

Strategies to Improve Capacity for Policy Monitoring and Evaluation in the Public Sector

N.S. Matsiliza*

Durban University of Technology, South Africa

Abstract: Scholars around the globe have contested the inadequate infrastructure and tools used by public sector agencies to monitor and evaluate public policies and programmes. Some of the urgent issues of concern deal with the inadequate human capacity in public agencies and departments to conduct fair and credible evaluations in the public sector. South Africa is not the only country that has adopted a government wide monitoring and evaluation system, other countries like Ghana, Kenya, Benin and Uganda have also endorsed formal monitoring and evaluation practice in the public sector. This article argues that monitoring and evaluation must not just measure the effectiveness and efficiency of public programmes and processes, but it must create a sustainable process whereby participants and evaluators can learn from the process. Capacity building in monitoring and evaluation must be fairly and continuously conducted to offer credible and valid information and knowledge on M&E by training agencies and institutions like universities. This theoretical paper adopted document analysis strategy to review and evaluate documents used as data source. Lessons learnt from this article contribute towards the existing strategies to enhance monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: Appraisal, capacity, evaluation, infrastructure, monitoring, techniques, tools.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The government in South Africa has adopted the Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) to assess the performance of public departments and identify gaps which are causing challenges to the provision of services and goods. The GWM&E goals and strategies are to identify the gaps in supporting planning, budgeting, programme implementation, financial management and reporting processes (The Presidency, 2009). The public sector, over the last decade, has been concerned with improving capacity in developing government systems in less and semi-developed nations like South Africa. Currently, public service is experiencing moderate and serious challenges that affect the implementation of GWM&E in South Africa. Majola (2014) holds the view that M&E implementation is still at an incipient stage in South Africa, hence there is a need to broaden human capacity that is designated to conduct M&E in public organisation. Hence, this article explores various strategies and methods to enhance the capacity for monitoring and evaluation, with the intention of improving performance in the public sector. Human capacity building should be a priority for improving performance in the public sector, especially to those departments and organisations that conduct systematic performance evaluation and monitoring and evaluation. The improvements in capacity of evaluators must focus on the needs of their clients and stakeholders, the skills

needed for evaluation and the resources and technical tools required during the evaluation process.

Since the adoption of GWM&E government has issued the National Policy Evaluation Framework (The Presidency, 2010) to consolidate the strategies and principles of monitoring and evaluation public organisations in South Africa. On its adoption, the GWM&E provided broad goals on its institutional arrangements that focused on a transversal approach underpinning legal mandate, financial responsibilities, roles and responsibilities of government officials and that of agencies targeted to implement GWM&E. Even though government departments have complied with the adoption of M&E, they are still grappling with the change that has been brought by GWM&E due to lack of human capacity (Maphunye, 2013). The main problem is that public departments have not yet developed sufficient human capacity and sufficient skills to conduct policy M&E. Mthethwa and Jili (2016) demonstrated that some municipalities lack the required necessary knowledge, skills and competence to carry out duties related to the M&E of public projects. Thus, government and other stakeholders that are involved must acquire appropriate skills and capacity to manage and utilise M&E effectively and efficiently. Similarly, Naidoo (2012) warns that poor planning of appraisal plans and high political expectations on M&E outcomes may produce poor results and recommendations that can later affect evidence-based decision-making.

It goes without saying that monitoring and evaluation has moved from being a performance evaluation tool to an emancipating and empowering

*Address correspondence to this author at the Durban University of Technology, South Africa; Tel: +2733 8458852; E-mail: NolutandoM1@dut.ac.za

process that can instill a new culture of building capacity in the public service (Abrahams, 2015). Therefore, this article argues that there is a need to continuously advance the skills and knowledge needed for M&E in the South African public sector. For this article to respond to the problem statement, it first reviewed literature on the discourse of M&E and conceptualise few concepts that are mainly framing the discourse of M&E. It was necessary to review challenges of implementing M&E in South African public organisations in order to establish what kind of strategic positions are needed to advance capacity of M&E in the South African public sector. This article reviewed literature and adopted a document analysis strategy in collecting and analysing secondary data which were mainly electronic books, articles from accredited journals, government policy reports, published minutes of the parliamentary monitoring group and other research reports focusing on monitoring and evaluation. Data was drawn from printed and electronic documents that reports various empirical studies on strategies for improving monitoring and evaluation in the public affairs. Public affairs includes public organisation, non-profit organisations and agencies' experiences on M&E. The researcher further filtered down and the articles and focused on those that are closer to the practice and capacity improvement on M&E in public organisation. The main focus of the researcher is to draw lessons on how public organisations can enhance their capacity of M&E. The researchers sought to review literature prior to document analysis, and incorporated it into the information from the reports for further analysis. Literature review and document analysis enabled the researcher to draw themes from the data and respond to the aim of this article, which is mainly to explore strategies that can enhance skills, techniques, human capacity for M&E. The researcher adopted both literature review and document analysis in order to address the limitation identified by Bowen (2009) as the over-reliance on few documents.

THE DISCOURSE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Various scholars have paid attention to the discourse of monitoring and evaluation, by providing diverse approaches towards the discourse of M&E with the intention of improving the way government works (Motingue and van der Waladt, 2013). There is a growing devotion of scholars, consultants and institutions that envisage M&E to be upgraded to a disciplinary niche area (Basheka and Byamugisha,

2016). However, it is important to understand what monitoring is and what evaluation entails in order to understand the discourse of M&E. The World Bank (2010) has demonstrated that monitoring and evaluation are inseparable since they are both applied in order to check the progress in the performance of an activity or a programme. Monitoring is viewed as an ongoing process of data collection and analysis of performance indicators that permits one to relate to a progressive programme result (Ile, Eresia-Eke and Ile, 2013). Monitoring can therefore assist supervisors and middle managers to constantly monitor progress on the implementation of their departmental key performance indicators on a daily and weekly basis by collecting all the reports to be consolidated for evaluation purposes.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines monitoring and evaluation as an ongoing function that practices the systematic gathering of data on specified indicators, to offer management and key stakeholders in a continuous developmental reporting interlinked with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds (OECD, 2018). Meyers (2002) is of the view that evaluation must provide opportunities for revisiting the learning programme strategy needed to improve the knowledge of recipients through continuous amendments and improvements. Similarly, Basheka and Byamugisha (2016) demonstrated that M&E in Uganda is implemented through a formalised mode of transmitting knowledge and is part of disciplinary inquiry. Similarly, the government in Ghana uses the Directorate of planning, monitoring and Evaluation (DME), which focuses on the implementation of critical government programmes as outlined by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (Catalogue of Ghana Standard of Authority, 2018). The move to align M&E with quality and standards of authority is a good move to allow governments and evaluators to be guided on how they can better track the performance of public programmes and processes.

Therefore, evaluation will encompass more thoughtful assessment of activities than monitoring. Evaluation is the process of defining the merit, worth and value of things (Public Service Commission, 2014). There are various types of evaluations, and each can be distinguished as formative (or process) or summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is often allied with a mid-term evaluation (for performance improvement), while summative evaluation includes an end-of-initiative review (for issues like accountability,

policy- and decision-making). Evaluation in research includes a 'set of research questions and research methods aimed at examining activities, processes and strategies for the indication of whether the objectives have been achieved, or whether the programme yielded better results to the beneficiaries (Vedung, 2011). In these two examples, the evaluator implies more of an independent, external, and objective role.

Evaluation is the organized and objective ongoing assessment of tasks or completed project, programme, together with its planning, implementation, and conclusion and results (Ille, *et al.* 2019). Evaluation can also identify priorities and relevance of actions and their intentions measured through objectives, to determine outcomes, progress on effectiveness and efficiency, and the impact of interventions and sustainability of programmes. An evaluation should provide information about processes and programmes regarding their credibility and usefulness, especially when there are beneficiaries, to provide lessons to be learned in order to improve the decision-making process for governments, donors and recipients. It is evident that both monitoring and evaluation are distinct, and they complement each other. Information on monitoring can be collected on a daily and monthly basis from reports about a policy, programme, or project (and over an extended period) to determine outcomes, whereas evaluation explores causality and provides evidence on the worth of programmes and projects, and substantiates why targets and outcomes are, or are not, achieved.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are not new to current governments. The ancient governments conducted monitoring of their grain and livestock production on a regular basis, more than 5,000 years ago. Today, modern governments also conduct monitoring and evaluation to create a synergy of events on checks and balances on a daily basis, monthly reports and annual auditing and assessments that would produce a consolidated assessment to track their expenditures, revenues, personnel performance, resources, programmes and project activities, goods and services produced, and so forth (Lopez-Acevedo, Krause and Mackay, 2012).

While public organisations seek capacity building to be at the core of their performance targets, they must build it to incorporate improvements in their vision, culture and values, internal organisational systems such as planning, cooperative affairs and human resources. Evaluators and senior managers must be

subjected to specific internal training on M&E or attend professional training through training providers such as universities and colleges. This will enable them to trace gaps at an early stage and identify wider results (whether positive or negative) in the due course of their work. The accounting officers or senior managers will need to record the whole process, in particular the changes that occurred before the employees were trained and then after they have been trained. This will illustrate whether the capacity building programmes offered by the department on M&E are really working and are necessary for specific units or for all departments.

The heads of departments, political appointees and line managers can also identify organisations with the best practices on M&E and pair with them with other organisations in order to share their practices and benchmarks on delivery of goods and services. This can assist evaluators and evaluates in understanding how they can add value to the evaluation process. Similarly, managers can also use the formal tools to help make an organisational assessment on the availability of the skills and knowledge required for M&E. Organisational assessment (OA) tools, often known as organisational capacity assessment tools (OCATs), must be designed to assess capacity, and plan capacity improvement when it is needed (Nigel and Smith, 2010). These tools should also be identified along the lines of the key performance indicators of the departments/units in order to monitor and evaluate capacity development or capacity building.

Leaders, at political and senior official levels and the CEO's of state enterprises as well as members of the executive, must lead by example and empower their followers by knowing more and by sharing information with their subordinates about M&E to ensure that good evaluations are conducted regularly, and that evaluations are properly designed for the task. Leaders must also partner and collaborate on M&E projects to share their experiences with NGO's and private sector managers who coordinate M&E for quality improvements so that they can learn how M&E processes are reported and interpreted and how information on results is disseminated. Leaders must have the capacity to establish whether recommendations have been acted upon. Moreover, they should be able to investigate whether there is compliance on those recommendations and take actions if there are none based on the existing policy or laws relating to the implementation of programmes.

CHALLENGES OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The professional field of monitoring and evaluation is fairly new, as a result employees and consultants conducting M&E have limited experience to support the evaluations. This in turn leads to inadequate skills to carry out the evaluations (Mthethwa and Jili, 2013). In some departments the units depend on a few senior evaluation managers to carry out the work. For instance, municipalities in South Africa rely on consultants and on the department of cooperative governance to conduct evaluations. Motingoe (2012) is of the view that most M&E assessments fail due to the shortage of qualified evaluators with skills needed to successfully conduct evaluations that will according to the work plan. There is an endless demand for experts who can develop the capacity of M&E systems in government departments in conjunction with existing training institutions. Motingoe (2012) further points out that few departments have still not yet reached an acceptable level of understanding of the monitoring and evaluation process and are operating in a lame-duck style. This has crippled the entire notion of monitoring the performance of these departments.

According to Majola (2014), the process of monitoring and evaluation is always the responsibility of managers, hence it sometimes endorses a top-down approach. Subordinates have to take orders from their managers. The challenge is that M&E systems may be part of the centralisation of power and it can be seen by programme managers to be a tactic to control the responsibilities performed by managers. With the additional task of M&E, managers become overloaded with tasks they need to account for. Similarly, the public sector is experiencing some delays in the central coordinating of M&E since some departments/units do not have a comprehensive view of the existing M&E practices across all spheres of government (Engela and Ajam, 2010).

The recent adoption of the GWM&E field in the public service, with a centralised arrangement is a risk to agencies partnering with government since data is drawn from a single M&E system. Trained and skilled personnel with technical advice are still scarce, hence it becomes a problem for departments to replace employees that migrate from one office to another. According to Mapitsa and Khumalo (2018), monitoring and evaluation has overlooked the technical aspects associated with its design and the tools needed to conduct the M&E process. Most evaluations focus on the socio-economic outcomes. However, there is an

escalation of demand for M&E systems at national and cross-sectoral systems of governance due to the decentralisation of government structures and programmes.

The GWM&E has inherent risks in the existing structure on data and information management that needs greater accountability and security. There is also a desire to make data more widely available and for it to be used for political gain. Addressing these challenges will not be easy, it will require lot of time and professional support. One approach is to create a professional and systematic approach of M&E. The following section will elaborate on the strategic priorities for improving the capacity required to conduct policy M&E monitoring and evaluation in the public sector.

Monitoring and evaluation is criticised for being paired together by scholars during their conceptualization, with less consideration of their dichotomy and the independence of evaluation. According to Picciotto (2013), evaluation can be treated as an independent process without being isolated from organisational performance evaluation. In addition, evaluation is sometimes treated as a learning process where evaluators receive certification to augment their knowledge of evaluation. There can be a danger to treat evaluation as only an educational process since it can ignore the benefits that can be brought by evaluation as an emancipatory approach. An empowerment and emancipatory approach can add value to goal attainment of ECB, in which this paper seeks to advocates as a necessity for the transforming South African public service. Vedung (2010) supports emancipatory evaluation that has emerged as an alternative for organisations that has lost trust in believing in scientific evaluations that are based on experiments and positive evaluation research.

If an organisation hires certified evaluators and still produce bad evaluation results that can hamper the strategic progression of the organisation, there is a need to support empowerment evaluation in public organisations (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Peterson (2017) affirms that social programmes desires social issues, values and stakeholders perceptions to be taken into account during evaluation in order for evaluation goals to be achieved. In participatory evaluation, stakeholders can provide credible and reliable performance information that can have lessons to be submitted to the policy makers. Finally, it goes without saying that both educational evaluation and

emancipatory evaluation must be adequately resourced to enhance its impact on the organization and to evade the perception that they are only there for window dressing.

DISCUSSION

Improving M&E Capacity

The implementing of M&E systems in an organisation needs extensive efforts to improve performance that is required by the organisational structure and culture (Lomofsky, 2014). Some departments have developed a participatory M&E that include empowerment of skills during the M&E process. The rationale for a participatory process is to develop an institutional knowledge and enhance the application of the strategies and tools while including the members of the unit being evaluated (Fetterman & Wandersman, 2002). It is necessary for organisations to be selective in choosing the type of M&E and skills needed to assess the worthiness of their activities and processes. This article uses the evaluation capacity (ECB) to illustrate the extent to which capacity can be developed to improve M&E.

Figure 1 demonstrates a comprehensive evaluation capacity building (ECB) model that can be adopted by public organisations. The strength of ECB is in its nature of work that has a clear direction and a flow of

duties and responsibilities organised through a framework of individual, organisational and public levels. The ECB is imperative since it can address gaps in identifying the need for M&E and improve capacity by developing the organisational M&E plans based on the demands of the stakeholders, communities and governments, building on the strength of its people and addressing their challenges. Capacity building (and development) is the process by which employees (at an individual level) and organisations attain or improve their existing skills and knowledge to work better in a suitable environment with the proper tools and equipment needed to accomplish their jobs competently (McKegg, Wehipeihana and Pipi, 2016).

In the case of M&E, human resources, skills and information are part of the capacity needed for both the evaluators and the users of evaluation reports to understand better the system of M&E and its use. Assessing performance of the organisation and that of employees can enhance M&E capacity. The ECB supports the enhancement of performance in order to improve the overall of the organisations. Bourgeois (2016) assessed the relation between performance and evaluation in developed and developing nations, and found that performance measurement can broaden organizational evaluation capacity. At organisational level, there are merits in the application of the ECB such as the following:

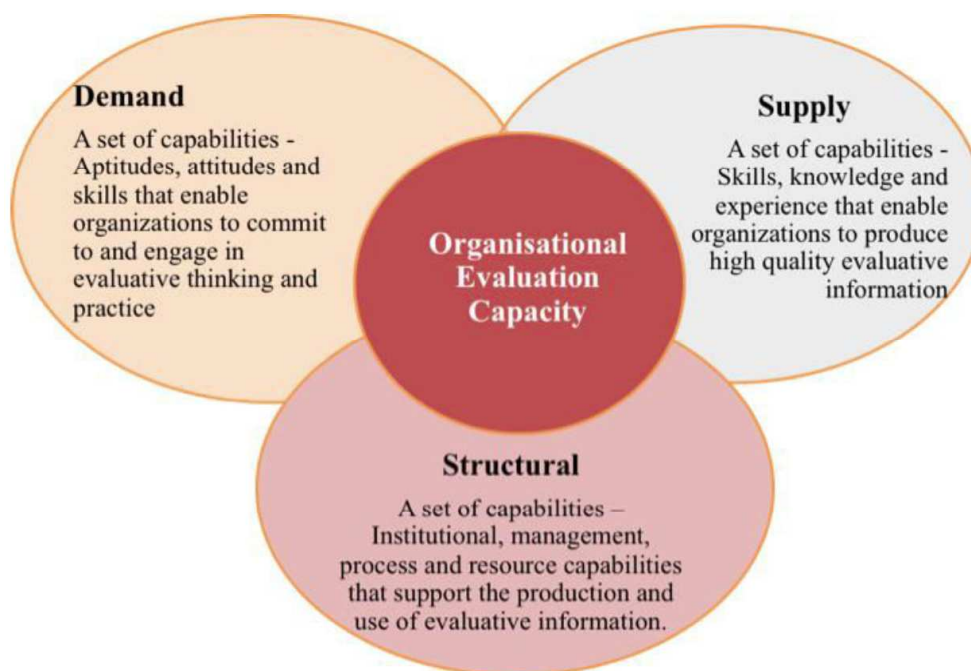


Figure 1: Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB).

Source: McKegg and Pipi (2016).

- According to McKegg, Wehipeihana and Pipi (2016), ECB can provide long-term outcomes in monitoring and evaluation of organizational capacities.
- Vedung (2010) is of the view that improvement in tools and techniques used during evaluation can improve the performance in relation to the organisational mission.
- Moeng and van der Walddt (2012) demonstrated that improvement on M&E capacity can enhance delivery of effective services.
- According to Picciotto (2013), clients and suppliers can accept the credibility and legitimacy of the organization that provide better trained M&E evaluators who know their job.
- Vedung (1997), affirms that clients easily shift from a down-graded brand to a better evaluated brand when services are rated after evaluation. Therefore, evaluation capacity building can increase the ability to renew and continually adapt and achieve sustainability in the provision of goods and services.

According to McKegg, Pipi (2016), M&E has to take account managerial requirements such as communication systems, data management, ongoing tracking of deliveries, legislative requirements and a clear M&E framework that indicates all the lines of accountability and responsibilities. Ile *et al.* (2019) are of the view that M&E must be well-coordinated through a systematic framework to avoid errors and mistakes that can compromise the achievement of M&E outcomes. Based on the literature reviewed, there are resources and skills that can be tapped to improve the capacity of M&E in public organisations, and some of them include the following:

1. Developing a Clearly Defined M&E Unit

In 2011, the Cabinet adopted that National Evaluation Policy Framework that was mainly providing a set of guidelines that would make evaluations to improve government's performance and development impact, accountability, decision-making and to widen the knowledge base around government's work. Even though there is the department of Monitoring and Evaluation within the Presidency, departments have incorporated their M&E work within the existing units. Kustel *et al.* (2017) are of the opinion that public departments need to develop an M&E system that will

support the leadership and management of the organisation, whether it is in the context of people or learning-oriented to enhance the development of M&E. The M&E unit can augment the M&E process when organisations provide improved and effective communication processes that support the diverse strategies to promote the use of M&E. Mapitsa (2018) is of the view that it is necessary for departments to arrange and establish a new organisational unit that highlights the roles and responsibilities for monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Some departments can establish M&E plans that will encompass the mandates and outcomes for achieving evaluation and the guidelines for the process of the M&E as identified in the M&E planning in as far as collection of data, analysis and reporting. According to Visser, Kusters, Guijt, Roefs, and Buizer (2014), an organisation must have the capability to act and commit to working properly, including planning, taking decisions and being practical on these decisions together. According to Matsiliza (2012), strengthening organisational arrangements must be conducted along with performance appraisals of departments and programmes. Managers must crop in employees when conducting organisational evaluations, and exposed them to diverse tools of participatory M&E. The merits of using participatory and empowerment evaluation is its replicability, the enhancement of sustainability, and effectiveness of programmes and projects through the establishment of community knowledge on M&E and people's organisational capacity.

The advantage of setting a separate organisational unit for M&E is that there can be a clear indication of accountability lines from the senior manager to the evaluators and the administrative assistants who carry out evaluations for different programmes. There can be overlapping of duties and less commitment when a department is using the same staff to conduct evaluations, performance management and other departmental duties and there will be a shortfall in ensuring that all institutional arrangements are taken care of. The senior personnel in charge must also give guidance on the processes and lead the unit in scheduling programmes and projects that are due for monitoring and evaluation and identifying accountability measures. Naidoo (2013) is of the view that a separate unit for M&E can add value to systematic evaluations, but at the same time it can bring discomfort to other units in the organisation. However, the evaluation unit is not totally independent at national level since it is situated within a managerial hierarchy. It negotiates decisions with the top government officials since it's in

the apex of decision-making, and the risk is that employees might not trust the evaluation managers since it may seem that they are policing them or assessing their performance.

2. Human and Physical Resources

It must be a priority to improve M&E by making sure that there are adequate human resources and infrastructure to implement and lead the M&E system. Human resources include the expertise of staff and the skills needed for monitoring and evaluation. Visser *et al.* (2016) alluded to the pillars of improving human behaviour as an increase of their commitment to M&E. These scholars suggest that evaluators must be motivated to think about what they can learn from behavioural changes and what that means for participants in order to think about and understand what needs to be done to increase the use of M&E by making sure that the staff are ready to focus on the process. However, in some organisations, behaviour change goes hand in hand with the mind-set. Employees must be exposed to various formal and informal training to learn about evaluation dynamics that can assist them in deciding on options to participate and understanding the expectations of the evaluation process.

Buckley *et al.* (2015), agrees that critical thinking is imperative during planning and implementation of evaluation since it can empower managers to decide to accept and not to accept certain ideas based on their belief and knowledge. Critical thinking is needed in decision-making since it involves posing rational questions, critiques about costs and resource allocation, identification of assumptions and preparing evaluators to reflect on options and making informed decisions in preparation for actions. In addition, effective monitoring and evaluation requires negotiation skills, research skills, writing skills and presentation skills. At an institutional level, monitoring and evaluation must be unique since it is systematic, and cannot involve everyone, only a selected and qualified team to do the work, and must differentiate itself by affirming clear goals to be achieved once it is done. To add to that, the institutional category must also consist of national M&E policies, internal organisational policies, control measures, operational systems, stakeholders and collaboration with other institutions and institutions dealing with professionalisation of M&E. Lastly, the governance category must involve leadership capability in dealing with the supervision of M&E activities, such as accountability, transparency, oversight and project and programme management.

3. Costs and Budget

Monitoring and evaluation can be improved by allocating adequate and sufficient budget to conduct all evaluations, and money must be appropriated according to what is required by the M&E plans. Each department/unit must submit votes that include M&E tasks ahead of deadlines for submitting votes. According to the National Treasury (2018), the Cabinet is required to provide financial support initiatives to avoid problems and to accelerate implementation of M&E in key sectors of the economy through initiatives, such as Operation Phakisa, on an ongoing basis. However, to be able to improve capacity for M&E, a department must be able to estimate all the necessary resources that will be included as part of the monitoring and evaluation of programmes. The most commonly identifiable expenses on resources include staff time, expenses of consultants, field data collection, data analysis costs, office equipment (computer, phones, and stationery), logistics like accommodation and travelling expenses.

It is crucial for an organisation to acquire M&E that meets an acceptable standard in order to improve planning and to budget for each of the different elements of M&E results in a system that is fit-for-purpose in completing evaluations. Data for monitoring must not suit monitoring and performance only, but it must ensure that there is sufficient capacity to collect, store, and analyse information needed for evaluation purposes. In return, this will save costs by shared learning through data within different clusters. In that fashion, M&E data cannot be analysed only to ensure accountability on an ad hoc basis. The South African government uses an incremental budgeting system, hence it would be proper to assess the previous appropriations and variations in the auditor's reports of previous years so that managers don't repeat mistakes and errors that were identified by the auditors, such as the improper and misuse of public funds. Where there were shortages in resources allocated by managers of programmes and projects, evaluators must make recommendations for improvement.

4. Information and Electronic Database

Monitoring and evaluation require information systems for data storage and for data analysis. There is a need to strengthen all information frames and security for systems that store collected information from various units/departments of an organisation. There is a great necessity for information communication technology (ICT) based multi-sectoral

and integrated M&E systems to support and build the capacity of government M&E departments at national, provincial and local levels in order to develop M&E systems which are responsive to specific needs and conditions. The GWM&E provides for the assignment of a policy framework that is considered by the M&E working group of the Presidency.

Proper information is the basis for good decision-making in M&E, hence it must be properly managed, shared and stored. Without accurate information, protocols and standards, information can be vulnerable to information abusers. There must be proper quality and security systems to manage information well, and to make managers and other information users accountable. The use of technology can boost the speed and quality of the process of M&E. The GWM&E in South Africa took the advantage of existing information management systems' infrastructure (like the National Treasury, Performance reports and Statistics SA) and aligned it with the M&E system that is coordinated by the Presidency. Information from the source systems of various departments will also be used by other stakeholders in the GWM&E system to generate an overall picture of national, provincial and local performance. The secondary users of information can use derived IT systems to organise and analyse the data from the underlying organisational source systems (The Presidency, 2009).

The use of a Programme Performance Information Framework (PPIF) can assist in clarifying the standards for performance and support of regular audits, in order to improve the structures, systems and processes required to manage information. Bad and weak information systems can threaten the security of a department in advancing its M&E targets. The PPIF in Monitoring and evaluation must be able to provide clarity on checks and balances on the national statistics before it is published to the public domain. To ensure that the national statistics are reliable and valid, the national statistical agency (STATS SA) and the Presidency must apply the national statistics standards properly and be monitored on a regular basis. The primary aim of building capacity can only be achieved if all information systems and data storage are effective and efficiently completed.

5. Coaching, Training and Mentoring

Consultants and Grantmakers can improve M&E by providing technical assistance in the form of coaching (usually one-on-one customised support), and/or

training (more often group learning and practice) and mentoring to build knowledge and skills. They can also offer input regarding evaluation practices of different organisations, and ensure alignment between programme goals, the evaluation, and opportunities for learning and improvement. Departments can also invite experienced consultants to support the delivery of a variety of programme strategies, and/or implement a custom programme framework during programme evaluation.

In the South African context, the department of Cooperative governance and traditional affairs (COGTA) conduct M&E of projects and programmes for various departments. They also rob-in academics to assist them with advice on evaluation of their M&E reports. The aim of COGTA is to enhance capacity for all spheres of government, to support and build their knowledge and ability to conduct M&E, facilitate and coordinate stakeholder engagement in pursuance of people-centred service delivery (COGTA, 2015). The department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs have a standing unit dedicated to monitoring and evaluation. The senior officials are responsible for providing leadership and guidance to the other departments responsible for training in various provinces with the assistance from The Presidency. The COGTA conduct evaluation to ensure that departments at provincial level and the municipality receive support and to recommend strategies that would increase efficiency levels and improve communication and co-ordination across programmes (COGTA, 2015).

CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNT

In conclusion, this article explored strategies and methods to improve M&E in public organisations. This article revealed that the evaluation capacity building model can inform this study to understand the context of improving capacity for policy monitoring and evaluation. This article revealed challenges facing organisations that have adopted M&E approaches, and suggests that knowledge and skills can be improved at an individual and organisational level. It is suggested that public organisations need to place more effort on improving human resources, infrastructure, budget allocations, organisational information systems and institutional capacity that requires rethinking organisational structure and culture. This article revealed some lessons that can be learnt in improving M&E, which would require strengthening aspects on planning and strategizing a separate unit for M&E,

building capacity of human, financial and physical resources, providing adequate information and data management and adopting unique technical aspects needed by specialists. By improving and building capacity of M&E systems, one would establish an M&E that is trustworthy, timely, and effective for the organisation, civil society, the private sector and programmes. Furthermore, it will have the ability to face the challenges of M&E and adapt to change.

The majority of M&Es projects are treated as more of a task than a tool, or as a requirement rather than assuming that it is part of the programme or project evaluation. Some organisations which take M&E seriously are seldom inspired by the modern global framework, but rather are approving their innovative methods out of their dedication to improving the capacity of government work. Evaluators also need to do a reality check, by conducting a feasibility study prior to the formation of programmes to ensure that these programmes are being implemented correctly and the benefits are going to the targeted beneficiaries at the right time and place. In some public institutions and non-governmental organisations, they have developed a participatory process to design the M&E system with the intention to capacitate the communities with more information on what M&E is and how it can work better to achieve its results. A participatory process is important because it shapes the legitimacy of the organisation, institutional knowledge and enhances the relevance of the plans and tools. It is important to start where the organisation is at, building on their strengths and addressing their challenges. Monitoring and evaluation can add more value in the decentralisation of structures by using M&E systems required by sub- national and national systems to be developed to harmonise the M&E structure and that of the government structure.

This paper recommends an integrative approach of capacity building that recognises the needs for M&E based on the local context and community needs aligned with that of the public sector policy framework towards monitoring and evaluation. Data during evaluations must be scientifically and systematically collected and must also include opinions from diverse participants as part of the evaluation.

Public organisations must develop an evaluation capacity building checklist that will provide a set of guidelines for public organizational evaluation capacity building (ECB), which will also form part of the routine practice of an organization. The effectiveness of the

key aspects of the checklist must be continuously reviewed after each evaluation process to guard against errors and failures during evaluations. Such continuous improvement can add value to stakeholders who seek to increase their long-term capacity to use policy and programme evaluation on continuous intervals like daily, monthly and annually.

This article warns South African evaluators to be cautious of copying evaluation models from other countries without a national benchmark of ECB needs emanating from South Africa communities, organisations and the state departments. Scholars have already demonstrated that the genesis of monitoring and evaluation in Africa and South Africa was benchmarked from foreign evaluation models (Basheka, 2016; Mouton, 2010). It is crucial for evaluators to benchmark from global experiences but focus on what is needed nationally and recognise the current challenges and complexities of the South African broader society. Evaluations must be designed to suit the desired local needs in order to produce credible evaluation results.

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