



## Importance of Effective Monitoring and Evaluation on Good Governance, Effective Service Delivery and Development in Public Sector

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### Article Info

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### Abstract:

Although there are challenges in the implementation of effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) in public sector, there is an agreement in many facets that effective M & E plays a role in improvement of good governance, effective service delivery and development in communities. However, every time M & E concepts are introduced in implementation of any government intervention or programme, practitioners raise challenges that include lack of support from the programme or intervention managers who think M & E is a mechanism to find faults and has potential to dent their performance assessment results. Little do they see M & E as reliable tool to lead to general development within the communities as it holds programme implementors accountable to resources and general performance.

The techniques of mixed methodologies have been adopted for this study with the aim of bringing both quantitative and qualitative data together in assessing the depth and importance derived from implementation of effective M & E in public sector. Quantitative data collected revealed that M & E is still regarded as an added performance in departments and as such not adequately resourced both financially and human resource. Qualitative data revealed levels of reluctance on part of top management to use findings of M & E to the latter. Findings also reveal that M & E findings do not serve in top management except where the department is afraid of the aftermath that may follow should there be no implementation. Lack of implementation of evidence-based findings of M & E leads to no improvement in intervention implementation and lack of development within the communities. The study recommends amongst others that M & E units are strengthened through capacity and financial resources. It also recommends the importance of public sector to internalise M & E as a daily management tool.

**Keywords:** effective monitoring and evaluation; good governance; service delivery; public sector; development

### 1. Introduction and Background.

Although Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) is relatively new in Public Sector it has proven to be key in promotion of good governance, effective service delivery and development. This is confirmed by Bakewell *et al* (2003) when they put M & E as a platform to hold programme managers accountable hence guarding against all mismanagement of amongst other resources of the state.

A table below as provided by Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation indicate a brief history of formalised M & E in public sector:

Year	Department approach to M & E.
1995	Department of Land Affairs established M & E Unit.
1996	Public Service Commission (PSC) was created to promote excellence in government through effective monitoring.
1997	Few other departments followed with establishment of M & E units.
2001	Framework for managing programme performance information was created.
2005	DPSA leads in establishment of Government Wide-Monitoring (GWM & E) and evaluation framework.
2009	Creation of DPME ministry at the Presidency in South Africa.
2010	National Planning Commission (NPC) was established.
2010-2024	Monitoring and Evaluation spreads to different levels of public sector (Departments, State Own Enterprises and municipalities)

Source: DPME and Limpopo Department of Education Evaluation Plan 2020-2024

In 2011, the National Planning Commission (NPC) in South Africa conducted a diagnostic analysis and realised that there are many reasons why the country has been struggling to achieve its set objectives since dawn of democracy in 1994. Challenges identified included lack of policy implementation and lack of effective monitoring and evaluation. Failure of the state to become developmental is also attributed to failure of government to be able to effectively trace the use of allocated resources, the implementation of activities leading to output, outcome and ultimately to long term change of people's living conditions. As raised by many, the country may have enough resources for better life but the large chunk of these resources is wasted due to several factors including lack on effective monitoring and evaluation and corruption activities. As de Klerk (2018) puts it, at times people commit rationalised corruption, which is a crime of entitlement, committed by those who cannot fathom that they are part of a wider community, with the fantasy that they are elevated to levels above the rest of society and more deserving than others.

De Klerk (2018) continues to indicate that without effective monitoring and evaluation, the psychological pathway to fraud leaves otherwise law-abiding people to rationalise their corrupt actions to such an extent that it allows them to continue the practices without being stopped by the pains of conscience and this becomes detrimental to developmental agenda.

On the other hand, Chapter 10 of the constitution of South Africa emphasises that effective public sector should strive to always achieve on the needs of its citizens. This is in line with what is entailed by the term good governance. Section 195 demands that public sector must be governed in efficient, economic and effective use of state resources. This section adds that such public sector should be developmental-oriented and meets the needs of its people

and deliver services in transparent ways. All these demands by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) can be achieved or realised through effective monitoring and evaluation.

## 2. Problem statement

This study is premised by the fact that although there are prescripts and policies emphasising importance of M & E in public sector, empirical evidence indicates that little is being done to strengthen usage of M & E findings with the intention of improving matters of governance, service delivery and build developmental state where people's living conditions are improved using state resources in accountable manner. The famous Judicial Commission of inquiry into allegations of state capture in public sector and organs of state lead by current Chief Justice Raymond Zondo revealed that the fraud and corruption in state has been so overwhelming to collapse all departments and lead to under-development. Years after the report the country is struggling economically that under-development is seen in different areas where unemployment has risen to over 32.1% (StatsSA, 6 March 2024); This is partially attributed to lack of effective monitoring and evaluation and despite this public sector is seen moving at snail pace in strengthening M & E units in departments and municipalities.

## 3. Research Objectives

The focus of the study is exploring the importance of effective M & E in promotion of good governance, improved service delivery and development within the communities of South Africa. The following objectives are used as basis of the study:

- To Explore the levels of M & E in public sector.  
This is to probe if there are adequate M & E structures and capacity in public sector.
- To examine contribution of M & E in improvement of governance and service delivery.  
This is to probe if effective M & E contributes into the improvement of governance and developmental service delivery.
- To recommend ways to improve M & E systems in public sector.  
To check if there are ways to strengthens M & E systems in public sector.

## 4. Research Paradigm.

Wagner *C et all* (2012) implies that for any topic that comes to the mind of the researcher, they start thinking of how to investigate such topic. This depends on how people think of the problem on the table and in most of the time researchers are influenced how they view the society and their own life and issues surrounding their lived. The author(s) categorised these perspectives into three main categories:

**Ontology:** What do people believe about the nature of reality?

**Epistemology:** How do people know what they know?

**Axiology:** What do people believe is true?

This study should be understood in the following ways:

Ontologically, it is believed and expected that public sector should take care of its people in a fair and transparent manner. Epistemologically, this is well-known as stipulated in the constitution of South Africa (1996) while Axiologically, it is believed that accordingly, all citizens believe it is true for public state to be governed properly and provide services with accountability. This study is therefore based on postcolonial or indigenous paradigm and focusses on empowering people to change society through good governance and effective service delivery. This study is furthermore based on Developmental theory shaped by co-creation approach calling for all to participate in bringing impactful change in the society by implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation for good governance, improved service delivery which is key to development.

## 5. Research methodology.

This study adopted the techniques of mixed-methods, quantitative and qualitative in collection of data. Semi-structured questionnaire and survey have been used. Survey questionnaire was sent to heads of M & E in all the departments of Limpopo Provincial Government while interviews using in most open-ended questions were conducted to sampled M & E practitioners in both departments and municipalities. The collected data was analysed thematically and findings on quantitative and qualitative was converged in the conclusions.

## 6. Literature review

### 6.1. Introduction

This part of the study is meant to look at what other authors wrote on the different matters in Monitoring, Evaluation, good governance, service delivery and development. This part again will provide definition of different concept and their use in the study.

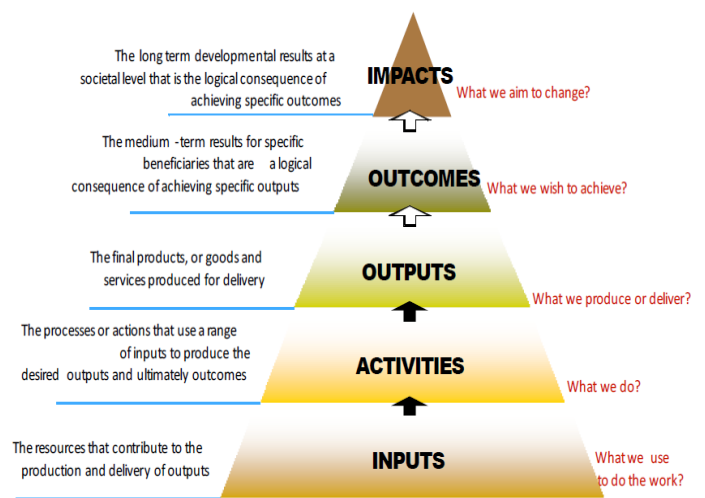
### 6.2. Monitoring and evaluation

According to Bakewell *et al* (2003) Monitoring is a **continuous** systematic assessment of the progress in a piece of work overtime checking if things are going as planned and allows room for methodological adjustment. Kariuki (2014) adds that monitoring is internal project activity and an essential part of day-to-day management.

It is clear in these definitions that if public sector has systematic and continuous assessment to the implementation of each programme they will understand and be able to realise on time if the programme will yield anticipated results and provide opportunity to methodologically correct the mishaps. This implies that each state programme was going to end up delivering services and contribute on development of living conditions of the people of the country. Unfortunately, due to lack of effective monitoring and evaluation there are several programmes that collapse and not deliver as expected.

As indicated, Evaluation is described as **periodical** assessment of relevance, performance, efficiency and impact of work with respect to its stated objectives. According to Kariuki (2014), project evaluation is an appraisal of a plan or projects performance which is undertaken either at periodic intervals.

The difference between the two concepts is that one is done continuous while the other is done periodically. While there is assessment conducted continuously to make sure programme is implemented as planned, there is a need to assess periodically if there is value to be derived out of the programme. This implies that should there be effective monitoring and evaluation, programmes aimed at developing the communities will be implemented as they are planned to realise set goals and periodically there will be ways to assess if indeed the programme is implementation is leading to the realisation of long-term set goals. The following M & E Concepts explain this notion better:



**Source:** Revised National Evaluation Policy Framework, October 2019. (DPME, South Africa)

In this diagram, it is implied that the state provides inputs, including funds and other resources to implement a certain programme. It is understood as the resources provided will need some activities, something to be done towards the realisation of some outputs or short-term results. The implementation will not need to end at short-term results but stretch to realise what needs to be achieved (Outcomes) which will ultimately lead to long-term and developmental achievement, the impact. At this stage the implementation of effective M & E will be completed.

Put differently, let us take an example of the implementation of long-term programme (Impact): provisioning of rehabilitation facilities in the township. Inputs will be the funds state has allocated for the centre. Activities will include actions taken that may include procurement of bricks, hiring of building contracts etc. When all is done, there will be a building called rehabilitation centre (Output). This building means nothing in terms of provisioning of rehabilitation centre until there is provisioning of rehabilitation programme (Outcome).

The rehabilitation programme maybe provided but this will mean nothing without long-term impact by for example building drug-free society, real development anticipated. The society that is Drug-free has potential to produce healthy community that actively contribute to socio-economic benefits of the community which is sign for development in such community.

### 6.3. Monitoring and Evaluation involves community participation.

Public sector, as stated by the Constitution of South Africa (1996) makes sure that its people receive services and get their needs fulfilled in a transparent way. The Constitution also champions for participatory democracy where community members are active in matters of governance and other matters affecting their lives. Monitoring and evaluation involve different stages or steps that all involve community members (Tools4dev 2024):

#### Step 1: The M & E process needs analysis.

A project/programme implementation should be responding to real, subjectively experienced needs and right solutions to motivate beneficiary participation to be effective.

#### Step 2: Programme and M & E design.

After realising the needs, M & E proceed to solution design to define project as well as M & E plans explaining what other regard as theory of change- looking at what has been don, what can be done and what needs to be achieved to address what problem or challenge.

#### Step 3: Mapping the stakeholders.

This assist in identification of role players and beneficiaries to tailor-make programme implementation to the correct direction leading to development that is relevant.

#### Step 4: Defining theory of change

Define change you hope to create within certain context. Programme managers work here with M & E practitioners to provide baseline and then gauge the way forward to realise development/.

#### Step 5: Defining the logic, mapping the indicators.

After having high-level theory and define the story behind change, then the question will be what to use to measure achievement. This is done through putting clear outcome indicators.

#### Step 6: Milestone identification

What is it that needs to be achieved and what are milestone to check off all is going to the right direction?

#### Step 7: Design instruments

These include monitoring and evaluation tools which need to be

relevant. Note that once wrong data is collected due to use of wrong tool, findings are going to be wrong or irrelevant.

#### Step 8: Implement and monitor.

Each implementation step needs to be evaluated to make sure it is a step to the right direction.

#### Step 9: Analyse

This is like cleaning data through proper analysis. In this stage it should be possible to understand if M & E process is conducted properly and keeps to be relevant.

#### Step 10: Finally write your report.

Keep on revisiting objectives set and understand if all was gathered properly and is more likely to lead to the right direction.

### 6.4. Importance of M & E

Although M & E are two different concepts, they complement each other. Monitoring for example provide data that can be evaluated and provide evidence to be used for developmental purpose. It is in this regard that Kariuki (2014) puts importance of monitoring evaluation amongst others as follows:

- To improve performance and achieve results.
- To measure and assess performance to be able to manage outcomes and outputs and development of results.
- Assessment of inputs and implementation process.
- To determine whether an implemented programme is doing it is supposed to do.
- To assess the relative success of programmes in meeting the stated objectives.
- To identify what can be improved in the plan or programme.
- Bothe monitoring and evaluation promote accountability.
- Monitoring and evaluation prevent waste of resources and channel the resources for development.
- M & E promote transparency and democratic participation in government programme implementation-one of the ethos of democracy.

### 6.5. Government structures to conduct M & E

Although in government there are oversight structure expected to conduct Monitoring and evaluation of implementation of programmes, the process of effective M & E as outlined by Malik M, Scheepers H and Amin, H (2023) involves stakeholders of development project meant for community impact. Immediately when the Constitution of South Africa (1996) is invoked it means all programmes should implemented in transparent way (Section 195). However, M & E should be conducted inter alia by the following structures:

- The Parliament/legislature: members of parliament time and again conduct oversight work on the implementation of government programmes. However, it has been realised that

although this is effective there is always a need for M & E unit of departments to conduct the process methodologically.

- Portfolio committee members: These are special focus committees of parliament that holds accounting officers accountable for not meeting set targets. Municipalities also have their structures to do the same.
- AGSA: The Auditor General South Africa rely more on reported performance and does diligent work of checking achievement of target by government departments.

All these bodies are doing good work, but each government institution needs to have own Monitoring and evaluation unit which amongst other verify reported performance before arrival of AGSA, monitor implementation of programme above what programme managers do and evaluate programme more than the analysis done by the programme managers. The M & E unit does the work of Monitoring the Monitors and they come above all set monitoring structure. Their work goes beyond “Box” ticking but question value and benefit of programme implementation. Monitoring and Evaluation unit should focus their work on producing evidence that can help decision makers to implement evidence-based decision that will lead to improvement of the programme and the sector.

### 6.6. Good governance

According to United Nations (Economic and Social commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2009), the concept governance is not new., it is as old as human civilisation and means the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. However, governance calls for open participation of community members, rule of law, transparency and that the state must be responsive to the needs of its people. This implies that monitoring and evaluation are embedded in good governance which demands that government should meet needs of its people. These are met if government programmes are implemented to the benefit of its citizens. Good governance demand for effectiveness and efficiency where the institutions meet the needs of the society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. This is possible with the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation processes. Agrawal, R *et al* (2017) define governance as the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented in corporate, local, national or international context. Also added is the relationship between good governance and M & E, Good governance create an enabling environment for M & E and the M & E contribute to good governance as it improves the outputs, outcomes and impact of the policies and programmes it is pursuing.

### 6.7. Community development

Community development is a process where people come together to take action on what's important to them. At its heart, community development is rooted in the belief that all people should have access to health, wellbeing, wealth, justice and opportunity.(Scottish Community Development Centre,2023). The centre also provides 5 pillars of community development Still, there are five elements or five pillars for community development: physical, financial, human, social, and

environmental.

On the other hand, Traditionally, government has been seen as the primary agent in serving the public good and defining the collective interest. According to this view, governments set the agenda for change, propose new laws and enforce existing ones. Government should play its role and purpose of producing value for the citizens. Public administration is a vehicle for expressing the values and preferences of citizens, communities and society as a whole. Some of these values and preferences are constant, others change as societies evolve. Periodically, one set of values comes to the fore, and its energy transforms the role of government and the practice of public administration. This is in line with Section 195 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996)(1) (e) which indicates that the state must make sure that people's needs are met. It is therefore through continuous and effective monitoring and evaluation that the government will be aware if indeed all plans are implemented as planned and are geared to bring anticipated impact in the lives of the citizens. It can be argued therefore that for developmental agenda to succeed, monitoring and evaluation are imperative.

## 7. Findings

Findings are presented thematically in line with some of the questions attended to by the participants.

### 7.1. The M & E units in Limpopo Provincial Government.

The Office of the Premier in Limpopo has more M & E practitioners than other departments. This can be justified as this is the Department that has to provide support to all other departments for the smooth running of the M & E activities in the Province. The question then becomes the level of M & E skills these officials, more than 10 in 2024 have acquired. Most of them are those who have been moved from other sections where they were no longer needed and it is believed they have been “dumped” to M & E. In this department there are high ranking positions such as members in Chief Directorate and Deputy Director General level hence an opportunity to seat in top management.

Other departments with high representatives of M & E practitioners include Health (about 7), Agriculture with about 5 member and transport and Community Safety with about 4 members. The rest have maximum of only 3 members to Monitor and evaluate about 7 programmes each in the department which becomes very difficult.(Provincial data base of M & E Practitioners, Office of the Premier 2023/4)

### 7.2. The M & E capacity in public service.

From the survey sent to sampled M & E practitioners in all departments, it was deduced that 95% have never been fully trained in Monitoring and Evaluation in any institution of higher education. There are over 60% who were exposed to short course conducted by the University of Witwatersrand, Wits Business School while 35% have been exposed to M & E matters except for grabbing insight in M & E fora.

### 7.3. Exposure to decision making meetings.

Although there is always a link between the M & E practitioners and their higher offices through their representatives, it cannot be guaranteed that the M & E challenges, findings and recommendations reach to decision making levels at the highest level in the department. This is because M & E practitioners are in majority at lower ranks in the structures of their departments to reach to the top. The M & E practitioners therefore have limited influence in departmental decision making. This defeats the purpose of M & E which is to provide evidence to assist in decision making to avoid ill-informed decisions that may lead to destructions and failure to deliver relevant services leading to waste of state resources.

### 7.4. Focus and attention of M & E practitioners.



Limpopo Province has 5 districts and 22 Local Municipalities. Three districts were sampled with 10 municipalities to participate in the study. Districts and local municipalities agree that they do some work in M & E, however, they fail to indicate if they have dedicated structures to do M & E work. Asked to provide evaluation reports none of them have internally conducted any evaluation. Some however, are able to provide outsources reports.

In some departments, M & E practitioners does other tasks and do M & E work seldomly or as per demand. This suggest that their attention is divided. This is also indicated well when one looks in their websites for M & E reports and do not get any example. Only the Office of the Premier and two Provincial departments have their M & E reports on their websites.

Sharing the M & E reports on websites is a requirement as set by the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and at times Auditors General seek for these reports from the websites. There is a need for municipalities to strengthen M & E unites to provide support to their oversight bodies and keep connected to the communities they serve.

### 7.5. The Provincial M & E Forum.

It is expected that the Provincial M & E Forum, led by Office of the Premier convene quarterly meetings where departments share M & E activities, challenges and find ways to improve on their

skills. However, from 2022-2024(April), the Forum just managed to convene less that three meetings. This means that there is a gap in capacity building and sharing best practices and challenges.

### 7.6. The M & E Reports.

As stated above, most departments do not have any M & E document shared on their websites. They even lack basic documents such as the Evaluation Plans. This seem to be contributing on M & E being undermined by both the stakeholders and the management in different departments. This again can be attributed to less M & E work done in departments and municipalities.

Lack of M & E reports becomes indication that both departments and municipalities continue to embark on different programmes without bothering to see if the programmes they embark on are responding to the needs of the citizens and if they are adding any value to the livelihood of the citizens. Lack of M & E activities leave department not aware of what they are putting resources in is playing any role in the development agenda for their beneficiaries. There is likelihood of programmes embarked on that are adding no value but waste of resources and time.

## 8. Recommendations

This study recommends amongst others that all departments of Limpopo Provincial Government should establish fully functional M & E systems. This is also the case with the municipalities and the whole public sector. The departments must also capacitate M & E practitioners through both short- and-long-term courses as offered by different academic institutions. The Provincial office must also establish relationships with other bodies that provide M & E skills which include SAMEA etc. Monitoring and evaluation units must be used to verify quarterly reported performance of the departments with the aim of improving quality of reports which ultimately may lead to improved Audit findings.

Finally, it is recommended that M & E should be regarded as management function in public sector. This suggests that M & E reports and findings for part of the agenda of top decision-making fora. The provincial M & E Forum should make sure that the planned quarterly meetings are convened and be used as capacity building platforms. Provincial departments and municipalities should be assisted by the DPME and other well capacitated institutions to build needed capacity so as to make sure all the programmes implemented provide anticipated improvement and development within the communities.

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