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Structural Constraints and Strategic Gaps: Understanding Corporate Governance and IS Failures in South Africa's Public Sector

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Widespread adoption of corporate governance frameworks throughout South Africa's public sector seemingly seems to fail to stop information systems (IS) failures which affects service delivery and restricts digital transformation initiatives related to national strategic goals set up by Government. The authors investigated systemic origins of corporate governance and IS failures by conducting interviews with 55 Government Information Technology Officers (GITO) from national and provincial departments. Qualitative interpretive methodology enabled the researcher to collect interview data for Atlas.ti analysis which produced recurring failure patterns in the public sector. Management showed minimal involvement in oversight along with structural challenges from bureaucratic regulations that existed within government bodies according to GITOs in national and provincial organizations. Research shows governance systems fail to produce desired information system performance due to systemic obstacles alongside insufficient capacity levels. The research finds that governing institutions require a strategic solution based on dynamic capabilities to address governance deficiencies.

Keywords: corporate governance, information systems, public sector, South Africa, ICT governance

1. INTRODUCTION:

South African public sector institutions struggle continuously with the execution and operational performance of their information systems (IS). IS-related failures along with inefficiencies continue as systemic problems despite the established corporate governance of ICT policy framework (CGICTPF) implementation. Significant obstacles in implementing digital transformation exist across developing nations because these entities commonly deal with predefined structural obstacles combined with political factors as well as capacity shortcomings (Latchu, 2022; Latchu & Singh, 2024b; Manda, 2021). Recent Zondo Commission investigations alongside Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) findings reveal that state governance architectures do not lead to effective information and communication technology (ICT) performance results. The existing flaws in IS governance of the public sector demand thorough analysis of their fundamental origins (Latchu, 2022; Latchu & Singh, 2024b). The public sector operates different from the private sector because it faces bureaucracy together with political considerations and capacity disparities on top of performance incentives and shareholder pressure (Boye et al., 2022). The research investigates the origins and root causes behind corporate governance and IS failures which occur in South African public institutions. Our research analyses systemic obstacles that block governance frameworks from reaching operational performance through qualitative data from 55 GITOs under the framework of dynamic capabilities. The article extends findings from research conducted by Latchu and Singh (2024).

South African government entities encounter continuous difficulties when deploying and operating their information systems (IS). As an attempt to address these issues the Corporate Governance of ICT Policy Framework (CGICTPF) was implemented yet IS-related processing failures persist throughout the system. Digital transformation faces significant obstacles particularly in developing countries because these nations encounter structural along with political and capacity-related barriers (Latchu, 2022; Latchu & Singh, 2024; Manda, 2021). The Zondo Commission along with evaluations from the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) have highlighted organizational disconnects between system governance structures and successful information and communication technology end results. IS governance failure in public institutions requires analysis of primary causes that underlie these breakdowns (Latchu 2022 and Latchu and Singh 2024b). In the public sector governance functions under different pressures than those in the private sector due to the influence of bureaucracy alongside political considerations and capacity differences (Boye et al., 2022). The research analyses the beginnings and fundamental motives leading to corporate governance and IS failures that appear in the South African public sector. The research uses qualitative analysis from a sample of 55 GITOs and dynamic capability theory to discover what stops governance systems from leading to operational performance within South African public administration. The research expands upon Latchu and Singh (2024) who analysed Auditor-General reports to reveal fundamental IS governance problems in South African public sector organizations. This research expands upon their findings by analysing 55 GITOs while applying dynamic capability theory to understand the recurring failure of governance frameworks to achieve operational performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Accountability alongside transparency and performance alignment represent core functions of corporate governance frameworks that work for public sector Information and Communication Technologies. The CGICTPF operates alongside King IV Report and PFMA and COBIT as foundational instruments that guide ICT governance in South Africa. The Department of Public Service and Administration established the CGICTPF to bring institutional ICT governance practices to governmental departments (DPSA, 2012; Phahlane, 2023). The CGICTPF implementation faces challenges because departments lack proper skills and resources and fail to align their operations with the framework's requirements according to Delport (2017) and Latch (2022). King IV has struggled to establish practical implementation across numerous public institutions because of political interference combined with weak oversight and insufficient ethical stewardship according to Ferguson (2019). The Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) has reported multiple times about extensive ICT control deficiencies across systems which include aging infrastructure alongside unaccountable staff along with insufficient risk management processes (AGSA, 2020, 2021). The evidence suggests that organizational frameworks in the public sector remain properly defined but their current operation demonstrates performance rather than fundamental change.

2.2 Public sector information systems failures stem mainly from the combination of weak leadership together with limited technical resources and bureaucratic resistance. The absence of strategic ownership in governance structures creates fragmented implementation according to Liana and Mazana (2023). Public institutions experience worsened IS performance results because their departments operate independently from each other while failing to follow policies correctly while overly depending on SITA which faces criticism for operational inefficiencies (Mzekandaba, 2024). The PFMA and MFMA introduced to supervise fiscal accountability turned out ineffective because their uneven implementation particularly in ICT-based procurements created substantial delays while fragmenting system integration efforts (National Treasury, 2023; AGSA, 2022). The insufficient adoption of COBIT and ISO 38500 as well as the SITA's strategic planning features has resulted in IS implementation failing to match strategic goals. The influence of GITO-led ICT governance systems remains weak across hierarchical structures according to Gabara (2023) because managers exclude them from decision-making processes.

2.3 Organizations can gain flexibility through dynamic capabilities which help them perceive changes and conduct strategic transformations as explained by Teece (2018). Strategic agility remains absent throughout the South African public sector because institutions show delays in responding to technological progress and changes in citizen requirements plus coordination issues between departments. Public institutions fail to interpret and sense changing contexts because they lack the necessary systemic abilities to adapt

(Thabane & Snyman-Van Deventer, 2018; Latchu & Singh, 2024). The prevailing cultures within organizations frequently act as barriers to innovation while informal leadership systems from within the organization frequently outrank formal authority structures and governance practices (Gill, 2008; Masilela & Nel, 2021). GITOs exercise agency using their personal networks and workaround strategies instead of receiving institutional empowerment. Reports of information system failures demonstrate that technical deficiencies do not explain the entirety of the problem since underlying cultural and structural barriers hinder progress. Framework governance can produce performance results only when it combines dynamic capabilities which enable experimental testing and organizational learning alongside adaptable local strategies (Teece, 2018)

3. Conceptual Framework

A new conceptual framework utilizes three domains of interdependent structures for interpreting public sector corporate governance and information system failures through **Strategic Agency** and **Dynamic Capabilities** combined with **Governance Structures**. The figure demonstrates how each domain functions as an essential institutional performance factor, yet governance failures materialize when either structural or functional aspects remain ineffective or inaccurate.

3.1 Governance Structures

Formal decision-making frameworks of ICT consist of control mechanisms along with regulatory guidelines (including CGICTPF, PFMA, and King IV) and oversight entities (including AGSA and SITA) and compliance requirements that direct ICT decision environments. The structures generally remain inflexible with strict compliance requirements in addition to having difficulties for adaptation to specific local settings. Governance decoupling develops within public institutions because they follow governance structures in a symbolic manner while neglecting operational process implementation (Gill, 2008; Masilela & Nel, 2021). The combination of powerful governance structures with limited strategic decision-making capacity produces symbolic compliance according to Figure 1.

3.2 Strategic Agency

The construct captures how ICT executives like GITOs deliver leadership by interpreting governance policies while influencing decision-making to link ICT initiatives with departmental goals. Data shows that GITOs work autonomously from core executive structures while holding constrained formal authority yet use informal networking to achieve change (Gabara, 2023; Latchu & Singh, 2024). Lack of dynamic capabilities alongside existing agency leads to governance reform initiation which produces limited and unsustainable impact on the system according to Figure 1.

3.3 Dynamic Capabilities

An institution demonstrates Dynamic Capabilities through Teece's (2018) framework when it identifies upcoming demands while grabbing available possibilities and adjusts its operational methods to address shifts involving context or technology or operations. Lack of dynamic capabilities results in system inertia alongside outdated technology and uncoordinated information and communication technology systems (Thabane & Snyman-Van Deventer, 2018). The emergence of isolated innovation happens when organizations possess dynamic capabilities, yet their formal governance structures operate out of alignment as shown in Figure 1.

The figure establishes that strong IS governance in public sector institutions depends on harmonious alignment across all three domains. An institution's overall performance declines dramatically whenever there is inconsistency between any domain and the other two connected domains. The framework both provides organizational themes for the research results and acts as a diagnostic tool to identify failure patterns while generating reform recommendations. The successful strengthening of ICT governance needs an integrated strategy which develops adaptable institutions while providing ICT leaders with necessary power and redesigns governance systems for better contextual responses.

Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework – Authors' own Sources

4. Methodology

Qualitative interpretive methods were used in the research design to observe how governance structures and strategic agency and dynamic capabilities affect the ICT governance outcomes of South African public institutions. Interpretivism served as the research approach to capture the individual perceptions of Government Information Technology Officers (GITOs) who manage public-sector ICT initiatives. All stages of the research process are presented thoroughly through Figure 2. The sequence of research design creation is depicted in Figure 2. Using interpretive research methods allowed researchers to deeply study participant situations thereby allowing them to closely observe governance interactions in advanced public institutions. Language refinement of the final manuscript used Quill Bot as a selective language tool for better grammatical cohesion and clarity. The tool focused exclusively on rearranging sentences but abstained from modifying neither the research findings nor the analysis.

4.1 Research Context and Participant Selection

The research examined government departments at the national and provincial levels within South Africa which depend on GITOs to fulfil their duties regarding the implementation of the Corporate Governance of ICT Policy Framework (CGICTPF) along with connected oversight requirements. The research design involved purposive sampling to obtain 55 GITOs who actively contributed to ICT governance and policy execution, or digital transformation functions as shown in Figure 2. A diverse selection of departments was performed to represent various organizational mandates (such as health, education, finance) for improved research application.

4.2 Data Collection

The Figure 2 displays the methodology of conducting semi-structured interviews with selected GITOs during the second process stage. The interviews took place during 2022 through 2023 using secure video conferencing software and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview process adopted an adaptable structure that permitted participants to discuss policy execution together with management practices and system innovations and ICT governance leadership. Each interview took place with participant permission before being fully transcribed for evaluation purposes.

4.3 Data Analysis

The transcribed data analysis proceeded through thematic methods according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) principles which appear in the third vertical section of Figure 2. Analysis was done through Atlas.ti software which allowed theme organization, memo writing and cross-case pattern detection. This research employed a combination of approaches that began with deductive code identification from the conceptual model followed by inductive coding of newly discovered findings. The research conducted a cross-case analysis to detect recurring patterns which appeared both within departments and across different governance systems and organizational maturity elements.

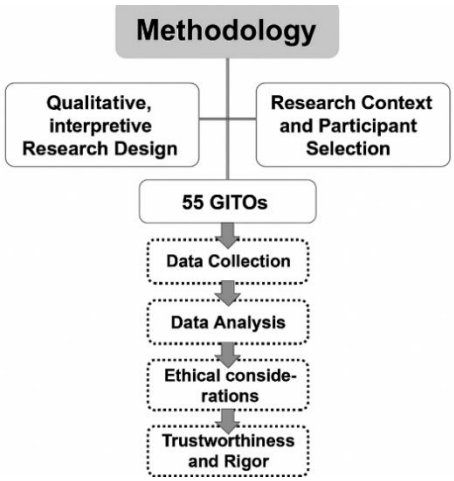
4.4 Ethical Considerations

The research followed ethical protocols at each step as described in Figure 2. The institution gave ethical clearance for all research procedures. Each participant obtained consent materials which explained the study purpose along with their right to freely volunteer and safeguarded their information confidentiality. All participant and institution identities remained anonymous throughout data collection and reporting purposes for confidentiality protection.

4.5 Trustworthiness and Rigor

The final part of Figure 2 shows the strategies which were used to strengthen the trustworthiness of the research study. Member-checking was used as a credibility enhancement method which included participant review of thematic summaries. Detailed contextual descriptions led to the achievement of transferability. An audit trail along with reflective memos and supervisory debriefing regularly supported dependability and confirmability through their contribution to analytical transparency and consistency.

Figure 2 – Methodology – Authors' own Sources



5. Findings

The analysis of 55 government IT official interviews generated six interconnected reasons that explain the continued ICT governance challenges faced by the public sector. Strategic obstacles prevent the analysed governance frameworks from functioning properly because of the fundamental structural along with procedural and cultural challenges. Each theme receives an exhaustive discussion in this section through the incorporation of participant statements plus the existing research from the academic world.

Theme 1 matches the concepts = Bureaucratic Overregulation and Structural Complexity

All interview participants declared bureaucratic overregulation as the biggest obstacle preventing effective IS governance practices. The described departments exist within bureaucracy that implements extensive compliance systems which hinder innovative and customized initiatives.

One GITO remarked**: "Bureaucracy – Delays decisions. – Rigidity. – No agility – volumes of documentation (memos, submissions, etc.), particularly in the public sector".**

The views of Thabane & Snyman-Van Deventer (2018) and Sarwar et al. (2023) agree that bureaucratic systems develop internal mechanisms which negatively impact their initial function of governance and accountability. Smaller departments experienced considerable difficulties due to structural complexity because their governance obligations exceeded their capacity to handle them.

"The public sector is over-governed, with too many structures for small organizations that cannot support the governance workload" commented another GITO

The CGICTPF as an example which faced implementation hurdles exemplified by the decade-long delay before its initial version could become operational and referred to us "governance inertia" according to Gill (2008). Latchu and Singh (2024) add that GITOs, in such constrained environments, must rely on discretionary leadership to navigate between compliance and operational necessity. The study confirms the requirement for governments to simplify their systems along with using regulatory mechanisms that consider local circumstances. The strategic approach should maintain adaptability together with innovation capabilities and fast issue response while maintaining accountability.

Theme 2 matches the concepts = Lack of Top Management Accountability and Buy-In

Executive leadership plus accountability in ICT governance procedures remained consistently absent. The formal existence of governance frameworks as well as committees fails to produce sustained senior management oversight or follow-through according to participants.

As one GITO commented **"Top management just distances themselves from ICT governance — we are left to drive everything".**

The delivery of efficient governance systems needs top executive engagement according to Prasad et al. (2022). ICT governance system effectiveness decreases when senior leaders stop giving their attention to these systems according to Liana and Mazana (2023). ICT governance needs to shift from being only a technical responsibility to become a joint effort between technical personnel and executive leadership because of their existing organizational power gap. When top leadership provides support to governance systems, they maintain stability, but these systems become unstable after leadership terms expire.

Theme 3 matches the concepts = Compliance Without Strategic Value ("Tick-box" Governance)

These participants showed their discontent toward ICT governance practices that consisted of mere symbolic compliance fulfilment instead of strategic implementation.

"Governance becomes a checkbox — the documents are there, but the intention is not" *said one GITO participant.*

The present governance structure focuses primarily on documentation tasks and reporting requirements instead of working toward the development of information and communication technology (ICT)-based public value creation. The ineffective operational performance within governance frameworks demonstrates symbolic compliance according to Gill (2008) and Masilela & Nel (2021). Research by Ferguson (2019) confirmed that King IV alongside COBIT require superficial adoption since organizations fail to integrate them properly. The "tick-box" compliance model creates demoralization in governance actors because they face no meaningful purpose or impact according to Latchu (2022). According to de Beer and Armstrong (2015) African micro and small enterprises employ similar practices by bypassing official intellectual property rules during business operations. The development of innovation happens through casual networks which support adaptive knowledge-sharing and collaborative activities. Rigid governance structures produce minimal meaningful outcomes because they need context-specific flexible systems of practice to generate effective results according to de Beer and Armstrong (2015). External governance systems should emphasize achievement through strategic delivery at both the corporate and institutional levels because maintaining only compliant processes remains insufficient.

Theme 4 matches the concepts = Delays Due to Cumbersome Decision-Making Processes

The participants identified that both time-consuming approval delays and resistant bureaucratic behaviour impeded the efficient and timely execution of ICT projects. Delays in ICT implementation can be attributed

to internal systems combined with the role of State Information Technology Agency (SITA) as an outside force.

GITO commented that **"You must go through five different internal forums before anything moves… Procurement via SITA is painful".**

The bottleneck challenges reveal a significant conflict between control-based governance systems and the necessity of being agile according to Sibanda and Von Solms (2019) in public ICT environments. Central procurement entities including SITA frequently insert processing delays which obstruct information communication technology delivery schedules according to Mzekandaba (2024) and Liu (2015). The CGICTPF implements well-intentioned methods but fails to adapt to departmental operating conditions (DPSA 2012, Phahlane, 2023). The effectiveness of governance depends on people's ability to establish efficient decision streams which allow accountability processes to function alongside operational effectiveness.

Theme 5 matches the concepts = Inconsistent Implementation Across Departments

Departments show various levels of implementation activity regarding governance frameworks in their practices. Active compliance with GITOs emerged from some departments but others showcased minimum and surface-level implementation.

"Everyone claims to follow corporate governance, but in reality, it's patchy and uncoordinated" as one GITO commented.

Fragmentation in departments regarding standardization creates disorder in public sector information and communication technology governance structure. The absence of proper oversight in departmental autonomy systems creates governance discrepancies according to Mokhomole (2023). Manda (2021) and Latchu and Singh (2024) establish that a standardized approach to governance implementation must exist to enable national digital transformation progress. The Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA, 2020) has identified inconsistent governance as the main factor resulting in substandard audit results and poor system performance. The alignment of institutions needs improved central governance coordination together with training development and mutual management principles throughout departmental teams that use corporate governance.

Theme 6 matches the concepts = Knowledge and Skills Gaps

The participants reported that multiple stakeholder groups exhibited insufficient governance competence and insufficient ICT capabilities.

GITO commented that **"ICT is left to run governance alone — the business side has no interest or skills to contribute meaningfully".**

The deficiency of necessary skills limits the performance of multi-stakeholder governance systems as well as it maintains ICT's position outside institutional choice-making processes. Moabalobelo et al. (2023) show that limited governance framework implementation and assessment results from capacity shortages among professionals. Professional and educational deficiencies among employees lead to poor institutional development according to Gcezengana et al. (2022). Every robust framework fails when professionals lacking governance skills do not interpret its principles for contextual application. Professional development programs and institutional knowledge sharing systems must be developed in addition to implementing governance competencies into leadership training and performance assessment programs.

The six thematic challenges from participants undergo consolidation through Table 1 which utilizes the conceptual domains of Governance Structures, Strategic Agency, and Dynamic Capabilities. The researchers incorporated direct participant quotes to show how each theme relates to real-life situations.

Table 1: The mapping process connects discovered themes to the domains within the conceptual framework – Authors' own Sources.

Theme	Description	Mapped Domain(s)	Representative Quote
Theme 1 matches the concepts = Bureaucratic Overregulation and Structural Complexity	Control redundancies combined with prescriptive governance patterns cause organizational sluggishness along with decreased responsiveness.	Governance Structures	"Bureaucracy – Delays decisions. – Rigidity. – No agility – volumes of documentation (memos, submissions, etc.), particularly in the public sector".
Theme 2 matches the concepts = Lack of Top Management Accountability and Buy-In	The focus on ICT leaders weakens and at the same time executives show reduced engagement with governance responsibilities.	Strategic Agency	"Top management just distances themselves from ICT governance — we are left to drive everything."
Theme 3 matches the concepts = Compliance Without Strategic Value ("Tick-box" Governance)	The governance systems operate with no operational connection and limited strategic alignment.	Governance Structures, Strategic Agency	"Governance becomes a checkbox — the documents are there, but the intention is not."
Theme 4 matches the concepts = Delays Due to Cumbersome Decision-Making Processes	Organizations experience delays during implementation resulted from their lengthy bureaucratic approval processes and constraints imposed by outside entities such as SITA.	Governance Structures, Dynamic Capabilities	"You must go through five different internal forums before anything moves… Procurement via SITA is painful."
Theme 5 matches the concepts = Inconsistent Implementation Across Departments	Departments follow different levels of acceptance in implementing governance frameworks.	Governance Structures, Dynamic Capabilities	"Everyone claims to follow corporate governance, but in reality, it's patchy and uncoordinated."
Theme 6 matches the concepts = Knowledge and Skills Gaps	A lack of ICT capabilities and governance from stakeholders causes their participation to remain fragmented.	Dynamic Capabilities	"ICT is left to run governance alone — the business side has no interest or skills to contribute meaningfully."

Linking the Findings to the Conceptual Framework in Figure 1

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework which demonstrates three key public sector ICT governance domains known as Governance Structures and Strategic Agency and Dynamic Capabilities. The analytic data pointed to different ways in which the domains either competed poorly or fell short regarding their

performance abilities. This section establishes how each theme interfaces with and presents cases of failures that affect one or more core domains.

Governance Structures

The public sector uses Governance Structures as formal organizational elements for ICT decision-making that combine oversight bodies with compliance systems between which rules provide structure. The existing governance structures show good development, but they present problems through inflexibility and partitioned functions as well as weak enforcement mechanisms which threaten their goal achievement.

- Theme 1: **Bureaucratic Overregulation and Structural Complexity** — The theme explores bureaucratic regulation together with structural complexity because this causes inefficiencies as well as implementation restrictions.
- Theme 3: **Compliance Without Strategic Value ("Tick-box" Governance)**— This is where we demonstrate how organizations perform governance procedures as a formality yet fail to merge these rules with operational activities leading to governance system value loss.
- Theme 4: **Delays Due to Cumbersome Decision-Making** — The fourth theme reveals how cumbersome procurement decision-making processes imposed by SITA and central authorities slows down the speed of ICT implementation.
- Theme 5: **Inconsistent Implementation** — The study discovers inadequate systems which link different departments together for enforcement purposes thus exposing problems concerning organizational standards and unified management activities.

The current governance systems show more resemblance to bureaucratic objects than they do to enablers of responsibility and creativity because of their existing attributes which reason that they require rethinking for better contextual suitability and responsiveness.

Strategic Agency

Strategic Agency represents the leadership capacity of ICT executives through which GITOs gain decision-making power to link ICT efforts with departmental objectives and steer through diverse governance scenarios. The study demonstrates that insufficient top-level backing combined with exclusion from strategic meetings impede agency development.

- Theme 2: Lack of Top Management Accountability and Buy-In — When top management fails to take responsibility for IT decisions and fails to show support the ICT leadership becomes detached from executive decision-making which makes GITOs work without proper authority or sponsorship.
- Theme 3: Compliance Without Strategic Value —further shows how IT leaders face governance challenges due to their inability to achieve strategic value or institutional influence that supports transformation at this stage.

The system restrictions reveal that able ICT leaders succeed in achieving only limited influence over policy outcomes which leads to a disconnect between intended goals and actual delivery achievements. To achieve strategic agency leaders, need formal membership in executive bodies and authority reallocation and specific leadership training programs.

Dynamic Capabilities

Within Dynamic Capabilities an institution can identify environmental changes while seizing new opportunities to restructure existing systems which results in performance enhancement. All departments presented specific weaknesses in this domain because survey participants identified deficiencies in skills alongside problematic decision-making processes and struggles to adapt.

- Theme 4: Delays Due to Cumbersome Decision-Making — The organization faces implementation delays because its decision processes are cumbersome when reacting to operational ICT needs.
- Theme 5: Inconsistent Implementation Across Departments — Several departments within the organization struggle to execute the governance reform program in a consistent manner.
- Theme 6: Knowledge and Skills Gaps — Many governance failures originate from deficits in interpretation power and practical skills related to governance practice implementation and maintenance.

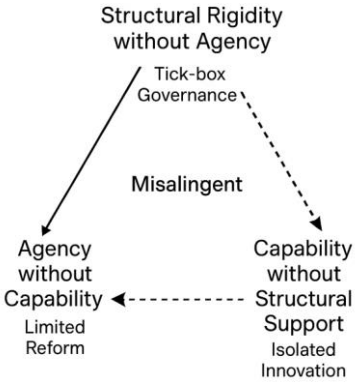
The research proves that rigid organizational structures alongside inadequate human resources and poor learning capabilities cause public governance to become static in response to new situations. Public sector development of dynamic capabilities requires organized funding toward workforce training and procedural enhancement and knowledge transfer initiatives.

An examination of Figure 3 shows the most prevalent failure configurations identified by the analysis. The analysis shows three main recurring misalignment structures which emerge in the governance system data instead of isolated system weaknesses:

- *Structural rigidity without agency* is when a governance system becomes symbolic when structural constraints exist without any implementing agency.
- *Agency without capability* is when agencies without capabilities achieve minimal reform outcomes which are difficult to expand on a regional or national level.
- *Capability without structural support* is when organizational structure restricts innovation to specific sectors even when departments have available capacity.

The identified misalignments confirm that ICT governance breakdowns in the public sector operate on a system-wide level.

Figure 3 **-** The authors present Figure 3 Misalignment Configurations Across Governance Structures, Strategic Agency, and Dynamic Capabilities – Authors' own Sources.



The study findings show that theoretical concepts explain how comprehensive ICT governance problems in South African public services stem from organization-wide structural issues instead of isolated individual weaknesses.

The reform of public sector ICT governance needs a strategic alignment between all domains and their individual domain strength optimization. Further examination of these implications takes place in the following section.

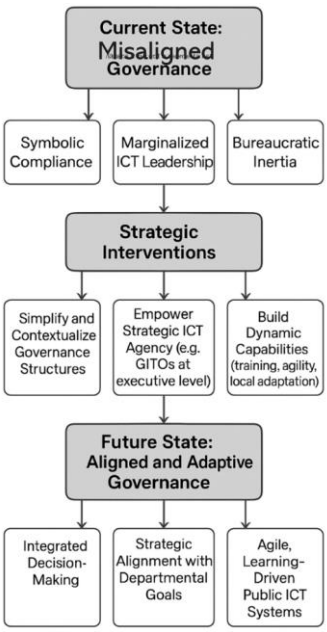
6. Discussion

The examined research demonstrates that the South African public sector has failed to match its governance principles to institutional management practices. Research findings demonstrate how information systems (IS) failures continue to occur after South African companies formalize corporate governance frameworks. The data analysed through Governance Structures, Strategic Agency, and Dynamic Capabilities reveals that South African public sector institutions experience structural inflexibility and perform symbolic governance and marginalize strategic initiatives. Structures of governance maintain their sound functionality and complete procedural requirements but frequently lose connections with their application environments. Their organizational standards cause bureaucracy to extend beyond its proper limits thereby reducing strategic flexibility. The separation between governance objectives and official reporting processes becomes most visible through "tick-box" governance operations (Gill, 2008; Masilela & Nel, 2021) which cause departments to perform requirements compliance but fail to embrace governance strategic direction.

The strategic authority of ICT executives is minimal at best. The Government Information Technology Officers (GITOs) who protect digital transformation processes suffer exclusion from central decision-making platforms because executive organizations do not grant them official authority. The limited agency power leads employees to use personal networks and make discretionary workarounds to move through rigid institutional structures. Governance frameworks demand leadership alignment but inadequately give authority to the leaders assigned to manage ICT reform which creates a leadership gap. The exclusion of key stakeholders weakens reform credibility and restricts institutional responsiveness as Liana and Mazana (2024) together with Gabara (2023) have established. The evidence indicates that organizations possess minimal dynamic capabilities based on their assessment from this perspective.

Departmental units encounter problems when they try to understand both technological developments and evolving service delivery requirements. A strategic united reform method requires execution to treat these entrenched problems. The figure 4 demonstrates that strategic agency develops through misaligned ICT governance when it establishes both alignment and adaptability. The model defines all necessary operational moves to improve institutional performance by implementing strong ICT management leadership together with flexible governance systems.

Figure 4 - The figure demonstrates the pathway for reform which moves from misaligned to aligned and adaptive approaches for ICT governance - Authors' own sources.



The public sector struggles to exploit opportunities along with reorganizing systems for enhanced performance because of delayed decision-making and implementation fragmentation and skills shortages (Teece, 2018; Thabane & Snyman-Van Deventer, 2018). The Theme 6 emphasizes how reflexive learning

systems fail to function properly because institutional memory and cross-sector knowledge exchange and continuous capacity building process are deficient. A larger public administration developmental issue stems from the inability to transform governance systems into operational success because of an adaptive capacity deficit (Gcezengana et al., 2016). The conceptual framework designed in this research integrates related findings to create an assessment methodology for understanding governance failures.

The three identified misalignments which are Structural Rigidity without Agency, Agency without Capability and Capability without Structural Support show that failures stem from interconnected systematic dysfunctions instead of standalone causes. The three scenarios result in symbolic compliance, un-sustained reform, and fragmented innovation as different types of governance failures. The analysis adds new knowledge to worldwide ICT governance research by demonstrating the typical challenges South Africa faces among developing nations.

The evidence demonstrates that governance failures exceed basic enforcement weaknesses because organizations have systems misalignment and weak leadership structures together with inadequate institutional adaptability. Traditional hierarchical control methods in the public sector need to transform into an adaptive governance system which enables ICT leaders to wield power and develops dynamic capabilities and unites policies and practices.

7. Contributions and Implications

This research provides theoretical along with practical benefits for Information Systems (IS) governance framework implementations across the South African public sector. The study investigates the real-life experiences of 55 Government Information Technology Officers (GITOs) throughout South Africa to establish an authentic comprehension of why formal integration of ICT governance frameworks fails to deliver meaningful operational value for this sector.

7.1 Theoretical Contributions

This research combines three distinct failure causation theories to establish new understanding in IS governance scholarship which derives its properties from structure and strategy along with capabilities. The conceptual model demonstrates that examination of Governance Structures requires consideration with both Strategic Agency and Dynamic Capabilities because these factors establish a systemic relationship. Research findings demonstrate that organizational failures occur when the three basic institutional frameworks produce incorrect alignments.

Secondly the article expands dynamic capabilities theory in public sector governance although this area remains insufficiently studied. This study provides enhanced clarity regarding why bureaucratic organizations fail to adapt governance practices through an examination of sensing and seizing and reconfiguring failures in bureaucratic systems. Efficient governance requires organizations to develop their abilities to learn and keep adapting through reflexive approaches.

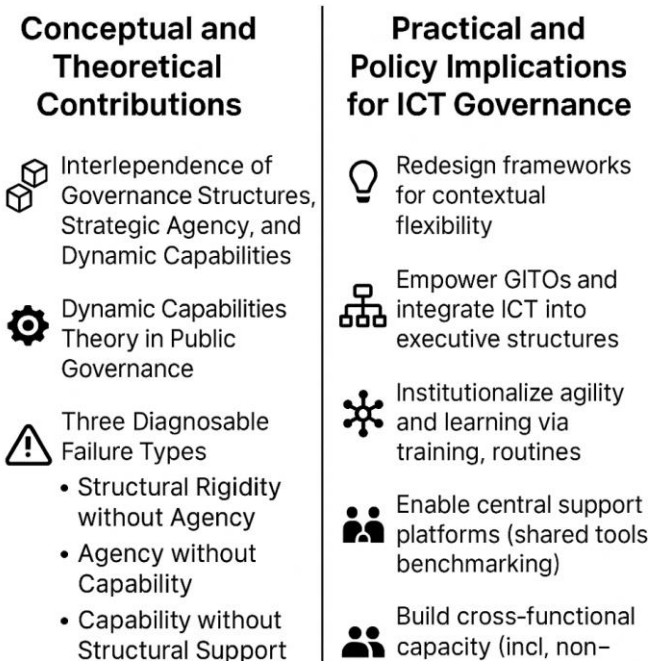
Thirdly, the research adds conceptual value through the identification and theoretical explanation of three specific types of governance failure:

- Structural rigidity without agency is when a governance system becomes symbolic when structural constraints exist without any implementing agency.
- Agency without capability is when agencies without capabilities achieve minimal reform outcomes which are difficult to expand on a regional or national level.
- Capability without structural support is when organizational structure restricts innovation to specific sectors even when departments have available capacity.

The failure types of function as analytical tools to analyse governance breakdowns for other developing countries thus enabling comparative investigations between cases as a lesson learned.

The summary of this study's dual contributions appears in Figure 5. The left side illustrates that focusing on conceptual ideas proves the importance of viewing ICT governance by integrating structure with agency and capability aspects. The right section gives concrete reforms which allow officials to handle digitization initiatives within limited institutional frameworks.

Figure 5 - is the summary of theoretical contributions and practical implications as generated by the authors. Authors' own Sources



7.2 Practical and Policy Implications

The research data shows the critical requirement to convert governance into an essential performance tool instead of an administrative requirement for public sector delivery. ICT governance frameworks require structural improvements which should allow ICT professionals to function as leaders through innovation while ensuring their technological initiatives integrate with service delivery needs.

Key implications include:

- Governance frameworks should be reviewed to introduce flexibility as well as contextual understanding and strike a balance between management control and responsiveness between executives and GITO. Management requires regulatory streamlining together with single system de-duplication.
- Executive decision-making forums should integrate GITOs to establish ICT as an administrative strategic element instead of treating it merely as a technical component. Leadership empowerment needs formal authority as well as budgetary control and performance monitoring systems to support it.
- Organizations can establish dynamic capabilities through continuous education and multidisciplinary learning and through implementing fast decision-making processes. Both knowledge management systems and reflective governance cultures need funding to become effective assets for the company.
- A standard implementation support framework should utilize national bodies that provide oversight and share practical tools with accessible shared services together with peer benchmarking networks. Departments must avoid creating independent governance systems.
- Organizations need to develop cross-functional governance competence through training sessions that will help non-ICT executives and operational managers to understand the value of ICT governance results while preventing individual responsibility segregation.

This research offers an evidence-based reform strategy which conforms to international governance and management principles. The framework together with their findings provide both an alert and guidance for nations that face digital transformation alongside institutional reform challenges because successful governance depends on alignment with strategy and institutional support and dynamic capabilities.

8. CONCLUSION:

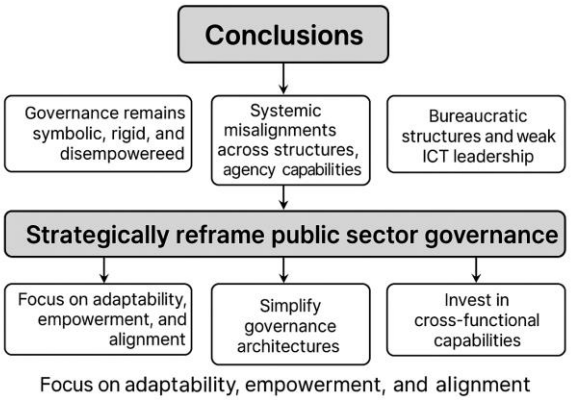
This article analyses South Africa's public sector corporate governance frameworks versus information systems (IS) performance using responses from 55 Government Information Technology Officers (GITOs). The official adoption of policies including the CGICTPF alongside PFMA and King IV fails to address the organizational governance system that continues to function symbolically and rigidly according to procedures. The ongoing governance system opts to function without strategic power. Strategic powerlessness results from fundamental structural problems between governing systems and strategic institutions and their adaptive capabilities as observed in the results. This conceptual model establishes that governance dissipation occurs because three governance segments fail to function as a unified system. Governance structures that operate remotely from operational necessities together with inadequate ICT leadership authorization from executives and inflexible departments during system adaptations result in ineffective governance that is performative and unresponsive.

These observations match the general criticism of detached governance systems in the public sector because frameworks get adopted regardless of appropriate implementation placement and institutional preparedness. The article promotes a strategic reorganization of public sector governance to solve its current shortcomings. To achieve meaningful reform success programs should centre on developing institutions that learn and enable empowered leaders while achieving systems convergence. ICT leaders need placement in executive forums to simplify governance frameworks as the public sector develops both cross-functional competencies and reflective learning practices. The study advances dynamic capabilities theory by taking it into public governance while developing a diagnostic system that detects multiple types of failures. This study presents an applicable classification system of governance misalignments called symbolic compliance alongside un-sustained reform and isolated innovation to help researchers and practitioners better understand how to reform complex institutional governance systems.

Future scholars need to conduct intervention-based study designs which monitor governance transformations through time in institutions with both fragmented structures and resource limitations. The field benefits from research based on investigation among different developing nations because it reveals their individual approaches to handling similar governance frameworks. The research validates a fundamental principle that governance extends further than technical compliance because it depends on strong relationships and effective responses and relevance to circumstances. The public sector faces a dual requirement of digital transformation together with governance systems which need to advance from rule-based control to learning platforms for strategic execution. Governance operates as more than guidelines since it consists of building connections which respond effectively to current circumstances. The structural alterations in public service delivery through digital transformation should result in governance systems developing into platforms for institutional learning alongside strategic action management.

This study conceives a strategic ICT governance concept through Figure 6 which visually presents its reform vision. This analysis outlines the necessary approach to establish dynamic ICT governance structures for public sector organizations within developing nations by showing how to address systemic challenges and theoretical frameworks.

Figure 6 - Refinedness in ICT governance propels organizations to develop adaptable systems connected to overall business direction. Authors' own Sources



9. Disclosure of Interest

The authors declare that there are no competing interests.

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