

A Review of Monitoring and Evaluation Processes of South Africa's Good Governance Practices

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in supporting good governance in South Africa. It investigated how M&E promotes good governance deliverables, such as transparency, accountability, and public involvement, and how this affects public administration practice. The reciprocal relationship between good governance and M&E was demonstrated by examining how emerging themes from M&E influence good governance in practice, specifically how the South African government promotes good governance. The paper is qualitative in character, with an emphasis on document analysis.

INTRODUCTION

There is a substantial body of work (Montigoe, 2012; Zwane, 2014; Mackay, 2007 & Mello, 2018) that investigates the influence of M&E on the performance of both public and private sector institutions. A review of the monitoring and evaluation literature reveals several commonalities and presents different arguments and dimensions that scholars use to describe M&E. Concisely, M&E is linked to best practices ensuring effective and good governance, accountability, openness, and public participation. To analyse and monitor commercial and public sector policy, a set of performance indicators is required that set standards for monitoring and analysing performance.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2009) defines monitoring on the one hand as an ongoing process by which stakeholders receive regular input on progress towards reaching organisational goals and objectives. Monitoring, according to this definition, involves more than just checking progress in the execution of actions and activities; it also includes reviewing progress and achievements against set goals. Good governance is critical in guaranteeing proper allocation and administration of public resources - an area plagued by numerous problems in South Africa. This research is significant therefore given its focus and the M&E problems that South Africa faces. It is worth noting that the features and essential concepts of effective governance are all key underlying tenets of democracy and M&E. M&E plays an important role in generating information on the implementation and results of a programme or projects. For efficiency-conscious organisations, to assess policy impacts and provide the basis for improved management and decision-making, as well as accountability to stakeholders M&E provides solid grounding (Pound et al., 2011).

Evaluation, on the other hand, is a rigorous and impartial review of finished or continuous operations - to identify fulfilment of specified objectives and contributing to decision making. Evaluation, like monitoring, can apply to a variety of things, such as an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, or organisation. The primary distinction between the two is that evaluations are conducted independently in order to provide managers and employees with an objective judgement of whether or not they are on track. In South Africa, this function, is however, carried out by the DPME in the Presidency. This government department completely focuses on ensuring that government plans are implemented, and current government objectives are met. Assessments are also more rigorous in terms of methods, design, and technique, and they generally involve more in-depth studies. Despite their differences, the goals of monitoring and evaluation are similar in that they both strive to offer information that may be used to guide decisions, enhance performance, and accomplish desired results.

The paper now provides discussions of the various themes emerging from M&E reviews in the sections, which follow.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AS GOOD GOVERNANCE

Governance is a process of making decisions and actioning such decisions. Governance is excellent when resources are distributed and managed correctly yielding a positive value for money. Eight major qualities of good governance are democratic, consensus-driven, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and adheres to the rule of law (Zwane, 2014). Where good governance prevails, corruption dwindles, minorities' perspectives are prioritised, and the voices of society's most disadvantaged are heard in the decision-making processes. Good governance is also a measure of timely responsiveness to the present and future needs of society; hence, it can be deduced that good governance is the panacea of sustainable community development.

Montigoe (2012:51), in Mhone and Edigheji (2004), defines good governance as "the manner by which governments undertake their tasks within a democracy and live up to its participatory and consultative requirements." Rooyen and Naidoo (2006:458), see good governance to comprise attempts at enhancing government institutions and civil society with the goal of making

government more responsible, open, transparent, democratic, participative, and promoting the rule of law. Gildenhuys and Knipe (2007:291) see good governance as reference to when government achieves its ultimate purpose of establishing conditions for a good and adequate quality of life for its citizens.

Figure 1: Linking good governance to M&E



Adapted from Naidoo (2011)

In a modernised world where terrible governance is increasingly seen as one of the fundamental causes of all evil, good governance is an ideal conclusion. When there are occasional shortages of medicines in hospitals and clinics, one realises the importance of effective governance processes. Figure 1 depicts how M&E can be utilised as a technique to attain outstanding results. Transparency and accountability are fundamental to both effective governance and M&E.

Both Zwane (2014) and Naidoo (2011) suggest that monitoring and assessment are critical to establishing effective governance. Governance and good governance are phrases that are increasingly being utilised in public administration and development literature. Good governance specifically, is the compound that attempts to accomplish people-centered effective service delivery. It can be applied in a variety of settings, including corporate governance, international governance, national and municipal governance. Governance is a set of ideals and ideas that encourage characteristics of transparency and accountability. Nelson's (2016), review of Leftwich (1993) suggests that there is a mixed bag of interpretations and understandings among researchers of what should be included in an all-inclusive definition of good governance, but the following are crucial features:

- An efficient public service.
- An independent judicial system.
- An enforceable legal framework.
- Accountable management and administration on public funds and an independent public auditor; and
- Respect for human rights and the law in all spheres of government.

The main challenge that emerges when turning good governance into a reality is attainment of sufficient management responsibility to implement M&E as a good governance tool (Mackay, 2007). Opponents of good governance may claim that there is a significant difference between the private and public sectors, and that the amorphous nature of public goods makes them unmeasurable because there is no bottom line. Public goods, on the other hand, can and must be measured, and Smith and Bratton (2001) agree that the public sector is "not unique in using resources and must account for them." As a result, the public sector too should demonstrate the value-addition while simultaneously being subjected to the same levels of scrutiny as the corporate sector. Furthermore, with increased private-public partnerships, the stark line between the private and public sectors has become more blurred, resulting in citizens having more exacting expectations of the governments they elect and the governance they expect. It implies therefore that M&E must demonstrate the value added by government at various levels. This is a departure from an unaccountable government acting behind an opaque and strange bureaucracy.

The researchers are of the opinion that, based on the above assertions of different authors, it may be contended that the principles of good governance are key for the effective functioning of the system of M&E. Principles are the unchanging, non-negotiable values that underlie a system (Levin, 2005:3). The principles of good governance, which should assist M&E, include unity in the policymaking, efficient and effective services delivery, and accountability by democratic institutions.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AS ENFORCERS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Monitoring and evaluation for the purpose of public accountability frequently implies an upward accountability to the government or funding agencies. M&E is commonly required to demonstrate that contracted work as well as stakeholder expectations of an organisation are carried out in accordance with agreed standards. M&E also includes reporting on results in relation to plans. Making programmes and plans transparent to the key stakeholders, who are public service clients, is what downward accountability entails. Performance monitoring assists in determining whether or not accountability for plan implementation is met. Evaluation aids in determining whether accountability for projected programme achievements is reached. Thus, both M and E are equally important in demonstrating that all stakeholders with vested interests in government operations are kept informed of developments and progress. This, in turn, allows for the timely implementation of actions as needed.

Possible indicators of downward accountability in the public service include:

- Mechanisms to incorporate feedback from all the stakeholders of the organisation.
- Clients' knowledge of available service providers.
- Willingness by clients to pay for services.
- Methods and measures for response to concerns raised by clients; and
- Availability of alternative service providers if clients are dissatisfied with the quality of received services (Christoplos, Sandison & Chipeta, 2012).

Accountability must be understood in the context of the principal-agent model, in which a principle delegated responsibility to an agent to act in the best interests of the principal and ensure accountability through economic and legal incentives and consequences. However, this knowledge is limited in that it only allows people with formal control over an entity to hold it accountable. According to Naidoo (2011:127), government departments are subject to numerous forms of accountability, each of which employs distinct methods to gather, assess, report, and act on various types of performance information. The requirement for the government to demonstrate its commitment to accountability is public knowledge and informs public mandate for the democratic state (Fox, 2010). In Naidoo (2011), accountability is critical state performance measuring component. The primary motivation for accountability comes from the political sector, as demonstrated by Taylor and Balloch (2005). According to Kusek and Rist (2004), in addition to being utilised for political decisions, evaluation is also employed for economic decisions. According to this research paper, there is widespread agreement that M&E plays a critical role in maintaining accountability.

Ntshakala and Nzimakwe's (2013) description of accountability has resonance with the views of Nelson (2016:86) as the desire for decision-makers in the corporate, governmental, and community sectors to be held accountable by the general public and by institutional stakeholders, Fox (2010) in Nelson (2016:86) defines public accountability as follows:

- The responsibility of government towards the public to achieve predetermined goals and objectives and to be held accountable.
- The commitment required from public officials to accept public responsibility for either action or inaction; and
- The understood obligation of the subordinates' role in the public sector to keep senior managers informed of their execution of duties.

According to Nelson (2016), accountability is thus the responsibility of the executing organisation to offer transparency regarding information that affects individuals affiliated with the executing organisation. M&E influences accountability by making resources publicly available and the municipality being open to inspection by the community they serve. M&E may considerably improve on the need for answerability and responsible decision making in the public sector based on the preceding definitions of the good governance principle of accountability.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AS ENFORCERS OF TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is non-negotiable, particularly in the setting of the principal-agent issue and when individuals are custodians of public resources including public funds. Citizens must have access to performance indicators and scoreboards in order to assess how well they are being served. The introduction of sophisticated tracking and performance management software has actually made performance tracking and therefore transparency is more easier. Monitoring how successfully a government provided citizen services was either not done at all or only a surface skimmed exercise in the past. According to Bauhr and Grimes (2012), policymakers and researchers have recently focused more attention on the relevance of government openness for accountability and good governance. Fox (2010) in Nelson (2016:86) suggest that transparency is "all activities pertaining to public management and administration occurring in public and not under the guise of secrecy or confidentiality." Furthermore, Ntshakala and Nzimakwe (2013:114) see transparency as the open flow of information to and from the public. As a result, M&E has an impact on the good governance principle of transparency, because all information in the government's possession must be made public.

Transparency is believed to be a fundamental prerequisite for improved quality of governance, improved accountability, and a reduced potential for corruption and impunity (Kaufmann et al., 2002; Kurtzman et al., 2004 and Stiglitz, 2002). The concept of transparency has been studied in a variety of domains including negotiation theory (Stasavage, 2004), international security (Florini, 2002), and state or regime effectiveness. However, there is no universal singular definition of transparency (Relly & Sabharwal, 2009; Florini 2007). Transparency is sometimes generally confused with "good governance", which limits its applicability and makes finding good operationalisations of the phrase difficult (Grigorescu, 2003). The information generated by M&E projects and systems is crucial for raising awareness and stimulating debate regarding the effectiveness of government programmes and policies. It can empower citizens to keep their government responsible, as long as processes are in place for the government to use this feedback to adjust its budgeting, planning, or programming efficiency.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AS ENFORCERS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

An increasing body of evidence indicates that effective evaluation techniques depend critically on client involvement. Participatory data gathering is facilitated, and lessons are generated by those who are truly interested in learning if a system functions well (Martin et al, 2011). Crucially, public service beneficiaries must be included in the process of creating the

indicators for this kind of M&E system. The most pertinent question is how can we effectively and efficiently ensure full participation by all stakeholders? Pound et al., (2011) makes the case for review teams that include both internal and external members. This approach combines the advantages of an "impartial" viewpoint with greater ownership driven by internal actors who actively participate. Participation in a program-level evaluation encompasses a spectrum of activities ranging from consultation at critical decision points to complete participation at all stages. Planning for an appropriate degree of participation and consultation in the evaluation process should begin during the programming stage, as this has a significant impact on the assessment's time frame and budget. Participation in the evaluation process should also be considered as part of the programme of M&E policy because program-level evaluations are typically built on previous ones and set expectations for future ones. According to Ntshakala and Nzimakwe (2013:114), public engagement is the expectation that communities would be directly involved in government decision-making. Furthermore, Silima and Auriacombe (2013:45) stated that community participation is important for:

- Community needs are identified, known addressed;
- The community becomes informed and educated about government; and
- It fosters cooperation from the community and relevant stakeholders.

Public participation has long been the means by which government agencies engage with communities and educate them in order to guarantee active community involvement in choices that have an immediate impact on the services that are provided to them. Participation from the public also gives communities the chance to watch how government agencies are providing services. Ward committee performance serves as an indication of community involvement. Ultimately, the public participation in the monitoring and assessment of public service policies and programmes can improve the government performance in service delivery. Moreover, Netswera (2011) in his paper, "The Rhetoric of Political Election Manifestos: An Analysis of the African National Congress Local Government Elections Manifestos Between 1995 and 2011" is of the view that, regular elections and citizen participation in those elections is a form of participation in governance. He bemoans even more, saying, "It appears that the election system is a valuable tool for empowering society, as it allows people to elect leaders on a regular basis, possibly based on the priorities stated in their election manifestos." This paper shares sentiments with the scholar on his sterling analysis that, public service beneficiaries must participate in all types of government elections so as to form part of governance participation.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Corporate governance information systems are extremely complicated, involving many different players, decision-making, transactional processes, suitable technologies, protocols, and codes of good practice. Analysing the potential role that information technology could play in this endeavour is necessary to guarantee the effectiveness and efficiency of corporate governance as a foundation for improving the performance of the business and solidifying its position on the capital market (Claudiu Brandas, 2011). Zwane (2014:102) asserts that in order for M&E to be fruitful, findings must be clearly stated and used as a benchmark for performance evaluation. Results provide a basis for collecting data on the need for a service, the inputs to that service, the service outputs, and the results. Indicators of these results can be used to measure important dynamics such as the quality of governance or effectiveness of services (Levine & Bland, 2000).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AS CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Gildenhuys and Knipe (2007) in Montingoe (2012:47) assets that most constitutions provide for a multi-level governance structure. According to Smit and Cronje (1996:62), a "system" is a collection of connected parts that work together as a whole. A multi-level government system, according to Gildenhuys and Knipe (2007:6), entails the replication of similar government institutions, for example, at the municipal, regional, and national levels. According to Van der Walldt et al., (2007:17), South Africa chose to have three levels of government: the national, provincial, and municipal. According to Malan (2005) in Motingoe (2012:47), the Constitution envisions a state in which the three branches of government collaborate and communicate regularly. As a result, it offers a set of guidelines to govern the character and extent of those interactions. The pursuit of an integrated and cohesive government to accomplish state objectives is a recurrent theme in cooperative governance practice.

The regulations that oversee cooperative government and intergovernmental relations are outlined in Chapter 3 of the RSA Constitution (1996). In this regard, cooperation between the three parts of government is required to support and coordinate each other's efforts, according to Section 41(h) of the Constitution (1996). A company cannot have all the components of effective corporate governance without information integrity and the avoidance of abusive use of all information by all parties involved in the internal or external governance system of the company (Musson & Jordan, 2005). Using information technology (IT) in this way might be perceived as a true aid in guaranteeing strong corporate governance, claims Lazarides and Drimpetas (2008). The five components of good corporate governance are independence, responsibility, accountability, transparency, and fairness. It is imperative that businesses provide information in a timely, accurate, and comparable manner, while also making it easily accessible to stakeholders. It goes without saying that, in order to provide this specific information during the decision-making process, supporting technologies are required. As a result, one of the most important components required to enhance sound corporate governance and its regulatory frameworks is e-governance.

According to Nelson (2016:86), the foundation of corporate governance is made up of several policy texts, such as the Performance Management Regulations from 2001, the White Paper on Transforming the Public Service (Batho Pele White Paper) from 1997, and the Constitution from 1996. Corporate governance, in the words of Visser (2013:2), "goes beyond

management" and "essentially determines whether the public service is effective and efficient in providing services." The goal of corporate governance, according to Fourie (2009) in Govender (2011:22), is to guarantee that public sector organisations engage in public accountability and that their operations are carried out in accordance with ethical norms. It should be mentioned that the following actions are part of corporate governance:

- Risk management;
- Anti-corruption and anti-fraud; and
- Audit committee.

According to Bekker (2009:7), effective corporate governance should involve public officials who possess the requisite knowledge and abilities, comprehend their role and purpose as government employees, strive to realise the public service's vision and mission, and provide updates on government actions taken to carry out its plan. Additionally, Nelson (2016:86) notes Govender (2011) when stating that corporate governance is excellent when it permits the public service to function effectively and efficiently and when it results in conformity with pertinent statutes. According to the points made before, corporate governance is based on several legal frameworks and policy frameworks that have led to the creation of initiatives like audit committees, risk management, and anti-corruption and anti-fraud initiatives. Furthermore, the arguments made emphasise that corporate governance needs to go beyond managerial techniques in order to be effective and efficient. When the state's powers and functions are divided among the three branches of government, one of the main goals of using the M&E policy to improve performance should be the efficient provision of services.

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology, as noted by Brynard and Hanekom (2006:35) and Mouton (2011), is the process of gathering and analysing data within the parameters of a research project. Mouton (2011) further highlights the significance of the methods and instruments employed in a research investigation. Yin (1994) contends that secondary sources can provide data for case studies without requiring a visit to the organisation being studied. A qualitative research design was used in this work to investigate, characterise, and interpret themes that emerged from M&E. It collected data from various sources, including journal articles, dissertations, and annual reports, using desktop analytics. Given that the primary goal of the paper was to investigate and better understand the difficulties that arise in the implementation of M&E's emerging themes in the public service.

EXPANSION OF THE EXISTING BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

This paper produces knowledge in several fields. An understanding of the relationship between M&E and governance. Despite their differences, the names and concepts are closely related. Global requirements for excellent governance and service delivery can be met using M&E. The paper investigated whether M&E has taken centre stage in all managerial activities, with the public service basing decision-making on the use of objective facts. The paper further investigated how M&E may be used to financial and HR data in addition to service-related data, covering all facets of management. This paper argued that there needs to be an iterative link between planning, implementation, and monitoring. This paper sought to establish whether that iterative link exists.

CONCLUSION

Themes that emerge from M&E in the context of the paper are covered in this paper. M&E has evolved into a facilitator and catalyst for the formation of corporate governance, accountability, transparency, good governance, and people-centered service delivery, as explained in the various parts. The paper's arguments in this section have made clear that, when implemented properly, M & E can bring about the much-needed change in terms of establishing an open government, a bottom-up approach to tailoring public services, better value for money, and the prompt implementation of corrective action whenever policy implementation falls short of expected goals. Even if the concepts under discussion are inseparable, they are the solution to public service efficacy.

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32. Paper dedication and acknowledgements
33. I would like to thank the NIHSS for its major financial contributions of this paper to be finished. I would like to thank Professor Barry Hanyane who supervised the thesis this paper has been extracted from and may your soul rest in peace Mkhuluwa. Lastly, Prof Zweli Mpehle may you also rest' bhuti'.