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Monitoring and evaluation practices in selected non governmental organisations

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and Evaluation (henceforth, M&E) has become a critical practice in the delivery and improvement of development projects and programmes in many Non Governmental Organisations (henceforth, NGOs). The practice of M&E is used to guide implementation of projects. Through M&E project personnel are able to assess the extent to which set program goals are met, identify obstacles, and draw important lessons which can be used in future decision making and future implementation of projects. Available research suggests that there are gaps and challenges in the effective realization of M&E practices in NGOs yet this is a critical practiceupon which project success is highly dependent. It is against this backdrop that the aim of this studywas to explore the views and experiences of management in implementing M&E practices for developmental projects in NGOs.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

M&E has become a critical practice in the delivery and improvement of development projects and programmes in many NGOs. Monitoring as a process involves tracking the progress and implementation of a programme which can then be used as a basis for decision making (NEPAD, 2002). Evaluation is the planned process of assessing whether the initial goals or objectives of a program have been realized (Hobson, Mayne & Hamilton, 2014). Over time these two different but interlinked concepts have come to be seen as synonymous (Binnendijk, 1989). According to the Urban Renewal Programme for the city of Cape Town (2013, p.9) “M&E is a participatory, democratic process of examining the values, progress, constraints and achievement of projects by stakeholders”. For Hobson et al. (2014) M&E ensures that accountability by the relevant management is ensured towards donors and beneficiaries as per the reasonable expectations of the programme. This encourages management to maintain focus on the intended outcomes of the project as well as steer clear of any unnecessary divergence. M&E also forces management to adhere to the standard expectations of their organisation as well as that of their donors (IFRC, 2011). With accountability also comes pressure for effective management of project resources as these inputs are measured against project outcomes to assess if they have been employed efficiently.

M&E also assists in better management, control and distribution of resources for effective programme performance (Muzinda, 2007). According to Binnendijk (1989), M&E also assists management to readjust the program's goals and strategies based on the information acquired about the programme's progress. This assessment involves looking at current challenges and obstacles as well as the outputs in comparison with the initial inputs. For IFRC (2011) this information which has to be accurate and evidence-based is helpful towards aligning the project to the desired outcomes. According to Gopane (2012), within the government sector M&E is seen as a helpful way to acquiring information for learning and sharing of experiences and vital insights with others to better plan for and enhance future programmes. M&E is thus advantageous if effectively implemented within various institutions.

International NGOs have largely played a critical role in promoting the implementation of M&E practices in the wake of the 1990s upon the realisation of the importance of carrying out this practice to ensure that genuine change is attained in developmental projects. There is a realisation that development challenges facing most if not all developing countries in implementing and sustaining changes which would have been initiated and funded by international organisations could be reduced if M&E is carried out effectively. In particular the role played by the M&E division within any organisation has become indispensable towards ensuring that projects or programmes yield the desired or intended results and minimise resource wastage and financial misconduct (Rodriguez-Garcia & Kusek, 2009; IFRC, 2011).

Developmental projects have adopted M&E practices in favour of the previous "investment banker's approach" which was used in the 1960s to assess the success of a project based on its "financial and economic rates of return". This was because most developmental projects then were largely infrastructural and industrial in nature with an aim of enhancing economic growth in developing countries (Binnendijk, 1989, p. 208). However, because of the shift in the nature of developmental projects being embarked on within developing countries post the 1990s it called for a shift in the manner in which M&E practices occur within NGOs. This current study explored M&E practices within various development NGOs in the Gauteng region of South Africa in relation to management's lived experiences.

1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

M&E practices are acknowledged for their usefulness towards project improvement. However, research conducted in developmental NGOs across many third world countries shows that there may have been multiple challenges experienced by management in implementing these practices as well as in formulating appropriate tools and designs to use (Muzinda, 2007). These challenges can hinder effective implementation of M&E and this is problematic because genuine progress and transformation as desired in project objectives can only be achieved if M&E practices are yielding the information required for improvement. However, within South Africa there is a gap in knowledge on what informs M&E frameworks and practices yet this critical knowledge is needed to help in holistically conceptualising the M&E phenomenon. On the other hand, the participatory praxis has become an established orthodoxy in M&E. This is because beneficiaries of these developmental projects are important and play a critical role in the evaluation of project outcomes as they are the ones who utilise the services. However, research conducted world-over shows that they have often been sidelined as important key players in M&E practices (Probst, 2002; UN, 2011). This has largely been attributed to management assessing the impact of programmes without involving the beneficiaries as they often overlook their participation (INTRAC, 2014). Despite the importance of participatory M&E very little is known about how development NGOs in South Africa incorporate the participatory practice. Against this backdrop this study explored M&E practices in NGOs in South Africa as this contributes to our holistic understanding of the M&E phenomenon. Such an understanding is foundational and vital in any efforts to improve on the implementation of M&E in NGOs within the country.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This study contributes to our understanding of the lived experiences of management in conducting M&E practices and can thus help to inform both practice and theory in this area of inquiry. This study may also assist in informing organizational policy to improve and develop more favourable environments and practices for effective design and implementation of M&E systems. From a theoretical perspective this study contributes to knowledge in M&E as there is a lack of in-depth research on this area within the South African context.

1.5 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of management in the implementation of M&E practices in selected development NGOs.

1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The secondary objectives of the study were:

- To explore factors that influence the design of M&E systems in selected NGOs.
- To explore the challenges faced by practitioners in the design and implementation of M&E systems.
- To explore the factors that simplify M&E practice.
- To investigate the perceived impact of M&E practice in selected NGOs.
- To explore the participatory nature of M&E practices used in selected NGOs.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the Monitoring and Evaluation practices used in Non-Governmental Organisations in South Africa?

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was informed by a combination of theoretical perspectives which include the Institutional Theory, The Theory of Stewardship and Agency Theory.

- **Agency theory**

This theory in relation to M&E as opposed to more general Agency theory suggests that the people or organisations that fund NGOs and NPOs have different goals, motivations and interests to those of the organisations whom they fund (Ferris & Graddy, 1994). M&E is therefore seen as a normal part of the contractual agreement within which donors and their beneficiaries must agree on in order to achieve desired goals for both parties involved (Fitz-Gibbon, 2002). The result of this theory is that both donors and their beneficiaries spend a lot of time and resources bridging this gap which exists between their different interests and objectives for the project (Van Slyke, 2007).

- **Theory of stewardship**

This theory in relation to M&E directly opposes the 'Agency theory' as it proposes that donors and NGOs share similar interests, goals and have inherent motivation and desires to work together towards achieving particular outcomes (Van Slyke, 2007). This therefore views M&E processes as a means to ensuring that the results which are desired by both parties are achieved as both the beneficiaries and benefactors are in agreement towards achieving similar outcomes. The consequences of this theory are that the relationship between the NGOs and their donors may strengthen as they assess project outcomes to ensure that the results achieved are in alignment with the mutually desired outcomes (Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson, 1997). This can result in higher project performance and enhanced knowledge of good governance. Thus M&E is seen as a positive system to benefit both the NGOs and their donors.

- **Institutional theory**

This theory suggests that the environment shapes an organisation's structures and ways of functioning (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Thus M&E is believed to only come under utilisation as and when certain results or outcomes are required by the external environment such as government and other economic organisations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The manner in which this information is collected is also determined by these external factors as they can determine whether or not conventional methods should be used to gain knowledge on performance related data.

1.9 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this research, a qualitative research approach which aims to understand social interaction and experiences from the perspectives of insiders was used. According to Bazeley (2013) the benefits of qualitative research are that it assists the researcher to clearly see things from the participants' point of view as well as to engage with the topic and research site in order to get particular meanings from the environment. This study aimed to get a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of project managers in NGOs in implementing M&E practice. This research adopted the case study design as it focuses on gaining insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants within an under-researched field (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). Purposive sampling was used to select ten project managers within the M&E field who work in developmental NGOs within Gauteng. In the study the researcher

used interviews to gather data guided by semi-structured interview schedules. Content analysis was used to analyse the data.

1.10 DEFINITION OF KEY WORDS

Monitoring-According to the IFRC (2011, p.11) "monitoring is the routine collection and analysis of information to track progress against set plans and check compliance to established standards."The role of monitoring is seen as one of regular and continuous tracking of inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts of development activities against targets. It determines whether adequate implementation progress has been made to achieve outcomes, and provides management with information to enhance implementation" (Muller-Praefcke, Lai & Sorrenson, 2010, p. 10)

Evaluation-According to the Urban Renewal Programme for the city of Cape Town (2013, p.10) evaluation has been described as "the comparison of actual project impacts against the agreed strategic plans" which looks at the goals that one has set out versus the actual impact of the project as well as assesses the manner in which the results accomplished were achieved.

Development NGOs-NGOs are "private, self-governing, non-profit organisations promoting people-centred development and are responsible to their donors and to the communities they work for" (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2009, p. 68).

Gauteng- name of Province in South Africa

Project/programme-within the M&E context this is a set of activities which are planned for implementation for the benefit of beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries-A person or group of people who receive money, benefits or advantages as a result of someone else (Cambridge Dictionary online, 2015). Within the M&E context beneficiaries are those people who benefit from the services offered by NGOs as a result of donor funding.

Donors/sponsors-A person or organisation which gives money, goods or other benefits to other organisations or individuals in need. These donations often come with terms and conditions attached to them.

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to de Vos (2011) every research study has limitations. Some of the potential limitations of this research include:

1.11.1 Subjectivity

Subjectivity is largely concerned with the researcher's personal feelings or thoughts towards the research data and how these should not influence the data analysis process (Henning et al., 2004; Guttentag, 1973). The researcher is thus called upon to be as objective and independent despite whatever their personal views may be towards the topic under enquiry. The researcher approached the research process and analysis of data in an open-minded way so as to limit the level of personal input and data bias by the researcher (Morrow, 2005). However, the researcher's own subjective pre-occupations could potentially have influenced the interpretation of the data. Nonetheless member-checking was also carried out in which the researcher revisited the participants with the collected data to just confirm the accuracy of that data to avoid misinterpretation by the researcher.

1.11.2 Generalizability

According to Creswell (2009) generalizability is the extent to which research findings and conclusions can be overly applied to a broader context. The research sample size was too small for a general conclusion to be drawn relating to the experiences of all M&E practitioners within development NGOs in South Africa as the research was only carried out on ten participants.

1.11.3 Trustworthiness of study

According to Morrow (2005) trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is aimed at supporting the argument that the inquiry's findings are worth paying attention to. The researcher therefore looks at credibility (the authenticity and realistic nature of the research), transferability (the extent to which the findings can be applied to a different settings by following similar procedures), dependability (the extent to which similar findings will be obtained if the study is replicated in a similar context), and confirmability of the research project and its findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To improve trustworthiness, openness (honesty) in sharing of experiences was encouraged in all participants prior to conducting the interviews. However, there was no guarantee that participants would honour the honesty-agreement as their responses were purely subject to their desire and comfort in answering the

questions. The researcher had no control over the authenticity and truthfulness of data provided by participants. However, a detailed account of the methodology has been provided for comparison by future researchers wishing to conduct a similar study.

1.12 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

CHAPTER ONE: Discusses the background of the study and highlights the objectives of the study. It also gives a brief overview of the research design and methodology and outlines the limitations and delimitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: Focuses on literature which describes the M&E paradigm in NGOs around the globe as well as in South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE: Describes the research design and methodology in detail covering all the operational detail of gathering and analysing of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: Provides a presentation and in-depth discussion of the findings that emerged from the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: Summarizes the major findings and the proposed recommendations emanating from the study.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and Evaluation is a fairly new concept within the African context with its birth having been conceived in the USA post World War Two. Thus its implementation has been coupled with some success and challenges over the years. The various dynamics associated with this practice world over will be discussed below:

2.2 Monitoring Defined Within The M&E Paradigm

Monitoring has been defined as "the collection and analysis of information about a project or programme, undertaken while the project is ongoing" (Hobson, Mayne & Hamilton, 2013, p.5). It is largely focused on assessing project inputs and outputs in accordance with the set design, budget and schedule for the project (Binnendijk, 1989; United Nations World Food Programme, 2015). This process is often continuous as data is collected and analysed whilst the project is on-going and throughout its life cycle. Monitoring is often done by internal management to ensure that the project implementation is in accordance with the desired expectations.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (2009) and Rodriguez-Garcia and Kusek (2009) monitoring is a continuous process of gathering information about a project and assessing its progress against the available resources as well as the set goals as set out by the project initiators and sponsors. "The role of monitoring is seen as one of regular and continuous tracking of inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts of development activities against targets. It determines whether adequate implementation progress has been made to achieve outcomes, and provides management with information to enhance implementation" (Muller-Praefcke, Lai & Sorrenson, 2010, p. 10). Thus monitoring ensures program improvement through continuous assessments.

According to the IFRC (2011, p.11) "monitoring is the routine collection and analysis of information to track progress against set plans and check compliance to established standards. It helps identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies and inform decisions for project/programme management". Some of the key questions which monitoring is concerned

with asking are whether or not outputs are leading to achievement of desired outcomes, or understanding the feelings of beneficiaries towards the project's activities. Other questions include asking whether or not project implementation is on schedule and within the allocated budget. Another major question which monitoring seeks to answer is whether the quantity and quality of resources available for the program is appropriate as well as the timely availability of the relevant project personnel (IFRC, 2011).

2.3 Evaluation Defined Within The M&E Paradigm

Evaluation has been defined by Hobson et al. (2013, p.5) as "the periodic, retrospective assessment of an organization, project or programme that might be conducted internally or by external independent evaluators". It is largely focused on measuring the results, outcomes or impacts of a project (Rodriguez-Garcia & Kusek, 2009). Given that evaluations are done periodically, this means that these assessments are carried out at various stages or phases of the project depending on the need and profile of the stakeholder who requires the information. According to Patton (2011) evaluations are also often carried out by teams or persons external to the organisation or project so as to scientifically extract data that can link change or certain outputs to the project processes. This information will in turn help management in making broader decisions regarding the project as well as the sector at large (Binnendijk, 1989). Given that evaluations are often carried out by external experts for the extraction of rigorous, this means that extra finances should be set aside for this purpose (Patton, 2011). Alternatively funders should be aware that there should be a set budget outside of project implementation for this purpose.

According to the Urban Renewal Programme for the city of Cape Town (2013, p.10) evaluation has been described as "the comparison of actual project impacts against the agreed strategic plans" which looks at the goals that one has set out versus the actual impact of the project as well as assesses the manner in which the results accomplished were achieved. Evaluation can either be formative within which it occurs during the project life so as to enhance functionality or summative within which it occurs post the project life assessing the lessons derived from the project processes (UNDP, 2009). According to Small, Cooney and O'Connor (2009, p. 8) "evaluation is an essential tool for learning how well a program is being implemented, whether a program has any effects on its participants, and how it produces those effects". This is regarded as a good method of on-the-job training as lessons are learnt and corrections are implemented whilst the program is ongoing. Information which

focuses on the processes is most useful to staff members and is easily embraced by them as they see it as a good way to evaluate their methods of working (Patton, 2011). Outcome evaluation on the other hand is mostly valued by other stakeholders such as sponsors as they want to know the impact or results of the project versus its initial objectives (Patton, 2011).

According to Muller-Praefcke et al. (2010, p.10) "unlike monitoring, evaluation is seen as attempting to establish attribution and causality, and serve as a basis for accountability and learning by staff, management and clients. Information from evaluation is to be used to develop new directions, policies and procedures". Since evaluation is largely based on outcomes of a program at different phases it is important that it is carried out as an ongoing activity so as to answer the needs of management. According to IFRC (2011, p. 13) "evaluations involve identifying and reflecting upon the effects of what has been done, and judging their worth. Their findings allow project/programme managers, beneficiaries, partners, donors and other project/programme stakeholders to learn from the experience and improve future intervention". Key questions for conducting evaluations are largely concerned with the nature of changes produced by the project and whether these changes were planned or unintended. Other questions involve asking whether objectives were achieved within the planned time and budgetary allocation of the project as stated by the project's initial design.

2.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

"Although M&E are usually discussed in tandem, they serve distinct yet complementary functions. Despite their distinct role, M&E processes in practice overlap and need to function as an integrated system" (Muller-Praefcke et al., 2010, p.10). According to the United Nations World Food Programme (2015, p. 9) "a good M&E strategy not only measures whether or not the hypothesis outlined in a logical framework held true, but uncovers why the hypothesis did not hold true allowing for adjustment and fine-tuning of the operation design". M&E is also context dependent such that the methodology which it employs should be in line with the nature of information being sort after as well as the nature of environment under which M&E is being practiced (House, 2004; United Nations World Food Programme, 2015). Having defined both Monitoring and Evaluation as separate concepts, here is a breakdown of the differences between the two as stated above:

Diagram 1

Differences between M&E concepts

	Monitoring	**Evaluation**
Assessment focus	Checking project progress' alignment to designated budgets and schedules	Checking results and impacts of projects
Timing of data collection and assessment efforts	A continuous ongoing process of data collection and review	Often periodic
Assessment implementers	Primarily carried out by an organisation's internal management	Often by done by teams external to the project
Management use of assessment results	Often serves the needs of management to enhance project implementation	Often serves the needs of higher powers to understand broader program dynamics and assist in broader decision making.

M&E will yield the desired results if the appropriate tools are used. There seems to be a dearth in literature on M&E instruments and measures. Nonetheless for Binnendjik (1989) administrative records, small sample surveys, proxy indicators and in-depth beneficiary information are some of the most effective ways of measuring and assessing project progress and outcomes. According to Woodhill (2007, p. 14) "M&E can only be useful if it answers the question why has there been success or failure. Many donors recognise this and are rejecting activity reporting, instead asking for results and impact reporting".

2.5 Main Functions of Monitoring and Evaluation in Non Governmental Organisations

According to Kanter and Summers (1987 as cited by Powell, 1987) M&E in organisations serves 3 main functions which are 'Institutional functions', 'Managerial functions' and 'Technical functions'. The *Institutional functions* involve assessing project activities and outcomes to ensure that organisational standards were met so as to ensure that the legitimacy of the organisation is maintained. Maintaining standards will thus help the organisation with resource attraction as potential donors, volunteers and other stakeholders will be interested in

knowing the extent to which the organisation meets its set standards which are often indicators for progress and success. However, one can argue that conducting M&E for its institutional functionality reveals the detached nature of NGOs from their projects as the greater interests are for their own image creation and maintenance rather than for the sake of genuine transformation of societal issues. Perhaps this could be a reason why some projects in NGOs fail as the priorities of the NGOs lie within their own organisational interests than those of the societies they serve.

The *Managerial functions* involve "measures to provide information to enable adjustment of activities to better meet standards; to provide knowledge of progress toward desired states; to spot trouble or potential trouble so that corrective action can be taken; and to allocate resources (budgets) and rewards among organisational participants and units" (Kanter & Summers, 1987 as cited by Powell, 1987, p. 159). Managerial functions therefore serve largely to assist the project managers regarding decision making prior to, during and after project implementation. These decisions involve resource distribution, task force allocation amongst other internal procedures.

However, effective project management may potentially be largely depended on the genuine interests of the manager towards change and project enhancement as knowledge provision provided by M&E does not guarantee relevant action by the project managers responsible. Also, the interests of the project managers may perhaps be the determining factor for the pro-active or passive nature of project managers in implementing effective M&E to acquire knowledge. Thus one can conclude that the managerial function of M&E is only applicable based on the ability of the responsible manager to implement change according to the findings of the M&E process.

Finally, the *Technical functions* involve "measures to provide information on the efficiency or quality with which the organisation delivers its basic products or services" (Kanter & Summers, 1987 as cited by Powell, 1987, p. 159). Here the main focus is on ensuring that the clients served by the organisation are satisfied with the nature of services that they receive. In most NGOs these clients are mostly the communities within which various development projects/programmes are implemented for the benefit of all. One can therefore conclude that M&E functions as a tool for good governance in NGOs through promoting transparency, openness, democracy and accountability (Binnendjik, 1989).

Despite the critical nature of the technicalities of M&E in promoting client satisfaction research has shown that the communities whom most NGOs serve are often excluded from the M&E process yet their opinions matter the most (INTRAC, 2014; Probst, 2002). Thus one can argue that the absence of adequate clientele participation by M&E personnel not only undermines the ability of communities to comprehend information that concerns their wellbeing but that it shows the inability of the NGOs to simplify the M&E process in such a way that promotes inclusion of the clientele base. A more inclusive approach to M&E is necessary in order for the processes to be relevant to the exact needs and perspectives of the beneficiaries.

2.6 Key Principles of Monitoring and Evaluation

M&E has some key principles that guide its implementation within any project/programme context. This is the only way to ensure its success. The first principle is that of *ensuring feasibility and focus* of the M&E process. This involves assessing the available resources and carrying out M&E which will fit within the available budget without stretching resources (Child Trends, 2007). This way the process will be thoroughly executed as there will be sufficient resources to implement the M&E process. This principle also narrows down data collection to that which one strictly needs to know versus that which would be "nice to know" (Hobson et al., 2013). This also helps to stick to the budget allocation or available resources for M&E as information gathered for analysis will be directly attributed towards answering the questions that management, donors and other stakeholders have about the project (Rodriguez-Garcia & Kusek, 2009). By maintaining the feasibility and focus principle one ensures that a practical and fruitful M&E process is achieved.

However, it must be noted that feasibility based on the availability of resources or budget can also mean that inadequate M&E is conducted as research has shown that most M&E practitioners experience budgetary constraints as one of their major challenges to effective M&E practice (Bamberger et al., 2010; INTRAC, 2014). This means that with lack of sufficient funds for M&E the supposedly narrowed focus that Hobson et al. (2013) have discussed may potentially be too narrow or too small to reach a definite conclusion or to offer a general conclusion which can be applied to the bigger group of the beneficiary and/or project sample.

The next principle is that of ensuring that the M&E process is *well-timed and useful*. This involves ensuring that data collected is relevant to the various stages that the project is at (Binnendjik, 1989). This also means that M&E should neither be delayed nor hastened as it has to be implemented at the appropriate time/phase of each project. Alongside appropriate timing, the M&E process should also be useful in providing information which is necessary for learning and enhancing decision making processes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Data collected will thus lead to an improvement of the project design based on the evidence gathered.

Despite being an accredit, experienced, active researcher and author in the M&E field, one can argue that it is extremely difficult to maintain the relevance of the claim by Binnendjik (1989) that data collected during the M&E process should be well-timed. It is true that the relevance of information is only dependent on the appropriateness of timing in which the data was provided yet there has been very little more modern and recent theory on M&E that speaks to the importance of this theory. There may be a possibility that M&E experiences of 1989 required more appropriately timing for data collection than that of the 21st century although this fact can only be substantiated by modern academic research which is currently in shortage particularly within the South African and African context. A argument can reasonably be put forward that perhaps seasonal collection of data is necessary for intervention to get accurate results.

The next principle is that of ensuring that the M&E process is *credible, valid and reliable* as far as possible given the available resources and tools to carry out the process (Hobson et al., 2013). Thus the outcomes should be as accurate as possible so that they can be used to enhance the programme under analysis. One can thus conclude that the credibility of the M&E findings is largely depended on the methodology or process within which the data is collected during M&E. This is because the validity, credibility and reliability of any information provided or produced is largely depended on the scientific nature of how the data was collected, analysed and reproduced (Babbie & Mouton, 2004).

Another principle is that the M&E process should be *ethical* in ensuring that consent is sought in relation to data collection and its use (Hobson et al., 2013). This requires acknowledging and respecting all people from whom the data will be gathered so as to not harm or violate the rights of any persons involved. The issue of ethics is a critical one when

dealing with beneficiaries whom are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, disrespect and abuse due to their circumstances of lack. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) ethical considerations are those ways of carrying out research in a manner which does not infringe on people's rights. This involves following a set of principles which ensure safety of all concerned in the research process. One can thus argue that information gathering during the M&E process has the potential to intrude and encroach into the personal lives and experiences of those involved yet these may be highly sensitive matters. As a result, ethical considerations play an important role is research as they guide or govern the moral way of collecting data from participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) as this concept of information collection is very similar to that which occurs in M&E.

Finally, the M&E process should be *sensitive* to the fact that there exists unequal power relations within each community. This therefore requires a purposeful collection of data from seemingly excluded members as long as they serve to answer the questions being sought by the M&E process (Bamberger, Rao & Woolcock, 2010). Thus the marginalised community members should not be excluded in data collection if they are beneficiaries of the project. According to Davids, Theron and Maphunye (2009) active participation by communities is important if genuine empowerment, development and transformation are to occur. Similarly, in order for sustainable change and transformation to be achieved through the M&E process the participatory nature ought to be genuine and all-inclusive despite the current situation where the participatory nature of M&E is still lacking (as has already been mentioned earlier). Davids et al. (2009) also acknowledge the importance of recognising power imbalances within each community engaged so as to be able to reach out to those marginalised members of society with whom the change is needed who are often excluded, oppressed or overlooked.

2.7 Key benefits of Monitoring and Evaluation

The M&E process has some key benefits which shall now be discussed. Some of the benefits of M&E include the fact that it provides data which can be used to make informed decisions regarding project implementation whilst it also allows for a thorough assessment of the impact of the project on its beneficiaries in relation to the intended goals and objectives (Child Trends, 2007). This means that the manner in which a project is carried out as well as its progress is subject to scrutiny and change if through M&E one discovers that the project is not achieving its intensions. It should be noted that informed decisions can only be made if

project managers are willing to actually make their decisions based on the information that they gather during M&E. One can argue that there is potential for managers to implement decisions that best suit their needs and their vision if the information they gather during M&E does not necessarily correlate with their mission or that of the donors in relation to the project at hand.

For Hobson et al. (2013) and IFRC (2011) another benefit of M&E is the fact that it encourages accountability by the management involved as they are answerable to all stakeholders for whatever outcome or results derived from this process. Accountability is all about "holding individuals and organisations responsible for their actions and performance" (Robinson, 1992, as cited by Clayton, 1994, p. 38). This therefore forces managers to exercise greater diligence to ensure success in their projects as continued funding by donors is highly dependent on the results of the project whilst continued community support is also dependent on the positive outcomes of the projects which are expected by the members. However, one can argue that there is a possibility that managers may implement a half-hearted attempt towards M&E due to accountability requirements as they may potentially feel the necessity to gather minimal information which their donors and stakeholders need. Thus other relevant information which may be necessary for improved programme implementation may be excluded.

According to Rodriguez-Garcia and Kusek (2009) M&E also ensures that learning amongst all stakeholders involved is achieved as this process results in lessons about success and failure of the project implementation which everyone involved can learn from. This will potentially result in more successful and fruitful future projects as everyone involved would have learnt a lesson regarding the role that each one plays. However, research has shown that this aspect of learning from past mistakes as well as successes has often been viewed negatively as project managers view M&E as a process of largely finding errors within project implementation (Bamberger et al., 2010; INTRAC, 2014).

M&E can also build morale for managers, volunteers and sponsors by highlighting accomplishments of the project (IFRC, 2011). This therefore simplifies donor accountability and also justifies resource mobilization for management as there is evidence to show for the impact of the project on its intended beneficiaries.

Traditionally M&E has mostly been practiced with the main objective of assessing effectiveness and practicality of project implementation (Estella & Gaventa, 1997). However, more conventional approaches to M&E view it as a process which is necessary for objective results to be acquired for the sake of enhancing decision making. These conventional approaches have however been criticised for being drawn from western ideology about utilising scientific investigation when conducting research (McArthur, 1997 & Tandon, 1981 as cited by Estrella & Gaventa, 1997). Nonetheless there is a lack of current data to substantiate this criticism as there is a dearth in more recent scholarly literature and research on the conventional approaches to M&E. According to Estrella and Gaventa (1997, p. 14) characteristics of conventional M&E approaches are as follows:

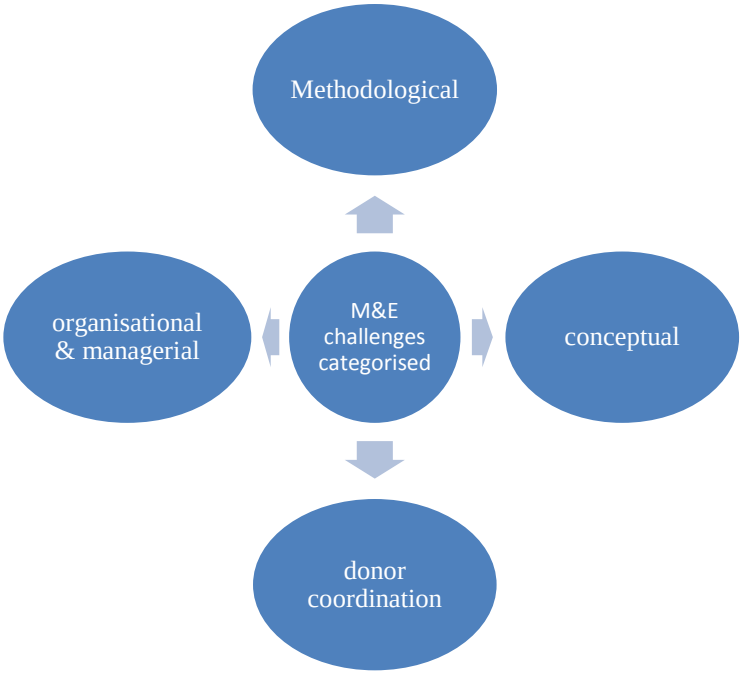
- Focused on measurement
- Orientated to the needs of programme funders and policy makers rather than participants or local people
- Striving for objectivity, and distance between evaluator and participants
- Conducted for the purpose of making judgments rather than empowerment

It is clear that the characteristics of conventional M&E are largely centred around the needs of donors and this simultaneously excludes the project beneficiaries. Thus one can conclude that conventional M&E overlooks the significance of beneficiary involvement as it is focused on obtaining results by evaluators for the sake of making decisions at higher levels whilst seemingly ignoring the importance of active citizen participation of the clientele. In the long run the results obtained through conventional M&E may be potentially unsustainable as the input of beneficiaries is neglected.

2.8 Monitoring and Evaluation Practice Challenges

Diagram 2

Categorisation of M&E practice challenges



Explanation of the diagram

Research has shown that since its emergence as a professional practice, M&E practitioners have encounters several challenges. The first category of challenges is *methodological* in that M&E processes are said to be highly costly to carry out and take long to actually complete (Bamberger et al., 2010; Rose, 2014). This is with specific reference to the materials required for surveys and interviews to be conducted as NGOs have often spent large amounts of money in carrying out this process. The M&E process in its entirety tends to be unnecessarily lengthy often going beyond the lifespan of the sponsorship for the project. This therefore results in the data collected becoming irrelevant and of no use post the natural project timeframe. One could argue that perhaps with better planning of the project time spent in conducting M&E may be managed better. This methodological error also raises questions about the periods within which M&E is being conducted given that this process is an ongoing one as has been highlighted in the earlier definition of the concepts. Regarding the high costs and insufficient funding to conduct M&E perhaps one can conclude that this highlights the insignificance of internal M&E to the relevant higher authorities within projects. Nonetheless this argument is unsubstantiated by existing research.

The second category of challenges is *conceptual* in that M&E processes are said to be hindered from being effective due to a lack of solid understanding of project objectives by the relevant management (Rose, 2014). As a result there are often no measurable indicators which would have been put in place to facilitate the M&E processes to ensure that project processes and outcomes are in line with the intended goals. Another conceptual issue is the fact that M&E processes are often carried out based on specific structured methodologies and not necessarily on management needs such that the results acquired do not answer the project informational needs of management (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997). This therefore highlights the impractical nature of some of the methodologies applied to data collection as they hinder the effective acquisition of relevant data as per the needs of management. This relevant data includes factors that result in project success or failure. Perhaps one can conclude that donor requirements are the ones that determine the nature of the M&E conducted such that the processes lean towards donor needs than those of managers from the onset. However, this may result in some relevant information needed by management being neglected yet it might potentially have an important impact on project processes and outcomes.

The third category of challenges is *organisational and managerial* in that M&E processes have often lacked a 'built-in' evaluation which is created during the project design phase (Bamberger et al., 2010). As a result they often lack the information which is necessary for creating a baseline which can be used for comparing project outcomes (IFRC, 2011). This means that project managers have then had to conduct evaluations based on separately constructed evaluation tools which are not directly linked to the initial project design and its intended outputs. It has thus been noted that one of the best ways to ensure the effective implementation of M&E is to ensure that the tools to be used are also constructed simultaneously alongside the project design (Rose, 2014). Also, management has been accused of seeing M&E as a separate process from the projects which are being assessed (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997). Thus the struggle has been about getting managers to realize that M&E is linked to the whole project implementation and should not be separated or seen as a different process.

Research has also shown that there is a general negative attitude by management towards M&E as it is often viewed as a process of searching for mistakes and inefficiencies instead of viewing this practice as a learning process (Bamberger et al., 2010). As a result M&E is often seen as a negative surveillance system for negative judgments to be passed onto management.

The challenge with managers viewing M&E negatively is potentially derived from the higher authorities treating the information that they acquire from M&E managers as a form of 'all-seeing' eye which judges their work ethic. Nonetheless there is insufficient scholarly research unpacking this challenge.

The fourth category of challenges is related to *donor coordination* in that methodological and procedural findings from M&E processes have often not been shared across various project disciplines and organisations for all donors and sponsors to learn from them (Rose, 2014). This is because there's often a negativity attached to M&E results that show poor project outputs as this supposedly reflects badly on the donors (Rose, 2014). It is therefore important for donors to publish or share information acquired during their M&E processes for others to learn from. Thus project implementation alongside M&E should be viewed as a growing and learning process which can be shared across similar projects by different donors or different organisations in order to improve results achieved. One cannot help but argue that perhaps project implementation is seen as a form of competition by donors to see who makes the biggest difference in developing countries?

2.9 History of Monitoring and Evaluation

Globally

Historically M&E emerged in the 1960s with donor agencies focusing on financial rates of return as well as maximizing economic growth as most projects invested in were largely economic in nature such as infrastructural construction (Binnendijk, 1989; Rossi & Freeman, 1993). It is in the 1960s that the US became the uncontested leader in M&E as it invested large sums of money towards social reform programs post World War Two which required effective and regular assessing to ensure that the negative effects of the war were successfully curbed (Mouton, 2010). However, it is only in the early 1970s that the 'investment banker approach' to M&E seized to be appropriate as there was a realization that project financial rate of returns are not the only outcomes of projects but that there are other project goals which do not have a monetary value within which M&E should also assess (Binnendijk, 1989).

Internationally in countries such as the US and the UK programme evaluation began as a top-down structure within which government was the main initiator of evaluation needs and methods (Mouton, 2010). This was due to a desire to assess the impact and effectiveness of service delivery in the public sector as carried out by the government. Examples of M&E processes that were initially conducted in the US include assessing "the effectiveness of the food stamp programme; investigating problems of nursing homes; evaluating the war against organised crime; establishing the fiscal future of New York City; and the usefulness of rural post offices, to name a few" (Mosher, 1984, cited in Mouton, 2010, p. 16). The aim was to improve these public services for the citizens at large hence there was a need to assess program implementation. With a desire for M&E also came a need for professionally trained evaluators as there was a shortage with only 6% having been recorded in the American Evaluation Association's membership directory (Mouton, 2010).

According to Mouton (2010) the US has however made significant advances in promoting M&E through institutionalising it and professionalising it so that it becomes a recognised formal career path. This was achieved through the launch of the following:

- The Evaluation Research Society and The Evaluation Networks (later become American Evaluation Association)- 1970s
- Creation of standards for evaluation practice by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation- 1994
- Development of evaluators' graduate and postgraduate training programmes
- Increased production of bodies of knowledge on programme evaluation- 1976

Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa

To the contrary Mouton (2010) highlights that in South Africa programme evaluation originated largely from the NGO sector and not from the state. This was due to large donor activity in attempting to address the Apartheid inequalities which then resulted in a need for assessing the impact of donor initiatives towards their beneficiaries. Thus it was a bottom-up emergence as government then adapted programme evaluation and learnt of its necessity from the NGOs. Thus government did not play a significant role in the initial implementation of programme evaluation and assessment. One ought to however be aware that the history of the emergence of M&E within the South African context has not been well documented thus far (Mouton, 2010).

According to Mouton (2010) in the mid 1990s many donor agencies in South Africa began to use the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as a guide in conducting their projects. In 1996 the first ever evaluation conference took place under which the main focus was on the importance of delivering good quality programmes in the country. By the end of the 1990s evaluation of programmes had begun to gain popularity and was being conducted as a part of fulfilling donor requirements regarding financial and progress accountability. Almost a decade later in 2009 the South African government under the leadership of president Zuma initiated a ministry that is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the performance of public sector service delivery (Mouton,2010).

The Political Approach to Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa

Despite its rationality and convincing nature M&E within government requires sound political support in order for it to be successfully implemented towards good governance and progress (Khan, 1998; Kusek & Rist, 2004 & White, 2005 as cited by Naidoo, 2011). In South Africa M&E is biased as it serves political, economic and social purposes. According Naidoo (2011) M&E results in South Africa are used by citizens to assess government performance so as to adjust their political backing (voting) accordingly. The government itself uses M&E results to assess its own performance and reinforce confidence in the citizens as it seeks external support for its policy and strategy decisions (Naidoo, 2011). M&E is also used as a tool for accountability and transparency by the government given the Apartheid history of secrecy. According to Naidoo (2011, p. 54) M&E practitioners within the South African government context "need to be conversant with the political imperatives of government, and design their approaches in a manner that, whilst meeting the exacting standards of research...point results in a direction that effects transformation". This also requires M&E practitioners to be well versed with the needs of government as a developmental state (Naidoo, 2011). Though implemented with a political motive one can argue that M&E within the South African government has potential to ensure effective programme implementation and better the lives of the masses given that it is results and change driven.

The Transformative Approach to Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa

Due to the Apartheid history the South African developmental state aspires for change which is biased towards the previously marginalised groups hence the need for M&E results which can help to further support and improve this goal. According to Naidoo (2011, p. 55) "issues

of transparency, accountability, learning, empowerment, and a transformational bias that serves agendas that privilege the voiceless and poor are prioritised". One could argue that these initiatives are also coupled with high levels of corruption within government (Davids et al., 2009). Nonetheless transformation should be pro-poor and aided by M&E results which are then used in developmental decision-making process. Thus South Africa's developmental state largely relies on M&E for it to base its decisions towards economic and social enhancement. "In terms of policy recommendations in South Africa, given the inherited inequalities, any judgment of programme effectiveness or recommendations would have to be contextualised and located within specific socio-economic and political settings. A simplistic approach to policy formulation may not work; it should flow from evidence based research, grounded in reality" (Naidoo, 2011. p. 56). These claims have been validated by Davids et al. (2009) who have also espoused the importance of evidence based research towards policy formulation and decision making within government.

According to Naidoo (2011, p. 55) "M&E needs to support transformation and could be biased towards focusing on assessing those areas that are important for social change. The transformational process includes participatory evaluation which accounts for the perspectives of the marginalised as the constitution obliges development initiatives to be accountable, transparent and empowering to the marginalised citizens (Fetterman, 1996). M&E in South Africa is geared towards "empowering individuals and communities, by providing them with results to advocate and hold government to account" (Naidoo, 2011, p. 56). It is through a transformative approach to M&E that the South African government hopes to effectively achieve transformation post the oppressive Apartheid era.

2.10 Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E)

This method of assessment emerged in the 1980s due to recognition of the importance of involving beneficiaries in research on projects that concern them (Miller & Campbell, 2006; Estrella & Gaventa, 1997; Fetterman, undate). Participation is thus a critical area especially in the development arena as needs assessments and effective program implementation heavily relies on the involvement of the beneficiaries. According to Chambers (1997) knowledge of the people involved is the basic starting point for developing genuine change. Thus there is great involvement of major stakeholders and beneficiaries with a purposeful inclusion of marginalised groups of those communities where the PM&E will be carried out. This method of assessment was initially spearheaded by theorists such as Paulo Freire who emphasized the

need for research which is people-centred in his 'Participatory Action Research'. It is during this era that Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (henceforth, PM&E) was birthed (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997).

Thus far scholarly research documented shows that there is little that has been done to explore the process of PM&E and its impact on the various projects. However, in the USA PM&E has resulted in change of vision an active involvement by community leaders to change unfavourable government policies and increase accountability by the public (Parachini & Mott, 1997; Miller & Campbell, 2006). In the UK funding agencies are utilising PM&E to improve their performance in development initiatives (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997). In India through PM&E more women are now empowered to plan and manage their own health plans as well as their own personal savings (Parachini & Mott, 1997). Nonetheless PM&E serves many functions of which the major ones as documented by Estelle and Gaventa (1997, p. 6) are as follows:

- Impact assessment
- Project management and planning
- Organisational strengthening or institutional learning
- Understanding and negotiating stakeholder perspectives
- Public accountability

Impact assessment involves analysing the results or consequences (both intended and unintended) of a project on its beneficiaries so as to learn how best to improve future outcomes (Sherriff & Potter, 2010). *Project management and planning* involves orchestrating and administering practical and effective program implementation and designs to achieve the desired goals. *Organisational strengthening or institutional learning* is all about taking heed of the lessons which are learnt from the entire M&E process so as to better improve the quality of future program implementation for the organisation involved (Sherriff & Potter, 2010). *Understanding and negotiating stakeholder perspectives* involves a recognition and appreciation of the views of all stakeholders involved in the project so as to further improve it to suit the context and achieve desired goals (Miller & Lennie, (2005) as cited by Sherriff & Potter, 2010). Finally, *public accountability* involves the organisation being answerable to the public about all dynamics of the projects such as the outputs and processes involved. Here transparency and openness is a key factor which results in good accountability by the organisation implementing the project. Thus all these dynamics are catered for by the PM&E

as it allows for all of them to be achieved through the broad involvement of various stakeholders and role players within a project (Miller & Lennie, 2005).

According to Estelle and Gaventa (1997) PM&E can either be led externally, internally or be carried out jointly. *Externally-led* PM&E involves assessments or evaluations being carried out by outsiders who have no direct involvement with the programme and those who have no personal or institutional interests attached (Campila, 1997 & Rubin, 1995). This is done with an aim of producing unbiased and objective results from the projects. These outside evaluators are usually commissioned by donor agencies to provide their expert outside experience and knowledge which can be utilised in personalising the PM&E experiences to suit the current project context (Rugh, 1992).

Internally-led PM&E involves the assessment and evaluation of projects being carried out by insiders to the project such as the beneficiaries (community member) and project management who are directly involved in the planning and implementation of the project (Campila, 1997). This form of evaluation is seen as an important one as community involvement assists in project sustainability as the beneficiaries themselves are largely involved and take responsibility over the process. Finally, *jointly-led* PM&E is a holistic and diverse approach which is characterised by the involvement of both outsiders and insiders to the project. Thus assessments or evaluations of project implementation and outcomes are carried out both by external and internal members whose contributions will offer a broad perspective and understanding of project dynamics and outcomes. Thus major stakeholders and beneficiaries will play an important role in PM&E.

According to (Abbot & Guijt, 1997) PM&E enhances participation by beneficiaries and also helps then to gain a deeper understanding of the development process thus further empowering them for transformation. The findings derived from the PM&E process are often authentic and relevant to local situations and needs (Sommer, 1993 & Feuerstein, 1986). PM&E also enhances project management and results in more effective decision making which is based on an accurate identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the projects at a local level (CONCERN 1996). This will in turn result in enhanced sustainability of projects initiated by funders as the local people at grassroots level are genuinely involved and their contributions are acknowledged in the process. For Abbot and Guijt (1997) and Rugh (1992) PM&E also empowers community members to become self-reliant as they learn how to assess the impact of project implementation on their own through their involvement in the

M&E process. Resource allocation will also improve is data collected will be fairly reliable since the service beneficiaries will be involved in the project assessment processes (Sommer, 1993).

Having described M&E and PM&E below is a diagram which shows the distinction between the evaluation processes carried out within the two concepts as orchestrated by Narayan-Parker (1993, p. 12):

Diagram 3

The difference between Conventional M&E and Participatory M&E

	Conventional Evaluation (from M&E)	**Participatory Evaluation (from PM&E)**
Who	External experts	Community members, project staff, facilitator
What	Predetermined indicators of success, principally cost and production outputs	People identify their own indicators of success, which may include production outputs
How	Focus on scientific objectivity, distancing of evaluators from other participants, uniform & complex procedures, delayed and limited access to results	Self-evaluation, simple methods adapted to local culture, open & immediate sharing of results through local involvement in evaluation processes.
When	Usually upon completion of project/programme, sometimes also mid-term	More frequent, small scale evaluations
Why	Accountability, usually summative, to determine if funding continues	To empower local people to initiate, control and take corrective action

2.11 Non Profit Organisations (NPOs)

Non Profit Organisations defined

According to Salamon and Anheier (1998) and Swilling and Russell (2002) a Non-Profit Organisation (henceforth, NPO) is one that is formally set up without a profit motive but offers voluntary services and is privately owned and self-governed. Micou and Lindsnaes (1992) describe NPOs as being made up of groups of people with a motive to benefit society in different ways. Similarly, for Davids et al. (2009, p. 68) NPOs are "private, self-governing, non-profit organisations promoting people-centred development and are responsible to their donors and to the communities they work for". NPOs are therefore seen as a bridge between the private and public sector service delivery. According to Swilling and Russell (2002, p. 9) NPOs can broadly be defined based on five criteria as follows:

- *Organised:* institutionalised to some extent; relative persistence of goals, structures and activities; excludes ad hoc or temporary groups.
- *Private:* excludes government structures; can receive financial support from government; can carry out government contracts.
- *Self-governing:* must control its own activities in accordance with its own procedures; not controlled by outside entities, like government or for-profit businesses.
- *Non-profit distributing:* profits generated are not returned to owners or directors; profits ploughed back into the basic mission of the organisation; does not exist to generate profits or other commercial gains.
- *Voluntary:* must engage volunteers in operational management; 'non-compulsory' contributions and membership; excludes professions requiring compulsory membership.

Characteristics of Non Profit Organisations

The common features of NPOs are that they do not belong to the state as they are legally independent from the state (Davids et al., 2009; Los-Tomiak & Dalecka, 2013; Hall, 1987 as cited by Powell, 1987). They stand on their own although they do cooperate and partner with the state to ensure effective service delivery through various projects. NPOs are also said to be of a *voluntary nature* as they do not have profit as their main motive for operating. As a result they are not commercially-oriented despite sometimes charging small fees for the

services that they render (Swilling & Russell, 2002). Also, NPOs comprise largely of groups of *people who share similar interests* towards humanity and societal change of some sort. These people then often come together to form alliances that are self-governed to achieve the desires that are mostly humanitarian in nature.

Most NPOs also work at grassroots levels and have greater contact with communities such that they thrive on *active participation* of citizens that they work with (Davids et al., 2009). This fact actually gives them a greater advantage over the state as they often have easier direct access to the communities that they work with unlike the state which may have more resources yet fail to reach all targeted masses. The activities of NPOs are mainly funded by donors both locally and internationally depending on the nature and extent of their fundraising activities (Davids et al., 2009; Butler & Wilson, 1990; Steinberg (1987) as cited by Powell in 1987). According to Micou and Lindsnaes (1992) for many NPOs to thrive it is crucial for them to maintain links and networks with other international organisations in similar fields for the sake of exchanging ideas and supporting each other towards various causes that they may pursue. Government on the other hand has been seen to offer minimal financial support to NPOs over the years. It is however disappointing to note the minimal government financial support given that in South Africa most NGOs work at grassroots levels and have greater contact with communities such that they thrive on active participation of citizens that they work with to ensure change at various levels (Davids et al., 2009; Cloete, 2009).

For example, in South Africa NPOs were very active in the fight for children's rights in 2005 and 2006 through the active involvement of children themselves in sharing their concerns and desires (Mniki & Rosa, 2007). NPOs have also been active in the fight against high levels of crime by young people in local areas of Durban (Gray & Mazibuko, 2002). Also worth noting is the high NPO involvement in the fight for the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act in 1998 (Usdin et al., 2000).

According to Merrington (1992, p. 14-15) as cited by Davids et al. (2009, p. 70) NPOs are seen as more effective agents for social change than the state or private sector because:

- They are good at communicating with and mobilising the poor.
- They employ participatory, bottom-up approaches in project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They are effective in assisting the poor to

participate in matters affecting them and to thus gain more control over the quality of their lives.

- They work well with, and strengthen, ineffective local institutions.
- They are innovative, flexible and experimental. This means that they can transfer technologies developed elsewhere and adapt them to local conditions, as well as formulate innovative responses to local needs, that is they are able to adopt a social learning process approach.
- They undertake projects at no or minimal cost to government and at lower costs than comparative public sector projects because of their commitment to using low-cost technologies.

History of Non Profit Organisations

According to Hall (1987) as cited by Powell (1987) NPOs initially emerged in England in the 16th Century in the form of religious people through personal capacity (the Puritans) whose main focus was on helping the poor of that time. By the eighteenth century NPOs had evolved into religious charity groups whose main aim was to assist the poor people across Europe and America post the civil wars. These groups could not be formalised due to the inhibiting colonial legislatures of the time (Hudson, 2003). By 1844 NPOs were officially recognised by the US Supreme Court as useful charities and this required a change in operations to more formalised structures that actually required educated people to function. By the nineteenth century philanthropic activities had also become widespread. After the Second World War (post 1945) the American government "assumed greater responsibility for the provision of social services, and it employed the non-profit sector to deliver them" (Hudson, 2003, p. 16). According to Hudson (2003, p. 14) "this began a period of professionalization and management improvement which led to the creation of today's nation-wide organisations such as the Red Cross and United Way".

World over NPOs emerged with the aim to correct the wrongs which had been created by colonial governments which left particular subgroups of nations oppressed (Hudson, 2003; Davids et al., 2009). The emergence of NGOs in South Africa however was largely influenced by "state incompetence, corruption and repression which revealed that social development cannot be achieved through public sector policies only" (Davids et al., 2009, p. 68). These NGOs also initially mushroomed due to the harsh inequalities and oppression exercised by the previous Apartheid government which then led to the emergence of

'Struggle NGOs' whose main aim was to fight for liberation of the oppressed (Davids et al., 2009; Swilling & Russell, 2002).

Obstacles faced by Non Profit Organisations

NPOs experience various challenges in practice. Some of the challenges that they encounter in practice are that the political environment within the country where the NPO is situated may not be favourable for the NPOs to practice effectively and efficiently (Micou & Lindsnaes, 1992). Countries under dictatorial leadership are a good example of the unfavourable political environments which make it difficult for democracy-oriented NPOs to operate freely and successfully. As a result NPOs in such politically unfriendly environments are then forced to perform minimally as their full potential is inhibited and thwarted.

Another challenge is that NPOs in similar fields tend to compete against one another especially due to competition for funding from donors (Micou & Lindsnaes, 1992). Instead of cooperating and helping each other towards achieving the same goal, NPOs end up trying hard to outperform their fellow organisations so as to acquire or gain access to financial resources before the others. This point is also linked to another challenge that NPOs face which is that of being unable to survive on their own without donor funding. According to Davids et al. (2009, p. 71) NPOs "have limited self-sustainability because their activities are financed mainly by grants from donors, with limited government funding". Due to donor funding received, NPOs also face the challenge of trying to please the biggest donors (political maneuvering) at the cost of appropriate, relevant and much-needed interventions for clients which may not necessarily be in line with donor expectations (Kanter & Summers, 1987 as cited by Powell, 1987).

According Davids et al. (2009) another challenge is that NPOs that work with the state on particular projects are often susceptible to organisational bullying or co-option where the state tends to dominate the project and overlooks the role that the NPOs play as they see themselves as a more powerful arm since they are the state. As a result NPOs then struggle to effectively be in partnership with the state to achieve positive change at grassroots level. Due to co-option NPOs also tend to then lose their power or ability to effectively express or communicate the needs of citizens.

Finally, another challenge faced by NGOs is that "they do not effectively reach the poor as their initiatives fall into the hands of local power elites such as municipal councilors,

traditional leaders and community project champions" (Davids et al., p. 71). As a result NGOs are challenged to become more discerning and develop the ability to accurately distinguish between those people within the community who are most vulnerable versus disguised elites who also want to benefit yet do not have the needs.

2.12 Theories for Non-Governmental Organisation and Non-Profit Organisation Accountability

Agency Theory

This theory suggests that the people or organisations that fund NPOs have different goals, motivations and interests to those of the organisations whom they fund (Ferris & Graddy, 1994). M&E is therefore seen as a normal part of the contractual agreement within which donors and their beneficiaries must agree on in order to achieve desired goals for both parties involved (Fitz-Gibbon, 2002). The result of this theory is that both donors and their beneficiaries spend a lot of time and resources bridging this gap which exists between their different interests and objectives for the project (Van Slyke, 2007). Maybe one can argue that this theory proposes that there will always be differences between donors and their recipient organisations such that a lack of trust is believed to be a major characteristic within the relationship hence the need to bridge the gap in different interests. This is however debatable given that there may not always be tension or diverse interests between donors and their recipient organisations otherwise then this would expose the senselessness behind the desire for donors to partner with organisations on development projects.

Theory of Stewardship

This theory directly opposes the 'Agency theory' as it proposes that donors and NGOs share similar interests, goals and have inherent motivation and desires to work together towards achieving particular outcomes (Van Slyke, 2007). This therefore views M&E processes as a means to ensuring that the results which are desired by both parties are achieved as both the beneficiaries and benefactors are in unison towards achieving similar outcomes. The consequences of this theory are that the relationship between the NGOs and their donors will strengthen as they assess project outcomes to ensure that the results achieved are in alignment with the mutually desired outcomes (Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson, 1997). This will result in higher project performance and enhanced knowledge of good governance. Thus M&E is

seen as a positive system to benefit both the NGOs and their donors. One can also add that it is important for any two parties to come into agreement regarding their values and vision for any project to succeed as well as meet the expectations of both parties involved.

Institutional Theory

This theory suggests that the environment is what shapes an organisation's structures and ways of functioning (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Thus M&E is believed to only come under utilisation as and when certain results or outcomes are required by the external environment such as government and other economic organisations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The manner in which this information is collected is also determined by these external factors as they'll determine whether or not conventional methods should be used to gain knowledge on performance related data. This theory assumes that on their own project managers do not see the need to implement M&E unless when prompted to do so by external stakeholders and one can argue that such theoretical underpinnings are problematic as there is potential for a possible misunderstanding of the M&E phenomenon. This is because by definition monitoring is an ongoing process so the theory perhaps lacks an accurate understanding of the conceptual definition of M&E given that it assumes that managers will not conduct M&E until required to do so.

2.13 Results-Based Management in Non-Governmental Organisations

Results Based Management (RBM)

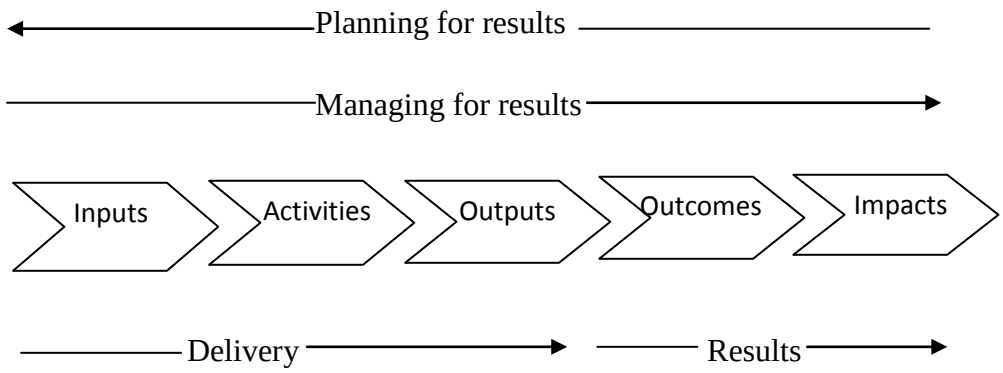
According to Spreckley (2009) Results Based Management (herein referred to as RBM) is a fairly new concept which is different from the previously used methods regarding project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation within NGOs. It is "a shift from focusing on the inputs and activities (the resources and procedures) to focusing on the outputs, outcomes, impact and the need for sustainable benefits (the results of what you do) (Spreckley, 2009, p.3). According to Necesito, Santos and Fulgar (2010) RBM focuses on the achievement of program results against the initial set objectives/goals of a programme. The United Nations World Food Programme (herein referred to as UNWFP) (2015, p. 4) describes RBM as a "participatory and team-based management approach that seeks to focus an organisation's efforts and resources on expected results". It largely focuses on improving "effectiveness and sustainability of operations" whilst also improving "accountability for

resources used" by all involved (UNWFP, 2015, p. 4). Ortiz, Kuyama, Munch and Tang (2004, p. 2) define RBM as "a management approach focused on achieving results; a broad management strategy aimed at changing the way agencies operate, with improving performance (achieving results) as the central orientation".

According to Spreckley (2009) and the Bureau of Strategic Planning (herein referred to as BSP) at UNESCO (2011) RBM works differently to the traditional project planning methods in that the planning process starts by focusing on the desired impact of the project and works backwards to the anticipated outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs. This is done through the application of a 'results chain' which is a procedure for guiding implementation sequentially (UNWFP, 2015). The inputs/resources required are the last aspect of the project planning process to be looked at as it is believed to be important to initially begin the process by assessing the desired impact of the project. However, in the actual project implementation phase, proceedings begin with the delivery of inputs, followed by the initiation of project activities, then assessment of the outputs, outcomes and impacts. Thus, project planning is done backwards by focusing on the final impact first whilst in the implementation phase delivery begins with the inputs then the results are focused on lastly. Below is an illustrative diagram of how the RBM 'results chain' works (Spreckley, 2009, p. 3):

Diagram 4

Results Based Management 'results chain'



According to the BSP (2011, p. 31-32) and the UNWFP (2015, p. 10-11) some of the key questions to be asked during each phase of the 'results chain" are as follows:

Input phase- Are the necessary resources made available on time and in the correct quantities and quality?

Activities phase- Are the activities being implemented on schedule and within budget?

Outputs phase- Are the activities leading to achievement of the expected outputs? Are outputs delivered economically?

Outcome phase- Are the intended outcomes being achieved? Are outputs directly leading to achievement of desired outcomes? Have the operation's objectives been consistent with beneficiaries' needs and with the organisation and government's policies?

Impact phase- What changes did the operation bring about? Were there any unplanned or unintended changes? Are the benefits likely to be maintained or an extended period after assistance ends is necessary?

Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBM&E)

According to Spreckley (2009, p. 5) and Ortiz et al. (2004) the term RBM Monitoring and Evaluation (herein referred to as RBM&E) involves:

- Clearly identifying programme/project beneficiaries', and other stakeholders', problems and opportunities
- Setting clear and agreed objectives, monitoring targets and milestones
- Ensuring adequate resources to achieve the objectives
- Monitoring progress towards results, and resources consumed, with the use of appropriate indicators
- Identifying and managing assumptions/risks, while bearing in mind expected results and the necessary resources
- Using quantifiable indicators and qualitative narratives to measure progress
- Increasing knowledge by learning lessons and integrating them into decisions
- Changing objectives as a consequence of learned lessons
- Reporting on results achieved and the resources involved

M&E within the RBM process is designed and plotted simultaneously with the actual project design and planning so as to ensure that all important elements that are included are directly linked to the project (UNWFP, 2015; Necesito et al., 2010). This helps to ensure that

sufficient budgeting for M&E processes as well as accountability systems are put in place to ensure that project monitoring and assessment of impacts are conducted effectively. According to Spreckley (2009) the RBM&E cycle is made up of six different stages.

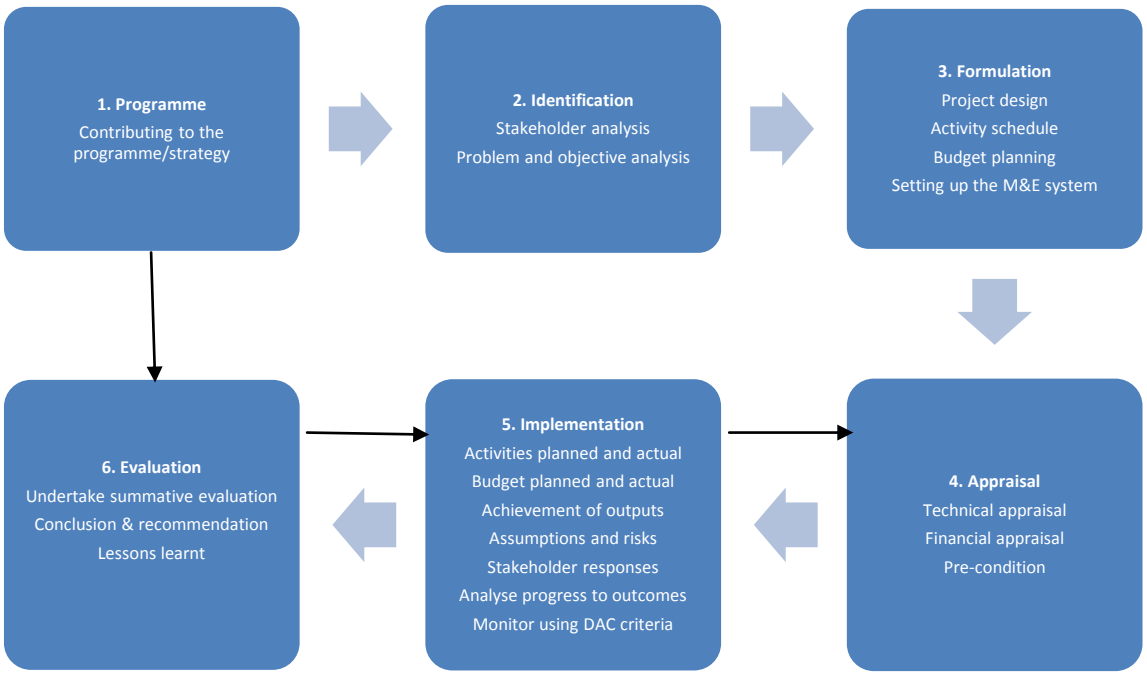
Stage 1 is the *programme stage* which involves ensuring that project strategies are directly linked to the desired outcomes in order to ensure the sustainability of projects. This also creates contexts for ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation of projects is included in the strategy formulation. Stage 2 is the *identification stage* which involves identifying the relevant stakeholders and their expectations for the desired project. In this stage the actual problem is analysed and unpacked alongside the identification of multiple possible solutions for tackling the problem. Stage 3 is the *formulation stage* which involves designing the framework for the project based on the project objectives, assumptions, evidence and indicators for success. The use of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is necessary and helpful in mapping an orderly project implementation strategy.

Stage 4 is the *appraisal stage* which involves submitting the project proposal to the donors for them to assess the extent to which it meets donor expectations as well as its feasibility. If the proposal is unsatisfactory then the first three stages will need altering and readjusting until they meet the expectations. Stage 5 is the *implementation stage* where project initiation actually takes place. Activities are conducted under the supervision of management to ensure success. Monitoring also occurs throughout the implementation stage to ensure that activities are in alignment with the set budgets, expected outputs and outcomes. Stage 6 is the *evaluation stage* where final measurement and assessment of project outcomes is conducted. Here the lessons that have been learnt during the project processes are recorded for future reference. Conclusions and recommendations are also made which will aid in decision making regarding project continuation, alteration or termination.

Below is an illustrative diagram of how the RBM&E cycle works as has been discussed above (Spreckley, 2009, p. 7):

Diagram 5

Results Based Management Cycle



RBM Implementation lessons learnt- Challenges and Enablers

Implementation of the RBM technique by local NGOs and the International NGOs has been faced with some challenges since its onset in the late 1990s/ early 2000s. According to the United Nations report of the year 2004 prepared by Ortiz et al. (2004) RBM techniques are in themselves not enough to achieve the desired results as the necessary policies, strategies and resources should be put in place to compliment and support the aims of RBM. As of the year 2012 the same problem was still being highlighted showing that there is still a lack of compatible strategies that support and effectively compliment RBM in order to ensure its success (Bester, 2012). These strategies also require that organisational culture also changes to come into alignment with the needs of RBM for it to be implemented successfully. For example, "regulations, procedures, management information systems, and training" need to be put in place to support the RBM strategies that the project management team will be implementing (Ortiz et al., 2004, p. 6). Another challenge highlighted is that successful RBM requires all sub-ports of the entire RBM system to be functional as all its systems are dependent on one another and make up the entire sum of its whole (Ortiz et al., 2004; Bester, 2012).

It has also continuously emerged within international NGOs that despite the importance of top management acknowledging and prioritising RBM as a management tool, many managers rather see it as a "bureaucratic requirement to justify their resources" (Ortiz et al., 2004, p. 4). This therefore results in management giving a half-hearted attempt towards the RBM strategy as they feel obliged to just fulfil it as a requirement thus making it a 'tick-box exercise' for accountability purposes. Research conducted by the United Nations Research Department has also shown that more has been done theoretically but not practically in implementing more efficient management methods to achieve desired results through RBM (Bester, 2012). This has largely been attributed to either the non-existent or the poorly structured RBM strategies in the different NGOs in different countries. This poor RBM implementation is due to the fat that there is no one set structure for how to apply RBM as there is an awareness of context differences in different countries.

2.14 Participatory Development

According to Theron (2008) participatory development is a process in which the communities or citizens whom change is aimed at are given the platform to influence decision making and be involved in the change process. This is because people are believed to have an inherent ability to engage, guide and actually own a project in the long run. Thus in participatory development communities are acknowledged and empowered to take part and are not sideline, overlooked or underestimated (Rasheed, 1996; Craig & Mayo, 1995). According to Craig and Mayo (1995, p. 5) the participatory development paradigm is centered around the 'Functionalist' sociological concept by Parsons which believes that "power resides with members of society as a whole, and power can increase in society as a whole as that society pursues collective goals". These goals which are aimed at benefitting society as a whole can be achieved through encouraging self-reliance which is acquired through emancipation of society. Thus "empowerment of the powerless can be achieved within the existing social order without any significant negative effects upon the power of the powerful" (Craig & Mayo, 1995, p. 5).

"The birth of a transformed nation can only succeed if the people themselves are voluntary participants in the process towards the realisation of these goals they have themselves helped to define" (RDP White Paper, 1994 as cited by Davids et al., 2009, p. 19). Thus public participation should always be encouraged and genuine efforts to get the masses involved in development processes that affect them is crucial. These efforts should be directed towards

ensuring maximum participation and involvement in "decision making" the actual "implementation of development programmes and projects", the "monitoring and evaluation" of these programmes and projects as well as equally getting a share in the benefits of development with others (Davids et al., 2009, p. 19).

According to Davids et al. (2009) and Hamann, Woolman and Sprague (2008) if genuine participation in development activities and initiatives is achieved then this will in turn lead to an increased sense of 'belonging to the project' for a nation's citizens. As a result people will become more willing to accept responsibility for the enhancement of their lives. Similarly self-reliance will also be achieved as people will feel an obligation to actively do their part to assist the government or the donors in achieving the desired end (Craig & Mayo, 1995; Rasheed, 1996; Bhatnagar, 1992). Also, through genuine participation groups of people that are often marginalised in society such as women, children, the disabled and the elderly are consciously included and empowered to be a part of the projects or initiatives which are aimed towards improving their lives. Finally, if implemented thoroughly, participatory development which is aimed at achieving change through public participation and involvement of the beneficiaries can result in accurate information about the current needs and realities within society being recorded (Hamann et al., 2008). Thus development efforts through various projects will be as precise and relevant as possible since correct information about people's needs would have been gathered.

A participatory approach to development is perceived to be one of the best ways of bringing about transformation and desired societal change as it places people at the centre of "planning and decision making" with an aim to achieve "socially just, economically viable and environmentally benign" change (Abed, 1992, p. 32). Thus sustainability of the projects is also at the heart of participatory development as it is believed that inclusion of society in the change process will result in them taking responsibility and ownership over the survival of the development initiatives/projects (Lahiri & Van Wicklin, 1992). According to Abed (1992), Spitz (1992) and Racelis (1992) since development is seen as a process and not a once-off occurrence, mechanisms should be put in place to promote participation. These mechanisms include measures to be put in place to encourage and promote the articulation of needs by the poor and marginalised groups. Also, project designs should include built-in elements that encourage popular participation. NGOs that work with people at grassroots levels should play a major role in the policy dialogue about formulating practical strategies

that encourage public participation in development projects (Abed, 1992; Spitz, 1992 & Racelis, 1992).

Some key factors that are important for successful participation to be achieved are that secrecy should be replaced with an open and transparent manner of doing things (Lahiri & Van Wicklin, 1992). People should not be lied to or deceived but instead accurate information distribution to empower society should occur. In cases where government is spearheading the development projects, NGOs that work with the relevant communities at grassroots level should not be sidelined as they serve as an important resource for acquiring effective community participation (Lahiri & Van Wicklin). Thus NGOs play a major role especially when it comes to gathering information from communities about the various projects which then serves as useful feedback for project termination, alteration or continuation.

Participatory development has however been criticised for delaying the initiation of projects as there are many people involved in the enquiry and engagement process (Davids et al., 2009). Thus this method of achieving development is initially costly in the preparation and implementation phase and is also time consuming as it adds increased demands on the project management team (Abed, 1992; Bhatnagar, 1992 & Crawford, 1992).

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach as it aims to capture and understand in a holistic way, the dynamic social interaction and experiences from the perspectives of insiders (Silverman, 2001).Qualitative research documents meanings associated to various experiences and tries to find a trend or pattern which is commonly occurring amongst participants through the analysis of thick descriptions of accounts given by participants (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit). For Creswell (2009) and Kothari (2003) qualitative research has many benefits among which are its ability to assist the researcher to clarify and view the perspectives of research participants whilst engaging with the research site/context as well as the topic. This helps a researcher to make knowledge claims and extract particular meanings from the environment which are tied to the research questions. According to Bamberger, Mabry and Rugh (2012, p.290) "QUAL researchers and evaluators share a view of social phenomena as dynamic composites of many participants' or stakeholders' perceptions and experiences, strongly influenced by the contexts in which their experiences occur". This study aimed to gain a broad understanding of the dynamic experiences of management of projects in the implementation of M&E practices in selected NGOs within Gauteng. To this end the qualitative research approach was the most suited approach that allowed the researcher to capture participants' lived experiences.

3.2 Research Design

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998) research design is defined as the primary/core method that is utilised in conducting research. This method is seen as a foundation for the whole research process and as a way to ensure that the research meets its aims and objectives. The study adopted a case study design. "Case study research method can be defined as the in-depth study of one or a few events or cases in order to understand the phenomenon being investigated" (Muzinda, 2007, p. 85). For Yin (2003) and Henning et al. (2004) a case study design facilitates for investigation of a phenomenon which has set boundaries within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the topic under enquiry is not explored through one lens, but rather through diverse lenses which allow for several aspects of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

According to Zucker (2009) and Henning et al. (2004) a case study design values the importance of the subjective creation of meaning by human beings although it also appreciates and acknowledges the availability of objectivity. One of the benefits of using a case study design is that it allows for close cooperation between the researcher and the participant as it allows participants to tell their stories and express their views on the topic whilst the researcher listens and acquires a better understanding of the participants' experiences and actions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Yin (2003) notes that when a study consists of more than a single case then a multiple-case study is required which will allows the researcher to analyse the experiences within each setting and across several settings. A case study design offers a broad and dynamic approach for understanding similarities and differences between numerous cases under study.

However, case study design has been criticised for lacking an orderly and logical way of handling data. It is seen to generalise its findings based on theoretical assumptions in use instead of the populations under study (Zucker, 2009). Also, for case study design to be effectively employed it is a prerequisite for the researcher to be well equipped with skills such as flexibility, ability to adapt to any environment, questioning and attentive listening in order for information to be gathered accurately (Baxter & Jack, 2008).These drawbacks were avoided through the researcher gaining a broad theoretical understanding of the M&E field under study prior to collecting data, being an active listener and easily adapting to any contexts which were suitable for participants during data collection. The case study design allowed the researcher to explore, investigate and unpack the meanings attached to various M&E experiences by the management in NGOs.

3.3 Population

A research population comprises of the total set from which participants will be drawn (Kitzinger, 1995). In the context of this study the population comprised of NGOs that were reached through project/programme managers who practice M&E in Gauteng. The second category of the population comprised of experts in the M&E field.

3.4 Sampling

According to Babbie and Mouton (2004) a research sample is the representative group of people from the population that is under study. These people should have "relatively

homogenous characteristics, behaviour or experiences which can facilitate broad comparison" (Walker, 1985, p. 30). Purposive sampling was used to select participants as it looks at choosing participants mainly based on their ability to answer questions posed in the research or answer the questions which the research seeks to unveil and assist in building theory substantively (Henning et al., 2004). For manageability of the field work process the sample size was made up of 8 different Non Governmental Organisations in Gauteng. From the first two organisations two participants were chosen from each, then one participant was chosen from each of the other six organisations. This gives a total of 10 project/programme managers who were interviewed. The criterion for selection was that the participants had to be recognised and formally appointed as project managers who are or have previously been involved in the M&E process of any projects within the organisation.

Gauteng as an area of study was chosen for convenience as it was the geographical location of the participants. This study did not focus on one specific field of development within the NGO sector.

These project managers came from different organisations so as to get varied responses and experiences from the NGO sector. The study sample was not limited to particular age groups or racial divisions as these did not affect the research objectives. Finally, two key informants of the study were drawn from people who are experts in the M&E sector by academic qualification and experience who were working as M&E specialists in corporate companies that conduct advanced M&E for NGOs as hired consultancies. These are the participants who were able to offer comprehensive answers that were directly relevant to the purposes of the research.

3.5 Research Instrument

A research instrument is the tool which a researcher uses to gather data or acquire information (Kumar, 2005). The researcher in this study used semi-structured interview schedules because this allows informants to "relate in their own terms, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem" (Walker, 1985, p. 4). Babbie and Mouton (2004) note that a semi-structured interview schedule comprises of open-ended questions which guides the flow of the interview. The semi-structured interview guide is not rigid and allows for new ideas to be explored based on the answers that are provided by participants. "In semi-structured interviewing which is guided by a schedule, the interviewer varies the questions in order to obtain maximum information from each interviewee" (Bamberger et al.,

2012, p. 307). The use of semi structured interviews schedules is thus beneficial because it allows for flexibility and can be used to collect large amounts of information (Shao, 1999).Another benefit of using a semi-structured interview is that the interviewer is available to clarify difficult questions thus the researcher's exact interests can be explored and probed whilst speaking to the relevant participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2004). As a result this will also help to avoid misinterpretation of participants' perceptions and experiences by the researcher. The semi-structured interview schedules were organised around questions that would generate responses relevant to the objectives of the study (*see Appendix C*). A different structured interview schedule was used on the key informants (*Appendix B*).

3.6 Pre-testing

According to Chadwick, Bahr and Albrecht (1984, p. 120) a "pre-test involves testing one's instrument and procedures on a small scale and then redesigning them to correct errors or problems revealed". It is the practice of checking the clarity and suitability of questions for the study prior to the official implementation of data collection using which ever tool one desires (Becker & Bryman, 2004). This helps to make necessary adjustments and corrections based on challenges that are encountered in the trial session. In this way, the targeted participants can understand the questions and provide the relevant responses which will answer the aims of the research without any hindrances or misunderstandings. The researcher pre-tested the interview-schedule using one project manager from the development NGO sector who possessed similar characteristics to those of required participants. However, this individual was not part of the study but was only used to test the simplicity and feasibility of the interviews.

3.7 Data collection

In a qualitative approach data collection is a process whereby researchers gather "raw empirical information of a phenomenon" to find answers to their research questions through speaking to relevant participants (Henning et al., 2004, p. 6). This process is essential in research as it helps the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the participants (Bamberger et al., 2012; Babbie & Mouton, 2004). Approximately 45 minute in-depth interviews were conducted to gather data from the participants. The initial aim was to conduct interviews which were approximately one hour long but participants did not have the time as they were very busy. Also, half the interviews were conducted via telephone with the other half being conducted as face-to-face interviews.

Those that were conducted via telephone were due to participants not having the time as well as convenient locations for us to conduct the interviews as participants were either travelling on M&E projects outside the province or some outside the country. Telephonic interviewing is primarily advantageous in that it is cheaper as it reduces travelling costs for interviewers (Chadwick et al., 1984). However, this method of data collection limits the length of interviews as was experienced by the researcher. In-depth interviews conducted via telephone also limit the researcher's ability to establish rapport or determine body language of participants to convey meaning (Chadwick et al., 1984) and this was also experienced by the researcher in the study as this could have impacted on the researcher's interpretation of meaning. Nonetheless all interviews were recorded using a recorder (with permission from the participants).A recorder allowed the researcher to capture holistic data from participants which could later be thoroughly analysed. Using a recorder also helped to avoid loss of data through the researcher's memory lapse over time as they allow for transcribing which offers detailed and marked acknowledgements of participants' experiences (Silverman, 2001).

3.8 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using thematic content analysis which according to Babbie & Mouton (2004) emphasizes the importance of examining and recording emerging trends or themes within data which are associated with the research questions. Thematic content analysis focuses on converting "raw data to final patterns of meaning which can be systematically categorised according to what a unit of meaning signifies for the researcher" (Henning et al., 2004, p. 102). The following phases were adopted during the analysis process:

Phase 1: Orientation to the data

Upon completion of interview transcribing, this initial stage involves the authentication of collected data through checking, confirming and testing the accurate nature of data that has been provided by participants (De Wet and Erasmus, 2005; Henning et al., 2004; Bazeley, 2013). This is done to verify the true nature of data that has been gathered. The researcher began by analysing raw data which had been collected to identify any errors and omissions and to correct these as much as possible. This also included correcting spelling errors in the transcripts. This initial phase gave the researcher an overview of the research material.

Phase 2: Working the data

According to De Wet and Erasmus (2005) there is need for a researcher to order his or her data according to commonly emerging themes so as to create clusters or hierarchies of information which will simplify the analysis of the findings for the researcher. Qualitative data coding generally involves identifying emerging themes in specific passages or segments of text (Bazeley, 2013; Bernard, 1994; Huberman, 1994; Henning et al., 2004). Processing and analysing data involves a number of closely related operations which are performed with the purpose of summarizing the collected data and organizing these in a manner that they answer the research questions (Dawson, 2002; Bazeley, 2013). The initial process of organising the data was carried out through familiarization and summarizing the data into the main emerging categories.

In this study relationships between categories were sought as data was analysed and summarised to establish patterns in a manner that answered the questions (Bazeley, 2013) regarding the experiences of project managers during M&E processes within the NGO sector. The research findings were also analysed and clustered on the basis of common emerging themes and characteristics within the study. Thus different categories were established for each group of similar trends.

Phase 3: Final composition of analysed data

According to Henning et al. (2004) this phase involves a final write up of the themes of the set data whilst establishing the pattern which has emerged. Qualitative data must be examined and interpreted to produce meaning from the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher therefore conducted a final evaluation of the research findings gathered from the experiences of project managers in M&E systems in order to provide valid conclusions of these experiences within the NGO sector.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

According to Henning et al., (2004) ethical considerations are those ways of carrying out research in a manner which does not infringe on people's rights. This involves following a set of principles which ensure safety of all concerned in the research process (Chadwick et al., 1984). Social research often involves an intrusion of some sort into the lives and experiences of people. As a result ethical considerations play an important role is research as they guide

or govern the moral way of collecting data from participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Some ethical considerations that guided the study were:

3.9.1 Informed consent

According to Silverman (2001) informed consent involves the researcher clearly explaining to the participants about the nature of the research so that participants become fully aware of what they will be taking part in. The extent to which participants can answer the research questions is also clarified so that they become aware of the degree to which they can engage in discussion (Padgett, 2008; Chadwick et al., 1984). Participants participated out of informed consent and were made aware of the full extent of their contribution *(see Appendix A and D)*. They were also made aware of the fact that the research would not change anything for their current M&E practice situations and would also not have any forms of financial rewards attached to it.

3.9.2 Beneficence

For Irwin (2006) beneficence focuses on ensuring that goodness and an act of kindness and concern over the participants is ensured by the researcher at all times. This also involved ensuring that the environment in which the interviews were conducted was safe and convenient for participants as Walker (1985) sees this as a critical aspect that researchers should observe. The researcher also acknowledged and appreciated diversity and respected each person in the process of data collection. A conscious effort was made by the researcher to portray a non-judgmental attitude towards diverse responses and perspectives that were received from the participants even when they differed from those of the researcher.

3.9.3 Voluntary Participation and the Right to Withdraw from the Study

For Babbie and Mouton (2004) voluntary participation means that participants should take part in the study willingly and should also be free to withdraw from the study as and when they wish to. Participants were informed of the option to withdraw from the research at any time if they so wished and could do so without giving any justification to the researcher. Participation was not be coerced but carried out on agreeable terms between the researcher and participants. *See Appendix A*

3.9.4 Avoidance of harm or non-maleficence

This ethical principle is largely concerned with ensuring that no harm should occur to participants during the researching process (Babbie & Mouton, 2004; Henning et al., 2004; Walker, 1985). This harm can be physical, emotional or psychological but should be avoided by the researcher at all costs. The researcher therefore ensured that participants were safe from any physical harm through utilising locations that were safe and comfortable for participants to conduct interviews in (as per participants' desires). Deception is also another trait which may be emotionally harmful or have physically harmful repercussions hence the research was conducted in an open and truthful manner so as to avoid deception as this can potentially be harmful to participants in the long run.

3.9.5 Violation of Privacy/Anonymity/Confidentiality

Participants' identities must be protected at all times and their private lives should be respected (Kumar, 2005). The participants were informed of their anonymity in the data compilation and report writing of the research as their identities would be protected through the use of pseudonyms. However, participants' identities were not anonymous to the researcher and her supervisor. Participants were informed of this fact prior to conducting interviews. To further ensure the confidentiality of participants, the names of the NGOs where they work have not been included in the final write-up of the report and participants were made aware of this fact prior to conducting the interviews. Also, the interview recordings shall be kept locked away in a safe for a period of time then discarded after six years provided that no research publications emanate from the study. Participants were made aware of this.

3.9.6 Approval of studies by institutional ethics committee

The research was only carried out after receiving the ethics clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), and in accordance with its requirements. *See Appendix F*

3.9.7 Publication of findings and feedback given to participants

Babbie and Mouton (2004) note that the final research report should be made available to participants if and when they so request it. As such, participants were informed that they shall be given an electronic copy of the final research report containing the findings of the study if they so desire. The researcher has tried to avoid drawing wrong or deliberately false conclusions to serve her own interests or to form research findings which have already been

premeditated. Also, the findings of this research shall be published in the form of an academic journal with the protection of participants' identities as mentioned earlier.

3.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

The chapter discussed the methodology which was used to conduct the research and analyse the findings. This study adopted a qualitative research approach as this is the most suited approach that allowed the researcher to capture participants' lived experiences. A case study design was used. The population comprised of project/programme managers in development NGOs in Gauteng. Purposive sampling was used to select participants. Semi-structured interview schedules which allow for depth in data gathering were used. Approximately forty five minute in-depth interviews were used to collect data from the participants. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse data.

Chapter four which follows presents a discussion of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the presentation and discussion of findings emanating from the study. The central themes that emerged from the data analysis processes are discussed. The discussion is guided by the research questions posed in the study which are in alignment with the research objectives. As such, the discussion of the findings is based on factors that influence the design of M&E systems in selected NGOs, the challenges faced by practitioners in the design and implementation of M&E systems, the factors that simplify M&E practice, the perceived impact of M&E practices in selected NGOs and the participatory nature of M&E practices used in selected NGOs.

4.2 FIRST OBJECTIVE: TO EXPLORE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DESIGN OF M&E SYSTEMS IN SELECTED NGOs

According to IFRC (2011) some of the key questions which monitoring is concerned with asking are whether or not outputs are leading to achievement of desired outcomes, or understanding the feelings of beneficiaries towards the project's activities. Other questions include asking whether or not project implementation is on schedule and within the allocated budget. Another major question which monitoring seeks to answer is whether the quantity and quality of resources available for the programme is appropriate as well as the timely availability of the relevant project personnel. It is the need to answer these questions given the various contexts within which the projects are conducted that determine how M&E systems are designed. This research explored factors that influence the design of M&E systems in selected NGOs. Findings of the study show that management style during project processes as well as donor expectations influence the manner in which M&E strategies are designed. These themes shall be discussed in detail below:

4.2.1 Management style of engagement

Many project managers explained how they all conducted their M&E strategies in conjunction with the actual project plan. This is because they acknowledge the importance of

incorporating M&E processes into the actual project so as to achieve a 'built in' method of project assessment. These participants also felt that their routine practice of thoroughly planning ahead in the initial stages of the project was a factor which influenced and facilitated the direction of M&E designs of their projects. Thus the project managers highlighted the significance of merging their M&E systems with the project plans prior to implementation as this helps them to create a more solid, well thought out and relevant assessment plan in place.

Referring to how M&E was incorporated into the design of his project one participant mentioned that:

> *"I think from the onset I think the project was well designed. The work plan itself it had attention to detail, apart from having activities, it had timeframes, people that were responsible and it also had implementation milestones so for instance if we said we're going to train people, so what then would be the evidence that you trained people? So the work plan was very very key for our M&E. Actually during the planning of the project we had a project document which articulated all these issues".*

Another participant said:

> *"M&E is integral or rather right from the word go right when you do the work plan, the work plan has target or what we call important milestones so the moment you say with this programme we're going to reach out to 23000 orphans and vulnerable children now you have a monitoring and evaluation indicator right at the beginning. So M&E has been integrated right from the beginning because the words that we produce or rather the operational plans and business plans they also become our monitoring and evaluation tools because we want to see at the end of the day if we've managed to achieve those targets".*

Supporting these sentiments one key informant said:

> *"Ideally M and E should be incorporated at the design stage or the beginning of even conceptualisation the project or programme you want to initiate".*

The above quotes show an acknowledgement and appreciation by project managers for the importance of incorporating M&E systems along the orchestration of the actual project design. This shows that the style of planning and implementation utilized by project managers at any given time determines the nature and extent to which M&E is incorporated into projects. It can also be argued that the type of leadership demonstrated by management as well as management focus and interests in a particular project are a critical factor which shapes the M&E design. This is because management's style of engagement utilized during project processes is skewed towards particular interests or outcomes which can either

promote or deter effective M&E design and implementation if focus is on other aspects of the project. One can then argue that perhaps management interests shape their project focus which in turn will either result in greater focus towards areas seen as important. This also means that even the depth of the M&E plans and the stages at which M&E is incorporated are determined by management focus. M&E therefore risks being seen as an after-thought which is not given much attention and is poor designed if the management involved is that way inclined.

From these findings it is clear that participants have been conducting their M&E plans during the project design phase thereby highlighting the significance of M&E to the management involved. These findings are contrary to research conducted by Bamberger et al. (2010) which suggests that some M&E practitioners have previously lacked 'built-in' M&E systems which are planned during project planning. This means that project managers have then had to conduct evaluations based on separately constructed evaluation tools which are not directly linked to the initial project design and its intended outputs yet Rose (2014) argues that effective M&E requires the tools to be constructed simultaneously with the project design. Earlier research by Estrella and Gaventa (1997) also unraveled that some managers had been accused of seeing M&E as a separate process from the projects which are being assessed thereby planning M&E systems separately from the project design. Thus the struggle has been about getting managers to realize that M&E is linked to the whole project implementation and should not be separated or seen as a different process thereby requiring to be set up alongside project implementation. The above quotations therefore reveal that managerial consciousness of M&E's relevance is critical in determining how and when it is designed and implemented.

4.2.2 M&E dependent on donor expectation/stipulation

The issue of donor stipulations and requirements was raised by many participants who felt that the manner in which they design and conduct their M&E is largely dependent on the needs of the donors. The participants highlighted that they set up their M&E plans in accordance with the outputs required by the donors in order to maintain donor relations and maintain credibility for future funding. There were mixed experiences with some participants mentioning that funders do not necessarily give them M&E frameworks to follow as they are more concerned with the results than the actual processes that have led to the results. Thus in some instances donors allow the project managers to design and conduct their M&E

processes in their own manner as long as it can account for the needs or expectations of the donors upon project completion. Others mentioned that donors stipulate their desired M&E designs and even provide the framework which is to be implemented for the project assessment.

When asked about the role that donors play in the design of M&E systems one participant said:

Another participant said:

> *"M&E is not one of my strongest points but I mean it's there right from the beginning. You sign a contract with a donor; the donor gives you a set of things, outcomes to be specific... So it's about aligning what the donor proposes and aligning it with what we have as an institution because the institution also has its own language in terms of tracking M&E and then there's also the language of the partners because partners themselves, have their own M&E processes... it's also a political thing because M&E can be imposed from donors & you find yourself tracking shit that has nothing to do with what you actually thought you would be doing".*

Another participant said:

> *"In donor funded programme more often than not the donor will come with their own stipulations in terms of M&E. They will tell you and they may give you an M&E framework. They will say we want the information like this, we want it collected like this, we want it to reach us per quarter, we want the information aggregated like this, they may give you all that. And then in other instances donors will give you leeway to design a framework for a particular programme so experiences with donors differ".*

Another participant said:

> *"The resistance or rather the challenges around M&E as a whole is really because it's something that is often imposed (by the funders). You're sent a framework you are supposed to fill it in. You're not necessarily included when it's started or sometimes you can't even articulate yourself within the framework".*

The above quotations show that donor influence in the design of M&E systems is high. One could thus argue that perhaps it is these donor expectations which determine the managers' area of focus in order to meet donor stipulations. Consequently such situations may potentially result in exclusion of management voices in the M&E processes yet they are the ones who have direct contact with beneficiaries and other firsthand experiences of the project.

Given their power, donors also potentially serve to negatively impact the participatory processes of M&E implementation if they are to be viewed as the core decision makers in the

funding relationship. This is contrary to the Stewardship theory which proposes that donors and NGOs share similar interests, goals and have inherent motivation and desires to work together towards achieving particular outcomes (Van Slyke, 2007). The consequences of this theory are that the relationship between the NGOs and their donors will strengthen as they assess project outcomes to ensure that the results achieved are in alignment with the mutually desired outcomes (Davis, Schoorman & Donaldson, 1997). The above quotations are in stark contrast to this theory as participants are visibly frustrated by donor M&E frameworks which are often imposed on them and have been viewed as an obstacle to M&E implementation. One can thus conclude that donors and NGOs may share similar interests but donor stipulations have the potential to actually weaken the relationship despite working towards similar goals.

4.3 SECOND OBJECTIVE: TO EXPLORE THE CHALLENGES FACED BY PRACTITIONERS IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF M&E SYSTEMS

Research has shown that since its emergence as a professional practice, M&E practitioners have encountered several challenges. This research explored the challenges faced by practitioners in the design and implementation of M&E systems. Various challenges were highlighted by the research participants which brought to light some of the obstacles that project managers face whilst implementing M&E. The themes which emerged are discussed below:

Challenges

4.3.1 Good planning but poor implementation

Participants felt that their projects had overall great designs on paper although the actual implementation was met with plenty of difficulties and setbacks. It was felt that M&E systems were in place and were well planned (from the onset of the project) but could not be implemented effectively due to poor M&E cultures within the organisations as implementers often did not know what to do with the collected data whilst senior management was viewed as a hindrance to M&E practice.

When asked about the challenges he experiences in implementing M&E one participant said:

> *"M&E is not seen as an important tool. It's not seen as an important component of the project. But I think from my experience M&E is very important. In our case from the planning point of view it was there but from the implementation point of view it may not have been that effective because you needed to do actual field visits on whatever has been reported. So it's never seen as very important by senior management... There was a lack of culture on how to monitor".*

Another participant said:

> *"So the challenge really with M&E is that sometimes you have really good templates, you have people in place but there isn't a coherent sense of first the data collection tools themselves, whether the community understands it? And then secondly once you've gotten that data, what to do with it?"*

It is clear from the above quotations that there are often good M&E plans in place yet there is poor implementation. One can see that there are several contributing factors such as inadequate support at senior management level to ensure effective M&E implementation. Perhaps this poses a threat to the methods of data collection that are then used as inadequate senior management support is often coupled with inadequate financial allocation being made towards the M&E budget. It can therefore be argued that challenges experienced in M&E of having plans on paper and poor implementation are similar to those experienced in policy implementation in South Africa where execution is usually poor despite strong theoretical work (Davids et al., 2009). It is clear that in some organisations M&E is conducted as a mere ritual to be fulfilled as the solid plans on paper are inconsistent with the poor implementation that then occurs. One can see a dearth in critical project management skills by the responsible personnel as project management should ideally be characterised by the application of planning, coordination, control, organising and ensuring effective use of available resources which are directed towards achieving specific goals or targets as set out by a project (Nokes, 2007).

4.3.2 Shortage of professionally trained M&E personnel

The issue of a shortage of professionally trained M&E personnel was highlighted by participants as a critical area in need of attention. Participants felt that they are overwhelmed with their workload due to being very few or at times the only ones with academic M&E professional training within their organisations. As a result project managers feel that they have to carry a heavy load as their fellow team players often rely on them thereby giving them added responsibilities. Also, participants highlighted their awareness that M&E is a

fairly new profession within South Africa thereby leading to the shortage as not many people are trained for it.

In response to the question regarding challenges experienced in the M&E field one participant said:

> *"...it's a new field, Evaluation studies was only recognised in the US I think probably around the 1980s or so and in South Africa the only university that is offering that is I think Stellenbosch. Very few people are qualified in Evaluation studies so people actually tend to conflict Evaluation studies or M&E with research".*

Another participant said:

> *"...there is no M&E people who are trained in monitoring and evaluation because most people when it comes to monitoring and evaluation they learn it on the job. No one actually sits down to say these are the processes that in monitoring and evaluation you start at this step then you go to this step then you go to this step. Only about I learnt it on the job and all I was told was that I have to collect numbers. So I feel that's the gap there. So no one is actually formally trained on that. Because you find if it's one person within the whole sector for you to pull the rest of the crowd it means you're carrying the whole load. So at the end of the day you're like you know what, what am I dying for? Can't I just follow everybody else's position because you're the one who becomes burdened. Because I'm the one who's going to do the whole logic model, I'm the one who's going to do the theory of change, I'm the one who's going to do the theoretical framework, because that's book-related. It's not something that's done at a practical level. So the challenge is if you have the formal part of it high chances are you're sharing the burden on your own".*

These sentiments were also echoed by one key informant who said that:

> *"There is need to develop institutional capacity (in South Africa) to initiate courses or programmes that actually train people on monitoring and evaluation, there is also need to adopt developed countries' strategies of monitoring and evaluation and to exchange information on how they have managed to implement monitoring and evaluation with success".*

Another key informant reiterated that:

> *"M&E calls for a lot, it calls for human resources, it calls for the general understanding of what it is so even if you look at institutional level the institutions that are training on monitoring and evaluation are still very limited and all those issues contribute to poor orientation of monitoring and evaluation as a profession and as a practice".*

It is evident from the above quotations that not only is there a shortage of professionally trained M&E personnel but that those who are there are currently overwhelmed and

frustrated. This shortage leaves M&E personnel at risk of inefficiency or poor delivery as they will not be able to perform optimally due to work overload. According to Mouton (2010) in the mid 1990s many donor agencies in South Africa began to use M&E as a guide in conducting their projects. By the end of the 1990s evaluation of programmes had begun to gain popularity and was being conducted as a part of fulfilling donor requirements regarding financial and progress accountability (Mouton, 2010). By 2009 the South African government under the leadership of president Zuma then initiated a ministry that is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the performance of public sector service delivery (Mouton, 2010). These historical trends just highlight how new the M&E field is in South Africa thereby explaining the shortage of expertise which has been raised by participants. Thus it can be concluded that more needs to be done by the universities that currently offer M&E to raise awareness and promote M&E as a field of practice. Also, perhaps the onus should be on the NGOs themselves to set aside funds for taking their M&E teams for thorough training or for M&E diplomas which are being offered by the three universities that teach M&E at the moment in South Africa.

4.3.3 Poor understanding of M&E concepts

The issue of a lack of thorough understanding of M&E concepts was raised as a grave challenge experienced by project managers as their team members often did not adequately comprehend the various M&E dynamics. Participants felt that there is a gap in how M&E is understood by fellow team players with confusion largely being around understanding the difference between outcomes and outputs.

One participant stated that:

> *"...lack of standardisation (by the project team). Someone will talk about using an output and outcome and they talk about the same thing... So what I'm trying to say is that without a very strong conceptual definition of M&E in the development of any programme I think most programmes will be chasing what they don't know that they are trying to achieve".*

Another participant said:

> *"That is a very common challenge, the way some of these terms are used and interpreted it differs across organisations. Some of these organisations use these terms interchangeably, what you would call an output here, is called an intermediate outcome by another organisation; it's the same thing at the end of the day. Some people will call it an outcome and some will call it a result. There is sometimes a confusion about how to interpret an output, outcome, intermediate*

> *outcome, what's your impact and the goal. That' a common problem that we always try to make sure that we are on the same page with people that implement a programme".*

Another participant said:

> *"Ah but sometimes it can be quite a… tedious work. If, there's too many of you who are working in it (in M&E) & very few who actually understand how it works".*

The above quotations reveal a dearth in understanding of not only M&E concepts but perhaps the entire M&E field in South Africa at the moment. It is evident that M&E in South Africa is still in its embryonic stages of development such that there is little personnel who are properly trained to do it. In turn this shortage of sufficiently trained personnel potentially hinders the effective achievement of the major value of M&E which is to assess whether or not a project has met its targets in order to conclude project feasibility and appropriateness (Hamper & Baugh, 2011). Adequately trained personnel who have a thorough understanding of M&E concepts are critical towards the betterment of current and future projects. This means that the technicalities of M&E require all practitioners to have undergone some form of academic training for the field. Similarly, there is also a deficiency in scholarly literature which speaks to the issue of understanding M&E concepts within the field in South Africa thereby highlighting that perhaps there is an overall assumption that all M&E practitioners and their teams have an adequate understanding of the field yet this is not the case.

4.3.4 Minimal funds allocated to M&E

Participants highlighted that they have often encountered challenges in how financial allocations for their projects are conducted within their various organisations. They largely felt that not enough funds are allocated towards M&E thereby negatively affecting the thoroughness of the M&E processes. It was evident in this research that budget issues affect implementation of M&E processes and not the actual planning of the M&E systems. Lean funds were thus seen as a major challenge which hinders M&E as per the needs of the donors and the expected results.

When asked about how funds are allocated for M&E one participant mentioned that:

> *"...it depends on the controlling officer, how they distribute the funds. So if that person is not so much interested in M&E then you'll say can I go to the field and collect data, I'll give you a case example where I said 'look people have been reporting that they reached this number of beneficiaries I want to go into the field and verify because I have not seen the attendance registers except reports so I want*

> *to go and see exactly if there are any then I'll come back with them'. I think out of the 25 districts I only made 1 trip (to 1 district)".*

Another participant said:

> *"So you might find that when it comes to implementation you may find that you have not budgeted for M&E exercises. You want to go for data collection and there is no budget for that or you want for capacity building, for us we work through local partners so these are local NGOs and community based organisation. They become our implementing partners, we get funding then we work through capacity building principles. But if it has not been budgeted for then you face a challenge".*

Another participant said:

> *"Some projects have very little funding for monitoring and evaluation so you cannot do one-on-one with the beneficiaries and find out about their experiences, funds can be a limitation sometimes".*

The above quotations highlight the issue of lean funds being allocated towards enhancing M&E operations. M&E is clearly viewed as a ritual and inconvenience which requires minimal attention and minimal financial allocation. It is evident that M&E is incorporated as a formality thereby highlighting the concern that perhaps managers do not fully comprehend the importance of M&E in shaping the success of projects. This lack of funds cannot be reconciled with the M&E value propositions which see M&E as a key instrument for capacity building and efficiency (Scriven, 1981). It can be argued that the lack of sufficient funding allocated to M&E limits the extent to which valuable information for future projects can be collected as managers are then limited to acquiring project information that fits within the allocated budget.

Rodriguez-Garcia and Kusek (2009) also unveiled that limited resources for M&E processes limit the acquisition of all the relevant information and managers are restricted to minimal information for accountability purposes. This also means that with lack of sufficient funds for M&E the findings reached may be too narrow or too small to reach a definite conclusion or to offer a general conclusion which can be applied to the bigger group of the project sample. One can also argue that perhaps the inadequacy of sufficient funds being allocated to M&E shows a discrepancy between the desires of project managers and those of donors in any given project. This is in alignment with the Agency theory of M&E which suggests that funders have different goals, motivations and interests to those of the implementing organisations whom they fund (Ferris & Graddy, 1994). M&E is therefore seen as a normal part of the contractual agreement within which donors and their beneficiaries must agree on

in order to achieve desired goals for both parties involved (Fitz-Gibbons, 2002). This could best explain why there is little funds being allocated to M&E as managers see M&E as an unnecessary formality and ritual which ought to be fulfilled for donor accountability.

4.3.5 M&E done as tick-box exercise

Participants highlighted that due to the tedious nature of M&E processes and pressure to meet deadlines and donor expectations team players often end up fulfilling M&E requirements for their projects in a half-hearted manner for the sake of accountability. It emerged in this research that M&E is often conducted only when reports or reviews are due for submission such that fictitious figure production occurs. Project managers felt that their fellow team players who are often their subordinates frequently lack consistency and honesty as they practice M&E minimally for reporting purposes thereby hindering a thorough understanding of the various dynamics that are at play within project implementation.

Regarding other challenges that M&E practitioners experience one participant explained by giving an example of his personal experiences and said:

> *"Let's say if it's the registers you want to see if people attended and how they attended. There's an issue with suspected cooking of statistics (inexplicable manner in which statistics are derived) where project team members tend to make up their own statistics regarding attendance and the events that took place as it is difficult to note the truth of what actually happened when you the manager were not present. Sometimes they do this because of pressure to deliver".*

Another participant said:

> *"The honest truth is we're only incorporating it (M&E) when it comes to the numbers. That how many people did we train? That's how we're incorporating it. No follow up is done for the people who are trained afterwards, what was the impact, no, it's only on the part of how many people got trained. So only on the part of processes, we're only monitoring the numbers trained".*

Another participant said:

> *"Half the time we go in to collect information because it's reporting period, we need to submit a quarterly report. So we don't have the time to go through the process".*

Another participant said:

> *"Some partners have a tendency of exaggerating figures. If they are anticipating that as a funder what you are interested in are numbers so for example we co-fund some projects with government. The government is into numbers and we are more interested in quality so there is a clash because the partner has to satisfy both*

> *funders whereas a funder who is more interested in quality we often have compromises in terms of quality because partners want to please government. People tend to give fictitious figures and often compromise on the quality and often do those high numbers. Sometimes they agree to spend an hour with beneficiaries but only spend 15 minutes and they get the registers signed so they can move on to the next one. That's also a major challenge in terms of the activities".*

Is clear in the above quotations that M&E reports are often gathered when feedback is required by the funders thereby leading to unethical practices among M&E practitioners and their team players. According to Ortiz et al. (2004, p. 4) it has also continuously emerged within international NGOs that despite the importance of top management acknowledging and prioritising M&E as a management tool, many managers rather see it as a "bureaucratic requirement to justify their resources". This therefore results in management giving a half-hearted attempt towards the M&E systems as they feel obliged to just fulfill it as a requirement thus making it a 'tick-box exercise' for accountability purposes. From this research it is thus evident that the challenge of conducting M&E as a 'last minute act' for reporting purposes is that it results in the so-called 'cooking of results' as mentioned by participants.

The fact that M&E is done half-heartedly to fulfill donor expectations shows that it is a flawed process altogether as the critical findings which can be used as important lessons for future projects will not be learnt as there is no appreciation for the strategic value of M&E. Again this is in alignment with the Agency theory which sees the M&E process as a normal part of the contractual agreement as donor and organizational interests are not in sync (Ferris & Graddy, 1994).

4.3.6 M&E seen as a 'panopticon'

The sociologist Foucault (1995) saw power as being a concept which can be applied in any institution to bring about order whilst being practiced in a more subtle manner. In his opinion power could be exercised to maintain social order through the simple concept of surveillance and observation. Thus his concept of the 'panopticon' being an epitome of how good behavior can be maintained through making people believe that they are under constant supervision therefore makes them behave accordingly. Foucault (1995) believed that this concept would work best in any institution as long as people are made to believe that they are under constant observation thereby producing quality work or good behavior as they will not be given room to slacken from knowing that no one is watching them.

In this research it emerged that M&E is regarded as a form of 'panopticon' (the all-seeing tower) as it is seen as a policing agent that searches for mistakes that have been made in the project implementation. Participants felt that M&E is often viewed as a surveillance tool in search for errors thereby attaching negative undertones to the practice.

Describing one of the challenges experienced in the field one participant said:

> *"Unfortunately us M&E people are the bad guys because that is our job. We check for mistakes in the programme, we check for loopholes in the programme, and unfortunately we are the policemen of the programme. So if I realize that something is wrong I'll call everybody involved then we will have a discussion and see how we can improve the stuff. Then if people don't want to listen we give out warning letters. And if people don't want to perform we just fire them, and we do this regularly. We are not there in the communities only for our good name but we also want to make a difference in people's lives".*

Another participant said:

> *"I believe all people involved in projects understand and appreciate what M&E is all about. It takes away us as M&E practitioners being seen as the policing department, we are seen as the auditors in the NGO and it should not be like that. We should be seen as complementary... If we understand that, they will not be the perception of a policing agent where people will say this is the M&E role and these are the duties of M&E".*

This was also supported by one key informant who stated that:

> *"People think it's judgmental but in its essence M&E is improvement focused...because it's in the social development sector it's not policing. People think it's policing. But in its essence, in its formulation it's meant to improve performance, it's meant to improve accountability, it's meant to improve how people view projects, how they design projects. Whether these projects are worth having, or have a meaning".*

It is evident from the above quotations that M&E is seen as a policing act required by donors and higher management to unravel all the areas of lack and incompetence during project processes. Perhaps this is the reason why some managers 'cook figures' as highlighted by the participants earlier as there is pressure to appear competent at all times. To support this finding research has also shown that the concept of learning from M&E results has often been viewed negatively as project managers perceive M&E to be a process of largely finding errors and inefficiencies within project implementation (Bamberger et al., 2010; INTRAC, 2014). In some cases M&E has been seen and used as a form of 'panopticon' resulting in the withdrawal of funds by donors as they have used it as a form of policing agent to assess project progress (Bamberger et al., 2010). It can also be argued that it is necessary for donors

to impose enquiries into project processes once in a while as they will be able to make a more informed decision regarding whether or not they are willing to take the risk of continuously investing their money towards the project at home (Pinson, 2004). Again here one can see the discrepancy between donor and organizational interests within project implementation as highlighted by the Agency theory (Ferris & Graddy, 1994). One can therefore see that there is no unison or similarity of interests between donors and their recipients.

4.4 THIRD OBJECTIVE: TO EXPLORE FACTORS THAT SIMPLIFY M&E PROCESSES

The favourable conditions which have enabled project managers to practice M&E with ease and bring forth the desired outcome have been those of having a clear and coherent M&E plan or design in place which can be followed throughout project implementation. Participants also mentioned utilising the log frame as a structured approach to ensuring that M&E is conducted at ease to meet donor expectations. It also emanated from the study that continued evaluations and having a thorough baseline to work with also simplify the operational processes of M&E as the necessary initial data is made available then is continuously assessed. Participants also felt that there is a need for more simplified language which is less scientific as an approach that will ease the M&E process given that most team players do not have professional M&E training. These themes shall be discussed in detail as follows:

4.4.1 Clear and coherent M&E plans

It emerged from this research that clarity of M&E plans as well as the lucidity are critical to the manner in which M&E will be applied by all team players involved. Practitioners felt that simple yet logical designs of M&E systems should be put in place as these will serve as a guide for the operations thereby reducing the amount of errors, loopholes and other implementation challenges experienced.

Responding to a question about the factors that simplify M&E in project implementation one participant said:

> *"A clear project document, a document that talks to your goals, it talks to your project objectives, it talks to your outputs, your outputs then coming to your results, that is your first level of results then talks to your outcomes that is another level of results which is what the beneficiaries will receive or the change in the*

> *beneficiaries... If you have a project that is very coherent where activities have got that flow, and then you have your risk matrix, your results framework, your M&E plan, your M&E framework, I think that is a very strong project... We had a very good project design and we were able to articulate the results. We were able to tell a story using our tools that we had, using the log frame, using our tools , and the quarterly reporting tools, and to that effect even when our donor reviewed us we also performed at 'A' and A+".*

As evidence of a clear M&E plan in place another participant said:

> *"We have a monitoring and evaluation framework that was developed on our 5 year work plan because this programme is for 5 years. So we want to see what progress we have made from 2013 up to now for the different interventions we have been doing and then at the end of the project sometime in 2016/2017 we're going to have another assessment an end of line assessment and then that is also going to inform or influence our evaluation aspects".*

These claims were also supported by a key informant who said that:

> *"Think of whether your objectives are clear. Remember one trick I can give you with M&E is that it centres around your objectives, your overall goals or aims, your activities, your outputs which are a direct result of your activities, your outcomes which come as a result of your activities then obviously your indicator which measures success or lack of success thereof. So make M&E practices clear, set goals, clear set activities, clear set frameworks".*

The above quotations highlight the importance of clearly laid out plans for M&E which simplify the process for M&E personnel. This means that management needs to be aware and well knowledgeable of the M&E phenomenon in order to coherently structure M&E systems so that they can meet project expectations. Again this requires management to appreciate the importance of M&E as well as to have a collaborative donor team given that it has already been highlighted earlier that donor stipulations determine M&E designs. The importance of logical and well thought-out plans is a critical value of M&E which will enable answering the questions of management (for the sake of project improvement) and those of the donors regarding the project's progress and outputs. This also means that in situations where donors dominate the M&E process they need to ensure that they produce clear frameworks which implementers at lower levels will be able to understand and adhere to. Effective M&E values continued learning and risk mitigation so as to achieve the best possible outcomes of the projects in alignment with the project goals (Scriven, 1981).

4.4.2 Use of critical tools

Many tools emerged but the mostly utilized is the log frame which participants felt was key to simplifying the design and implementation of M&E systems for tracking project progress.

The various components of the log frame approach were stated to have segments which cater for indicators, outcomes, outputs and impacts which M&E personnel can follow with ease.

When asked about the tools that simply M&E practice one participant said:

> *"If you focus just on the outcomes the most important tool when you talk about outcomes is the log frame. So the log frame is very important because the log frame has all those 3 components, the impact level, the outcome level and the output level".*

Another participant said:

> *"The methodology of logical framework ideally helps you in designing your programme. It is also an M&E framework, from the word go you decide this is where you want to go and this is the impact or outcome we want to achieve. And you start working backwards, that is an M&E tool that helps you to design your programme".*

Another participant said:

> *"When we design out projects we use the logical approach framework. In the logical framework approach, we have what we call result areas and we have our activities. We have our set targets and means of verification. For every project there is a log frame for it and for every activity and target has a means of verification, it shows the programme implementers on the ground that if we are going to have an activity. For example, if we want to monitor the number of the women who use family planning, our means of verification would be the clinic records so right from the start if they say they will refer certain groups of women from a particular village to this particular clinic. We can check the clinic records if there is an increase in the number of women coming from that particular villages because of the referees from our project. If it's a childcare project, we check after school care registers because they keep a list of kids who are attending and on what days, we can check that register. And for project reasons if there is a home based caregiver they have their forms which the clients have to sign and they also have to sign".*

The above quotations highlight the use of the log frame as a critical tool that simplifies M&E. It is clear from the participants that not only is the log frame important on its own as a tool but that even the managers who utilize it need to be masters of the trade otherwise the log frame will not yield results as a stand-alone tool without human input. Similarly Spreckley (2009) also argues that use of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is necessary and helpful in mapping an orderly project implementation strategy. One could argue that creating a log frame requires the designing to be carried out by people who fully understand the scope of the project based on the project objectives, assumptions, evidence and indicators for success. However, one ought to be aware that there are other tools which are utilized during M&E practice such as problem trees, Gantt charts, WBS which assist with establishing time

frames, performance parameters (amongst others), although these were not of popular use by the participants interviewed.

4.4.3 Use of simplified language

It emerged from this research that M&E is a rather technical field which comprises of scientific terms and concepts which the lay person who is a part of the M&E team cannot implement. Participants felt that these technicalities are the reasons why many people do not enter the field and also that they are the reason why M&E implementation is ineffective as knowledge and comprehension of these 'scientific' terms is lacking. There was a general sense that M&E is thought to be complex yet everyone involved in project implementation actually conducts it in one way or another.

Regarding the challenges experienced in M&E one participant said:

> *"I think it's going back to the politics and I think it doesn't help with M&E also especially if you just come & speak the language of indicators, deliverables and outputs. I think that's a very specific knowledge base. So I think there's also the clash there around the language of politics in making sure that people actually understand because for a very long time I think M&E has been limited to M&E specialists within the organization".*

Another participant also said:

> *"You see M&E is a highly technical area whereby you need certain skills to understand frameworks of M&E so the first challenge is understanding what M&E is. That is the biggest challenge. Lack of skill in other words".*

A key informant however said that:

> *"I always say we need to demystify M&E because people hear about M&E and think about some technical animal. I believe that everyone working in an NGO context is an M&E officer because everyone does a bit of monitoring and evaluating in their work. Monitoring is routine collection of information about a project".*

It is evident from the above quotations that M&E has some technical undertones attributed to it which make it rather complex for the lay employee to implement without the expert assistant of a professionally trained person. Perhaps this can be attributed to the lack of academic training on M&E of the people who implement M&E alongside project managers. Thus one can argue that perhaps more friendly ways of implementing M&E are required in order to promote inclusion of all team players involved at management level. Nonetheless given that the field is fairly new there is insufficient scholarly literature that speaks to the technicalities of M&E within project implementation in South Africa.

Also, the technicalities associated with M&E reveal that there is a need for relevancy in people-centred development if everyone is expected to be genuinely involved in the process. Language becomes a key tool that facilitates access to beneficiary involvement and engagement as it ensures that beneficiaries acquire adequate understanding. This highlights the need for genuine development and greater effort to be made by the core power figures to accommodate the intellectual needs of beneficiaries and all involved so as to create a platform for meaningful engagement during the M&E processes. This concept of people-centred participatory development is spoken of at length by Davids et al. (2009) who discuss its importance within the South African context as all persons including the marginalized and the minority groups should be purposefully catered for in the engagement processes. As it stands, the above quotations reveal that there is no greater effort being made to cater for the intellectual needs of all stakeholders involved hence one can conclude that inclusivity and reasonable accommodation of beneficiary communities are lacking in the M&E processes.

4.5 FOURTH OBJECTIVE: TO INVESTIGATE THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF M&E PRACTICE IN PROJECTS

The M&E process has some key benefits which shall now be discussed. Some of the benefits of M&E highlighted in this research include the fact that it provides data which can be used to make informed decisions regarding project implementation whilst it also allows for a thorough assessment of the impact of the project on its beneficiaries in relation to the intended goals and objectives (Child Trends, 2007). This means that the manner in which a project is carried out as well as its progress is subject to scrutiny and change if through M&E one discovers that the project is not achieving its intensions. This research explored the perceived impact of M&E practice within NGO projects. The themes which emerged under this objective shall be discussed in detail below:

4.5.1 Accountability

The issue of accountability was raised by participants as one of the main benefits that result from M&E processes. This is because project managers are able to successfully fulfill donor and stakeholder requirements whenever M&E systems are implemented. Some participants highlighted that their donors are more interested in results than in how M&E is conducted

hence the results produced from those M&E processes are what matters most for giving donors the desired feedback. Others felt that M&E assists them to acquire future funds as there is plenty of competition for funds meaning that one's ability to produce donor expectations secures prospects for future funding as donors gain confidence in the reliability of the NGO.

When asked about the impact of M&E for their projects one participant said:

> *"My understanding is that M&E is very important. To begin with monitoring is very important because you need to account to the different stakeholders... And then for evaluation it is very important especially to the funders because in the NPO sector the funders are really interested in projects, or programmes or services that make a difference in the lives of the beneficiaries. So it's no longer about providing services to the people and then you just go because at the end of the day there is a lot of competition and I think it is just the right thing to do".*

Another participant said:

> *"My understanding from my experience within a project management context is that M&E is used for accountability purposes. It is used to monitor whether things are going as planned and used to be able to see the future impact or whether what you've planned actually yielded the results you wanted. It's to check results. Have you reached the right targets, have you reached the beneficiaries, have you also used the money the way you said you're going to use the money?"*

Another participant said:

> *"I'll point out the issue of accountability, accountability to the donors, and accountability to the beneficiaries and accountability to us as an organisation. Like I said it's important to justify to the donors or to your funders that this is how we used your funds and the impact we had".*

It is evident from the above quotations that M&E contributes to the maintenance of good donor relations as their expectations are met and accounted for through M&E systems. One can see that the ability to justify the use of funds given by donors is a critical benefit of M&E which has the potential to either bind or destroy relations between donors and their recipient NGOs. Trust between the two parties is therefore highly dependent on the results which M&E produces. Perhaps it is this need for accountability which puts project managers under pressure to meet targets which then results in the fictitious number manufacturing ("cooking of data") as there is a need to reaffirm donor confidence as was highlighted earlier by participants.

Similarly, Hobson et al., (2013) and IFRC (2011) stipulate that M&E encourages accountability by the management involved as they are answerable to all stakeholders for whatever outcome or results derived from this process. This therefore forces managers to exercise greater diligence to ensure success in their projects as continued funding by donors is highly dependent on the results of the project whilst continued community support is also dependent on the positive outcomes of the projects which are expected by the members.

4.5.2 Programme enhancement

The issue of programme enhancement was raised by participants as a key impact of M&E as the information derived from the M&E processes can be used to further improve project operations. M&E is thus viewed as a tracking device which alerts project managers of any concerns that require rectification whilst the project is ongoing. Participants highlighted that M&E does not only assist in improving current project functionality but that it also assists managers with enhancing future projects. It is thus seen as a positive tool for continued learning and can also be used for futuristic forecasting based on lessons learnt.

When asked about the perceived impact of M&E one participant said:

> *"You also need to account to yourselves so monitoring is about checking your progress against your target at the beginning of the programme. So if you had said that by the end of the year we're going to train so many people and then you can check day to day, week to week, month to month to see if you are on track, and you'll see if you have to make any adjustment to your work plan. Probably you'll have to increase your workload if you're too far ahead of your schedule or sometimes you have to take something out of the schedule if you're overwhelmed. And then along the way you'll learn some very important lessons which you can also incorporate into your work plan. Because there are some things that you will not actually be aware of when you plan and then when you actually do the implementation you see that oh I think if we try this we'll have better results".*

Another participant said:

> *"Monitoring is routine collection of information about a project and programmes, so you are tracking your activities, your outputs, outcomes all of that is collecting information about it. You are trying to see how you can make use of the information to improve the programme going forward".*

The above quotations reflect the fact that M&E is seen as an important practice that facilitates programme enhancement thereby improving service delivery for the beneficiaries. It is seen as a practice which assists to continuously improve projects. One could add that M&E assists in the maintenance of a good reputation by organizations as a form of brand image of

efficiency and success will potentially be associated with an NGO whose M&E systems produce successful project results. Again effective implementation of change discovered during the M&E process needs to be coupled with appropriately skilled managers who are knowledgeable on project functions lest there be futile efforts towards change. The managerial functions of M&E involve "measures to provide information to enable adjustment of activities to better meet standards; to provide knowledge of progress toward desired states; to spot trouble or potential trouble so that corrective action can be taken; and to allocate resources (budgets) and rewards among organisational participants and units" (Kanter & Summers, 1987 as cited by Powell, 1987, p. 159). However, it should also be noted that this so-called programme enhancement can only occur if the project managers involved actually take the initiative to implement the various lessons learnt during M&E.

4.5.3 M&E as knowledge base for lessons learnt

It was established in this research that M&E provides a platform for lessons learnt which can be implemented by other project managers outside of the NGO. M&E was acknowledged to be a hub for knowledge production which can be packaged in such a manner that anybody interested in learning from project failures or successes can access. This is with specific reference to methodologies which can actually be published as scholarly material for easy access as project implementation is about enhancing the lives of the beneficiaries and not a competition for the best project implementers.

When asked to give any recommendations regarding the impact of M&E one participant said:

> *"M&E is another branch of research, it's another method of knowledge production & quite often it's left especially but then some organizations, they do have methodologies that are people orientated but quite often it's the specialists who write that report. But M&E remains largely unchanged in terms of as a critical space for knowledge production. It's highly specialized, very specific in its language".*

Another participant reiterated similar sentiments that:

> *"The impact (of M&E) becomes powerful because it speaks to, taking for instance, and that's where publication comes out, publication comes out to say but this is what this project learnt, the next people who want to do that project if they come across what happened to us they are able to work on that so I think then the powerful part that comes out is the publications, lessons learnt so that in future those mistakes are not repeated again".*

It is clear from the above quotations that there is need for improved access to and availability of M&E findings in project management within NGOs which other managers can learn from. The issue here is that M&E lessons that would have been learnt as well as the procedures which would have been used within the project should be packaged for publishing so that they are made available for others to learn from despite being in a different NGO. NGOs in similar contexts or conducting similar projects can learn from it thereby having a ripple effect of successful projects being derived from the lessons learnt by others. Again one can add that there is potential stigma and fault-finding associated with publishing project M&E systems as this can expose managerial incompetence.

However, according to Rose (2014) methodological and procedural findings from M&E processes have often not been shared across various project disciplines and organisations for all donors and sponsors to learn from them. This is because there's often a negativity attached to M&E results that show poor project outputs as this supposedly reflects badly on the donors and organisations that implement projects. However, it should also be noted that there is a dearth in published project experiences perhaps because people feel the need to protect their organisations. Thus publishing actual M&E experiences potentially exposes organisational weaknesses thereby threatening the image of an organisation to the outside world. Research conducted by Binnendijk (1989) highlighted that there was a fear associated with publishing project experiences within international NGOs in developing countries for all to see and learn from. This was due to the fear of exposing organisational weakness. Thus it can be argued that perhaps this is still the same situation two decades later. Nonetheless there is insufficient scholarly literature to support this argument.

4.6 FIFTH OBJECTIVE: TO EXPLORE THE PARTICIPATORY NATURE OF M&E PRACTICES USED IN SELECTED NGOS

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) as a method of assessment emerged in the 1980s due to recognition of the importance of involving beneficiaries in research on projects that concern them (Miller & Campbell, 2006; Estrella & Gaventa, 1997; Fetterman, undate). Participation is thus a critical area especially in the development arena as needs assessments and effective programme implementation heavily rely on the involvement of the beneficiaries. According to Chambers (1997) knowledge of the people involved is the basic starting point for developing genuine change. This requires great involvement of major

stakeholders and beneficiaries with a purposeful inclusion of marginalised groups of those communities where PM&E is conducted. This research explored the participatory nature of M&E practices used in the selected NGOs. The themes which emerged from this objective shall be discussed below:

4.6.1 Beneficiary involvement in M&E design is lacking yet participation is required in implementation

It also emerged that participants felt that beneficiaries are not involved in the actual design of M&E systems yet their participation is still required when it comes to the implementation of M&E systems. This was seen as a loophole within the M&E systems as participants felt that the gap between M&E design and implementation involving beneficiaries should be bridged. There was a general feeling that beneficiaries should be involved starting at the design stage which thus calls for more friendly approaches to M&E which can cater for their comprehension needs.

When asked to identify any gaps if any in the participatory nature of M&E one participant said:

> *"The programmes we implement are already designed well in advance without beneficiary input and so when we go to them and say let's monitor and evaluate yet their input was never requested to begin with... So if the beneficiaries were never included to begin with when the programme was conceptualised there are gaps in then trying to involve them to monitor and evaluate at a later stage".*

A key informant supported this claim by saying:

> *"Participatory M&E should start before implementation so that people are on board from the word go. It's not about saying we have been implementing for 6 months now we have to go in for a monitoring visit. You are now coming in at a later stage (during implementation), but these processes should start even when you are gaining entry into the community (during the design stage)".*

It is evident from these quotations that there is a call for more beneficiary friendly M&E approaches which are inclusive of beneficiary needs right from the beginning of the actual design. Beneficiary involvement right from the design stage of the M&E processes is lacking yet their contributions are critical for project enhancement given that they are the ones who should have the power to determine the outcome of M&E processes. This is because beneficiaries can choose whether or not to cooperate with M&E personnel within organizations hence their involvement is crucial. Given that it has already been highlighted earlier that beneficiaries are often excluded from the M&E processes due to low intellect, it

can be argued that it is the organisation's responsibility to educate the beneficiaries and device more friendly tools to accommodate. According to Ife (2006) education is key for competence in understanding and encouraging participation. The fact that beneficiaries have been found to not be involved during project designing but involved during project implementation shows that the programme of action being utilized by managers is not participatory in nature as the packaging is not inclusive of the educational needs of beneficiaries. This is contrary to the principle of PM&E which believes that participation by beneficiaries helps them to gain a deeper understanding of the development process thus further empowering them for transformation and sustainable projects (Abbot & Guijt, 1997). Nonetheless it should be noted that there is a lack of adequate current academic material that addresses the issue of PM&E within the South African context.

4.6.2 Half-hearted attempt to beneficiary involvement

Participants highlighted that they involve their beneficiaries in their M&E processes to a large extent. They mentioned how beneficiaries are included through the formation of community dialogues as organised by the NGO project teams in collaboration with the community steering committees and community leaders. It is through these community dialogues that baseline information is collected, whilst feedback, engagement and interactions occur between project leaders and the beneficiaries. Any challenges faced by community members regarding project implementation are aired and interrogated by all parties involved to ensure project success. Participants used their personal experiences and case studies to explain how they involve their beneficiaries in the M&E processes.

Pertaining to beneficiary involvement in projects one participant related to a previous project of his and stated that:

> *"One of the outputs or one of our objectives was to increase demand and accountability for maternal and child health services. So what that means is we had to work with the beneficiaries. In this case what I mean by beneficiaries is the communities themselves... What we did was we funded local NGOs within the communities who created a demand and they then formed community dialogues where they would talk about maternal and child health services. So they talked to chiefs, they talked to steering committees, they talked to young women…".*

Another participant said:

> *"I also do random checks so I can just pick a list of beneficiaries and see if it's a home based care programme and then I'll select randomly the beneficiaries that I'm going to do a home visit. I take with me the project leaders and check with them how*

much of the services they have received, how many times they have visited, what are the services, any challenges and anything else. This is part of the monitoring, I also do spot check with the beneficiaries and they can tell me how they are benefitting from the project. I can verify with them what they are receiving and I can compare with what the project says they are giving to the beneficiaries".

From the above quotations it is apparent that there is high beneficiary involvement where they are engaged for the sake of providing the necessary information to project managers. At surface level this type of beneficiary involvement appears to be high and genuine yet one can argue that participation being conducted via information giving is very superficial as it does not allow for genuine inclusion of beneficiaries in the M&E processes. It can then be concluded that the extent to which beneficiaries influence the M&E processes are questionable as they are excluded in the actual M&E planning processes due to their supposed intellectual deficit as has been discussed earlier. Participation where beneficiaries are largely involved during the implementation stages to provide answers and not during the crucial project designing stages is not authentic participation as it is passive in nature. It treats beneficiaries like inactive recipients whose contribution to the project should only be about their experiences and not about their involvement towards the project M&E designing itself. Beneficiaries are overlooked and perhaps the project managers have a sense of entitlement to M&E formulation without involving beneficiaries given that they are the 'experts' in the field and perhaps undermine beneficiaries.

According to Abbot and Guijt (1997) and Rugh (1992) participation in M&E empowers community members to become self-reliant as they learn how to assess the impact of project implementation on their own through their involvement in the M&E process. The above quotes are a contradiction of the need for empowerment and self-reliance in M&E as beneficiaries are treated as passive recipients whose contributions are minimal and very basic.

4.6.3 Lack of beneficiary intellectual understanding

It was established in this research that there is poor beneficiary involvement due to their lack of intellectual abilities to comprehend M&E concepts well. Participants felt that even though beneficiary involvement is high as mentioned earlier, there is still room for improvement as greater beneficiary involvement can still be achieved if M&E concepts are simplified for the lay man to understand. It was established that beneficiaries often do not understand the reasons for conducting PM&E and the importance of their involvement. Beneficiaries were

also said to lack intellectual comprehension of what is expected of them in any given M&E exercise. Participants therefore felt that simpler M&E templates that are friendly to the less educated should be incorporated into the PM&E design as this is the only way in which beneficiary involvement will increase.

One participant said:

> *"The challenge (with implementing beneficiary participation) is capacity. We seldom find such capacity in local communities of people who can be fully engaged in saying ok, we want to design a tool that collects such information. So for the local community to partake and understand that process is a huge challenge. Primarily it is intellectual. When we work with communities half the time it's about consultation, we want to come in with a programme so we meet with community leaders, communities. We consult them on how we want the programme to be like, so in terms of their involvement, they are in tune with such kind of working. So for you to now say, we want you to help design a tool that we are going to use to measure progress is often a challenge (as their comprehension is not that deep)".*

Another participant said:

> *"There is this drive about simplifying the M&E tools to include the qualitative stuff...There's practical challenges involved like for us to design a programme like the one we have right now they (beneficiaries) do not fully understand the concept behind what we are trying to do (due to low intellect)".*

Regarding the challenge experienced in implementing PM&E one participant said:

> *"In order for M&E to be used we have to make sure the beneficiaries are involved in it, they understand it and they're part of it. But no (in the current project) they're not involved at all. They don't understand. We've got evaluation forms but 3 quarters of them are not filled in properly because they're not understanding (how to complete them). So I think the lack of understanding of the beneficiaries is also a problem which if we want M&E to be used and taken seriously we need to involve people. They need to be trained (to enhance understanding)".*

The above quotations highlight the struggles by project managers in implementing PM&E due to lack of understanding of beneficiaries. Given that this research has highlighted illiteracy as a challenge amongst beneficiaries, one can argue that the implication for project managers is that their willingness to collaborate with beneficiaries requires them to go to great lengths to devise simpler and context relevant M&E designs and tools which beneficiaries can comprehend and actually partake in. The fact that beneficiaries do not understand the M&E concepts and processes means that there is a lack of education by the project managers as insufficient knowledge is given to them before they can fully participate in the development process. Education is a critical tool for empowerment and involvement as

it enables all beneficiaries involved to participate more meaningfully and to greater lengths as their intellectual needs are accommodated for (Davids et al., 2009).

One can thus argue that it takes a willing heart to ensure that beneficiaries are genuinely involved and not excluded from the M&E processes. The fact that beneficiaries do not understand how M&E systems operate and their role in shows that there is some form of short-circuiting being done by project managers where they are overlooking the importance of teaching beneficiaries in a manner which they understand. The authenticity of the participatory nature of M&E is lacking. This also means that project managers must utilize evaluation methods that fit beneficiary contexts and not impose their own tools which beneficiaries do not understand. This also highlights the importance of managers being given flexibility to change M&E frameworks instead of using those which are donor imposed as highlighted earlier. This is because managers have direct contact with beneficiaries at grassroots level such that they require the leeway to incorporate more friendly M&E systems which cater for the context and needs of beneficiaries. These findings are in alignment with previous research which revealed that communities whom most NGOs serve are often excluded from the M&E process yet their opinions matter the most (INTRAC, 2014; Probst, 2002). A more inclusive approach to M&E is necessary in order for the processes to be relevant to the exact needs and perspectives of the beneficiaries.

However, in some organizations they are beginning to make critical steps towards ensuring accessible development hence peer education has been seen to be helpful in enhancing beneficiary education. It emerged in this research that peer educators who form part of the project beneficiaries are key role players in the engagement processes. Participants felt that peer educators selected by project team personnel within the communities in which the project is being implemented are highly influential in steering participation in M&E processes. Not only have these ‘peers’ been instrumental towards encouraging beneficiary involvement in M&E but they have also been champions who assist project managers with explaining difficult concepts to beneficiaries so as to promote inclusion and enhance the participatory dynamics of M&E. Peer educators thus serve as teachers who explain difficult concepts to their fellow community members given that it has already been highlighted that most beneficiaries are excluded from participating in M&E processes due to poor intellectual capabilities.

When asked for factors that simplify the participatory aspects of M&E one participant stated that:

> *"Very few organisations have what you call 'champions'. Champions are like your peer educators that if I go to every project and within a project maybe there are 5 different activities, from each activity I identify a person to say you are the champion and the champion you're the one who's going to help me with the data. So this person becomes the peer educator to the rest of the people (beneficiaries) in that activity to say but this is important because I know it. So when meetings are held on M&E those champions are involved. They are the champions to help others understand because people understand better... I feel peer education is a powerful tool. So if you take peers in projects and use them to go and preach the gospel, they are more likely to say 'no guys this is important, guys this form has to be filled in because it is important for M&E', because they would have been trained and they are in constant meetings of how M&E should be conducted".*

Another participant said:

> *"We have different levels of participation, we also have what you call beneficiary committees so for each group there are beneficiary committees for example we have school clubs and we have peer educators who represent different age groups with life skills project and excellent reproductive projects for other lessons. In that case all committees are represented by peer educators or the youth club leaders. So this is one way of beneficiary participation so if they have any issues or challenges the peer educators are directly linked (to help with explanations and provide guidelines as far as they can)".*

It is evident from the above quotations that peer education is one of the most effective methods of promoting greater beneficiary involvement as difficult concepts are explained by their fellow community members whom they potentially understand better. One could argue that perhaps this highlights the importance of conducting thorough baselines prior to M&E designs as the intellectual capabilities of beneficiaries can be captured in that process so that managers can devise other simpler ways in which greater participation can be achieved. Nonetheless there is insufficient scholarly data that addresses this method of encouraging participation in M&E.

4.6.4 Time and cost constraints of beneficiary involvement

It emerged in this research that involving beneficiaries in M&E processes is not only lengthy but also expensive. Participants felt that it takes up an unnecessarily long period to consult with and engage beneficiaries at the level which is thorough and all-inclusive. It was even stated that such engagements with beneficiaries can actually delay or slow down project implementation as there is too many people involved and too many views to consider.

Regarding the cost implication participants felt that it requires a lot of funds to cater for the large volumes of beneficiaries if genuine engagement is to be conducted.

Regarding the factors that impede successful beneficiary involvement in M&E processes one participant said:

> *"It's time consuming because this one is going to say do this whilst that one says do this, this one is going to say don't do that, so at the end of the day you might actually end up with nothing. And this is difficult because we have donor deadlines to meet".*

Another participant said:

> *"The other problem is that the participatory process is costly, in terms of time and resources. So that is another challenge in terms of promoting such methodology it will need a lot of time and resources, half the time which we don't have. Half the time we go in to collect information because it's reporting period, we need to submit a quarterly report. So we don't have the time to go through the process".*

It is evident from the above quotations that the process of beneficiary inclusion is time consuming as well as demands a lot of financial commitment. Thus one can argue that without either of these it is impossible for project managers to implement PM&E as it has already been highlighted earlier that project managers often do not have sufficient funds allocated to M&E duties whilst they also chase donor expectations which include meeting specific deadlines at specific times. Owing to these donor project cycle times, the voice of beneficiaries who are recipients of services are blocked thus time in itself is a constraint which hinders effective beneficiary involvement. This leaves managers with a lot of pressure to meet deadlines and donor requirements thereby aborting the authenticity of participation required in M&E. Research conducted by Bamberger et al. (2010) and Rose (2014) unraveled similar sentiments in which M&E processes are said to be highly costly to carry out and take long durations to actually complete.

4.6.5 Lack of incentives resulting in lack of beneficiary cooperation

Participants highlighted that they often face resistance or difficulties in acquiring beneficiary involvement as the beneficiaries have an expectation that they should receive some form of incentive from the project implementers for their cooperation. Beneficiaries have been stated to exercise a sense of entitlement for incentives from project managers in exchange for their participation despite the fact that the project will benefit them in the long run. It was also

established that at times the beneficiaries are not even interested I cooperating with the project managers as they feel that they are not benefitting from the engagements.

Describing the challenges faced in engaging beneficiaries in the M&E process one participant said:

> *"We get some beneficiaries who don't want to participate if there are no incentives. Beneficiaries think it's all about money, presents and food. Beneficiaries must have a mind change because they are not only benefitting from the material stuff, they benefit much more from the education we're giving them. So sometimes they refuse to participate because we're not giving them anything material. So it's not all of them but some of them have that problem".*

Another participant said:

> *"There is this misconception among people that if you're doing monitoring and evaluation you're doing it for your own selfish purposes. Like some people will complain that we're giving you data on our beneficiaries and you're going to use that data to go and look for funding and then us the organisations who would have given you the data we don't get anything in return".*

Another participant said:

> *"The other thing you often find is that we don't go back and then you find a bottleneck when you try to involve because they think there is nothing in it for them".*

The above quotations are evidence of a lack of willingness to participate by beneficiaries due to the absence of visible or tangible incentives. It can be argued that beneficiaries have possibly been given false hope by previous NGOs who may have come into their communities to conduct baselines which they then used to acquire government funding then they never return to provide the promised services. Beneficiaries perhaps feel the need to cater for their own personal needs before they can cooperate. One could argue that this is where the importance of community education comes in so that beneficiaries are fully explained to so that they can become aware of the bigger picture and the impact of the project in the long run given their participation. Again these quotes highlight the level of desperation and poverty within most communities where development NGOs offer their services as people are so poor that they often look out for their own needs before those of others. Nonetheless there is inadequate scholarly data that supports this finding within the South African context.

4.6.6 Involvement of other stakeholders

It emerged in this research that other multiple stakeholders who have interests in the outcomes, processes and implications of the project are also incorporated into the M&E processes. These people can be other community members who may not be the target beneficiaries of the project. Other stakeholders include government departments amongst others whose contributions to the project may be of importance to achieve fruition. Participants highlighted the importance of involving these stakeholders as their influence affects project implementation.

Referring to a previous project to explain the involvement of other stakeholders one participant said:

> *"One of the things that we had was a steering committee which was led by the National Department of Health (even though the project was targeted at rural people). We had the deputy director general for HIV&AIDS Dr Yogan Pillay. So we had a steering committee. So during these steering committee meetings the beneficiaries themselves would come and talk about how they are benefiting from the programme".*

Another participant referred to her project experiences and said:

> *"We also do workshops where, with educators (even though the project is targeted at students) as another process in terms of looking into the challenges using the human rights language, using the dialogue on positive discipline in trying to understand where's the challenge in terms of the educators role... So the dialogues help in terms of qualitative approaches and having a sense what the demand is".*

From the above quotations one can see the importance of understanding and negotiating stakeholder perspectives as these can have a direct impact on project implementation, outcomes and outputs. It is evident that managers need to acknowledge the existence of different role players within communities and societies who may also have interests in the activities of the project whether for their own personal gain or for the wellbeing of the masses. For example government may be more concerned about the well-being of the communities whilst other stakeholders may be more interested in the benefits that await them from the project. This goes to show that human beings are not individual entities living in a vacuum but rather that human experiences are shaped by the influences of those around them. It can also be argued that this process of consulting all stakeholders has potential financial and time implications which can delay project start-up due to different people's views and desires or even hinder project completion. Also, it is critical for the managers to develop effective communication skills in order to successfully engage the stakeholders at various

levels. According to Miller and Lennie (2005, as cited by Sherriff & Potter, 2010) it is important to recognise and appreciate the views of all stakeholders involved in the project so as to further improve it to suit the context and achieve desired goals. Thus the participatory nature of M&E can offer a platform which allows for the broad involvement of various stakeholders and role players within a project.

4.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter discussed the findings of the study in which the researcher highlighted key issues that emerged from the data gathered during the interviews. The discussion was directed by an attempt to address the objectives set out in the study. The findings show that project managers in development NGOs experience various yet mostly similar challenges. It was clear from the findings of the study that some of the factors that influence the design of M&E systems are the fact that M&E is designed and incorporated during the project planning phase and donor expectations/stipulation. Pertaining to challenges faced by project managers in the design and implementation of M&E systems, factors such as having good theoretical planning but poor implementation, poor understanding of M&E concepts, lean funds allocated to M&E, shortage of professionally trained M&E personnel, M&E done as tick-box exercise and M&E seen as a surveillance system were found. Factors which were found to be enablers of M&E processes were having clear and coherent M&E plans, use of the log frame, conducting a thorough baseline and simplified M&E language which is less technical. Pertaining to the perceived impact of M&E it was clear that accountability, programme enhancement and knowledge production are some of the benefits. Finally, regarding the participatory nature of M&E, half-hearted attempt to beneficiary involvement, poor intellectual understanding of beneficiaries, lack of beneficiary involvement in M&E design but presence in implementation, lack of incentives resulting in lack of beneficiary cooperation, involvement of other stakeholders and peer education as key teachers of M&E were found.

Chapter five which follows presents a summary of the major conclusions and recommendations reached by the study.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises the main findings of the study. The study explored factors that influence the design of M&E systems in selected NGOs, the challenges faced by practitioners in the design and implementation of M&E systems, the factors that simplify M&E practice, and the perceived impact of M&E practices in selected NGOs and the participatory nature of M&E practices used in selected NGOs. The chapter also presents recommendations emanating from the study and possible areas for future research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DESIGN OF M&E SYSTEMS IN SELECTED NGOs

Management style during project management and donor expectations were found to be the main factors that influence the design of M&E systems in NGOs. These factors largely determine the direction which the design of M&E systems take on. The factors are as follows:

Management style of engagement

The manner in which project managers conduct their M&E designs was discovered to be largely based on their desired results. Many project managers conducted their M&E strategies in conjunction with the actual project plan. This is because they acknowledge the importance of incorporating M&E processes into the actual project so as to achieve a ‘built in’ method of project assessment. Routine practices of thoroughly planning ahead in the initial stages of the project was a factor which influenced and facilitated the direction of M&E designs. The significance of merging M&E systems with the project plans prior to implementation was seen as a helpful way to create a more solid, well thought out and relevant assessment plan.

M&E dependent on donor expectation/stipulation

It was discovered that donor stipulations and requirements determine the design and conduct of M&E practices. M&E plans are orchestrated in accordance with the outputs required by the donors in order to maintain donor relations and maintain credibility for future funding. Some funders were seen to not necessarily provide M&E frameworks for project managers to follow as they are more concerned with the results than the actual processes that have led to the results. In some instances donors have thus allowed the project managers to design and conduct their M&E processes in their own manner as long as it can account for the needs or expectations of the donors upon project completion. To the contrary some donors were seen to stipulate their desired M&E designs and even provide managers with the framework which is to be implemented for the project assessment.

THE CHALLENGES FACED BY PRACTITIONERS IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF M&E SYSTEMS

The challenges that hinder effective design and implementation of M&E systems were identified as follows:

Good planning but poor implementation

It was established that most project designs looked ‘fantastic’ on paper, however; actual implementation more often than not reflected poor implantation. M&E systems in place were seen to be well planned (from the onset of the project) but could not be implemented effectively due to poor M&E cultures within the organisations as implementers often did not know what to do with the collected data whilst senior management was viewed as a hindrance to M&E practice.

Shortage of professionally trained M&E personnel

The issue of a shortage of professionally trained M&E personnel was highlighted as a critical area in need of attention. Project managers are overwhelmed with their workload given that they were usually the only ones with professional M&E training within their organisations. In most organisations that participated in the study, there was a shortage of personnel who do M&E. As a result project managers feel that they have to carry a heavy load as their fellow team players often rely on them. It was also established that M&E is a fairly new area of inquiry within South Africa, to this end; there is a shortage of qualified personnel.

Poor understanding of M&E concepts

It was established that a lack of thorough understanding of M&E concepts is a grave challenge experienced by project managers as their team members often do not adequately comprehend the various M&E dynamics. Participants felt that there is a gap in how M&E is understood by fellow team players with confusion largely surrounding the understanding of the difference between outcomes and outputs.

Minimal funds allocated to M&E

It was discovered that project managers often encounter challenges in how financial allocations for their projects are conducted within their various organisations. They largely felt that not enough funds are allocated towards M&E thereby negatively affecting the thoroughness of the M&E processes. It was established that budget issues affect implementation of M&E processes and not the actual planning of the M&E systems. Lean funds were therefore seen as a major challenge which hinders M&E.

M&E done as tick-box exercise

It was established that due to the tedious nature of M&E processes and pressure to meet deadlines and donor expectations team players often end up fulfilling M&E requirements for their projects in a half-hearted manner for the sake of accountability. It emerged that M&E is often conducted only when reports or reviews are due for submission such that fictitious figure ‘cooking’ occurs. Project managers felt that their fellow team players who are often their subordinates frequently lack consistency and honesty when they engage in M&E. In many cases M&E is only done for reporting purposes and is hardly used as a tool for improving projects and informing management decisions.

M&E seen as a ‘panopticon’

The ‘panopticon’ is a sociological concept of how good behaviour can be maintained by making people believe that they are under constant supervision. It was established that M&E is regarded as a form of ‘panopticon’ (the all-seeing tower) as it is seen as a policing agent that searches for mistakes that have been made in the project implementation. M&E was viewed as a surveillance tool in search for errors thereby attaching negative undertones to the practice.

FACTORS THAT ENHANCE M&E PROCESSES

The favourable conditions which have enabled project managers to practice M&E with ease and bring forth the desired outcome have been those of having a clear and coherent M&E plan or design in place which can be followed throughout project implementation. It was also established that utilising the log frame as a structured approach to ensuring that M&E is conducted at ease to meet donor expectations was helpful. It also emanated from the study that continued evaluations and having a thorough baseline to work with also simplified the operational processes of M&E. It was also established that there is a need for more simplified language which is less scientific as an approach that will ease the M&E process given that most team players do not have professional M&E training. These themes are summarized below.

Clear and coherent M&E plans

It emerged from this research that clarity of M&E plans as well as lucidity are critical to the manner in which M&E will be applied by all team players involved. Simple yet logical designs of M&E systems were seen to be necessary as they will serve as a guide for the operations thereby reducing the amount of errors, loopholes and other implementation challenges experienced.

Use of critical tools

It was established that although many tools are used in M&E the log frame was the one mostly utilised as a key instrument for simplifying the design and implementation of M&E systems for tracking project progress. The various components of the log frame were seen as having segments which cater for indicators, outcomes, outputs and impacts which M&E personnel can follow with ease.

Use of simplified language

It emerged from this research that M&E is a rather technical field which comprises of scientific terms and concepts which the lay person who is a part of the M&E team cannot implement. These technicalities were believed to be the reasons why many people do not enter the field and also that they are the reason why M&E implementation is ineffective as knowledge and comprehension of these ‘scientific’ terms is lacking. There was a general

sense that M&E is thought to be complex yet everyone involved in project implementation actually conducts it in one way or another.

THE PERCEIVED IMPACT OF M&E PRACTICE IN PROJECTS

Some of the benefits of M&E highlighted in this research include the fact that it provides data which can be used to make informed decisions regarding project implementation whilst it also allows for a thorough assessment of the impact of the project on its beneficiaries in relation to the intended goals and objective. The themes which emerged in this objective are:

Accountability

It was established that accountability is one of the main benefits that result from M&E processes. This is because project managers are able to successfully fulfil donor and stakeholder requirements whenever M&E systems are implemented. Participants highlighted that their donors are more interested in results than in how M&E is conducted hence the results produced from those M&E processes are what matters most for giving donors the desired feedback. It also emerged that M&E assists project managers to acquire future funds as there is plenty of competition for funds meaning that one's ability to produce donor expectations secures prospects for future funding as donors gain confidence in the reliability of the NGO.

Programme enhancement

It was discovered that programme enhancement was a key impact of M&E as the information derived from the M&E processes can be used to further improve project operations. M&E was viewed as a tracking device which alerts project managers of any concerns that require rectification whilst the project is ongoing. M&E was believed to not only assist in improving current project functionality but that it also assists managers with enhancing future projects. It is thus seen as a positive tool for continued learning and can also be used for futuristic forecasting based on lessons learnt.

M&E as knowledge base for lessons learnt

It was establish that M&E provides a platform for lessons learnt which can be implemented by other project managers outside of the NGO. M&E was acknowledged to be a hub for knowledge production which can be packaged in such a manner that anybody interested in learning from project failures or successes can access. This is with specific reference to

methodologies which can actually be published as scholarly material for easy access as project implementation is about enhancing the lives of the beneficiaries and not a competition for the best project implementers.

THE PARTICIPATORY NATURE OF M&E PRACTICES USED IN SELECTED NGOS

Participation requires great involvement of major stakeholders and beneficiaries with a purposeful inclusion of marginalised groups of those communities where PM&E is conducted. This research explored the participatory nature of M&E practices used in the selected NGOs. The themes which emerged are:

Beneficiary involvement in M&E design is lacking yet participation is required in implementation

It was established that beneficiaries are not involved in the actual design of M&E systems yet their participation is still required when it comes to the implementation of M&E systems. This was seen as a loophole within the M&E systems as participants felt that the gap between M&E design and implementation involving beneficiaries should be bridged. There was a general feeling that beneficiaries should be involved starting at the design stage of M&E. This calls for more friendly approaches to M&E which can cater for their comprehension needs.

Half-hearted attempt to beneficiary involvement

It was discovered that beneficiaries are involved to a large extent in M&E processes despite these processes being flawed. Beneficiaries are included in the formation of community dialogues organised by the NGO project teams in collaboration with the community steering committees and community leaders. It is through these community dialogues that baseline information is collected, whilst feedback, engagement and interactions occur between project leaders and the beneficiaries. Any challenges faced by community members regarding project implementation are aired and interrogated by all parties involved to ensure project success. It was concluded that participation where beneficiaries are largely involved during the implementation stages to provide answers and not during the crucial project designing stages is not authentic participation as it is passive in nature. It treats beneficiaries like inactive recipients whose contribution to the project should only be about their experiences and not about their involvement towards the project M&E designing itself.

Lack of beneficiary intellectual understanding

It was established that there is poor beneficiary involvement due to their lack of intellectual competency to comprehend M&E concepts well. Participants felt that even though beneficiary involvement is high there is still room for improvement as greater beneficiary involvement can still be achieved if M&E concepts are simplified for the lay man to understand. It was established that beneficiaries often do not understand the reasons for conducting PM&E and the importance of their involvement. Beneficiaries were also said to lack intellectual comprehension of what is expected of them in any given M&E exercise. Participants felt that simpler M&E templates that are friendly to the less educated should be incorporated into the PM&E design as this is the only way in which beneficiary involvement will increase. To the contrary it also emerged that peer educators who form part of the project beneficiaries are key role players in the engagement processes. Peer educators were seen to be highly influential in steering participation in M&E processes as they assist project managers with explaining difficult concepts to beneficiaries so as to promote inclusion and enhance the participatory dynamics of M&E.

Time and cost constraints of beneficiary involvement

It was discovered that involving beneficiaries in M&E processes is not only lengthy but also expensive. Participants felt that it takes up an unnecessarily long period to consult with and engage beneficiaries at the level which is thorough and all-inclusive. It was even stated that such engagements with beneficiaries can actually delay or slow down project implementation as there is too many people involved and too many views to consider. Regarding the cost implication participants felt that it requires a lot of funds to cater for the large volumes of beneficiaries if genuine engagement is to be conducted.

Lack of incentives resulting in lack of beneficiary cooperation

Resistance and difficulties in acquiring beneficiary involvement was highlighted as a challenge as the beneficiaries have an expectation that they should receive some form of incentive from the project implementers for their cooperation. Beneficiaries have been stated to exercise a sense of entitlement for incentives from project managers in exchange for their participation despite the fact that the project will benefit them in the long run. It was also established that at times the beneficiaries are not even interested in cooperating with the project managers as they feel that they are not benefitting from the engagements.

Involvement of other stakeholders

It was established that other multiple stakeholders who have interests in the outcomes, processes and implications of the project are also incorporated into the M&E processes. These people can be other community members who may not be the target beneficiaries of the project. Other stakeholders include government departments amongst others whose contributions to the project may be of importance to achieve fruition. Participants highlighted the importance of involving these stakeholders as their influence affects project implementation.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings generated in this study, it is recommended that the NGO sector, M&E training organisations and donors consider the following:

- Management need to prioritise M&E practice within their projects.
- Donors need to allow project managers sufficient leeway to conduct M&E in a manner that is most suitable and relevant to the project context given that they are the ones with direct involvement.
- Professional training on M&E needs to be promoted and improved so as to enhance M&E practice and reduce workload on the currently overwhelmed workforce.
- More funds need to be allocated to M&E in the project budget.
- Simplified language is critical and needed in order to enhance participation and understanding as well as improve M&E processes.
- M&E case studies as a hub for knowledge production should be packaged and made available as scholarly material in such a manner that anybody interested in learning from project failures or successes of others can access.
- Beneficiary involvement should be enhanced through their purposeful accommodation by using language and processes that are accessible and user friendly for them.

5.4 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research could focus on

- Exploring the experiences of beneficiaries in being involved in the M&E processes.
- Investigating donor perspectives on M&E practice within projects.
- Exploring the nature of M&E courses taught in the country.
- Investigating the experiences of other team players in being a part of the M&E process.
- Investigating the implementation of lessons that would have been learnt during M&E processes.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave a summary of the major findings of the study that are linked to the aims and objectives of the research as set out in the first chapter. The major findings in this study as discussed in the previous chapter highlight factors that influence the design of M&E systems in selected NGOs, the challenges faced by practitioners in the design and implementation of M&E systems, the factors that simplify M&E practice, the perceived impact of M&E practices in selected NGOs and the participatory nature of M&E practices used in selected NGOs. Many challenges that hinder effective M&E processes were identified by project managers. Continued research in this area will bring to light better ways in which M&E can be practiced so as to yield the necessary results.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Good day sir/madam

My name is Wilma Chibonore, I am a Masters student registered for the degree Master of Arts in Course Work and Research (Social Development) at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research on the experiences of management in the implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices in projects within selected NGOs in the Gauteng province. It is hoped that the information to be obtained may enhance M&E as a practice and in a small way contribute to a general understanding of experiences of project managers in conducting M&E thus help to inform future plans on M&E implementation strategies. This research may also help to inform organizational policy to improve and develop more favorable environments for promoting effective M&E practices within the NGO sector.

I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you. If you are interested in taking part I will arrange for an interview with you at a time and place that suits you. The interviews will take approximately one hour. If you feel at any time within the process of the study that you wish to withdraw you may do so as well as also refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with answering.

With your permission, the interview will be tape recorded. No one other than my supervisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes and interview schedules will be kept for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the study. I will answer them to the best of my ability. I may be contacted on 073 5905450/ wilmachib@yahoo.com. Should you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study, an abstract will be made available on request.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the study.

Yours sincerely

Wilma Chibonore

Supervisor`s name: Dr Victor Chikadzi

Supervisor`s office number: 011 717 4474

Supervisor`s email: Victor.Chikadzi@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX B

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:

1. What is your understanding of Monitoring & Evaluation practice within the project management context/NGO context?

To explore factors that influence the design of M&E systems in selected NGOs.

1. How is M&E incorporated into the design of a program/project?
2. What is the rationale for M&E practice in your organisation?
3. What informs M&E practices within South Africa?

To explore the challenges faced by practitioners in the design and implementation of M&E systems.

1. What challenges are mostly experienced in implementing M&E?
2. What things would you point out as important factors that simplify and enable M&E practice?

To investigate the perceived impact of M&E practices in selected NGOs.

1. What do you see as the impact of M&E practice?
2. What are the major contributions of M&E for donors and NGOs?

To explore the participatory nature of M&E practices used in selected NGOs.

1. What do you think about Participatory M&E's contribution towards program enhancement?
2. What would you recommend or suggest regarding how Participatory M&E is practiced in NGOs at the moment?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PROJECT MANAGERS:

General

1. Can you briefly tell me about your organisation?
2. When did you start working in this organisation?
3. What is your role in this organisation?

To explore factors that influence the design of M & E systems in selected NGOs.

1. What is your understanding of Monitoring & Evaluation *(herein referred to as M&E)* practice within the project management context/NGO context?
2. Can you briefly give me an overview of any project that you are currently managing?
3. How is M&E incorporated into the design of this program/project?
4. Tell me about the instruments you use in monitoring and evaluation of activities in the project.
5. What informs your decisions on the tools/instruments to use?
6. What are the major frameworks that guide your M&E practice?
7. What role do your donors play (if any) in how you conduct your M&E processes?

To explore the challenges faced by practitioners in the design and implementation of M&E systems.

1. What challenges do you experience in design of M&E systems in your programmes?
2. What challenges do you experience in implementing M&E? What things would you point out as important factors that simplify and enable M&E practice in your field?

To investigate the perceived impact of M&E practices in selected NGOs.

1. What do you see as the impact of M&E practice in your projects?

To explore the participatory nature of M&E practices used in selected NGOs.

1. Do you involve your beneficiaries in the M&E process? If yes, then how so?
2. What contribution does it make to involve beneficiaries in M&E activities?
3. What is the downside if any of including beneficiaries in M&E.
4. What would you recommend or suggest regarding how beneficiaries should be involved in the implementation of M&E?

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

DECLARATION BY THE PARTICIPANT

I hereby consent to participate in the research project. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any particular items or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential.

Name of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

I have explained the purpose and procedures of the study as well as the participant's rights. I agree with the conditions mentioned in the information sheet and consent forms.

Name of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO-TAPING OF THE INTERVIEW

I hereby consent to tape-recording of the interview. I understand that my confidentiality will be maintained at all times and that the tapes will be destroyed two years after any publication arising from the study or six years after completion of the study if there are no publications.

Name of participant:.....

Date:.....

Signature: .....

APPENDIX F

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Chibonore

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H15/06/13**
PROJECT TITLE	Monitoring and evaluation practices in selected Non-Governmental Organisations
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ms W Chibonore
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	19 June 2015
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	12 July 2018

DATE 13 July 2015 **CHAIRPERSON** _____
(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : dr V Chikadzi

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES