

IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING ON PERFORMANCE OF DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES IN GHANA



Dr. Ofori Asamoah

**Impact of Strategic Planning On
Performance of District Assemblies in
Ghana**

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By

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my mother, Cecilia Amuah and my maternal grandmother, Maame Adubraah who taught me the basics of management.

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INTRODUCTION

Formulating strategies or preparing a strategic plan in itself is not enough. There is therefore the need of placing interest on the strategic planning and the planning process for measuring the performance of the organization. The study measured the qualitative impact of strategic planning on a well- defined behaviour based variables. The study explored how district Assemblies in Ghana plans strategically and how such planning impacts on their performance to meet the socio-economic needs of the people.

Qualitative data were collected from primary and secondary sources. The study was conducted in Ahanta West district one of the vibrant districts in Ghana. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources .Forty nine (49) respondents were interviewed using structured questionnaire as the data gathering tool. Strategic planning and its related concepts such as long-range planning, strategic thinking, operational planning and strategic management were the theoretical basis for the study.

The findings revealed that strategic planning has a significant impact on the performance of District Assemblies such as optimization of the strategic perspective of the assemblies and enhanced teamwork. It further results in improved understanding of the organization's objectives and overall direction. It can facilitate implementation of organizational objectives and goals. The respondents agreed and accepted the impact and resolved to continuously plan to maximize this impact of strategic planning.

It was recommended that further studies should incorporate both qualitative and quantitative impact of strategic planning and the planning process for a profit and non-profit organizations.

Balanced scorecard with the various lenses should also be used in measuring the impact of strategic planning and the planning process.

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM FOR THE STUDY

• Introduction

This chapter aims at giving the reader a clear view of the background of the study, the problem and the objectives of the study, its significance, scope, research questions, assumptions or hypothesis, and the meaning of special terms used in it.

• Background to the Problem for the Study

Ghana's system of government provides for the establishment of District Assemblies as per the law on Local Government (Local Government Act, Act 462, 1993). The District Assemblies are the highest political and administrative authority in the district. The District Assemblies are in charge of planning and implementing such strategic plans for the total development of the area. The law provides a framework for decentralization of decision making and development at the local level. The District Assemblies are headed by District Chief Executives (DCEs). There are District Coordinating Directors assisted by a deputy in every district.

Any organization including local government poised to succeed in the present-day dynamic environment must plan strategically. The study has been stimulated by this idea of measuring the qualitative impacts of strategic planning on the performance of District Assemblies in Ghana.

The study will focus on Ahanta West District Assembly in the Western Region of Ghana.

Although there are 138 districts in Ghana, the choice of Ahanta West District Assembly is representative as the entire District Assemblies have the same administrative structure and the same planning cycle as per the Local Government Law in Ghana.

The District was formed in 1988 from the former Sekondi Takoradi City Council by Government Legislative Instrument (LI 185, 1988). The District was ranked as one of the most deprived in the region in terms of socio-economic infrastructure, especially education, health, water and sanitation.

Business environment is increasingly and constantly changing. There is therefore uncertainty about the future as new situations such as technological advancement, new societal trends, new economic forces or newly enacted government regulations emerge. District Assemblies in Ghana are also operating in markets where competition is keen and many large competitors are present. In order to survive in a dynamic and fast-changing turbulent environment and therefore succeed in competitive markets, an

autonomous government institution must diagnose the changing situation or circumstances and accordingly put in place strategic measures.

However, formulating and implementing a strategic plan should not be the end of strategic planning. District Assembly administrators and other stakeholders need to know the impact or effects of strategic planning on the Assembly's performance. The impact or effects should be measured not only in terms of typical output-oriented quantitative indicators but also in terms of qualitative impacts of the strategic planning process or activity itself. Measuring the impact of strategic planning in this direction will enable management to know whether the resources devoted to strategic planning are worth their value or not.

The present study has been stimulated by this idea of measuring the qualitative impacts of strategic planning on the performance of District Assemblies.

• **Statement of the Problem**

Strategic planning is a set of managerial decisions and actions that determine the long-term direction and survival of an organisation. Strategic planning is also the activities that lead to the statement of goals and objectives and the choice of strategies to achieve them (Dubrin, 1998). This can be governmental or Non – Governmental Organization. It is typically concerned with fundamental decisions about the future of the organization or the District Assembly in question.

The core of strategic planning is monitoring and evaluating environmental threats and opportunities in the context of the Assembly's strengths and weaknesses. The outcome is an action plan of how the organisation in question will capitalize on its strengths and weaknesses to achieve its objective or mission.

Every organisation has a strategic plan even if that strategy has never been explicitly formulated. The District Assemblies are by laws mandated to have written strategic plans in the form of medium term or long term plans for the district. In this competitive world, however, every organisation must be proactive, that is, prepare for and deal with the rapidly changing environment. The complexity and dynamics of managing a district dictated by major technological, social and economic factors compel District Assemblies to monitor and evaluate these factors relevant to the district and work out strategic measures to proactively cope with these challenges. The ability of a District Assembly to respond proactively has therefore become an imperative and in some cases, a competitive edge. Thus, every District Assembly regardless of its size, location, resources, and the party in power must have some form of strategic plan or develop a strategic perspective. The administrators must be able to measure the impact of strategic planning on their performance of the Districts Assemblies.

The literature on the impact of strategic planning has increasingly and exclusively dealt mostly with profit or financial payoffs (Ramanujam and Venkatraman, 1987). Indeed, there has been little or concern on measuring other qualitative aspects of the impact of the strategic planning and the planning process itself on performance of local government structures such as District Assemblies. In other words, the act of engaging in strategic planning is as valuable as the ultimate strategic document and this needs to be measured.

By focusing exclusively on profits and economic indicators, the literature has widened rather than bridged. There is, therefore a gap in knowledge on the impact of strategic planning in terms of financial performance, on one hand, and the qualitative impact or effects of the planning process on the other. It is this qualitative impact or effect that this study is about.

• Objectives

This study is an attempt to investigate the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies with particular reference to the Ahanta West District Assembly in the western region of Ghana. The focus is on measuring the impact resulting from the strategic plan and the strategic planning process. Specifically, the objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To study how Ahanta West District Assembly plans strategically to respond to the diverse needs of the family and communities in the district.
- ii. To assess the qualitative impact of strategic planning such as team building, common understanding of Programmes, managerial decision making, organizational goals implementation etc. on the performance of the Ahanta West District Assembly.

• Key Research Questions

The main research questions for this study are:

How is strategic planning done in Ahanta West District Assembly?

What is the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies in Ghana?

• Rationale/Significance of the Study

District Assemblies in Ghana commits a large amount of resources in terms of people, time, energy and money to the development, preparation and implementation of strategic plans and Ahanta West District Assembly is not an exception. The effects of these strategic plans and the planning process or activity on the performance of the District Assembly are not yet known. Developing, preparing and implementing strategic plans should not be the end of the strategic planning process. Is it not right to say that every District Assembly/organisation must be able to know the extent to which its strategic plans and planning activity are impacting, or have impacted on its performance? This study will therefore attempt to find out the impact of strategic planning on Ahanta West District Assembly's performance in terms of qualitative outputs.

Since the creation of the District in 1988, no study has been carried out on strategic planning and the Assembly's performance. The thrust of this study is therefore aimed at contributing to knowledge in that direction. Such knowledge or information could be of great value to the district administrators, government departments, ministries, agencies, Non Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders in knowing whether the resources invested in strategic planning are worth their value or not.

Most studies on the impact of strategic planning on organisational performance have concerned themselves with the typical business or profit-making organizations; little or no attention has been paid to Local government agents or organizations such as Ahanta West District Assembly. This lack of studies on strategic planning in 'non-business' or 'not-for-profit organizations' is mentioned by some authors such as Stone and Crittenden (1993). Again, most measures of organisational performance have put too much stress on economic and financial indicators alone. This study is an attempt to contribute to fill the gap by developing non-financial indicators to measure the impact of strategic planning on the performance of District Assemblies.

• **Scope of the Study**

This study will focus on determining qualitative impact or effects or implications of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies. The emphasis is on impact or influence due to the strategic planning process. It is this view that has guided the approach of the present study.

• **Hypothesis**

Measurements of the impact of strategic planning have focused on figures such as measures of financial indicators in profit making organizations; little or no attention has been paid to qualitative aspects especially in not for profit or political organizations.

The central hypothesis of this study that apart from economic and financial indicators of measuring strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies other non-economic and financial indicators are of equal significance.

• **Definition of Relevant Terms and Concepts**

Strategic planning is the key concept in the present study. Therefore, in order to place this study in a proper perspective, an attempt has been made to define some terms and concepts.

◆ **Strategic Planning**

Is the process whereby an organisation determines its basic mission and future or long-term objectives through an analysis of its internal and external environments; and then selects and implements an appropriate strategy for accomplishing the mission and the objectives (Dubrin, 1998).

The purpose of strategic planning is to deal proactively with environmental threats and opportunities as they relate to the organisation's strengths and weaknesses. The output of strategic planning is a strategic plan from which is derived annual operating plans and budgets.

◆ **District Assembly Mission**

Is a general statement concerning the purpose of the existence of the district or the District Assembly. In business or a profit making organization, the mission statement defines what business the organisation is in or is to be in and the kind of company it is or is to be. It provides a sense of direction for decision-making at all levels of management in the organisation. In the absence of a well-formulated mission, it will be inconceivable for an organisation to develop objectives and strategies (Byars al et., 1996)Every Government, Sector Ministry and District Assembly has a mission for her existence

◆ **An Objective**

An objective is a statement of what an organisation seeks to achieve by its operations and when the results are to be accomplished. Objectives are more likely to be stated in quantifiable terms. Objectives may be classified according to time frame. In this case, objectives are either short-term or long-term. Objectives with a lifetime of one year or less are classified as short-term; those with timeframes of more than one year are classified as long-term. Objectives can also be described as medium-term, i.e. with a life span usually of one to three years. In this sense, a long-term objective will refer to one with a life span of over three years. Objectives may also be categorized on the basis of their scope of influence on the organisation. Objectives that relate to the organisation as a whole are known as corporate or organisational objectives. Those objectives that concern a particular division are called divisional objectives; functional or departmental objectives are those that relate to specific functions or departments such as finance, marketing and human resource management, within the organisation.

◆ **External Environment**

Refers to outside influences or forces within which the organisation exists and over which it has no direct control. These forces are classified into two: the task environment and the societal environment. (Hunger and Wheelen, 1996; page 7

The task environment consists of forces that directly impact or are impacted by the activities of the organisation. For example, customers, suppliers, labour associations and potential competitors. These forces are close to and are in regular contact with the organisation. The societal environment consists of those forces that impact on the activities of the organisation in the long-term. Economic, social, technological, political or regulatory forces are examples. These forces are far removed from the organisation.

◆ **Internal Environment**

Refers to forces within an organisation and which constitute the context in which activities are carried out. These include organisation structure, culture, i.e. shared beliefs, expectations, and values, and resources such as human resources skills, financial resources, and technological capabilities. Every business needs to periodically evaluate its internal strengths and weaknesses (Kotler, 2001, Pearson Education, Inc, page 47)

◆ 'Strategy'

'Strategy' comes from the Greek 'strategia' and means 'generalship'. The word is widely used in the military sphere and pertains to the maneuvering of troops into position before the enemy is actually engaged. Business borrowed the concept in the early 1960s and has since been extensively used to describe the steps or actions taken by an organisation to position itself to compete in the changing environment in achieving its mission and objectives." An organization's plan for achieving its mission and goals in the environment" (Kotler, 2001, page 433)

In large organisations, three different levels of strategy may be distinguished: corporate - level strategy, business - unit strategy, and functional - level strategy (Pearce and Robinson, 2000, Hunger and Wheelen, 1996 Hess and Siciliano, 1996). Corporate-level strategy is formulated by top level management to address which businesses the organisation will be in and how resources will be allocated among those businesses.

A business-unit strategy is concerned with the interests and operations of a single business unit. The strategy deals with such questions as: How will the business compete within its market? What product or services should it offer? Which customers does it seek to serve? How will resources be distributed within the business? A business unit operates within the objectives and strategy set up by top management. Within that framework each business-unit performs its own strategic management process.

Functional-level strategy is narrower in scope than business-unit strategy and provides a framework for the management of functions such as research and development, information management, marketing, production, and human resource so that they support the corporate-level and business-level strategic direction. For example, if the business unit strategy requires the development of a new product, the research and development department will put into place plans on how to develop that product.

It must be borne in mind that corporate - level strategy is the foundation of all other strategic decisions and therefore provides overall direction to business - unit and functional - level strategies. It also needs to be noted that the three levels of strategy are not mutually exclusive; as far as possible, they must be congruent with each other.

◆ Environmental Threats

Environmental threats are negative external factors that would prevent an organisation from achieving its objectives. They are challenges posed by an unfavorable external trend or development that would lead ,in the absence of defensive marketing action, to deterioration in sales or profit (Kotler,2006) Opportunities are positive external environmental factors that an organisation can take advantage of in achieving its objectives.

◆ Strengths

Strengths are positive internal factors that facilitate the achievement of an organisation's objectives, while weaknesses are negative internal factors that prevent an organisation from achieving its objectives.

◆ A Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan is a written document outlining the specific mission, objectives, core values and strategies that the organisation will adopt to realise short-term and long-term performance targets. The plan may also contain a summary of the diagnosis of external opportunities and threats as well as internal strengths and weaknesses.

◆ Impact

Impact refers to a marked effect or influence, consequence either intended or unintended, and either positive or negative.

◆ Performance

In this study performance means accomplishment, achievement, a desired result or intended result. Performance of District Assemblies therefore refers to the extent to which a District Assembly achieves its stated objectives. The activities a District Assembly carries out to accomplish its mission will always give an indication of its performance. Lusthaus et al (2000, Page 46) stated that "outputs and their effects are the most obvious aspects that show an organisation's performance."

The concept of organisational performance varies considerably among different authors. Child (Child, 1984), points out that the definitional variations cover several issues. One of these issues is whether there should be a single dimension or a range of dimensions for measuring such performance. In business organisations, for example, a single dimension for measuring performance could be return on investment. In the case of a hospital, for example, there could be a range of dimensions for measuring performance. For example, cost per patient admission, and duration of waiting time for admission.

In the management of District Assemblies number of school structures built during the period, roads constructed, degree of good governance over the period, the number of students awarded scholarship to pursue further studies, the percentage of target internal revenue generated e.t.c, are performance measuring examples.

The second issue is whether or not to consider organisations as purposive aggregations of individuals working in a concerted manner towards the attainment of common goals. Child argues that if organisations are considered in this perspective, then 'good or at least satisfactory performance can be defined with reference to the attainment of these goals'. He however points out that there are at least two difficulties with this goal-oriented approach to defining organisational performance. The first is that all

members of an organisation do not come to it with identical purposes. The second difficulty is whether goals are appropriate in content and in the level at which they are set.

In consideration of these difficulties, Child argues that some authors on organisations have put forward a systems-oriented view of organisational performance. The systems model stresses the survival of organisations and therefore sees performance in terms of economic and financial indicators or criteria. Financial criteria are of utmost relevance to business organisations, public services as well as charitable organisations.

The third issue revolves around the idea that each of the various stakeholders of an organisation (the management, employees, suppliers, customers, government authorities etc), have conflicting ideas about performance. For example, the organisation's management body might define the organisation's capacity to attract the required resources as an indication of performance. On the other hand, the donors of the organisation might regard performance in terms of the organisation's impact on a given target group. All these different definitions of performance by the various stakeholders introduce a political flavour to the definition of organisational performance.

Finally, there is the issue of timeframe. Must performance be measured in the long-term or in the short-term? According to Child, this question also has a political dimension. For instance, a short-term profit maximising approach will definitely be of advantage to investors. However, it will be of great disadvantage to the employees who have a longer-term stake in the prosperity of the organisation.

◆ **District Assembly**

A District Assembly is the highest political authority in the district, and has deliberative, legislative and executive powers. It is composed of one person from each electoral area within the district elected by universal adult suffrage.

Members of Parliament in the district without voting right. The District Chief Executive of the District and other members not more than thirty percent of all the members in the District Assembly appointed by the President in consultation with the traditional authorities and other interest groups in the district. The District Chief Executive is the administrative and political head of the district (Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, Article 241(3) and 242)

District assemblies may be Metropolitan if the area has population of more than 250,000 and compact or Municipal if population is between 95,000 to 250,000 and a District if population is below 95,000. The Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies are also referred to as District Assemblies by the law (Abane, S. Agbenorto and S. Attafua, 2005).

● **Flow of the Study**

The present study is structured into five chapters.

◆ Chapter 1: The problem for the study

The chapter presents a general introduction to the study. This covers an overview of the problem for the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and key research questions. The rationale, significance, and scope of the study as well as the assumptions or hypothesis are also outlined. The chapter ends with definitions of key terms and concepts.

◆ Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Chapter two provides the conceptual framework and literature review. It presents the concepts and issues of strategic planning and a brief review of previous studies in the area of performance of District Assemblies. Specifically, the chapter provides an overview of strategic planning, and also explains its related terminologies. The purposes and benefits of strategic planning to organisations are also discussed. This is followed by an outline of the basic steps by which a strategic plan is formulated and implemented. The chapter concludes with a review of previous studies on the impact of strategic planning on organizational performance.

◆ Chapter 3: The Study Area and Methodology

Chapter 3 deals with the study area and research methodology. Specific topics dealt with are: the study area, design of the study, sampling methods, data gathering instruments, methods of data analysis and constraints and challenges encountered in undertaking the study.

◆ Chapter 4: Result and Analysis

Chapter 4 presents the major findings of the study from an empirical point of view.

◆ Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

Chapter 5, the conclusion, summarizes the major findings of the study and presents a number of recommendations for further study in the area of strategic planning and performance of District Assemblies.

● Chapter Summary

This chapter has served the purpose of setting the background for the present study: the problem, objectives, key research questions, significance and hypothesis have been delineated. Terms and concepts that have a unique use or meanings in the study have been defined.

The next chapter will set the theoretical base for the study. It will explain strategic planning and its benefits to District Assemblies. It will also outline the strategic planning process. Finally, it will situate the

present study in the context of what has already been done in connection with the problem for the present study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

• Introduction

The previous chapter set the background for the present study, outlined the statement of the problem and its scope, and explained the purpose of the study and its significance or justification. It also defined and explained the key terms.

The major task of the present chapter is a review of the relevant literature on the impact of strategic planning on organisational performance. However, since strategic planning is the core or fundamental concept of the present study, it would also be worthwhile to undertake a discussion of the concept.

Specifically, chapter 2 serves two purposes. It first sets the theoretical or conceptual base for the present study. Strategic planning as a concept will be explained. Its value or potential benefits to organisations have also been outlined. An understanding of these benefits is necessary for measuring the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies. This will be followed by an overview of the strategic planning process or the steps by which a strategic plan is formulated or developed and implemented. Secondly, this chapter will attempt to place the present study into perspective. That is, show what research has been done previously in relation to the problem.

It will then review the District Assembly concept in Ghana briefly.

• Definition of Strategic Planning

Any District Assembly poised to make an impact in the lives of the citizens in the area or bring real governance in the doorstep of her citizenry in the present-day dynamic business environment must plan strategically. The authorities must paint scenarios, anticipate the environment and be proactive or forward-looking, set realistic objectives and develop strategies and plans of action to achieve those objectives. The issue is not anticipating the future but making fundamental decisions based on foresight.

The concept of strategic planning is amenable to different definitions depending on the preferences of the author. According to Stoner and Fry (1987), strategic planning is a management tool designed to enable organisations to competitively adapt to anticipated or future changes in the environment. "Specifically, the strategic planning process provides an overview and analysis of the business and its relevant environment - describing the firm's current conditions and recognizing the key external factors

affecting its success. Then the process describes an outline or action plan of how the business will proceed to capitalise on its strengths and minimize or mitigate its weaknesses and threats". Bryson (1998 page 5), defines strategic planning as "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation is, what it does, and why it does it. At its best, strategic planning requires broad scale information gathering, an exploration of alternatives, and an emphasis on the future implication of present decisions".

The strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, how it is going to get there, and how it will know if it got there or not(McNamara,2005).

According to Dubrin (1998), strategic planning encompasses those activities that lead to the statement of goals and objectives and the choice of strategies to achieve them. Of all these definitions, a closer examination of Bryson's definition will provide an idea about the main features that form the basis of the meaning of strategic planning. The first point is that the process is strategic because it is concerned with the best way of enabling an organisation to respond to the dynamic and turbulent environment of business. In the next phase, it highlights the objectives and actions to achieve those. Finally, strategic planning is concerned with fundamental decisions and actions because critical choices must be made about what an organisation must do why it does it, and how it must do it. The choices entail organisation - wide and long - term implications.

Although many authors define the concept of strategic planning differently, the various definitions nevertheless share a common theme: the future prosperity and survival of an organisation in its environment. The future orientation and "creating" the future underlie strategic planning. The issue is not anticipating the future but making major or fundamental decisions about the future in the present.

• **Related Concepts**

In discussing strategic planning, one comes across a number of related concepts, key among which are long-range planning, strategic thinking, operational planning and strategic management. It would therefore not be out of place to look at these concepts.

• **Strategic Planning and Long-Range Planning**

There is a distinction between strategic planning and long-range planning although the tendency is for many people to use the two terms interchangeably. The distinction between the two terms lies in the differences in assumptions placed on the organisational environment.

Long-range planning refers to the formulation of a plan for accomplishing a goal over a period of several years. It is based on the assumption that present knowledge about future environmental conditions impacting on an organisation is adequately reliable to guarantee the implementation of the plan during its life span. Long-range planning was the order of the day during the late 1950s and early 1960s in the United

States of America (USA). This was a time when the American economy was relatively stable and therefore somewhat predictable.

Strategic planning, by contrast, means that an organisation must take long-term decisions that will enable it to respond to a dynamic, or constantly changing business environment. The key idea is that the business environment is always changing and will continue to change. This assumption contrasts with the relatively stable environment assumed for long-range planning.

- **Strategic Planning and Strategic Thinking**

Strategic planning deals with how an organisation will achieve its vision. It is basically about gathering and analysing information about the present with a view to determining an organisation's future short-term and long-term goals and the formulation of an action plan to achieve those goals.

Strategic thinking on the other hand, is basically a synthesis of information aimed at producing a profile of what an organisation wants to become in future for example, ten years ahead. It reflects on the purpose of the organisation, and seeks an understanding of the organisational environment, especially of the forces that impact the achievement of that purpose. It aims at creativity in developing measures to effectively respond to those forces. Strategic thinking enables organisations to 'step outside the box of unconscious, unquestioned assumptions that keeps them from anticipating threats to their survival or opportunities for prosperity'. (George, 1997:69)

- **Strategic Planning and Operational Planning**

Strategic planning is the process of determining an organisation's long-term future direction. It includes analysing the organisation's environmental opportunities and threats, strengths and weaknesses, formulating overall objectives and deciding on means to accomplish those objectives. Strategic planning is the responsibility of top management.

Operational planning by contrast is making detailed decisions about specific goals and the means of implementing the strategic plan. It is short-term and normally covers a period of one year. Operational plans are prepared by first-line managers in consultation with middle-level managers to support the implementation of the strategic plan.

Thus, the key to the distinction between strategic planning and operational planning lies in their differences in terms of time frame, scope, and management hierarchy. However, the two forms of planning are linked by goals and objectives that reflect the organisation's mission statement.

- **Strategic Management**

The concept of strategic management implies managing in a way that focuses an organisation on the most important decisions and actions. This requires the kind of long-term perspective and priorities that result from the strategic plan. The concept embodies a focus on the future within the context of a changing,

but relatively predictable business environment. Thus strategic management requires continuous reassessment of current plans in the light of long-term priorities. The key issue is that strategy should be deliberately determined and that the implementation process should be managed.

• **The Potential Value (Benefits) of Strategic Planning**

Having attempted to define strategic planning, the issue now is: why do organizations such as District Assemblies, NGOs, e.t.c engage in strategic planning? In other words, what are the benefits derived from strategic planning? This is the question discussed in this section.

A number of arguments or criticisms have been leveled against strategic planning. Notable among the critics are Peters and Waterman (1982) in the USA, Ohmae (1982) in Japan, and Stacey (1991) in the United Kingdom (UK). Despite the criticisms, some authors in the field (for example, Stoner and Fry, (1987) Bryson, (1998), Byars et al., (1996) Pearce and Robinson, (2000) argue for the necessity for strategic planning. Bartol and Martin, (1998) Johnson and Scholes, (1999) and Thompson and Strickland, (1996) also agree that strategic planning has relevance for organisations. According to McNamara(2005),strategi planning serves a variety of purposes in organization .

A synthesis of the value or benefits of strategic planning as advanced by the authors under consideration are as follows. First, strategic planning enables District Assembly Members, Assembly staff ,heads of decentralized departments and other stakeholders to reflect on the nature of the District assembly(organization), the present and future needs of its of the residents, possible and probable changes in the environment, that is changes in for example, technology, social trends, and economic forces. A careful, systematic, and objective appraisal of these forces enables management to come to terms with the unique strengths or latent vulnerabilities of the District Assembly. In this way, the required strategic decision can then be taken during meeting of all stakeholders of the District Assembly in question and even any organization. Thus, a District Assembly or any organisation that engages in strategic planning puts itself in the best position to achieve its destiny, that is, survive in turbulent environments.

Secondly, through strategic planning, a District Assembly is able to have a sense of direction or focus that enables it to clearly see where it is going and where the future will lead it. According to McNamara (2005) ,with a clearly defined purpose of the organization ,realistic goals and objectives are consistent with the mission of the organization in a defined time frame within the organization's capacity for implementation. Without such a map, a District Assembly may spend time reacting to problems, putting out fires and taking hasty, uninformed and ad hoc decisions that may be costly. With this road map, which points to a direction and a destination, crisis management is avoided. An old adage says, " If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there". Another says, "If you know where you are going, you are much more likely to get there"

Third, strategic planning can provide opportunity to involve the various levels of management in the process. When the Assembly Members, Unit Committee members, heads of departments, NGOs in the district, Civil Society groups, etc, participate in strategy formulation, they get a clearer understanding of the

direction where the organisation wants to go. This facilitates the alignment and commitment of the employees and management to the goal and objectives of the District Assembly thereby assuring excellence in performance. Employees, community leaders and members, and various partners of the District Assembly will be more than prepared to put in extra effort to enable the District get an edge over its competitors, all other factors being equal.

Fourth, strategic planning enables organisations to understand how the expectations of stakeholders (e.g. government, community, customers, shareholders, employees) and the environmental forces that impact it (e.g. technological, political-legal, market conditions) affect the organisation's survival and success in a changing world. The environment of organisations is constantly changing and no organization governmental or pure business is immune to these changes.

Fifth, another value of strategic planning is that it ensures that all the different units of the organisation work together towards the achievement of the same objectives. Without a strategic plan, the constituent units of the organisation will veer off track. A strategic plan therefore provides an integrative mechanism for all organisational units to work together. In the District assembly set up, various Units, Committees, Area Councils, government departments, and various partners have different functions to play. With a well formulated strategic plan each of these stakeholders will be aware of their roles and this will let them to be dedicated to it.

Finally, strategic planning fosters in management the habit of periodically appraising the competitive position of their organisations. This compels management to be more proactive and conscious of the environment in which their organisations are operating. It fosters in managers the habit of thinking in terms of the future. Thus the act of engaging in strategic planning is as valuable as the ultimate plans that are derived from the process.

• Impact of Strategic Planning on Performance of District Assemblies

District assemblies are local government organizations that performs administrative and executive functions and therefore the centre of management and development decision making (NCCE, 2005) . Thus, District Assemblies are organizations and hence the term District Assemblies and organizations will be used interchangeably in ascertaining the literary works on impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies.

Prior to the early 1970s, strategies of organisations were merely extrapolations of past performances. However, other factors such as deregulation, increasing technological change and globalisation made meaningless this approach to long-range planning. (Rosenberg and Schewe, 1985) , W. Kiechel III, 1989). Organizations were therefore compelled to put in place a systematic approach of dealing proactively with environmental threats and opportunities as related to the organisation's weaknesses and strengths. Thus, organizations recognised the importance of strategic thinking and planning. (Hart and Banbury, 1994).

However, over the years, the question arose whether organisations that did strategic planning performed better than those that did not. This prompted researchers to measure the impact of strategic planning on organisational performance. The purpose of this section is therefore to present an overview that will acquaint the reader with existing studies related to the present study. In other words, who has done what, when and where and what were the approaches used.

Several indicators have been developed in an attempt to measure the impact of strategic planning on organisational performance. Most of these studies were conducted in the USA and based on samples of American companies. These studies have been exclusively concerned with financial analyses and economic performance of firms. In other words, they have been concerned with profits or financial payoffs from strategic planning.

One of the early studies in measuring the impact of strategic planning on organisational performance was carried out by Ansoff and his colleagues. (Ansoff et al; 1970: 207). Their study focused on ninety three manufacturing firms in the United States. In their study; they used financial indicators to measure the impact of the strategic planning approach. Similar studies carried out by Miller and Cardinal, (1994) also used financial criteria to measure the impact of strategic planning.

Reflecting on the strategic performance question, Pearce and his colleagues also conducted a study of two hundred and ten Fortune 500 firms in the United States

(Pearce et al., 1987). They were exclusively concerned with long-term financial performance relative to the various industries of the firms. They considered it in absolute terms.

Greenley (1989) conducted a review of nine previous studies on manufacturing firms in the USA and the UK. One of the studies Greenley reviewed was conducted by Karger and Malik. In this study which involved a sample of nine companies, they compared those companies that were “planners” with a pair made up of “non-planners”. The comparisons were made on the basis of variables such as sales value, sales per share, and earnings per share, operating margin and net income.

‘Did Baker, Adams and Davis (1993) do something different? These researchers were also concerned with strategic planning and the extent and benefits of written business plans. They, therefore, conducted studies into a sample of one hundred and ninety four United States firms that made sales of between

USD 100,000 and USD 25 million in 1984 and that had showed a sales increase between 1987 and 1988. Their concern was measuring profits of the companies that fall within their chosen range and criteria.

Moreso, Pearce and his colleagues (1987) also provide another perspective on the strategic performance issue. They studied ninety-seven small USA manufacturing firms. Performance of the firms was measured by means of the following evaluative factors: return on assets, return on sales, sales growth and overall performance. Their exclusive concern was with improved financial performance.

Careful scrutiny of the study so far conducted by the researchers has indicated that the analysis of strategic planning and organizational performance has been concerned with only profit as measured quantitatively by financial indicators or accounting-based numbers such as net profit margin, (NPM) return on investment, (ROI) earnings per share, (EPS) return on equity (ROE), shareholder value, as well as other economic indicators. Thus, as Pearce and Robinson (2000, page 9) have lately pointed out, ‘an accurate assessment of

the impact of strategy formulation on organisational performance requires not only financial evaluation criteria but also non-financial evaluation criteria - measures of behaviour-based or qualitative effects' such as building strong team, common understanding among employees and management, improvement in decision making of management, individual role definition, etc. Goodstein et al., (1993 Page 327), also confirm this viewpoint by indicating that the acid test of strategic planning in any organisation lies in the extent to which it impacts behaviour in the organisation. In other words, several behavioural effects of strategic planning on organisational performance are discernible other than financial and economic indicators of performance. To stretch the argument further, the impact of strategic planning on performance of organizations such as District Assemblies should be measured not only on typical output-oriented quantitative indicators such enumerated above , but also on behavioural indicators or factors relating to the impact of the strategic plan and the planning process or activity.

The present study will extend this argument to Ahanta west district assembly in the western region of Ghana a sub governmental unit established by Legislative Instrument to bring development and governance to the people in the area so that this argument could be ascertained.

• Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 set the theoretical framework for the present study. The core concept of strategic planning was explained: its meaning and related terminologies. The potential benefits to organisations were also outlined. This was followed by an overview of the basic steps by which a strategic plan is formulated and implemented.

The chapter also attempted to situate the present study in the context of previous research in relation to the problem that is the subject of the present study. It was noted that research so far has attempted to measure the impact of strategic planning on organizational performance. The indicators for measuring performance were basically financial performance criteria and other variables such as sales value, sales per share, earnings per share, operating margin and net income. The general finding is that there has been a total exclusive focus on profits and other financial and economic indicators. But it has been argued that the impact of strategic planning on organizational performance must include other non-financial evaluative dimensions of behaviour-based impact or effect. The present study will extend this argument to Ahanta West District Assembly, a so that this argument could be ascertained.

sub governmental unit established by Legislative Instrument to bring development and governance to the people in the area.

Chapter 3 will describe the methodology or procedures used for the present study. It will cover background information on the study area, the District Assembly concept in Ghana ,design of the study, sampling, data sources, data collection and analysis. The limitations or weaknesses of the research methodology will also be outlined.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

• Introduction

The previous chapter set the theoretical base for the present study. It provided an overview of the nature and benefits of strategic planning. It was argued that to measure the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies presupposed an understanding of what strategic planning means and its relevance to organizations and the District Assembly concept in Ghana. The chapter also attempted to review some of the relevant literature on the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies (organization). The review assumed and concluded that the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies requires criteria other than financial and other economic measures.

The purpose of the present chapter is to provide relevant information on the study area and describe the methodology or procedure that was used to test this assumption or hypothesis. This chapter consists of various topics: background information on the study area; design of the study, sampling, data sources, data collection and data analysis.

Information was obtained from the Western Regional Coordinating Council, The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, The Ahanta West District Assembly, World Vision Ghana Generic Proposal for Ahanta West, The Ahanta West District Planning Officer's Office, Ahanta West Assembly Members, four chiefs in the district, some heads of government decentralized departments in the district and websites for District Assemblies in Ghana

• Administrative Structure in Ghana

Ghana practices a decentralized system of government. The Local Government Act, Act 462, 1993, provides the framework for local level governance. The country consists of 10 administrative regions, each headed by a Regional Minister. The regions are further sub-divided into 138 administrative districts called District Assemblies each headed by a District Chief Executive (DCE) who is also a political figure. The districts can be Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assemblies depending on the population and the compact nature of the area. Each district has a District Assembly which provides an avenue for the people to actively participate in decision-making and in the planning and implementation of development projects that meet their aspirations. Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) coordinate the work of the District Assemblies. At the community levels are Unit Committees which are involved directly in the grassroots resource mobilization.

- **Description of Ahanta West District**

- **Geo-physical Characteristics**

Ahanta West District consists of 123 settlements. The district capital is AgonaNkwanta. Large settlements include Apowa, Dixcove, Ewusiejoe and Abura. It is located at the southern most tip of the Western Region of Ghana with the Gulf of Guinea as its southern limit. The district shares boundaries with Shama Ahanta East Metropolitan Assembly to the East, Mpohor Wassa East District Assembly to the North East, Wassa West District Assembly to the North West and Nzema East District Assembly to the West. The District has an area of 636 square kilometers. Map 3 shows the geographical location of the district within the regional and national context.

The district lies within the south-western equatorial climatic zone of Ghana. The highest monthly mean temperature is 34°C recorded between March and April, while the lowest mean temperature is 20°C recorded in August. Relative humidity is very high averaging between 75% to 80% in the rainy season and 70% to 80% in the dry season. The district lies within the wettest region in Ghana. It experiences a double-maxima rainfall with a mean annual rainfall of over 1700 mm.

The vegetation falls largely within the high rain forest belt zone of Ghana. The District is underlain by pre-Cambrian upper Birrimian rocks. These rocks are rich in mineral deposits such as gold, diamond and manganese. However, prospecting needs to be done ascertain their commercial viability. There are also substantial clay deposits in parts of the district, mostly, around the Beahu area. The coastline is rich in sand deposits. Generally, the soils in the district are fertile and their types range from loose sand to clay.

(Source: Ahanta West District Assembly Medium Term Development Plan, 2002 to 2004) .

- **Demographic Characteristics**

The population of the Ahanta West District is 95,140. (Ghana 2000 Population and Housing Census). This is made up of 49,116 females and 46,024 males. The proportion of males to females is 93.7%. The total population is made up of 76,088 rural dwellers and 19,052 urban dwellers. The average household size is 5.9. The district is inhabited by a mix of ethnic groups: the Ahanta, Wassa, Nzema, Ewes and Fantis. The Ahanta are the predominant ethnic group

(Source: World Vision Generic Proposal for Ahanta West District, 2005)

- **Environmental Profile**

The Ahanta West District used to be covered largely with primary vegetative cover but is now covered mostly with secondary forest. The only area which has maintained traces of the former natural environment is the Cape Three Points Forest Reserve. Rubber and palm plantations presently cover over

sixty percent (60%) of the total land area. Increased human activity on the land has affected land cover, wildlife and soil resources.

- **Economic Activities**

About 58% of the total population engages in agriculture (World Vision Generic Proposal for Ahanta West, 2005). The remaining percentage engages in small scale trading, fishing and the formal sector. Small scale trading is dominated by women while the formal sector employs only a few people. Income levels are generally low giving rise to generally low per capita expenditure.

Crops grown include oil palm, rubber, coconut, cassava, plantain and vegetables. There are two companies in the district namely Norwegian Palm Limited (NORPALM) and the Ghana Rubber Estates Limited (GREL) who own large oil palm and rubber plantations respectively. With the outbreak of the Cape Saint Paul Wilt, the coconut plantation, which used to be the viable cash crop, has been completely wiped out. Major economic activities are:

- **Agriculture/Food Security**

The agricultural sector has three components: the crops sub-sector, livestock sub-sector and fisheries sub-sector. The crops sub-sector is the most predominant of all the sub-sectors engaging more than 70% of farmers. The soils and climatic conditions in the district favour the production of tree crops such as rubber, oil-palm, coconut, citrus etc. The six major food crops of the district listed in descending order of importance are cassava, maize, plantain, cocoyam, rice and yam.

The livestock sub-sector covers poultry (both exotic and village fowls) cattle, pigs and small ruminants. These are reared in the district. Commercial poultry production has become important in the district because of its proximity to market centres in the Sekondi – Takoradi Metropolis.

Presently, meat production (beef and mutton) is estimated at about 30% whilst that of pork is about 70%. The district has no slaughtering facility and (beef and mutton) is brought in from Takoradi.

The fisheries sub-sector is divided into marine fisheries and aquaculture. The district has a long stretch of coastline from New Amanful in the east to Egyambra in the west suitable for landing fish. There are 21 landing beaches.

- ◆ **Social Services**

- **Health Situation**

Health facilities are however limited in terms of number and spatial distribution. On the average, there is only one health post per roughly 15 kilometer radius. Table 5 below gives the distribution of health facilities within the public and private sectors in the Ahanta West District.

Sub - district	Facility	Number	%Total	Public	Category	
					Private	CHAG/Mission
AgonaNkwanta	Health Centre	2	22.2	X	0	0
Dixcove	Hospital	1	11.1	0	0	0
Apowa						
Princess	Health Centre	1	11.1	X	0	0
	Health Centre	3	33.3	X	0	0
	Clinic	1	11.1	X	X	0
	Total	8	100			

Table 1: Distribution of Health Facilities by Sub - District and Category in the Ahanta West District (20016)

NB: CHAG (Christian Health Association of Ghana)

Source: Ghana Health Service, Ahanta West District: January 20016

Malaria ranks first in order of importance of all the health problems in the district

▪ Education

As in most parts of Ghana first cycle education is considerably widespread in the District. Primary schools constitute 32.9% of the available schools. The share of Junior Secondary Schools is 23.3% while Senior Secondary Schools constitute 2% and Vocational School 0.5%.

The table below depicts the situation.

Level	Category			Total	% of Total
	Public	Private	Community Sponsored		
Nursery	27	15	28	70	41.9
Primary	44	11	0	55	32.9
Junior Secondary School	31	8	0	39	23.3

Senior Secondary School.	2	0	0	2	1.1
Vocational	0	0	1	1	0.5
Total	104	34	29	167	99.7

Table 2: Distribution of Schools by Levels in the Ahanta West District: 2015/2016 Academic Year

Source: Ghana Education Service: Ahanta West District, January 2016

The bar chart below depicts the situation

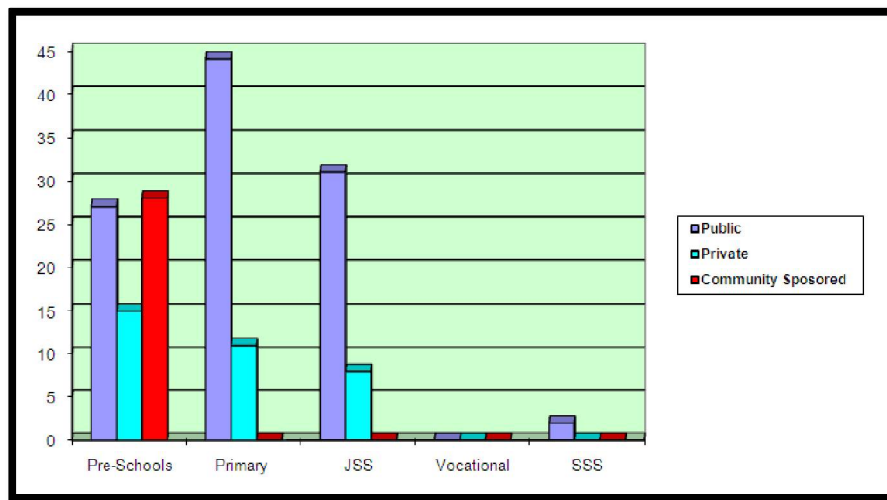


Figure 1: Number of Schools in the Ahanta West District at All Levels.

(Both Public and Private): 2015/2016 Academic Year

Source: Ghana Education Service: Ahanta West District, January 2016

The staffing and enrolment levels in the various schools in the district are shown below.

Level	No. of Teachers	Enrolment Males	Enrolment Females
Pre-school	81	1,298	1,282
Primary	305	6,011	5,580
Junior Secondary	172	2,015	1,654
Senior Secondary	63	1,222	197
Technical/Vocational	12	84	117

Table

3:

Staffing and Enrolment in Public Schools

Level	No. of Teachers	Enrolment	Enrolment
-------	-----------------	-----------	-----------

		Males	Females
Pre-School	26	470	485
Primary	74	1,306	1,252
Junior Secondary	56	568	533

Table 4: Staffing and Enrolment in Private Schools

Source: Ahanta West District Medium Term Development Plan (Prepared December 2002)

• Religion

There is freedom of religion in the district as guaranteed by Ghana's Constitution. No exact figures on religious distribution are available. However, conservative estimates will show Christianity as the dominant religion. Islam and Traditional Religion are other forms of religion.

• Infrastructure /Social Amenities

Road transport is the main form of surface accessibility in the district. There are two main types of roads in the district. Trunk roads comprise 30% while feeder roads take the remaining 70%. The roads in the district are generally in bad condition and are almost impassable during the rainy season. The only exception is the trunk road which traverses the district in an east-west direction and forms part of the Trans African Highway and the Agona Nkwanta to Dixcove and Busua roads. The feeder roads which are most used in terms of traffic flow are the Sankor – Cape Three Points roads, a distance of 27.2 kilometers and Apowa – New Amanful road, a distance of 4.8 kilometers.

Details of social amenities in the district are shown in the table below.

Community	Type of Service Available
AgonaNkwanta	Telephone, Bank, Postal Services, Police Station, Fire Service, Health Post and Court.
Apowa	Telephone, Bank, Health Post and Post Office
Abura	Telephone, Bank and Health Post
Egyambra	Telephone and Health Post
Princess-Town	Telephone, Health Post and Police Station
Dixcove	Telephone, Hospital and Police Station
Busua	Telephone and Beach resort
Aboadze	Telephone service
Ewusiejoe	Telephone service
Beahu	Telephone service

Table 5: Communities with Various Social Amenities

Source: Ahanta West District Medium Term Development Plan 2002-2004 (Prepared December 2002)

• **Employment and Gender**

In the Ahanta West District, women are in the majority and play a very significant role in the socio-economic activity of the district. Transformational Development Indicators survey carried out in the district in September 2003 indicated that women play very important roles in agriculture and in the development activities of the district. Women traditionally do crop sowing, farm maintenance, harvesting and transportation of crops. Women are actively engaged in cassava production and oil palm processing. Women are also responsible for fetching water and collecting fuelwood. They are actively involved in providing labour for implementation of community projects. Despite their contributions in the various sectors of the economy, women have differential access to resources.

• **Administrative Structure**

Ghana's system of government provides for the establishment of District Assemblies as per the Local Government (Act 462) of 1993. The District Assembly is the highest political and administrative authority in the District. It provides a framework for decentralisation of decision-making and development at the local level. Popular participation in governance and development at the local levels is advocated for.

• **The Ahanta District Assembly Profile**

Prior to 1988 when it was created as a separate autonomous district by Government Legislative Instrument (L I185), the Ahanta West District was part of the former Sekondi – Takoradi City Council now Shama Ahanta East District Assembly. The District was ranked as one of the most deprived areas in the Western Region of Ghana in terms of socio-economic infrastructure, especially education, health, water and sanitation.

The District Assembly is the basic unit of government at the district level. At the sub-district level, the Area Councils are rallying points of support of the development activities of the District Assembly. The Unit Committee is the bedrock for the realisation of effective decentralised governance and development. They mobilize resources at the community level.

The District Assembly is headed by the District Chief Executive (DCE). It is made up of 45 Assembly Members, 2/3(30 Members) of whom are elected directly from 30 electoral areas in the district. The remaining 1/3(15 Members) are appointed by the Government in consultation with traditional authorities and other interest groups. A Presiding Member elected from the 45 Assembly Members presides over the meetings of the Assembly. Strategic decisions are taken during the meetings of the Assembly Members. They meet twice a year but there can be special meetings convened for such purpose. Administratively, the DCE is supported by the District Coordinating Director and a deputy. The Executive Officer, The District Finance Officer (DFO) and the District Planning Officer are the core management staff of the District Assembly. They are assisted by other supporting staff. They implement decisions taken during Assembly meetings.

The District Assembly is the basic unit of government at the district level. At the sub-district level, the Area Councils are rallying points of support of the development activities of the District Assembly. These institutions have provided means of popular participation in governance and development at the local levels.

The central government's departments also have offices in the district. They are 22 in number. Some of these decentralized Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are Agriculture, Education, Health, Social Welfare and Community Development, National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Electoral Commission, Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Forestry Commission and Environmental Health Department. They are headed by district directors/Coordinators. They are members of the District Assembly but with no voting right.

The Assembly performs its functions through the Executive Committee and a network of Sub-Committees. The Executive Committee carries out the decisions of the Assembly and oversees the work of the Sub Committees. The District has 6 Area Councils which is a cluster of communities. These are Abura, Busua, Dixcove, Ewusiejoe, Apowa and Agona Area Councils. The Area Councils also have administrative staff. The Area Councils together with Unit Committees complement the work of the District Assembly. Members of these committees are accountable to the people.

The communities are motivated to participate in decision-making. The Ahanta West District has three Traditional Councils: Lower Dixcove, Upper Dixcove and Busua Traditional Council. The traditional Councils are consulted on major decisions affecting the district. They are headed by paramount chiefs. Some of the chiefs are members of the District Assembly.

• **Mission and Vision Statement**

The mission of Ahanta West District Assembly is to 'Create an enabling environment that will lead to improvement in the literacy rate and the reduction in poverty levels of all manner of people in the district, ensuring that they have access to basic social services and are empowered to participate in the taking of decisions that affect them'.

The vision is to harness all available resource in the district s to meet the development goals of the people in the district.

• **Strategic Planning in Ahanta West District Assembly**

The preparation of strategic plans of all the District Assemblies in Ghana is enjoined by the directives of the National Development Planning Commission Act (NDP Systems Act, Act 480, 1994).

The District Planning Coordinating Unit is responsible for strategic planning in the district. It is made up of the District Chief Executive, the District Planning Officer, the District Finance Officer and the Budget Officer the District Coordinating Director. Under the supervision of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), competent professionals are brought together (accountants, engineers, surveyors, planners,) in the district to prepare its strategic plans commonly called District Medium Term Development

Plan (DMTP). The NDPC prescribes the format of the strategic plan (Local Government Act, Act 462, section 47). The key professional staff of the District Assembly attends workshop to study the guidelines for the preparation of the plan. The District Planning Coordinating Unit (DPCU) then collects data from the various parts of the district.

The DPCU then meets all heads of departments NGOs and key stakeholders in the district to get their input.

Another workshop is held to select key priority areas of the district by the DPCU based on the information gathered .The DCE chairs this meeting.

Based on the key priority areas identified and recommendations from the Executive Committee of the District Assembly the DPCU prepares a draft strategic plan for a period normally three years as Medium Term Plan.

The DPCU then meets all the 30 Assembly Members who represent various electoral areas of the district and the 15 appointed ones, Heads of departments and Member of Parliament in the district to adopt or reject the plan.

When the draft is adopted, the Assembly Members then go back to their electoral Areas to educate their electorate on the strategic plan. The plan is then submitted through the Regional Coordinating Council to the National Development Planning Commission for approval. The District Assembly may, with prior written approval from the NDPC make modifications to an approved district strategic plan (Local Government Act, Act 462, section 47)

The implementation of the strategic plan for the district assembly is done through annual action plans with SMART targets, and the needed resources or inputs bearing in mind risks and assumptions. Mechanisms for providing feedback on the strategic plan implementation include regular reporting, reviews, periodic evaluations and audits by the Regional Coordinating Council.

• Design of the Study

The design of the study is aimed at addressing the following objectives:

- (a) To find out how Ahanta West District Assembly plans strategically to understand and respond to the concerns and needs of the people in the district
- (b) To design evaluative tools for measuring the qualitative impact of strategic planning on performance District Assemblies. To meet the above objectives, a descriptive survey design was used for the study.

The design of the study covers the following elements:

- (a) Demographic data on respondents;
- (b) Evaluative tools for measuring the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies.

The survey instruments were pre-tested with a representative number of respondents with the aim of finding out the quality of responses needed. The instruments were then revised based on the feed back received.

• **Sample Population**

Forty nine District Assembly staff, Assembly Members and decentralised Department staff were covered in the population for this study. This represents a response rate of 87.5 percent of the 56 questionnaires distributed.

In designing the study, it was deemed necessary to consider the Assembly staff and other interest group such as Assembly Members, chiefs and district directors responsible for strategic planning as critical respondents. This is because the particular interests of this study fall within their area of responsibility. These respondents were therefore deliberately targeted.

• **Data Gathering Instruments**

This study used structures through questionnaires, interviews and documents. Primary data were collected by distributing a questionnaire and cover letter to the Members of the Assembly responsible for strategic planning in Ahanta West District. The importance of the survey to the District Assembly was briefly explained to respondents before the distribution. They were encouraged to be honest and thoughtful in selecting their responses.

The items used in the instruments were based on a 5-point Likert scale items, 1 being the lowest and item 5 being the highest. This allowed the respondents to agree (1) or disagree with a series of statements.

Section A covers demographic data on respondents. It includes age, sex, and educational level and position or what the respondent do at the District.

Section B concerns evaluative tools or indicators for measuring the impact of strategic planning on organizational performance. These are divided into five themes or categories covering strategic thinking, team building, common understanding, administrative and executive decision - making, and implementation of the District Assembly's goals and objectives. Each theme or category contains an equal number of statements. In all, there were a total of 15 statements.

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with a total of 15 respondents who are involved in strategic planning. This method allowed respondents to express their views freely. The interviews usually lasted twenty minutes. Assuring the confidentiality of the interviewee, notes were taken and later analysed.

Secondary data were also obtained by studying documents that seemed to help with an understanding of strategic planning in the Local Government system. These documents were obtained from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the Ahanta West District Assembly, the District Assemblies' in Ghana website, and the Medium terms plans of the District Assemblies. Documents studied included those relating to the Local Government structure, development planning as well as strategic plans and annual operating plans.

• **Operationalisation and Measurement**

It has been argued that measuring the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies requires an appreciation of the potential benefits of strategic planning. The instrument created to measure the impact of strategic planning was designed to measure qualitative outcomes associated with the strategic planning process and the strategic plan rather than output-oriented quantitative indicators. As main focus has been placed on economic and financial indicators, constructs have been derived from benefits and purposes of plannings which are strategic in nature.

These statements have been measured with the use of a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to answer the questions by indicating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the statements of the behaviour-based impacts of strategic planning as related to the present situation in Ahanta west District Assembly .The degree of agreement or disagreement is given a numerical score ranging from 1 being the lowest, to 5 being the highest. The respondent's total score is calculated by summing these scores from all the statements.

• **Techniques of Data Analysis**

Each specific statement in the Likert system was scored. Manual analyses of the data were carried out using simple statistical methods. The frequency, absolute, and percentage score were then determined for each specific statement.

• **Constraints and Problems**

The first challenge relates to the search for the relevant literature. Indeed, a search at the various major libraries for the relevant literature showed that most of the books were not current enough. A search at Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, the supervising central government ministry also runs into the same difficulties.

Another problem is the busy nature of the District Assembly staff. The assembly Members is always busy and staff are always on the field. It was therefore difficult to reach majority of them in different district.

The time for the survey was short. Although all the 138 District Assemblies in Ghana have the same operation and arrangement as they are regulated by the Act, it would have been more representative to cover three or more district for a better comparison. This was not possible due to time constraint.

• **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided background information on Ahanta West District, profile of the Assembly, overview of Ghana. the subject of this study. It has also dealt with the sample population, data gathering instruments, operationalisation and measurements, and data analysis methods. Dissertation constraints and problems were also outlined. The next chapter will deal with a presentation of the findings and discussion of the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

• Introduction

Chapter 3 dealt with the area of study, methodology, analysis and findings for the present study. Specifically, the chapter started with demographic information of respondents on Ahanta West District, the District Assembly. It also dealt with the design of the study, sample population, data gathering instruments, operationalisation and measurement, methods of data analysis, and dissertation constraints.

The present chapter however, is concerned with the presentation of the findings as well as discussions on it. Chapter 4 is accordingly structured into three major sections: one section for demographic characteristics of sample respondents, section two for findings and section three for discussions or interpretation.

• Profile or Demographic Characteristics of Sample Respondents

This section is concerned with findings on the demographic characteristics of respondents. It covers matters such as age distribution, sex differentials, current positions or roles at the district, as well as educational level of respondents.

◆ Age Distribution of Respondents

The table below shows age characteristics of respondents.

Frequency	Below 20	20 30	31 40	41 50	51 60	61	Total
NO. (ABSOLUTE)	0	0	7	21	21	0	49
PERCENTAGES	0	0	14.2	42.9	42.9		100

Table 6: Age Distribution of Respondent

Source: Field Research, May, 2006

Table 6 shows the age distribution of respondents. Majority of the respondents (42.9) falls within the age range 41 to 60 years.

These are mostly heads of departments in the District Assembly.

◆ Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Out of the total respondents of 49, 9 (13.4%) were women and 40 (86.7 percent) were men. Generally, in Ghana, women do not occupy high positions of governance at the local level. Despite an attempt by government and NGOs to encourage women to be part of decision making at the local level, little has been achieved in this direction. This accounts for the high sex differential levels.

The educational level of respondents is shown in Table .1.3 below. Fourteen have masters, postgraduate diplomas and certificate degrees. This constitutes 23.6 percent. Majority (28) representing 57.1 percent of respondents have bachelors degree in various disciplines and 7 representing 19.3 percent have second cycle education comprising secondary and technical/vocational education

Educational Level	Secondary	Degree	Postgraduate (masters, pgd/pgcert
No.	7	28	14
Percentage	23.6	57.1	19.3

Table 7: Educational Levels of Respondents

Source: Field Research, May, 2006

◆ Functional Distribution and Current Job-Profiles of Respondents

Respondents included 15 Assembly Members who represent the people in their electoral areas during strategic planning and implementation, 20 staff from the District Planning Coordinating Unit This is the nerve centre of strategic planning in the District Assembly. Majority were deliberately reached because of their particular interests in this study. Also, the study falls within their jurisdiction. 9 staff from the decentralised departments and 5 from the Central Administration.

32 (65.3) of the respondents are in Managerial positions 10(23.4) are in supervisory while 7 (14.3) are in supporting staff of the District Assembly.

● Findings from Field Survey

This section presents the results or findings of the survey. These are presented with respect to evidence of each question asked. Based on the nature of questions, headings have been established.

As indicated in section 3.6, the items used in the instruments were based on a 5-point Likert scale items, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. This allowed the respondents to agree or disagree with a series of statements.

Section B concerns evaluation tools or indicators for measuring the impact of strategic planning on organizational performance. These are divided into five themes or categories A to E, covering strategic thinking, team building, common understanding, administrative and executive decision - making, and implementation of goals and objectives of the Assembly.

• Discussion

This section is mainly for interpreting and discussing the results or findings of the survey. The questionnaire focused on issues relating to strategic thinking, team building, shared understanding, executive and administrative decision-making and enhanced implementation of the goals of the District Assembly. Accordingly these issues constitute the headings or themes of the discussion.

Responses	1		2		3		4		5	
	NO	PER	NO	PER	NO	PER	NO	PER	NO	PER
QUESTION NO.										
A.1	0	0	0	0	7	14.3	17	34.7	25	51
A.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	71.4	14	23.6
A.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	67.3	16	32.7
SUB TOTAL	0	0	0	0	7	4.8	85	57.8	55	37.4
B.1	6	12.2	0	0	0	0	19	33.8	24	44
B.2	0	0	0	0	8	15.3	20	40.8	21	42.9
B.3	4	8.1	37	75.5	0	0	6	12.3	2	4.1
SUB TOTAL (B)	10	6.8	37	25.2	8	5.4	45	30.6	47	32
C.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	42.9	28	57.1
C.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	34.7	32	65.3
C.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	71.4	14	28.6
SUB TOTAL(C)	0	0	0	0	0	0	73	49.7	74	50.3
D.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	53.2	20	46.8
D.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	57.1	21	42.9
D.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	46.9	26	53.1
SUBTOTAL (D)	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	54.4	67	45.6
E.1	0	0	0	0	14	28.6	21	42.8	14	28.6
E.2	0	0	0	0	7	14.3	28	57.1	14	28.6
E.3	0	0	0	0	7	14.2	21	42.9	21	42.9
Subtotal (E)	0	0	0	0	28	19	70	47.6	49	33.4
Grand Total										
	10	1.4	37	5	43	5.9	353	48	292	39.7

Table 8: Responses to Strategic Planning Questions

Source: Field Research, May, 2006

◆ Strategic Thinking

In the strategic thinking construct, it is seen that strategic planning has an important impact on members of the District Assembly and the entire inhabitants in the district. For example, 25 or 51.0% of the 49 respondents strongly agreed with reference to Question A1, that strategic planning enables the organisation to think and act strategically in terms of the future, while 17 respondents or 34.7% indicated that they agree. This is against a total of 7 or 14.3% of respondents who were neutral. A similar picture is provided by the responses to Question A2 where 35 or 71.4% respondents agreed and 14 or 23.6% strongly agreed that strategic planning enables the District Assembly to think of possible and probable changes in the environment and thereby take action to prevent crisis. In Question A3, all the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that strategic planning enables the District Assembly to think of how stakeholders' expectation affects its performance.

Responses	1		2		3		4		5	
	NO	PE	NO	PER	NO	PER	NO	PER	NO	PER
Question No.										
A.1	0	0	0	0	7	14.3	17	34.7	25	51.0
A.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	71.4	14	23.6
A.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	67.3	16	32.7
Total	0	0	0	0	7	4.8	85	57.8	55	37.4

Table 9: Response to Questions on Strategic Thinking

Source: Field Research, May, 2006

As depicted in Table 8 above, under the strategic thinking construct, the aggregate of the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed (Q1 = 17; Q2 = 25; Q3 = 49; aggregate = 91) clearly indicates that strategic planning has an important impact on the District Assembly. It can safely be inferred that this impact can provide an important impetus for the Assembly to continue engaging in consistent strategic planning. In terms of performance in economic and tangible terms, the information provided in chapter 3 clearly depicts.

The findings, on the whole, suggest that the real value of strategic planning is its impact on the future orientation of the organisation. It not only enables the District Assembly to identify its environmental threats but also its opportunities. its strategic capabilities or perspectives.

◆ Team Building

Under this construct, Question B1 recorded 77.8 percent of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed. However 6 respondents or 12.2 percent strongly disagreed. Question B1 is about the fact that strategic planning results in the building of strong teams. Nineteen (19) respondents agreed while 24 strongly agreed. This represents a total of 43 out of the 49 respondents. Question B2, 'the strategic plan

ensures that Assembly Members, Unit Committee Members, staff of the district ,etc work toward the same goals', recorded 20 (40.8%) of the respondents agreeing while 21 or (42.9%) strongly agreed. 8(15.3) were neutral. Question B3 recorded 4 (8.1%) respondents disagreeing and 37 (75.5%) strongly disagreeing. The table below illustrates the situation.

Questions	1	2	3	4	5					
B.1	6	12.2	0	0	0	0	19	33.8	24	44.0
B.2	0	0	0	0	8	15.3	20	40.8	21	42.9
B.3	4	8.1	37	75.5	0	0	6	12.3	2	4.1
TOTAL (B)	10	6.8	37	25.2	8	5.4	45	30.6	47	32.0

Table 10: Responses to Questions on Team Building (Questions B1 To B3)

Source: Field Research, May, 2006

Responses to the questions under the team-building construct indicate the value placed on team-work by the various stakeholders of the District Assembly. This shows in the achievement in terms of infrastructure and social services in the district. If strategic planning results in team work, all other things being equal, the level of the effectiveness of the District Assembly in meeting its goals and objectives is also increased resulting in the overall development of the district.

◆ Common Understanding

Under this construct, 21 respondents (42.9%) agreed while 28 (57.1%) strongly agreed that the strategic plan has resulted in a common understanding about the goals and objectives of the Assembly and how it will achieve them within a defined time frame. The response rate is very significant in the sense that it indicates the degree to which the strategic plan serves to communicate the District Assembly's goals and objectives to its constituents. It also indicates that unless goals and objectives of the District Assembly have been clearly communicated to Assembly Members, NGOs departments and staff of the Assembly by means of the strategic plan, it remains very difficult how the District can carry out its mission.

Questions	1	2	3	4	5					
C.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	42.9	28	57.1
C.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	34.7	32	65.3
C.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	35	71.4	14	28.6
TOTAL(C)	0	0	0	0	0	0	73	49.7	74	50.3

Table 11: Responses to questions on Common Understanding

Source: Field Research, May, 2006

In Question C1, 21 respondents (42.9%) agreed while 28(57.1%) strongly agreed that the strategic plan has created common understanding about the direction of the District Assembly and where to focus their energies. Question C2 recorded 49 (100%) of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to a common understanding of the role Ahanta West District Assembly rural development programme in improving the lives of the people as a result of the strategic plan. In Question C3 too, all the respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the question.

The responses to the questions under the Common Understanding construct as Table 11 depicts, seem to follow a similar trend or pattern. This trend suggests that the strategic plan has positively impacted on the District Assembly in terms of creating a shared understanding of the goals, objectives and direction of the Assembly among the constituents.

◆ Administrative and Executive Decision-Making

In Question D1, a total of 29 respondents (53.2%) agreed or 46.8 percent strongly agreed that strategic planning provides a coherent framework for administrative and executive decision-making. All the respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the questions D2 and D3. This shows that administrative and executive decision-making was rated as an important impact due to the strategic plan and strategic planning. The table below gives the detail.

Question	1	2	3	4	5					
D.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	53.2	20	46.8
D.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	57.1	21	42.9
D.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	46.9	26	53.1
Total (D)	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	54.4	67	45.6

Table 12: Responses to Question on Administrative and Executive Decision Making

Source: Field Research, May, 2006

◆ Implementation of Goals of the Assembly

Respondents also rated the effect of strategic planning on the implementation of goals of the District Assembly relatively high. The aggregate score of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that strategic planning enhances implementation of goals is 119 (81.0 percent) as against 28 (19.0 percent) for those who were neutral.

Question	1	2	3	4	5					
E.1	0	0	0	0	14	28.6	21	42.8	14	28.6
E.2	0	0	0	0	7	14.3	28	57.1	14	28.6
E.3	0	0	0	0	7	14.2	21	42.9	21	42.9

<i>TOTAL (E)</i>	0	0	0	0	28	19.0	70	47.6	49	33.4
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Table 13: Response to Question on Implementation of the Goals of the Assembly

Source: Field Research, May, 2006

By clarifying the roles of various individuals and groups, the findings suggest that strategic planning can have the impact of reducing inter-departmental conflict, personality clashes and power struggle. When conflict is reduced, the outcome is a conducive environment, which elicits the creativity and commitment of all inhabitants in the district. These have the overall impact of increased strategic effectiveness, which facilitates the implementation of objectives and goals of the District Assembly.

◆ Other Comments

On the columns for any other issues and from the findings of the interview, 26 respondents representing 53.0 percent acknowledged the fact the defined qualitative impacts outlined above have indeed contributed immensely to the peace and tranquility in the district. They further hinted that as all the parties involved in developing the district are involved in the planning process, all the relevant stakeholders play their part and the major development goals achieved in the district in areas of education , health, agriculture, tourism and good governance can be attributable to that. 81.63 percent of the respondents interviewed feel that the modest gain achieved in the district and the local governance administration in Ghana generally is due to the fact that these qualitative impacts translate into other quantifiable impacts like physical development in the district.

● Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented and discussed the results of the present study under the relevant themes. Specifically, the results indicate that strategic planning has an important impact on performance of District Assemblies in Ghana in terms of strategic thinking, team building, and shared understanding of organisational objectives. It also provides a framework for administrative and executive decision-making. It enhances implementation of organisational objectives. Chapter 5, which is the final chapter, will concern itself with a summary of the findings. It will also draw conclusions and make recommendations for further study on the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies in Ghana.

Chapter 5: Key-findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

• Introduction

In the previous chapter, the findings from this study were presented and discussed. It was found out that the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies must go beyond figures to a consideration of behaviour-based impacts or effects. The empirical study fulfills the objectives set out in the study. It presents how District assemblies plans strategically and qualitative impacts of such planning. As qualitative impacts are not visible, it also provides ample information on the achievements and the present state of the district.

The present chapter provides a summary of the research findings and the procedures used. It concludes and discusses the implications of the findings - their meaning and significance. Finally, it deals with the recommendations or suggestions for further research.

• Summary of Findings

The major findings of the empirical study are highlighted in this section.

◆ Planning at the District Assemblies

It was found out that all the District Assemblies in Ghana formulate strategic plans based on the guidelines provided by the National Development Planning Commission. It was also observed that every District Assembly has a District planning Coordinating Unit headed and development Planning Sub Committee with the function of identifying the resources of the district and prepares strategic plans for their use among others.

There is an Office responsible for entire development planning of the district headed by well trained Planning Officer with such other professionals.

During the interview with the relevant heads of departments of the state agencies it was revealed that the strategic plans of the district are being prepared for a 3-year period. These are generally referred to as District Medium Term Plans (DMTP) and the Regional Coordinating councils have copies to monitor its implementation. All the relevant agencies, departments, personnel in and outside the district are consulted during the preparation of the DMTP.

It was an well-acknowledged fact that the qualitative impacts of such planning is enormous among strategic thinking, understanding of the goals and objectives of the district, enhanced decision making team building, customer satisfaction ,etc.

- **Qualitative impacts of strategic planning**

The key finding is that strategic planning can impact on performance of district Assemblies in Ghana in certain areas such as strategic perspectives, and team building. It can also result in improved understanding of the Assemblies objectives and overall direction. It can facilitate implementation of organisational goals and objectives. This idea contrasts with previous studies by the research community in the field, which focused exclusively on the financial payoffs of strategic planning.

These qualitative impacts, though not visible are needed to better measure the quantitative impacts better. In section 3.2 of the study (the study area), detailed information have been given on the district chosen as a case study. It can be inferred that due to the qualitative impacts a lot of have been achieved .The resources of this district have been utilised in a very efficient manner by the people of the district. The relevant state agencies have common understanding of the development goals of the district so they all work as a team to achieve them.

- **Conclusions**

Formulating and implementing a strategic plan in itself leaves a lot of unanswered questions. The impact of the plan and more critically the planning process on performance of District Assemblies needs to be measured. The present study has attempted to find out the extent to which strategic planning and the strategic plan impact on performance of District Assemblies. The focus has been on a defined behavioural impact of the process of strategic planning and the strategic plan.

Previously conducted studies had mainly focused on financial and economic indicators for evaluating the role of strategic planning in case of measuring organisational performance. Balanced scorecard developed in the early 1990s provides a good measure for assessing an organizations' goals and progress to achieve them through the four major lenses (financial perspective, customer perspective, business processes and learning and growth perspectives). The main objective, however, is to assess how to achieve the strategic goals of the organization in question. It does not delve deeper into measuring the quality impacts.

These conventional measures are nevertheless still very significant but they are insufficient in measuring the performance of District Assemblies. There may indeed be other crucial information, which the quantitative figures may not be able to show.

The present study stresses the need to take account of the behaviour-based impact of strategic planning on the performance of District Assemblies. In other words, beyond the figures or numbers, other

more qualitative factors or indicators must be assessed. It is only when this is done that a holistic view of the impact of strategic planning on organisational performance can be formed.

This study therefore, attempts in a humble way to contribute to filling a gap in the literature on strategic planning and performance of district Assemblies. It suggests that in addition to financial and economic indicators of assessing the impact of strategic planning on organizational the performance, behavioural impacts also need to be equally taken into account.

The evidence reported in this study indicates that strategic planning has a significant impact on the performance of District Assemblies, such as optimisation of the strategic perspective of the organisational and enhanced teamwork. It can result in improved understanding of the organisation's objectives and overall direction. It can facilitate implementation of organisational objectives and goals. The indicators for measuring impact as presented in this present study may be used by similar organisations such as NGOs or business entities as a framework to measure staff perceptions of the effect of its strategic plan and the planning process on their organization's performance. In this way, the organisation may be able to provide justifications for the resources that are invested in strategic planning.

• **Scopes for Further Research**

Integration of financial information and a critical appraisal of other indicators form a sound basis for determining the impact of strategic planning on the performance of District Assemblies. Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendation has been made for further study to advance knowledge in the area of strategic planning and performance of district Assemblies.

Further studies might investigate the impact of strategic planning on performance of District Assemblies from a wide range of perspectives including financial, economic, organisational and stakeholder perspectives. The focus should be on non profit making organizations and incorporate the lenses by balanced scorecard. Performance in such critical areas as customer satisfaction, quality, cycle time, innovation, employee development and employee satisfaction also needs to be mentioned. However, the emphasis on each area may differ depending on what is essential to a particular organisation. In fact, organisational performance is multi-dimensional and therefore, in measuring the impact of strategic planning it is necessary to explore an approach which can cover different aspects.

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Preparing a strategic plan in itself is not enough so there is the need to review strategic planning process in an organization. The book explores qualitative impact of strategic planning on a well-defined behaviour based variables in the context of District Assemblies in Ghana.

The book will expose readers to the concept of strategic planning and its related concepts such as long-range planning, strategic thinking, operational planning and strategic management.

The book also takes readers through the strategic planning process, levels of strategic planning and benefits strategic planners will get by planning strategically.

The book exposes the fact that strategic planning has a significant impact on the performance of organizations including District Assemblies in Ghana such as optimization of strategic perspective of the District Assemblies and enhanced teamwork among others. It results in better understanding of the organization's objectives and overall direction.



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