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RISK LEADERSHIP IN A SOUTH AFRICAN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

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Abstract:

This exploratory qualitative study focuses on risk leadership as a specified and important part of the leadership required in a South African provincial treasury department. This is a particularly topical issue given observed public sector failures and the expectation for treasury departments to provide leadership over equitable allocation and optimal utilisation of provincial resources. The study sought to explore risk leadership in a South African provincial treasury government department as reflected in annual reporting. It began with a literature review, from which an initial thematic codebook was derived to provide the basis for the study. Next, a document analysis was completed of audited annual reports of the selected provincial treasury department, focusing on the period 2017–2019. This provides a baseline for risk leadership in a provincial treasury department before the National State of Disaster was pronounced in March 2020 to counter the COVID-19 pandemic. Twelve codes were generated from the literature review and compared to the codes extracted from the document analysis of the annual reports. The findings present a two-sided view of risk leadership in the provincial treasury environment. It relates to internal risk leadership, within the treasury itself, and external risk leadership offered to the public sector institutions overseen by the treasury. A critical question that emerges from this main finding is whether the treasury is sufficiently well-positioned and capacitated to execute its external risk leadership mandate effectively. The study also offers a useful reference point for conceptualising future academic studies on risk leadership in the crucial public sector context.

Keywords:

Tone from the top, risk leadership, decision-making, oversight, public sector, performance