Monitoring and evaluation in the public sector: a case of the Department of Home Affairs (South Africa)

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Abstract

The unprecedented economic, political, social and technological challenges around the world is forcing governments to think differently and adopt new approaches and reforms to enhance the performance of the public service. The performance of the South African public sector has been hindered by a number of challenges over the last two decades. In response to these challenges the government introduced a Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework which provided guidelines on how Departments should carry out Monitoring and Evaluation functions. The introduction of the Policy Framework for the GWM&E System is part of the public service reform and the approach towards increasing the Government's effectiveness, by putting more emphasis on M&E. This research analyses the influence of the M&E Framework on service delivery within the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa. The study utilised a qualitative research approach, comprising interviews and documentary evidence. The study found that the M&E framework is a critical tool that brings performance processes together for the enhancement of service delivery. The article concluded that implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework by the Public Sector should be geared towards improvements of service delivery, for the benefit of citizens. As a result, it recommended that government departments such as the Department of Home Affairs should strengthen the support services within the Monitoring and Evaluation teams and also expand the structure to all levels within their departments. Advocacy and Communication Plans should be in place and should be used as tools to overcome misconceptions or lack of information about M&E; Plans should also be put in place to monitor utilisation of performance information as this is key in ensuring evidence-based development of policies, planning and decision making.

Introduction

In South Africa, significant growth in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) has been observed in the public sector since 2004, when the need for M&E in strengthening governance was first raised as a priority for the country in the State of the Nation Address by then President Thabo Mbeki. Since then, various legislative and policy mandates have been defined in order to set the parameters for the implementation of M&E throughout the country.

Literature shows that M&E is considered a key feature of public service delivery as it assists government to ensure good "governance, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and delivery of tangible results", as well as to respond to the needs and demands of all its service delivery beneficiaries, (Kuset and Rist, 2004: xi). A study

conducted by Okello (2014:1736) found that effective service delivery is dependent on the manner in which the "objectives, indicators, inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact and implementation strategies" are structured. This permits the collection of quality data that would serve as input towards the development of policies and implementation of projects. Hence the need for a M&E framework. According to Ntoyanto (2016:14), by monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes and projects, service delivery can be ensured. Also, by practicing M&E, funds can be effectively utilised and this could also result in improved performance, more accountability and better and informed decision-making across all spheres of government. This study corroborates with the above studies and highlights that the M&E framework should be considered a critical tool that brings performance processes together for the enhancement of service delivery.

This study, serves as input not only to the academic body of knowledge but also in enhancing the general understanding of the role and importance of M&E in promoting service delivery in the public sector using the case study of the Department of Home Affairs and the impact this has on effective and efficient delivery of public services. Furthermore, the study will assist the Department in fostering a culture that values the role of M&E. Research on the implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation is still limited in South Africa. This will help in identifying new policy areas and those that need improvements for effective implementation. There is a growing need for more research and contribution on the implementation of government reforms and how these are influencing service delivery, which is still a huge challenge in South Africa. To respond to this, the following research questions were used in this study:

- What is the relationship between monitoring and evaluation and performance of the Department of Home Affairs?
- What effect does the DHA Monitoring and Evaluation Framework have in promoting service delivery?
- What are the challenges and opportunities for improving M&E practice at the DHA?
- What can be done to improve the efficiency of the DHA M & E framework?

The remaining structure of this study is as follows: The following section explores the methodology of the study; followed by the theoretical overview / Framework; research methodology that underpins the study; presentation and discussion of findings and a conclusion.

Design and Methodology

The study used the qualitative research approach. A qualitative research technique is aimed at producing in-depth information in order to describe and understand a problem that is under study by soliciting views and perceptions from a small group of people (Queiros, Faria and Almeida, 2017:370). Furthermore, by adopting the qualitative method of research, the researcher was able to solicit inputs which assisted in creating an understanding of the topic under study through the experiences of identified officials within the Department of Home Affairs who are actively involved in decision making and M&E activities.

The research design consisted of semi-structured interviews. This method of data

collection was used to gain a detailed understanding of participants' beliefs and perceptions about the topic (De Vos *et al*., 2014:302-342). During the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 2 officials from the M&E Unit, 4 Senior Managers in Provincial offices and 5 Provincial Office Managers. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown rules electronic platforms were utilised to collect data and for the majority of interviews, telephonic interviews were conducted. Furthermore, documentary Research was also employed during data collection. Documentary research method is referred to as the analysis of documents that contains information about the topic under study (Ahmed, 2010:2) As a result, this method was also employed during data collection. A comprehensive review of DHA Annual Reports and Plans dating from 2013-2014 financial year to date, was conducted to substantiate the findings of the study.

Study Site

The study used the case study research design. The case study selected was the Department of Home Affairs. This Department was chosen as the study area because it is one of the government departments in South Africa that has a well constituted M&E Directorate, which is key for planning and providing assistance to business units to ensure that there is a coherent logic and alignment between selected outcomes, objectives, outputs and inputs (DHA M&E Framework, 2015:12).

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is a key enabler of service delivery and security across government and private sectors. It is "a critical enabler of citizen empowerment, inclusive development, efficient administration and national security" (DHA, 2019:7). One of the Department's strategic objectives is to provide "secure, efficient, effective and accessible service delivery to citizens and immigrants" (DHA, 2019:9). It is committed to providing quality services to both its internal and external stakeholders by meeting their expectations and needs.

The DHA plays a fundamental part in the lives of all South Africans. The civil registration function of the DHA impacts on the lives of citizens and on the functioning of the state and the economy. The Department serves both the public and private clients in their provision of services. This pertains to provision of services relating to the identification of persons and the determination of their statuses. For an example, access to the pensions and child-support grant system depends on the availability of the birth certificate and the identity documents (DHA, 2019:35). Furthermore, for all commercial banks to be able to effectively function and enter into contractual agreements, there is a dependency on the Department of Affairs for reliable identification and verification of their clients (DHA, 2019:35).

The work of the DHA is also guided by the Constitution (1996), notably Section 7(2) which obliges all state institutions to "respect, protect, promote and fulfil the Bill of Rights". There are also various pieces of legislation governing the work of the DHA. Much of the legislation currently administered by the DHA such as the Death Registration Act, 1992, (Act No. 51 of 1992) Marriage Act, 1961, (Act No. 25 of 1961), South African Citizenship Act, 1995 (Act No. 88 of 1995), Refugees Act, 1998 (Act No. 130 of 1998) etc., are the products of multiple amendments of laws inherited from the apartheid era. One consequence is that

"such legislation and regulations may not be grounded in coherent policies that are fully aligned with the Constitution, new legislation and current developments, which consequently impact negatively on service delivery" (DHA, 2019:57).
The Department has long been accused of long queues, discriminatory practices and abuse of human rights pertaining to provision of some of its services.

Research Ethics

Before the study was carried out, Ethics Clearance from the University's ethics Committee was obtained and throughout the study, the University's ethics protocols in dealing with ethical considerations were applied. Additionally, approval was obtained from the Department of Home Affairs granting permission to conduct interviews with officials. Throughout the study, the Researcher conformed to ethical principles that promoted informed consent and confidentiality. Keeping respondents safe is also another important ethical consideration adhered to for everyone involved in a study. To reduce the increased exposure of respondents to risks of everyday life and social interaction such as infectious illnesses (e.g. COVID-19), the semi-structured interviews were conducted electronically with all the participants.

Fieldwork

The primary research was conducted between September 2020 and January 2021. For this study, a total of 11 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 1 x Senior Manager in the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate; 1 x Manager in the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate; 5 x Office Managers at Frontline Offices within the Department of Home Affairs and 4 x Senior Managers at Provincial Offices within the Department of Home Affairs. All interviews focused on: 1) the relationship between organisational performance and M & E; 2) the effectiveness of the DHA M&E framework in promoting service delivery; 3) the challenges and opportunities for improving M & E practice at the DHA and 4) recommendations for improving M & E efficiency at DHA. The interviews conducted included middle and senior managers who had first-hand experience and were responsible for the implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in their areas of work.

Selection of the research participants

The researcher used purposive sampling to target participants. For this study, middle and senior managers who had first-hand experience and were responsible for the implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in their areas of work were identified from a list of all managers that was provided to the researcher by the Department.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was applied. Once data had been collected, the raw data was categorised, synthesised and coded using thematic analysis, to identify themes. Data was then reported based on the identified themes. The themes were categorised according to the different research objectives in the questionnaire, which included the relationship between M&E and performance of the Department of Home Affairs, the

effect of DHA M&E Framework on service delivery, the challenges and opportunities for improving M&E practice at the DHA and improvements upon the efficiency of the DHA M & E framework to better their practice.

Background and context of the study

Discourse of M&E

Existing literature reveal that there is currently no universal definition of what constitutes M&E and also, that definitions of evaluations are ever evolving. However, this study adopts definitions by the Presidency (1997:1) and the OECD (2002:27). The Presidency (1997:1) defines Monitoring as "the collection, analysing, and reporting of data on inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts as well as external factors, in a way that supports effective management" and Evaluation as "a time-bound and periodic exercise that seeks to provide credible and useful information to answer specific questions to guide decision making by staff, managers and policy makers".

These definitions are similar to that of the OECD (2002:27) which state that, Monitoring is "a continuous function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and main stakeholders of an on-going development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives...allocated funds" whilst Evaluation refers to "the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results". The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process…"

The definitions above indicate that the two terms are distinct in nature yet complementary. They are complementary in that monitoring, by its very nature is on-going whilst evaluation is a post-event activity. As a result, managers receive continuous feedback from M&E both pre, during and post the implementation process. By implementing monitoring, public institutions are "simultaneously evaluating as they make judgments about progress and interventions that need to be introduced. Similarly, when they evaluate, they do so on the basis of the insights and information they have acquired from monitoring" (Phetla,2017:13-14).

This implies that Monitoring serves as a feedback mechanism upon which progress on achievement of set targets, objectives and indicators and early warning signs of problematic areas needing to be corrected are communicated to managers and all affected stakeholders. The relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability may be assessed through the evaluation exercise. Through the conducting of evaluations, "crosscutting lessons from operating unit experiences are extracted and determinations of the need for modifications to strategic results frameworks are made" (The Presidency, 1997:1).

The predominant focus of monitoring is on tracking program implementation and progress, including inputs that contribute to the achievements of service delivery output, activities and processes used to produce the desired outputs, outputs produced and initial outcome achieved as a result of the outputs produced. The focus

is thus on both what is being done in a program and how it is being done, with the aim of identifying the necessary corrective action, if any.

For monitoring to take place, targets and indicators are often used as an important point of reference for monitoring. Monitoring is thus primarily used to support management and accountability. Evaluations on the other hand, move beyond the tracking focus of monitoring and focuses on forming judgements about program performance, identification of deeper and nuanced understanding of change and issues associated with a program and developing explanations of what is being identified. Evaluations are aimed at informing policy and program development based

M&E is considered an enabler in the journey to transform the public service into being 'efficient, effective and responsive to citizens and Parliament'. Effective M&E could result in "improved identification and correction of deviations during programme implementation, the achievement of high performance, improved employee and management competencies, and the enhanced accountability that could as a result lead to the improvement in service delivery" (Mviko, 2015:5).

What is key to note is that there are performance information concepts which provide definitions and standards structures, systems and processes which are key in the management of performance information. These include inputs, outputs, activities, outcomes and impact. Majola (2014:30) elaborates on the meaning of these concepts and indicates that a) Inputs pertains to all the resources that are used as contribution towards production of service delivery. These are all the resources that are used and work done to produce service delivery outputs. These resources include human resources, equipment, systems, budget, and buildings; b) Activities are in essence, what gets done or actions or processes by utilising inputs to produce the outputs; c) Outputs are goods and services that get produced through utilisation of resources for delivery of services. These are what get produced in the quest for service delivery; d) Outcomes are the results for specific group of people which are as a result of producing outputs. and e) Impact pertains to discernible changes brought about by the services produced and offered to communities and all citizens.

According to the Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (i.e. the PPI Framework) of 2007, performance information should be structured in such a way that the manner in which the government intends utilising its available resources to deliver on its mandate is clearly demonstrated (The FMPPI, 2007:1). Kimaro, Fourie and Tshiyoyo (2018:208) state that M&E systems should be created for the purposes of facilitating the utilisation of performance information. It therefore becomes the government's responsibility to put measures in place to ensure the generation of performance information (supply) for utilisation in decision-making. In institutions where M&E is institutionalised, this should be done through a compilation of quality reports generated from the M&E system. Performance information should thus become part and puzzle of management decision-making process.

There are different forms applied in M&E functions and their applications are dependent or determined by the context or environment within which they exist. Their interrelatedness and equal power to improve the manner in which governments and organisations perform should not be underestimated. It is also important to

note the complementarities between M&E and a fit between the two which must be promoted at all times (Markiewicz and Patrick, 2016:12-15).

Additionally, the success of the implementation of the M&E systems is dependent upon the availability of well-trained personnel. Mthethwa and Jili (2016:102) posit that a shortage of skills is one of the factors that prevent the successful implementation of M&E in municipalities. The knowledge, skills and competence required for those performing duties related to M&E of public projects is limited, leading to the inability to develop an institutional M&E system (including M&E plans, indicators and tools). This consequently implies that, because of the lack of M&E skills and competence by officials to design and implement a proper M&E system, it becomes difficult if not impossible to track progress on achievement of projects or targets, and to draw lessons from the performance information. This results in the making uninformed decisions that compromise attainment of effective and efficient service delivery.

Capacity building remains one of the key elements for M&E. It is a two-sided phenomenon which involves role players who supply and generate M&E information and those who demand or use M&E information. As a result, there is a need for adequate capacity to effectively produce, interpret and translate M&E information into actions. Institutions' and employees' capacity to "design, implement and refine the M&E system is vital for effective institutionalisation of M&E" (Kimaro, Fourie and Tshiyoyo, 2018:215).

Importance of M&E in the Public Sector

Monitoring and Evaluation is considered an enabler in the journey to transform the public service into being 'efficient, effective and responsive to citizens and Parliament'. Various countries have adopted different approaches to public sector reforms according to their specific requirements, aligned with M&E systems.

Monitoring and evaluation is used for various purposes. M&E may be used for making decisions by management, as a tool to promote learning within an organisation, with the ultimate aim of improving how government operates and does things, and also how they provide services to meet the needs and expectations of citizens. M&E systems are not meant to replace good management practices. Instead they are there to enhance managerial processes by providing evidence for decision-making (Ojok, 2015:20).

M&E plays a critical role in helping managers acquire information needed to make decisions such as program direction and continuation and ensure optimal utilisation of resources (Phetla, 2017:1). The implementation of the M&E as part of the decision making process is more important than the formal requirement of M&E. Ojok (2015:20) argues that "the real accomplishment of M&E are not the reports or facts produced but comprise the higher quality of information procured". The real product for M&E therefore, becomes a high quality decision making. The M&E system should provide evidence for decision-making. The argument by Ojok (2015:20) above corroborates with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 2016:1) stance that a good M&E system is not only about collection of statistical information, but rather that the effective and efficient implementation of the M&E System is dependent on the extent to which it is planned, managed and resourced to

make it 'stick'.

Furthermore, the quality of public decisions significantly depends on the quality of analysis and advise provided. The extent to which information is accurate and how it is presented becomes key in helping managers make informed decisions (Head,2016:472; Ojok,2015:20). Performance information should as a result, be used for monitoring of performance, optimal allocation of resources and enhancement of the quality of service delivery (Lee and Fisher, 2007:53).

What is key to note is that high quality evidence, coupled with leadership, capacity and concerted action are necessary 'ingredients' for quality decision making processes that result in better decisions and service delivery. Therefore, using evidence to inform policies and programmes and better decision making requires leadership, capacity and concerted action (Aryeetey *et al*., 2017: 2-3). These are critical for the consolidation of learning from an M&E system (Ijeoma, 2014:84).

Apart from M&E serving the very important purpose of informing the decisions made by managers in their organisations, it is also meant to generate knowledge and promote the learning within an organisation. Learning is one of the primary purposes of M&E and consequently, organisational learning should be seen as an outcome of M&E. The results from M&E should help create learning within an organisation and its utilisation as a management tool results in learning to improve planning, service delivery and the ideal allocation of resources. M&E is thus one of the important tools utilised to improve service delivery, and the emphasis is thus placed upon the manner in which M&E information is utilised (Ojok, 2015:21; Abrahams, 2015:10).

The role of organisational learning is said to be the most challenging outcome of M&E. Ideally, the information that comes out of the M&E system should be such that it helps foster a culture of learning in an organisation and improves service delivery. The information collected should be converted into "analytical, action-oriented reports that facilitate effective decision-making" (Ijeoma, 2014:31). For many organisations, the conversion of such information into lessons learnt has not been easy.

Evaluations are conducted for the purpose of organisational learning. Various scholars argue that "different types of evaluations are appropriate for answering different kinds of questions" and there is thus no "one size fits all evaluation template to put against the variety of questions". One of the principles guiding evaluations in the South African Public Service is that these must be utilisation-orientated and must also promote learning (The National Evaluation Policy Framework, 2011:4). Therefore, it is the responsibility of all government departments to include evaluations as part of the functions of management as a way to continuously improving performance. Results coming from evaluations should be discussed at management meetings and forums to serve as a basis for planning, budget decisions and general decision-making (Ijeoma,2014:93).

M&E systems provide continuous feedback and enable governments and organisations to develop an understanding of the different projects, programmes and policies that are successful and also more generally, what is working or not working as planned, and reasons why things are not working as planned, whilst promoting organisational learning. How information is used triggers knowledge management, which means learning from experience, learning from the results, analysis and analysis of results

(Ijeoma,2014:59-60).

According to the World Bank (2010:1) the effectiveness of the capacity of M&E framework is assessed by among others, the strength of the demand for evaluation. Porter and Goldman (2013:1) argue that demand for M&E is shown when there is appetite for utilisation of information from the M&E systems by decision makers to enable them to make choices. However, "when there is great capacity to supply M&E information, but low capacity to demand quality evidence, there is then a mismatch between supply and demand" (Porter and Goldman (2013:1). The mismatch between supply and demand of M&E leads to monitoring masquerading as evaluation.

M&E is a key feature of public service delivery as it assists government to ensure good "governance, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and delivery of tangible results", as well as to respond to the needs and demands of all its service delivery beneficiaries, (Kuset and Rist, 2004: xi). By monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes and projects, service delivery can be ensured. Also, by practicing M&E, funds can be effectively utilised and this could also result in improved performance, more accountability and better and informed decision-making across all spheres of government, (Ntoyanto, 2016:14).

The conducting of organisational performance monitoring enable government to learn about what is working and what is not with the aim of improving service delivery. The information that comes out of the M&E system should help foster a culture of learning in an organisation. M&E can only play a significant role in the accountability process if measures are put in place through regular exchange of information, reporting, knowledge products, learning sessions and the evaluation management learning process and planning (UNDP,2009:182).

Institutionalisation of M&E in the South African Public Sector

The South African Public Service has three national, provincial and local spheres of government which consist of dedicated ministries assigned with the responsibility of managing public services based on democratic values and principles of the South African Constitution, 1996 and delivering such services in an impartial, equitable and fair manner. This is aimed at addressing the remnants of the apartheid era by being responsive to the needs and expectations of citizens, particularly those from poor and disadvantaged communities (IDASA, 2010:6). Further to this, historical poor delivery of services to citizens by the South African government is compelling it to try to do things right the first time in the delivery of services. However, challenges pertaining to poor service delivery still persist in South Africa, largely as a result of poor M&E.

In an effort to transform and change the culture of the public service into a more effective environment, Government introduced several policies that include the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery. The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997 provides the basis upon on which service delivery strategies are developed by departments in the national and provincial spheres of government, in order to enhance provision of quality and equal services. It is thus the responsibility of all government departments to ensure the identification of M&E mechanisms and to design structures to enable the measurement of progress whilst also introducing corrective action, where a need arises.

It was for this reason that the national government first introduced in 2007, the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&E) System Policy Framework aimed at improving effectiveness, accountability and transparency across all spheres of government and its public entities. The Framework consists of tools such as "standards, processes, strategies, plans, information systems, reporting lines and indicators" to assist all government departments in carrying out their M&E responsibilities effectively, (The Presidency, 2007:1). As a result, M&E processes were put in place to assist the public sector in continuously assessing its performance with the aim of identifying the contributory factors which to its service delivery outcomes (The Presidency, 2007:1). By monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes and projects, the government aims at ensuring that service delivery is achieved, funds are effectively utilised and this could also result in improved performance, more accountability and better and informed decision-making across all spheres of government, (Ntoyanto, 2016:14).

Consequently, the Results-Based Management approach was adopted in South Africa and this has assisted government departments to design policies that are responsive to citizen's service delivery needs. The adoption of this approach also ensured that there is alignment of planned objectives of government programmes etc., to achieve the desired results. According to Majola (2014:21), with this approach, the emphasis is placed on planning, M&E, and management. In essence, the result based management should become part of the organisational culture, policies, embedded processes and decision-making procedures (Majola, 2014:21). It is thus the responsibility of all departments in all spheres of government to ensure development of relevant indicators that are aimed at promoting the M&E of the services they provide (Magagula, 2019:41).

As Kimaro, Fourie and Tshiyoyo (2018:208) argue, M&E systems should be created for the purposes of facilitating the utilisation of performance information for improvement of decision-making and service delivery. It therefore becomes the government's responsibility to put measures in place to ensure the generation of performance information (supply) for utilisation in decision-making. This should be done through a compilation of quality reports generated from the M&E system. Performance information should thus become part and puzzle of management decision-making process.

What is critical to note is the roles and responsibilities that key public organisations are assigned with in ensuring the ownership and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation by government departments. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation thus becomes the champion for the coordination of M&E across government (Ijeoma, 2014:182-183). Another key stakeholder is the National Treasury which is responsible for ensuring and ascertaining that the information produced throughout the M&E result chain (i.e. inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes) serves as a basis of processes relating to planning, budgeting, reporting and implementation management.

The Statistician-General, who is the Head of the StatsSA, is mandated by Section 14 (a-c) of the Statistics Act of 1999 to assess and declare statistics produced by governments departments and other public institutions as official statistics, based on

the quality of the statistics produced (Ijeoma, 2014:182). Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has the responsibility to ensure transformation within the Public Service whilst also increasing the public service's effectiveness and improving governance. These and other stakeholders, such as the Public Service Commission, Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation have the responsibility of ensuring that government-wide monitoring and evaluation is undertaken responsibly by relevant line departments, (Kariuki & Reddy, 2017: 3).

As currently conceptualised, the Policy framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation is dependent upon systems in government departments to generate information from which the performance of government can be measured. It is therefore the responsibility of each department to have in place a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and as a result, Accounting Officers of departments are obliged to establish M&E systems for their respective institutions (The Presidency, 2007:14; Phetla, 2017:24). Implementation of these systems is guided by several principles. These principles include the principle that there should be clear linkages of the implementation plan with prior public sector reform initiatives; incorporation and consolidation of existing M&E initiatives at all spheres of government, all aligned to the overall aims of government; integration of systems and seamless exchange of data; development and enforcement of statistical data and reviewing of the implementation plan against milestones on a regular basis.

The Presidency is mandated to coordinate the process of implementing government policies by all departments to ensure integrated service delivery. Another key stakeholder is office of the Auditor General which needs to ensure the implementation of the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework by relevant line departments (Kiriuki and Reddy, 2017:3-4).

As indicated in the introduction, various legislative and policy mandates have been defined in order to set the parameters for the implementation of M&E throughout the country. For example, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) obligates all government departments and public institutions to provide services impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias. In line with the Constitution, senior managers of public institutions are obliged to respond to people's needs, be accountable and transparent at all times by making available accurate information as and when required, to Parliament and to citizens for utilisation in holding government accountable in their delivery of services.

The Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System Policy Framework (2007) is aimed at ensuring that there is value derived from the performance information produced and the manner in which it is interpreted and analysed within departments and municipalities from when resources are identified and utilised to coming up with public services that bring about discernible changes to the lives of citizens." (The Presidency, 2007:1). Other key pieces of legislation include the National Evaluation Policy Framework (2011) which is aimed at promoting the conducting of evaluations on programmes by government institutions (The Presidency,2011:2; Phetla, 2017:19). Also key is the South African Statistics Quality Assurance Framework (2008) which is aimed at enhancing and extending transparency in data evaluation and also improving the quality of performance

information across all government departments and public institutions. The SASQAF provides an outline of the process to be followed in the collection of the information produced from the M&E (Stats SA, 2008: 1; Phetla, 2017:20).

As currently conceptualised, the effectiveness of the Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System in measuring performance of government is dependent on the provision of quality information by all spheres of government. It must thus be noted that for the GWM&E System Policy Framework to be successfully implemented, there must be clear objectives and proper coordination and integration.

Presentation and Discussion of Results

Overview of the Department of Home Affairs

The Department of Home Affairs is a government organisation established in terms of Section 197 of the South African Constitution of 1996. The mandate of the DHA is derived from various Acts of Parliament and their accompanying Regulations and policy documents. The primary mandate of the DHA is the "Management of citizenship and civil registration, international migration, refugee protection and the population register through the delivery of enabling services to all citizens, foreign nationals, government and the private sector" (DHA, 2019:5). The Department is required to give administrative effect to the founding constitutional provision relating to common South African citizenship which states that "all citizens are equally entitled to the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship" and are also "equally subject to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship" (The Constitution, 1996:3).

The DHA is one of the government departments in South Africa that has a well constituted Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate, which is considered key in the implementation of proper strategic management and reporting. In order to conduct the research with ease, it was necessary to develop an understanding of the role and the general background of the organisation that is under study.

The manner in which Department of Home Affairs is structurally arranged is aligned with its mandate to enable it to deliver the services it is required to deliver to citizens. the DHA is made up of three Programmes that are aimed at ensuring the realisation of its mandate and these are briefly discussed below: Firstly, Programme One on Administration provides strategic leadership, management and support services to Programmes 2 and 3 which are core businesses of the Department. The functions supporting the core business include policy and strategic management, audit services, finance, counter corruption and security services, human resource management, communications, legal services, intergovernmental services and information services (DHA Annual Report, 2018-2019:64-74).

The study used the qualitative research approach which provided a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the M&E Framework within the Department of Home Affairs and how this improved performance and service delivery. By adopting the qualitative method of research, the researcher was able to solicit inputs which assisted in creating an understanding of the topic under study through the experiences of identified officials within the Department of Home Affairs

who are actively involved in decision making and M&E activities. The research design consisted of Interviews or Interviewing which is one of the widely used methods of data collection in qualitative research. This method of data collection was used to gain a detailed picture of participants' beliefs and perceptions about a topic under discussion or study (De Vos *et al*., 2014:302-342). During the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 2 officials from the M&E Unit, 4 Senior Managers in Provincial offices and 5 Provincial Office Managers. Furthermore, documentary Research was also employed during data collection. A comprehensive review of DHA Annual Reports and Plans dating from 2013-2014 financial year to date, was conducted to substantiate the findings of the study.

Findings

Interviews with participants confirmed the existing relationship between the M&E Framework and organisational performance and the influence that the Framework has on service delivery. The study found that improvements in governance practices and the introduction of stringent monitoring and evaluation processes, assisted the Department in the improvement of its performance since 2015. Interviews with participants further indicated the utilisation of M&E information as fundamental to service delivery. Details on these findings are discussed below.

Relationship between Organisational Performance and M&E

The study revealed that the approval of the M&E Framework resulted in the Department introducing various changes which enhanced and supported accountability, transparency and improved performance. The Department of Home Affairs M&E Policy Framework has enabled the government via the DHA Portfolio Committee, civil organisations etc. to hold the Department accountable in their utilisation of resources allocated by government. The Department's performance has also improved since 2015.This has been attributed to amongst others, clear and stricter monitoring and evaluation processes which promoted utilisation of evidence. The intensified focus on monitoring and reporting practices in support of annual performance plan targets with specific interventions implemented, where and when required also contributed in the improved performance of the Department.

The M&E Framework has contributed immensely in ensuring proper accountability and improved delivery of services through specific measurable, time-lined, achievable and realistic set targets at operational level in the Department. By implementing the M&E Framework, managers are more responsible and accountable for their areas of work and Branches within the Department are able to plan better and ensure optimal utilisation of resources.

There is a clear indication that with the implementation of the M&E Framework in the Department of Home Affairs, there are improvements in employee and management commitment due to pressure to perform, effective use of resources and improved level of accountability. These findings corroborate with the literature which revealed that effective monitoring and evaluation in public sector organisations should result in "**…**the achievement of high performance and the enhanced accountability that could as a result lead to the improvement in service delivery" (Mviko, 2015:5).

The study further revealed that successful accomplishment of monitoring and evaluation of activities in the Department, hindered by amongst others, the lack of knowledge of the existing M&E Framework by all in the Department, which can be attributed to the lack of M&E Communication and Advocacy Plan in the Department of Home Affairs.

Influence of M&E Framework on Service Delivery

The M&E framework is seen as a critical tool that brings performance processes together for enhancement of service delivery. Service delivery levels in the Department of Home Affairs, especially for certain key enabling documents such Identity Documents (ID) and VISAs, have shown greater consistency due to the use of operations management principles. For an example, the time that it took for the Department to produce VISAs in the Immigration environment improved significantly. For the period 2016 to 2019, "95.5% of permanent residence for selected categories, 97% of business and general work visas, and 90.50% of critical skills visas' averages were recorded for immigration permits and visas. All these documents were issued within the set service standards (DHA Annual Report, 2013-14:40). These improvements are in line with Mviko's (2015:5) view that Monitoring and Evaluation plays a key role in improving service delivery and that effective monitoring and evaluation in public sector organisations could result in "improved identification and correction of deviations during programme implementation, the achievement of high performance, improved employee and management competencies, and the enhanced accountability that could as a result lead to the improvement in service delivery".
These findings further reinforce the interpretation of the New Public Service approach which recommends that public managers need to acquire skills to enable them to resolve complex problems in partnership with citizens by being open, accessible, accountable and responsive when serving citizens, (Robinson, 2015:10).

M&E Performance Information: (i.e. utilisation of performance information)

With the implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, Interviews with officials within the M&E unit revealed that the usefulness of performance information and the reliability of the reported performance information for utilisation by management in decision making had improved. However, the challenge still becomes how such information gets utilised by operations for decision-making and improvement on service delivery. The typical example was made of the non-utilisation of performance information by units such as Strategic Planning in their planning processes, Policy development in their daily processes, and also the Budgeting section in their allocation of budgets for Branches within the Department. This confirms the findings by the study that Despite the Framework being in place, the Department continued to experience recurring service delivery challenges and non-achievement of some of its targets, objectives and goals. Limited utilisation of M&E results are still huge challenges within the Department. Ultimately this negatively affects service delivery. This reveals that the information which the M&E produces becomes less useful because it is not acted upon.
Furthermore, conclusions from respondents show that the information that comes

out of the monitoring and evaluation system does not help foster a culture of learning in the Department. Literature indicates that M&E systems should be used as vehicles to facilitate the utilisation of performance information, with the aim of improving the management of the public sector. It therefore becomes critical that governments are capacitate to supply performance information for use in monitoring of performance, facilitating optimal utilisation of resources, and improvement in the quality of services delivered. in decision-making. Furthermore, literature shows that it is only through the availability of data and information about the problem that problems can be identified and understood better. This will enable the determination of root causes of problems and designing of possible solutions to the problems.

The findings from the interviews indicate that there is limited filtering and utilisation of performance information produced by the M&E system by managers in the DHA, which is in contrast to the ideals of the New Public Service which emphasises the role of public officials and how they need to be accountable to citizens and ensuring that they serve and respond to their needs. The NPS approach recommends that public managers should acquire skills to enable them to deal with any types of problems in collaboration with citizens. To address the needs of citizens and to respond and provide with service delivery-oriented solutions, issues, "openness, accessibility, accountability and responsiveness" are key elements that governments must consider when serving citizens (Robinson, 2015:10).

M&E Reporting process: (i.e. use of monitoring and feedback as part of a learning process)

Although performance measurement, reporting, and the use of performance information to inform decision-making by management at all levels is considered fundamental to service delivery improvement, sharing of feedback and learning to improve service delivery is still a challenge in the Department of Home Affairs. The study showed that despite strategies such as the joint quarterly performance review sessions, Departmental Planning sessions, Budget Committee and Executive Committee meetings where progress made on the implementation of the strategic objectives are reviewed, the impact of these is not felt at operational level. The feedback coming from these reporting forums has not been successfully cascaded down to operational level for utilisation in decision making and in enhancing service delivery. The study further show that performance information collected in the monitoring process does not help Operations Managers to measure the efficiency of their operations in ensuring service delivery and making adjustments to inputs where necessary to improve performance.

In the DHA, the culture is more skewed towards compliance rather than one promoting generation of knowledge and how this can be utilised to bring about improvements and learning. Although the usefulness and reliability of performance information utilisation by management in decision making has been confirmed throughout the Departmental quarterly review meetings, what is key is how and when that information gets utilised by operations and other units., which is one area that still needs to be examined.

The lack of communication and advocacy about Monitoring and Evaluation decisions

and proposed solutions to service delivery issues and improvement on performance in the Department of Home Affairs makes it difficult for the Department to become a learning organisation. The relevance, value and benefit of implementing the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework on the achievement of their goals is thus not felt by all across the Department.

The presence of the M&E unit at operations level and their role in providing support and guidance on monitoring and evaluation processes at operational level was regarded as non-existent during the study. Operations are not provided with support and assistance in identifying implications for improved service delivery and identifying appropriate and priority indicators. The researcher observed that there is a lack of understanding by Operations Managers of the role they also have to play in ensuring that monitoring and evaluation happens in DHA.

The non-existent culture of evaluation practices and utilisation of evidence in decision making and improvement in service delivery is another biggest challenge in the Department of Home Affairs. This is evidenced by a lack of a departmental Evaluation Plan which should guide how evaluations are conducted in the department. The lack of this Plan is a clear indication of the poor demand for M&E in the Department. Consequently, there is limited demand for evaluations which implies that no evidence is used to inform decision-making and improvement of service delivery; and monitoring masquerading as evaluation.

Within the Department of Home Affairs, the implementation of the M&E Framework is limited by various factors which include amongst others inadequate human resource capacity, lack of more qualified officials to carry out monitoring and evaluation at provincial offices, misunderstanding of the M&E Directorate's role and responsibilities in the Department, lack of strong Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), lack of Training and Development of employees on Monitoring and Evaluation related issues, lack of an effective communication mechanism for M&E results to inform decision-making and lack of involvement of all employees in the M&E process especially at Operational level.

Implications of the study

This study serves as input not only to the academic body of knowledge but also in enhancing the general understanding of the role and importance of monitoring and evaluation in promoting service delivery in the Department of Home Affairs and the impact this has on effective and efficient delivery of public services.

Based on the empirical assessment of the implementation of the M&E Framework and how M&E operates in the Department of Home Affairs, a study can be conducted across all local offices in all nine Provinces, to assess and identify monitoring and evaluation needs. Also, future research can be conducted on the interrelatedness of the different functions within monitoring and evaluation and how these contribute to organisational performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, analysis and conclusion of the research study, the following

recommendations are made:
The researcher recommends that for the Framework to have an impact and receive buy-in, Monitoring should be conducted at Operational Level across all Branches in the Department. By so doing, the current M&E system will be able to accurately monitor performance at operational level in terms of inputs, outputs or outcomes in operations, resulting in the Department's ability to measure its efficiency, effectiveness and overall impact as a national organisation. The applicability and application of the M&E Framework should be all-encompassing and not skewed towards certain areas – currently it is more skewed towards strategic level rather than operational.

Advocacy and Communication are effective tools to overcome misconceptions or lack of information about M&E. There is lack of knowledge of the M&E Framework within the Department which is a huge concern. The researcher therefore recommends that an M&E Advocacy and Communication Plan be developed by the Department of Home Affairs to enhance and popularise the M&E Framework with emphasis on roles and responsibilities for each of the affected stakeholders. The implementation of this will also help in mainstreaming M&E as one of the Department's main functions and will also help in establishing a positive culture within the Department.
Performance Information produced should be used at all times to inform decision-making, planning, policy development and enhancement of service delivery. The research recommends that a plan be put in place to monitor utilisation of performance information. By having this in place will ensure that the development of policies, planning, decision making is evidence-based and that effective service delivery will be determined through comparison of performance against budgets and service delivery plans, and taking corrective action when required.

There has also been limited roll out of training and development on Monitoring and Evaluation and the implementation of the M&E Framework. Therefore, training should be provided on M&E and how this should be implemented in the entire Department. This would enhance staff's general understanding of M&E. In addition, the training should include clarification of the roles and responsibilities in the practice of M&E.

Conclusion

Literature shows that M&E is considered a key feature of public service delivery as it assists government to ensure effective governance and delivery of tangible results. In South Africa, the introduction of stringent monitoring and evaluation processes, assisted the Department of Home Affairs in the improvement of its performance since 2015. The introduction of the M&E Framework contributed immensely towards ensuring accountability and improved service delivery. The implementation of the Framework forced managers to be accountable and more responsible in their areas of work whilst ensuring amongst others, optimal utilisation of resources and commitment from officials. Further, the utilisation of M&E information is fundamental to service delivery. Performance information is considered key in

decision-making and promotion of learning, the sharing of such information and feedback for utilisation in service delivery improvements is key.

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