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GOVERNANCE FORUM

Strategy in the Public Sector: Reflecting a Little...

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Agenda

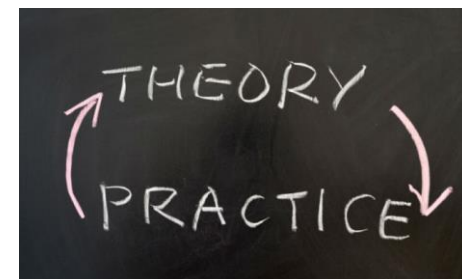
Theory

Reality (aka Practice)

Reflecting a little...

Theory

- **New Public Management and ‘Isomorphism’:**
strategy in the public sector - *“it’s easy, no?”*
- **1994, 1995, 1997...**



Three Levels of Strategy

Policy Strategy

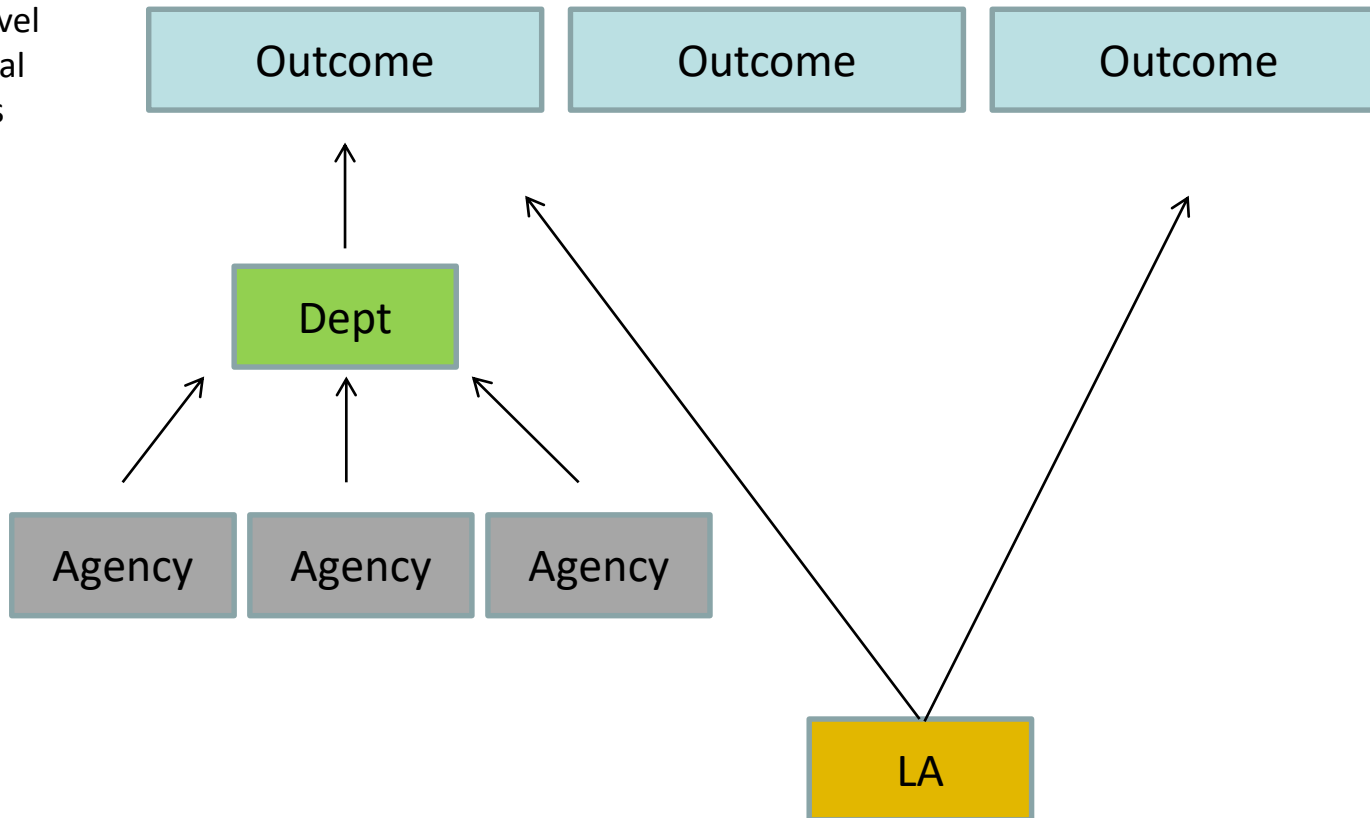
Organisational Strategy

Managerial Strategy

Source: Stewart (2004)

Strategic Context - Ideally

High Level
Societal
Goals



Public Bodies as 'Reactors'

- Public bodies more likely to be 'reactors' than their private sector counterparts
- Strategies more likely to be focused on external and internal organisation due to political limits on discretion
 - Boyne and Walker (2004)

Reality (aka Practice)

- Question: if strategy is so constrained, why such a focus on strategic planning in public organisations?
 - **Internally**
 - Roadmap for activity over 3-5 years
 - Enabler of performance influencing and accountability
 - **Externally**
 - Framework for external relationships/synergies
 - Performance tool for Department / assurance
 - Conveys objectives and communicates performance

Observations

From Inside and Outside

- Attitude towards strategy
- Importance of good Information/Data
- Board member skill-set and attitude
 - Creative thinking / “Crack testing”
- Executive view of the Board
- Stakeholder engagement
- Ambition/Accountability - metrics
- Communication (outset and progress)
- Review and evolution

Boards and Strategy

- *“We’re not involved in strategy enough”*
- *“We sign-off on strategy. It’s a fait accompli”*
- *“We’re bogged down in the operational, and need to devote more time to strategy”*
- *“It’s hard to discern if our strategy is working”*

Measures to support the Board

- Formal process for strategy
- Periodic review in Board work plan
 - Segments more frequently – ie via SMT members
- Away Day(s)
- Structuring the agenda to frontload strategy
- [Rightly] tying other items to strategy
 - Long term commitments/programmes
 - Strategic/Principal Risks

Metrics – The Good, Bad, Ugly...

Good	Bad	Ugly
We'll deliver x by y.	We'll deliver x.	Yeah, x is important...
We'll increase the # of x by 10% by H1.	We'll increase the # of x during the 3-5 year period.	We'll focus on increasing the # of x.
Awareness of A will increase by 15% by end 2018	Awareness of A will increase over the strategy period	We aim to increase the awareness of A

Don't be afraid, stretchhhhhh the target...

Conclusions

- Boards/Governing Bodies have an important role in strategy development and review
- Consulting stakeholders is critical / ‘rounding the picture’
- Public organisations can be ‘braver’ in their strategies, esp. on deliverables

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Questions / Thoughts?

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References

- Boyne, G. & R. Walker (2004) 'Strategy Content and Public Service Organisations', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol.14, No.2, pp.231-252
- Stewart, J. (2004) 'The meaning of strategy in the public sector', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol.63, No.4, pp.16-21