institutions, stakeholders, resources, and dynamic capabilities in shaping organisational performance.

10. Practical Implications

The findings offer several practical lessons for managers and practitioners across the public sector. Firstly, strategic plans should not be viewed simply as documents prepared to satisfy administrative requirements. Greater attention should be devoted to implementation processes, communication systems, and mechanisms that foster ownership among employees and stakeholders. Equally important is the need to invest in human capital. Continuous training, professional development, and capacity-building initiatives are essential for strengthening the competencies required to execute strategies successfully.

The review also highlights the importance of inclusive leadership and participatory approaches. Organisations that encourage employee involvement, stakeholder engagement, and cross-functional collaboration are more likely to cultivate commitment and improve implementation outcomes. Correspondingly, monitoring and evaluation systems should be strengthened to promote evidence-based decision-making and organisational learning. Strategic planning should be understood as an ongoing process of reflection, adaptation, and improvement rather than as a periodic exercise undertaken every five years. Finally, organisations need to cultivate adaptability and change-management capabilities. In an environment characterised by increasing complexity and uncertainty, flexibility and responsiveness are becoming indispensable ingredients of successful strategic management.

11. Policy Implications for Vision 2050

The experiences accumulated during the implementation of Development Vision 2025 provide valuable lessons for the design and execution of Vision 2050. Perhaps the most important lesson is that the next phase of national development should focus less on

producing additional plans and more on strengthening implementation capabilities. Future reforms should move beyond "planning for development" towards "managing for results."

Leadership development and institutional capacity building deserve particular attention. Effective implementation requires organisations that possess competent leaders, capable personnel, and systems that support learning and accountability. Human resource development should therefore become a strategic priority. Sustained investments in skills development, continuous learning, and talent management will be essential if public institutions are to respond effectively to emerging development challenges.

There is also a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems. Reliable data and robust performance management systems can improve accountability and facilitate timely corrective action. Furthermore, decentralisation reforms should be accompanied by adequate financial autonomy and institutional capacity. Local government authorities cannot effectively deliver development outcomes without sufficient resources, technical expertise, and decision-making authority.

Another lesson concerns the importance of sequencing and adaptability. Future national development frameworks should avoid repeating broad priorities without considering implementation realities. Incremental and adaptive approaches are likely to enhance policy effectiveness and sustainability. Finally, stakeholder participation and communication should be institutionalised as integral components of strategic management. Development outcomes are more likely to be achieved when citizens, employees, communities, and development partners are actively engaged throughout the implementation process.

12. Future Research Directions

Despite the growing body of literature on strategic planning in Tanzania, several areas warrant further investigation. First, much of the existing research has focused on individual organisations and specific sectors. Comparative studies covering multiple sectors and regions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of strategic planning practices across the public sector.

Second, there remains limited longitudinal evidence on how strategic capabilities evolve over time. Future studies could explore the processes through which organisations develop

and sustain implementation capacities. Third, the growing influence of digital transformation presents new opportunities for research. Future studies should examine how digital technologies, artificial intelligence, big data, and analytics are reshaping strategic planning and execution in public institutions.

Fourth, there is increasing need to investigate the relationship between strategic planning and organisational resilience, particularly in contexts characterised by uncertainty, crises, and rapid environmental change. Fifth, empirical studies are needed to test and refine the Evolutionary Strategic Planning Capability Framework proposed in this review. Quantitative and mixed-method approaches could provide valuable insights into the relationships among capabilities, participation, strategy execution, and organisational performance. Finally, comparative studies involving other African countries would enrich understanding of how contextual factors shape the evolution of strategic management in developing economies.

With consideration of such contexts, some propositions are emerging from the review. Based on the evidence synthesised in this study, five propositions are advanced to guide future research and theory development.

Proposition 1: *Strategic planning in Tanzania's public sector has evolved from a compliance-driven activity into a capability-oriented approach to strategic management.*

Proposition 2: *Organisational capabilities mediate the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance.*

Proposition 3: *Stakeholder participation, communication, and collaboration strengthen strategy implementation and contribute positively to performance outcomes.*

Proposition 4: *Human capital, organisational learning, adaptability, and leadership constitute critical dynamic capabilities that underpin effective strategy execution.*

Proposition 5: *The success of Vision 2050 will depend less on the preparation of new strategic plans and more on the development of implementation capabilities that enable public institutions to transform strategic intentions into sustainable development outcomes.*

Collectively, these propositions provide a foundation for future empirical inquiry and contribute to a deeper understanding of how strategic management evolves within public-sector organisations in developing economies.

13. Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this review. First, the study relied primarily on published articles, dissertations, and other accessible sources. Consequently, some experiences and practices within Tanzania's public sector may not have been adequately captured. The conclusions should therefore be understood as reflections of patterns emerging from the available evidence rather than as nationally representative estimates.

Second, the literature is unevenly distributed across sectors and time periods. Recent studies are more abundant than those conducted during the early years of Vision 2025, resulting in stronger evidence for contemporary developments than for earlier phases.

Third, many of the reviewed studies are institution-specific and employ diverse methodologies. Differences in research designs, analytical approaches, and sample sizes may limit direct comparisons across studies.

Finally, because the review focuses exclusively on Tanzania, caution should be exercised when extending the findings to other contexts. Nevertheless, the breadth of sectors represented and the diversity of methodological approaches enhance the credibility and robustness of the overall conclusions.

14. Conclusion

Twenty-five years after the adoption of Tanzania Development Vision 2025, strategic planning has become firmly embedded within the country's public sector. Over this period, both the understanding and practice of strategic planning have undergone substantial transformation. What initially emerged as a reform instrument aimed at improving organisational direction and accountability gradually evolved into a broader approach to strategic management that places increasing emphasis on performance, participation, communication, organisational learning, and implementation capabilities.

The evidence synthesised in this review reveals a progression through several phases characterised by institutional diffusion, performance orientation, stakeholder engagement, and capability development. However, the expansion of strategic planning systems was not accompanied by comparable improvements in implementation capacity. Persistent challenges such as inadequate financial resources, weak coordination mechanisms, limited autonomy, and insufficient human-resource capabilities continued to constrain effective execution across many public institutions.

Perhaps the most important insight emerging from the Vision 2025 experience is that development outcomes depend less on the existence of strategic plans and more on the organisational capabilities required to implement them successfully. In this respect, Tanzania's experience reflects a broader shift from planning-centred administration towards capability-based strategic management.

As the country transitions towards Vision 2050, the emphasis should move beyond the preparation of strategic documents and towards strengthening leadership, human capital, organisational learning, adaptability, and execution capabilities. Sustainable transformation will depend not merely on what organisations aspire to achieve, but on their ability to convert strategic intentions into meaningful and measurable results.

Ultimately, the Tanzanian experience demonstrates that strategic planning is not a one-time event or a static administrative requirement. Rather, it is a continuous and evolving process through which organisations learn, adapt, and strengthen their capabilities in pursuit of long-term national development aspirations.

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