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THE ESTABLISHMENT, THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH, OF AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGIC ICT PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE AS A DIVERSIFIED ORGANISATION

By

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SUMMARY: THE ESTABLISHMENT, THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH, OF AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGIC ICT PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE AS A DIVERSIFIED ORGANIZATION

With the current drive of both academia and practice to ensure that there is an appropriate degree of collaboration to ensure mutual benefit, any study undertaken that has the application of theory as one of its objectives, should therefore be able to make a contribution to both areas. From a strategic ICT planning perspective the ability to apply a planning process in a cohesive and coordinated manner throughout diversified or complex organisations has been one of the challenges that faced both academics and practitioners. This becomes especially relevant in view of the drive to ensure alignment between business and ICT so as to ensure that the potential utility of ICT can be leveraged and sustained to contribute towards the competitive advantage of the organisation.

This situation is also relevant to the South African Department of Defence as a particular kind of diversified organisation. With this in mind the initiative was recognised to establish an appropriate strategic ICT planning process for the department and to apply it to the point where a corporate strategic ICT master plan could be institutionalised. A progressive and longitudinal action research process resulted in not only the development of an appropriate process of definition and alignment, but also on the ability to apply and manage the strategic ICT planning function with full collaboration of all role players and stakeholders.

The conclusion from this research was that it is indeed possible to develop and apply an appropriate strategic ICT planning process that recognises the strategic – corporate and business unit level – environment of a diversified organisation, but that it is largely dependant upon the ability to ensure collaboration and participation within a clear and distinct construct of functions and responsibilities. Without appropriate management arrangements and mechanisms, it was found to be very difficult indeed due to issues relating to the semi-autonomous nature of the respective business units in relation to corporate management.

Keywords: IT Strategy, Planning, Alignment, Framework, Action Research

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