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# Institutionalisation of the South African National Evaluation System in two National Government Departments

**A research report presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Public Policy at the School of Governance, University of Witwatersrand**

By

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**Declaration**

I, Thomas Tshilowa, declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Public Policy at the School of Governance, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

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

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**Abstract**

This study has attempted to review the institutionalisation of the South African national evaluation system as well as the extent of the uptake of the system by participating departments based on the experiences of two departments. The study was necessitated by the need to understand how the institutionalisation of the evaluation system is navigating through the negative attitudes of some of line departments towards the practice of evaluation.

The study employed a combination of document review and semi-structured interviews with selected participants. In terms of the conceptual framework, this study is anchored on a hybrid of the rational choice model (evidence-based approach) and a political system model to provide a balanced analysis of the system.

One of the critical elements towards the institutionalisation of the evaluation practice in government is the capacity of line departments to manage and conduct evaluations. While the MPAT assessments show that a significant number of government departments still do not have M&E units, this study found that both of the sampled departments (departments of Human Settlements & Trade and Industry) are just some of the few departments that have the capacity to conduct evaluation in terms of M&E units. It is imperative to note that DPME is not (and cannot be) responsible for the establishment of M&E units in government departments save the issuance of the MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement that seeks to foster the establishment of the departmental evaluation systems, which includes the establishment of M&E units, among others.

The uptake of the evaluation system by line departments is also one of the critical elements towards the institutionalisation of the evaluation practice in government. The study found that the cooperation and uptake of the system by departments varies from one department to another, and even within the same department.

Finally, DPME appears to be succeeding in rolling out the national evaluation system as per the National Evaluation Policy Framework notwithstanding the implementation challenges

alluded to in Chapter 5. However, the uptake of the evaluation system by line departments still poses a major challenge for the system. It appears that the MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement would go a long way in fostering the uptake. However, it remains to be seen if this intervention would drive a genuine uptake as opposed to a mere compliant uptake.

**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

| | |
|---|---|
| CLEAR | Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results |
| DDG | Deputy Director-General |
| DG | Director-General |
| DHS | Department of Human Settlements |
| DPME | Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| DTI | Department of Trade and Industry |
| EBPM&I | Evidence-Based Policy-Making and Implementation |
| GWM&E | Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MPAT | Management Performance Assessment Tool |
| NEP | National Evaluation Plan |
| NES | National Evaluation System |

# 1 Chapter 1: Introduction

The South African government recognises the importance of performance information to inform planning and budget decision. The recognition of the value of performance information is captured in the following quote by the former Minister of the then Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (now called Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation):

> *"If we are to improve our performance we have to reflect on what we are doing, what we are achieving against what we set out to achieve, and why unexpected results are occurring. We cannot advance without making mistakes on the way, but we must evaluate and learn from our successes and our mistakes. Without this, we cannot improve"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011: ii).

The performance information has been mainly generated through performance monitoring and evaluation (Presidency, 2007). The monitoring aspects of performance information are well institutionalised through the government performance information system. The evaluation component is yet to be well institutionalised notwithstanding the number of evaluations conducted by various departments as well as the current efforts by the government to institutionalise the practice of evaluation in government (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011; Engela & Ajam, 2010).

As a result, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) (in the Presidency) was tasked to establish a national evaluation system as described in the National Evaluation Policy Framework (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011) (A brief overview of the evolution of evaluation practice in South Africa is captured under the background below). It is imperative that this system is not confused with the monitoring and evaluation system encapsulated in the Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) System, 2007. It should instead be viewed as a third component of the GWM&E system (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011).

To this end, this document constitutes a report on the institutionalisation of the national evaluation system in South Africa, based on the experiences (case) of two departments. It is

important to note that the focus of the study is on the evaluation system, and not the monitoring and evaluation system. The report begins by providing a background to the subject under study as well as the conceptualisation of the study (the problem statement, research objectives, and key research questions, etc.). Chapter 2 outlines the research design and methodology for the study. Chapter 3 is about the theoretical framework for the study while Chapter 4 presents the findings of the literature review. This is followed by a discussion of research findings in Chapter 5. Finally, the report sums up with a conclusion in Chapter 6.

### 1.1 Background to, and Brief Description of the National Evaluation System

In South Africa, the concept of monitoring and evaluation emerged through the work of non-governmental organisations owing to the conditionality attached to the donor funding (Mouton, 2010). It was not until the latter 2000s that the South African government began to take a tangible interest in the concept of monitoring and evaluation as part of management practices (Engela & Ajam, 2010; Goldman, 2013; Mouton, 2010; Podems, Goldman & Jacob, 2014). A case in point is the 2005 Cabinet approval of a plan to develop the Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&E) (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014). The objective of GWM&E was to provide for integrated monitoring and evaluation practices and standards "*to be used throughout Government, and function as an apex-level information system which draws from the component systems in the framework to deliver useful M&E products for its users"* (Presidency, 2007: 5). This objective was to be accomplished through the synchronisation of the following three data terrains across all departments and levels of government:

i. *"**Program Performance Information**, derived, among other things, from departmental registers and administrative datasets, and strongly linked to departmental budget structures,*
ii. ***Social, Economic, and Demographic Statistics** derived mainly from Statistical Agency of South Africa (StatsSA) censuses and surveys as well as departmental surveys, and*
iii. ***Evaluations**, which mostly make use of researchers outside of government and tend to occur on an ad-hoc basis"* (Engela & Ajam, 2010: 3).

By this account, the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System is a system of two systems, i.e. monitoring system and evaluation system. However, as in many other countries, the implementation of GWM&E system in South Africa has seen a greater focus being placed on the monitoring system rather than on the evaluation system (Engela & Ajam, 2010; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). This is not to say that there were no evaluation activities. Indeed, there were departments that were already conducting evaluations though these were done in the absence of a "*national [evaluation] system or standards*" (Goldman, 2013: 43).

In response to inadequate and uncoordinated evaluation activities, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (located in the Presidency) was therefore established in 2010, whose main task, amongst many, was to establish the national evaluation system in government (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011; Goldman, 2013). The purpose of the national evaluation system is to institutionalise the practice of evaluation in government the evidence of which could be used to inform planning, budgeting and improve the effectiveness of government programmes (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011).

The National Evaluation Policy Framework, which encapsulates a blueprint of the South African national evaluation system, was developed in 2011 (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). As indicated above, the National Evaluation Policy Framework is a supplement to the Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&E) as outlined below:

> *"While the Presidency is the custodian of the GWMES as a whole, National Treasury has published the Framework for Programme Performance Information and Statistics South Africa has published the South African Statistics Quality Framework to provide policy frameworks for the first two terrains. This National Evaluation Policy Framework completes the set of policies which make up the GWMES"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011: ii).

Each of these three policy frameworks outlines the institutional arrangements (including roles and responsibilities) that are required to implement Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System. However, as indicated above, it is important to note that the focus of this study is the evaluation system as reflected in the National Evaluation Policy Framework.

### 1.1.1 Description of the South African National Evaluation System

The need for evidence-based policy-making practice is the main driver for the South African national evaluation system in the sense that both the demand for (including the use of evaluation) and the supply of evaluation are the main pillars (Department of Performance and Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011; Porter & Goldman, 2013). In other words, National Evaluation Policy Framework seeks to facilitate the practice of evidence-based policy-making, as reflected by a statement of purpose below:

> *"The overall aim of the National Evaluation Policy Framework is to institutionalise evaluation in government and to ensure that evidence from evaluations is used to improve government performance"* (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a: 1).

Furthermore, the Policy Framework sets out to achieve the following objectives (Department of Performance and Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011: 1):

i. *"Foreground the importance of evaluation in policy-making and management;*
ii. *Promote, facilitate and institutionalise the use of evaluation in Government;*
iii. *Strengthen linkages between evaluation, policy-making, planning, and budgeting;*
iv. *Develop a common language and conceptual base for evaluation in Government;*
v. *Clarify the role of evaluations in relation to other performance management instruments;*
vi. *Frame the evaluation function in terms of its scope, institutionalization, standards, process requirements, skill requirements, governance, financing, and oversight;*
vii. *Clarify distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of public institutions in relation to evaluation;*
viii. *Improve the quality of evaluations undertaken in public institutions;*
ix. *Increase the utilisation of evaluation findings to improve performance".*

It subscribes to the following four purposes or reasons for evaluations (Department of Performance and Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011):

i. For improving performance

ii. For improving accountability
iii. For generating knowledge about what works and what does not
iv. For improving decision-making

However, it is important to note that the Policy Framework emphasises learning from evaluation than punitive measures for poor performance.

The Policy Framework outlines the following three key outcomes of the system (Department of Performance and Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011):

i. Stakeholders would gain a common understanding of evaluation
ii. Government departments are guided in conducting evaluation
iii. Evaluations are utilised to effect positive change in service delivery

Amongst the above outcomes, the utilisation of evaluation is the main yardstick of the success of the system.

DPME has developed a plan for institutionalising evaluation practice in government, which comprises the following activities, among others (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011):

1. DPME to develop evaluation guidelines, practice notes and norms and standards,
2. DPME to develop rolling three year and annual national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments,
3. DPME to implement the national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments,
4. DPME to conduct and/or facilitate capacity building to equip aspiring evaluators in partnership with other skills development institutions such as PALAM (now called School of Government), universities, research service providers, South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) and other capacity development organisations,
5. DPME to ensure quality assurance of evaluation processes and products,
6. DPME to facilitate sustainable demand for and use of evaluation,
7. Departments to develop and implement the departmental evaluation plans,
8. Departments to ensure that there is an evaluation budget for all programmes,
9. Departments to establish Evaluation Units with required skills to conduct evaluations,

10. Departments to ensure that the results of evaluations are used to inform decision-making, and
11. National Treasury to ensure the government annual performance plans and budgets are informed by evidence, including evaluation reports.

In addition to coordinating evaluations at the national level (through the National Evaluation Plan), DPME has introduced a requirement (through the MPAT Evaluation Standard), which requires government departments to establish their own departmental evaluation systems, using the national evaluation system as a prototype Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a). The MPAT Evaluation Standard consists of the following elements, which constitute a 'blueprint' for a departmental evaluation system (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016d: 10-11):

i. *"Department has planned capacity to manage/conduct evaluation projects,*
ii. *Relevant staff is in place,*
iii. *Department has approved or adopted guidelines that follow the national evaluation system,*
iv. *A multi-year evaluation plan that follows the national evaluation system,*
v. *Department has undertaken at least 1 evaluation of a major programme, policy, plan, project or system in the previous 2 years, or is currently undertaking one,*
vi. *Each evaluation has a steering committee ensuring effective oversight of the evaluation process,*
vii. *Each completed evaluation has an approved management response and improvement plan, and*
viii. *Departmental evaluations are made public on departmental websites".*

### 1.1.2 The Evaluation Process Prescribed by the National Evaluation System

The Policy Framework also outlines the evaluation process that is to be followed as reflected below. The intention of this section is to familiarise the reader with the process that the DPME adopted to coordinate an evaluation project at a national level. This would provide context to the rest of the findings.

**Pre-design and design**

The pre-design and design stage involves preparing for evaluation. Ideally, the preparation for evaluation should take place during the planning phase of the programme. This stage also involves the conceptualisation of the study as reflected in both the Concept Note and Terms of Reference for evaluation projects. The Concept Note reflects the description of the unit of analysis (policy, plan, programme, project etc.), which includes (but not limited to) objectives, outcomes of the intervention, key components of the intervention, the budget for intervention etc. (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016f). The Terms of Reference, on the other hand, outlines the title of the evaluation, purpose of evaluation, key evaluation questions, the scope of the evaluation, the methodology, implementation arrangements, etc. (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016g). This stage also involves the formation of a steering committee to oversee the conceptualisation of the study (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). Preferably, this committee should include all relevant stakeholders beyond programme implementers to ensure the ownership and use of findings by all. This stage also involves an appointment of a service provider in accordance with government supply chain principles.

**Implementation of evaluation projects**

The implementation of evaluation is kick-started by an inception report in which an appointed service provider (evaluator) outlines, in detail, the evaluation methodology, and evaluation process, evaluation project plan including the budget (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). It also involves the actual evaluation of the intervention by evaluators. Inherent in the actual evaluation is the role played by the advisory and steering groups. According to the Policy Framework, *"An advisory group provides technical support, advice, and expertise while a steering group manages the evaluation process"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011: 13).

**Peer review and validation process**

At the completion of the study, the evaluation report will be subjected to a peer review process as well as validation process (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). Peer reviewers look at both the process followed by evaluators in conducting the evaluation as well as the evaluation product. As for validation process, the draft report will

be presented to a workshop of stakeholders to elicit feedback from all stakeholders including potential users of the evaluation under validation.

**Recommendations and management response**

After the validation workshop, the evaluator will work the feedback into a final report. Once the report is finalised, evaluation users (mainly implementing departments) are afforded the opportunity to analyse the findings and recommendations of the report. During this time, implementing departments are also required to "*[respond] to the findings and recommendations of an evaluation report, and [to] write a management response, either accepting the results or indicating where they disagree with reasons"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011: 13).

**Communicating results**

The final report would also be disseminated using various forms and platforms of communication. According to the Policy Framework, communicating results is more than emailing a report to relevant stakeholders. It requires *"a strategy for the dissemination of the evaluation report, including publishing evaluation reports on relevant websites, developing communication materials on the evaluation, sharing findings with key stakeholders as well as the media*" (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011: 14).

**Follow-up**

Subsequent to considerations of the recommendations as evidenced by the management response, implementing departments are required to:

i. Prepare an improvement plan in response to the evaluation recommendations,
ii. Implement the improvement plan, and
*iii.* Monitor implementation of the improvement plan and report the progress thereof to Cabinet via DPME on a three monthly basis (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

As indicated above, the DPME is currently institutionalising the practice of evaluation (evaluation system) in response to a number of perceived shortcomings (including inadequate and uncoordinated evaluation activities in government) which in turn contribute to a low demand for and supply of evaluations (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). Further, the process of establishing an evaluation system in South Africa is challenged by a general negative attitude towards evaluation. A survey conducted by the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation[1] in 2012, for example, found that *"evaluations are not seen as opportunities for learning and improvement but as means of policing with punitive attachment where programme performance is found to be wanting"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, as cited in Goldman, Ntakumba & Jacob, 2013: 3). It also found that *"senior management often fails to champion M&E and M&E is regarded as the job of the M&E unit* [with little influence] *rather than all managers"* (3). More than half of participants indicated that *"M&E information had limited or no influence on decision-making" (3).* In other words, the culture of evidence-based decision-making in government appears to be weak. All these point to the challenge of institutionalising the practice of evaluation across all government departments, which is constitutive of the evaluation system. This study has attempted to establish how the implementation of the evaluation system is beginning to achieve results in dealing with those challenges.

## 1.3 Research Objective

This study sought to review the institutionalisation of the South African national evaluation system based on the benchmark outlined in the Policy Framework, as well as the extent of the uptake of the system by participating departments. However, due to the magnitude of the subject of the study, viewed against the available academic time to complete a mini-research, this study sought to review the institutionalisation of the South African national evaluation system using or based on the experiences of two selected national departments (Department of Human Settlements and Department of Trade and Industry).

1 This department is now called the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

## 1.4 Key Research Question

The main question that this study sought to answer is: To what extent is the national evaluation system being institutionalised into routine performance management practices within participating national departments[2]? This question has been broken down into the following sub-questions:

i. How is the implementation of the national evaluation system faring against the benchmarks outlined in the National Evaluation Policy Framework?
ii. What is the level of the uptake of the evaluation system in participating departments?
iii. What are the implementation successes and challenges the institutionalisation of the system is experiencing?
iv. What are the lessons that are being drawn from these implementation challenges?

## 1.5 The Scope of the Study

This study covered the implementation of the evaluation system from its inception[3] in November 2011 to December 2017. The study was restricted to DPME and two national departments (Department of Human Settlements and Department of Trade and Industry), all of which are based in Pretoria.

## 1.6 Definition of Concepts

The section provides the definition of the key concepts used in this study.

2 The researcher selected two of those departments that have responded to the DPME's call to submit their programmes to be included in the 2012/13 National Evaluation Plan, and thus to be evaluated according to the evaluation system guidelines (see the sampling section below).

3 The inception of the South Africa evaluation system was marked by the approval of the National Evaluation Policy Framework on 23 November 2011.

**Evaluation**

The South African National Evaluation Policy Framework defines evaluation as "*the systematic collection and objective analysis of evidence on public policies, programmes, projects, functions and organizations to assess issues such as relevance, performance (effectiveness and efficiency), value for money, impact and sustainability, and recommend ways forward"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation 2011: 3).

**Monitoring**

Monitoring is defined as a *"continuous collecting, analysing and reporting of data in a way that supports effective management"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation 2011: 3). Monitoring is differentiated from evaluation in that it *"does not provide the depth of understanding of 'performance' that can be gleaned from an evaluation"* (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012: 6).

**Evaluation system**

The evaluation system refers to an "*integrated and planned development of skills, resources and infrastructures and the intentional shift towards an evaluation culture in an organization, department or government"* (Haarich, 2008: 1).

**Monitoring and evaluation system**

The South African Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System defines monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system as *"a set of organisational structures, management processes, standards, strategies, plans, indicators, information systems, reporting lines and accountability relationships which enables national and provincial departments, municipalities and other institutions to discharge their M&E functions effectively"* (Presidency, 2007: 4). The framework's description of M&E system also includes "*the organisational culture, capacity, and other enabling conditions which will determine*

*whether the feedback from the M&E function influence the organisation's decision-making, learning and service delivery"* (4).

**National evaluation system or monitoring and evaluation system**

The concept M&E system is widely and, often used interchangeably with the concept evaluation system (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). However, these two concepts are in fact different. This ambiguity is attributed to the fact that the M&E system is purported to include the evaluation system. However, in many instances, what is regarded as M&E system is actually the monitoring system; the evaluation system part is not active or is non-existent (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). An M&E system is actually a 'system of systems' (monitoring system and evaluation system) (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014).

**Institutionalisation of the evaluation system**

The institutionalisation of evaluation system refers to a process of creating *"a sustainable, well-functioning [evaluation] system within a government, where good quality M&E information is used intensively"* (Mackay, 2007: 23). In the main, it involves the following process (but not limited to) (Haarich, 2008; Kusek & Rist; 2004; Mackay, 2007; United Nations Development Group, 2011):

i. Establishment of a national department that will champion and steward the evaluation practice,
ii. Development of a National Evaluation Policy,
iii. Establishment of evaluation guidelines, standards, and practice notes,
iv. Building awareness of the importance of evaluation amongst key stakeholders, and building partnership between championing department other government departments and agencies,
v. Building both capacity and capability to conduct evaluations by establishing evaluation units within departments and training evaluators,
vi. Incorporating evaluation into the routine performance management practice, and
vii. Creation of incentives for demanding and using evaluation evidence.

## 1.7 Field of Study

The focus of this study was on policy implementation, that is, the implementation of the South African national evaluation system as captured in National Evaluation Policy Framework. Having said that, it is not advisable to examine the implementation of the policy without being aware of what informed the formulation of the policy, and how the system itself came into being (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011).

# 2 Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter comprises the research paradigm, type of the study as well as the sampling strategy for the study.

## 2.1 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm refers to a framework that a study adopts in collecting and analysing data (Barker, as cited in De Vos & Strydom, 2011). For example, a researcher may decide to just describe the subject under study (descriptive research paradigm) or to draw meanings from the subjects of research (interpretive research paradigm) based on his or her frame of reference for the worldview. This decision would influence how such a researcher goes about collecting and analysing data. However, it goes without saying that the choice of the research paradigm is informed by the nature of key research questions. Some authors only make a distinction between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms while others prefer to distinguish various paradigms such as positivism, interpretivism, constructionism and so on. (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; De Vos & Strydom, 2011; Fouché & Schurink, 2011; Neuman, 2011).

The study was a qualitatively informed study, which adopted a combination of descriptivism and interpretivism research paradigms. Descriptivism research paradigm refers to an epistemological stance in which research merely seeks to observe situations and/or events and then describes what was observed (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Interpretivism research paradigm, on the other hand, takes a step further by generating meanings out of what was observed (Neuman, 2011).

The key research question for this study calls for descriptivism research paradigm as a frame of reference since it seeks to establish how the national evaluation system is being institutionalised. In other words, the researcher sought to describe how the system is being institutionalised. The commands of the descriptivism research paradigm are reflected throughout the report especially with reference to sections 1.1.1 and 4.5 of the report. However, as it is the case with most qualitative studies, it would not be sufficient to just give a description of the system and how it is being institutionalised. Therefore, the study also

sought to generate meanings from observations made (through document reviews and semi-structured interviews) about how the system is being institutionalised. In other words, the description of the South African national evaluation system (as per the descriptivism research paradigm) formed the basis for the application of the second chosen research paradigm, i.e. the interpretivism research paradigm. The application of the interpretivism research paradigm was especially useful when one had to deal with the sub-questions about the uptake of the system by participating departments, implementation challenges, lesson learnt and how the system can be further improved.

## 2.2 Type of the Study

The nature of the key research question warranted a qualitative study. Qualitative studies can take various approaches, including, narrative biography, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory or case studies (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). This study adopted the case study approach, which can be characterised as a procedure or strategy for studying a phenomenon (programme, event, and situation, community) which is bounded by time, context or place (Fouché & Schurink, 2011). In a case study research, the phenomenon that is being studied is regarded as a 'case'. The process of institutionalising the national evaluation system in South Africa and its uptake by participating (selected) departments is the 'case' in hand. In other words, the study used the experience (case) of the selected departments to examine institutionalisation and uptake of the evaluation system.

## 2.3 Case Selection (Sampling)

The process of selecting participants or any other sampling units is referred to as sampling (Strydom, 2011a). There are two main types of sampling, namely, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling refers to a sampling procedure in which every unit of target population stand an equal chance of being included in the sample (Strydom, 2011a). This means that the sample in the probability sampling method should be representative of the target population. In non-probability sampling, on the other hand, the representativeness of the sample cannot be claimed.

Non-probability sampling was used in this study to select the participants. There is a range of non-probability sampling types, namely, convenience sampling (reliance on available subjects), purposive or judgemental sampling, snowball sampling, and quota sampling (Babbie, 2008). This study used the purposive sampling method to select participants that would be interviewed. Purposive sampling is defined as a sampling procedure *"in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement about which ones will be the most useful […]"* (Babbie, 2008: 204). The researcher purposefully selected participants who were involved in the design and/or are involved in the implementation of the system. The sampling target population consisted of three categories of participants as outlined below.

The first segment of sampling target population comprised employees of Evaluation and Research Unit within the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. This Unit (Evaluation and Research Unit) has been tasked with the responsibility of establishing and implementing the evaluation system (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). Hence it was considered to be the most relevant and knowledgeable unit of sampling regarding the subject of the study (South African national evaluation system). At the time of case selection (sampling), the Unit comprised of just over 15 officials, and the researcher conducted interviews with six of its officials (four directors and two longest-serving evaluation officers) (see the table 2 about sampling structure below).

As indicated above, the study also sought to examine the uptake of the evaluation system by participating departments. It is important to note that evaluation systems stand or fall by the participation of and buy-in from line departments (Mackay, 2007). It was, therefore, necessary to include, in the sample, some of the line departments that have been participating in the evaluation system. This was the second segment of sampling target population. The researcher purposefully selected departments that responded to the DPME's call to submit their programmes to be included in the first 2012/13 National Evaluation Plan[4], and thus to be evaluated according to the evaluation system guidelines. The 2012/13 plan comprised a list of evaluation projects for eight different departmental programmes that

4 The introduction of national evaluation plans started in 2012.

were submitted for evaluation (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2012a). According to the DPME Evaluation Update[5] (dated January 2015) although most of these departmental evaluations were successfully concluded, some departmental projects did not go as planned (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014b). Therefore, the researcher saw this as an opportunity to select one department whose evaluations project was deemed successful and one other department whose evaluations project experienced challenges. This was to ensure that both positive and negative accounts of the institutionalisation and uptake of the system are explored. For the purpose of this study, a successful evaluation project is one which was implemented according to evaluation protocols set out in the National Evaluation Policy Framework, and for which a responsible department has developed an improvement plan, and is in the process of implementing such a plan. This criterion is based on the progress status reported in the 2015 January Evaluation Update for each evaluation project (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014b).

From the 2012/13 National Evaluation Plan, the researcher selected the first department whose evaluation project met the criteria for successful evaluation project and the first department whose evaluation project experienced challenges. The table below presents the structure of this segment of sampling target population.

| **Name of Department** | **Name of Evaluation** | **Description of Interview Participants** |
|---|---|---|
| Trade and Industry | Implementation Evaluation of Business Process Services Programme | Programme Official and M&E Official |
| Human Settlements | Implementation Evaluation of Integrated Residential Development Programme | Programme Official and M&E Official |

Table 1: Selected Departments

Only officials who were part of the evaluations of their respective programmes were eligible for selection.

5 Evaluation Update is a summary of progress feedback on establishing the South Africa National Evaluation System.

The third segment of sampling target population was external evaluators of the programmes that were submitted by selected departments as alluded above. It was envisaged that this group of participants would provide a different perspective regarding the question of institutionalisation of the evaluation system since they are neither attached to the DPME nor participating departments.

The table below depicts the entire sample structure for the study.

| Sample Structure | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Segments of Key Informants** | **Number of Key Informants** | **Total** |
| DPME officials | 4 Directors and 2 M&E Officers | 6 |
| Trade and Industry | 1 Programme Official and 1 M&E Official | 2 |
| Human Settlements | 1 Programme Official and 1 M&E Official | 2 |
| Service providers[6] | 2[7] x 1 External Evaluator | 2 |
| **Total** | | **12** |

Table 2: Sample Structure A

## 2.4 Data Collection and Analysis Process

This section entails a process of collecting and analysing data. Since the type of research is qualitative in nature, this study adopted the qualitative methods of collecting data. In this study, data was collected through document review and semi-structured interviews with selected participants.

### 2.4.1 Document review

Documentary review refers to a data collection method in which a researcher studies documents (written for non-research purpose) to generate a scientific knowledge (Strydom & Delport, 2011). In this study, it is important that document review is not confused with literature review. While literature review was used to map out the existing, accessible

6 External evaluators are those who were responsible for evaluating the programmes of selected departments.

7 This number represents the number of evaluations of programmes from two selected departments (one evaluation per department).

scientific body of knowledge on evaluation systems document review was used as one of data collection methods for the study. This method was mainly employed to describe how the evaluation system came about and how it is being implemented (see section 1.1.1 on the 'Description of the South African National Evaluation System'). Further, the information collected through document review (as one of the data collection methods for this study) was also integrated with the empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews in Chapter 5 (Discussion of Research Findings) to enhance the strength of the findings. The researcher perused the following key documents, among others:

- Diagnostic survey report
- Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- National Evaluation Policy Framework
- Evaluation guidelines and templates
- National evaluation plans
- Quarterly and annual performance reports
- Evaluation updates
- Departmental management responses and improvement plans.

Most of these documents were available on the website of the DPME. Those that were not readily available on the website were formally requested from the DPME and/or respective departments.

### 2.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

In addition to document review, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with selected participants as alluded to under the section on sampling above. A semi-structured interview is defined as a qualitative interview in which a researcher asks an interviewee certain questions based on a predetermined interview guide but with an element of flexibility (Greeff, 2011). Interviews with DPME officials and external evaluators were used to triangulate the information elicited from document review in describing how the evaluation system came into being and how it is implemented. On the other hand, interviews with officials from participating departments were used to elicit information regarding the uptake of the evaluation system by selected departments. The interviews were conducted through

face-to-face and one-to-one interview setting, with the exception of one interview, which was conducted through email due to a busy schedule of the interviewee. The researcher visited the selected officials at their place of work to conduct these interviews.

The above data collection process was designed to address all key research questions as reflected in the consistency matrix table below.

| Methodological Framework | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Question** | **Methodological Activity** | **Data Source/Key Informants** |
| How is the implementation of the national evaluation system faring against the benchmarks outlined in the National Evaluation Policy Framework? | Documentation review | • National Evaluation Policy Framework<br>• Evaluation guidelines<br>• National evaluation plans<br>• Quarterly and annual performance reports<br>• Evaluation updates<br>• Programme evaluations reports |
| | Semi-structured interviews | Six DPME officials & 2 external evaluators |
| What is the level of the uptake of the evaluation system in participating departments? | Documentation review | • National Evaluation Plans<br>• Terms of references for evaluations<br>• Management response reports<br>• Improvement plans<br>• Improvement progress reports |
| | Semi-structured interviews | Six DPME officials & four officials from selected departments |
| What are the implementation successes and challenges the institutionalisation of the system is experiencing? | Semi-structured interviews | All selected participants (six DPME officials, four officials from selected departments & two external evaluators) |
| What are the lessons that are being drawn from these implementation challenges? | | |

Table 3: Methodological Framework

### 2.4.3 Data analysis methods

Data collection was followed by the data analysis process. Since the process of data collection involved qualitative methods, the study also used qualitative data analysis technique. Qualitative data analysis is defined as "*the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships"* (Babbie, 2008: 415). From the review of documents, and transcripts of the interviews, data was categorised and organised into meaningful themes and patterns. Data from the document review was extracted and organised according to pre-determined criteria. On the other hand, data from interviews was first transcribed and then perused to establish themes and patterns. As indicated above, data from document review was mainly used to describe the evaluation system and how it works, whereas data from semi-structured interviews was used to triangulate the information elicited from document review as well as to establish the extent to which participating departments are taking up the evaluation system.

## 2.5 Limitations of the Study

Due to the timeframe for completing the study, the researcher had to limit the number of participating departments that would form a sample to only two departments (refer to sampling method above). This has a potential to limit the diversity of the views, and thus the richness of the findings. However, through in-depth interviews and by posing more probing questions, it was anticipated that the key issues could be pursued thoroughly and in depth.

## 2.6 Research Ethics

Scientific soundness and the feasibility of the study are not the only requirements of a research project. A researcher should also take into consideration the ethical aspects of his or her research project. Babbie (2008: 66) offers a generic definition of research ethics by indicating that the research ethics "*deals with matters of right and wrong"*. In practice, research ethics is about conforming to the codes of principles intended to govern the conduct of a researcher in collecting and analysing data, and reporting the findings (Babbie, 2008;

Strydom, 2011b). This means that a researcher has the ethical responsibility to both the participants and audience of his or her research (Gravetter & Forzano, as cited in Strydom, 2011b).

Although ethics committees and research professional associations do not seem to agree on what is ethically right or wrong, there are some common codes of ethics, namely, voluntary participation, avoidance of harm, assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, deception of participants etc. (Babbie, 2008; Strydom, 2011b). However, adhering to some or all of these principles would also depend very much on the context of each research project which, for researchers, means extra sensitivity to the ethical dimension of their research projects.

In this research the approach was, firstly, to explain the purpose of the research to participants, and request them to voluntarily avail themselves for interviews. The researcher had also asked the participants' permission to record the interviews in order to have a full record of the conversation. The participants' consent to participate in the interviews was formally secured by asking them to sign the consent form.

The consent form contained the following assurances for participants to mitigate the risks against the participants especially the external evaluators whose career depends on the workable relationship with the DPME and other line departments:

i. Information that may reveal the identity of the participant would be treated confidentially.
ii. The transcripts of their respective interviews would be made available to them if they wish to ascertain that their information was captured correctly.
iii. Data would be analysed and presented in such a way that it does not reveal the identity of the participant(s).
iv. Sections of the report that contain direct sensitive quotes from participants would be sent to the respective participants to view and ascertain that these sections are not revealing to their identity and/or damaging to their persons and their careers.

# 3 Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework for the Study

Theoretical framework refers to a researcher's theoretical point of reference or worldview to which he or she subscribes, in guiding and focusing his or her research (Imenda, 2014). The term 'theoretical framework' is used interchangeably with the term 'conceptual framework' although some scholars acknowledge that this should not be the case (Green, 2014; Imenda, 2014). However, this section is not intended to debate which school of thought is correct. It only serves to outline theories and/or concepts used to guide the study.

This study adopts a hybrid of rational choice model and political system model to explain both the formulation and implementation of the South African national evaluation system. This choice is informed by the fact that although evaluation systems are mainly anchored on the evidence-based policy-making approach, which is best explained in terms of rational choice model, the process of establishing these systems is also influenced and shaped by political context within which they are to be or being implemented, which warrants an analysis of the political environment (Mackay, 2007; Wesselink, Colebatch, Pearce, 2014).

Furthermore, these models should not be construed as competitive *"in the sense that any one of them could be judged best"* but together they provide a more comprehensive understanding of policy-making (Dye, 2005: 12). Thus, the combination of rational choice model and political system model ensures that this analysis presents balanced aspects of policy-making (Birkland, 2005).

## 3.1 Rational Choice Model

Rational choice models postulate that, in making decisions, decision-makers weigh policy options, based on evidence, and choose the option that would maximise the expected outcomes (Edwards, as cited in Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The main assumption for this model is that the best possible results can only be achieved through an *"ordered gathering of relevant information allowing the best alternatives to be identified and selected"* (Weiss, as cited in Howlett & Ramesh, 2003: 167). By this account, the process of choosing the best

possible policy option is evidence based or what is commonly known as evidence-based policy-making.

A rational choice model is characterised by the following sequential process (Dunn, 2004: 48):

i. Identification of *"a policy problem on which there is sufficient consensus among relevant stakeholders that the decision maker can act on their behalf",*
ii. Specification and consistently ranking *"the goals and objectives whose attainment would constitute a resolution of the problem",*
iii. Identification of *"the policy alternatives that may best contribute to the attainment of each goal and objective",*
*iv.* Forecasting of *"the consequences that will result from the selection of each alternative",*
v. Comparison of *"these consequences in terms of their consequences for the attainment of each goal and objective", and*
vi. Selection of *"the alternative(s) that maximises the attainment of goals and objectives".*

Rational choice model is best illustrated through a cost-benefit narrative wherein policy makers only choose policies that yield gains that exceed the costs (Dunn, 2004; Dye, 2005). It is important to note that the cost-benefit configuration is not only explained in monetary values but also include innumerable social benefits as well.

The main criticism of rational choice theory centres on the fact that it is difficult if not impossible to identify every alternative policy option, and gather all the evidence for each. According to Dye (2005: 17), this criticism is based on the following assumptions:

*i.* *"Policymakers are not motivated to maximise net social gain but merely to satisfy demands for progress; they do not search until they find 'the one best way'; instead they halt their search when they find an alternative that will work.*
*ii.* *There are innumerable barriers* [such as] *the cost of information gathering, the availability of the information, and the time involved in its collection".*

iii. *"Neither the predictive capacities of the social and behavioural sciences nor those of the physical and biological sciences are sufficiently advanced to enable policymakers to understand the full benefits or costs of each policy alternative" (Dye, 2005: 18).*

This criticism has prompted some scholars to develop a range of adjusted versions of rational choice model with toned down procedural requirements in order to identify a policy option, which may not necessarily be the best but workable (Birkland, 2005; Dunn, 2004). The point here is that policy-making should be informed by the best available and/or accessible evidence possible. The mere fact that the rational choice model has an unrealistic target, i.e. identification of all policy alternatives (with all policy information) does not and should not be construed to mean that the model is invalid; it just means that the target should be adjusted to a realistic level.

In the policy world, the rational choice model is actualised by an evidence-based policy-making practice (Dye, 2005; Wesselink, Colebatch & Pearce, 2014). Evidence-based policy-making practice facilitates rationality in policy-making in that it advocates for the demand, supply and use of evidence to inform both policy-making and policy management, i.e. government programme planning, budgeting, management and decision-making (Nutley, Morton, Jung, Boaz, 2010; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012; Wesselink, Colebatch & Pearce, 2014).

In accordance with the evidence-based policy-making practice, systematic 'evidence' is required throughout the policy cycle as depicted in figure 1 below (Dunn, 1994).

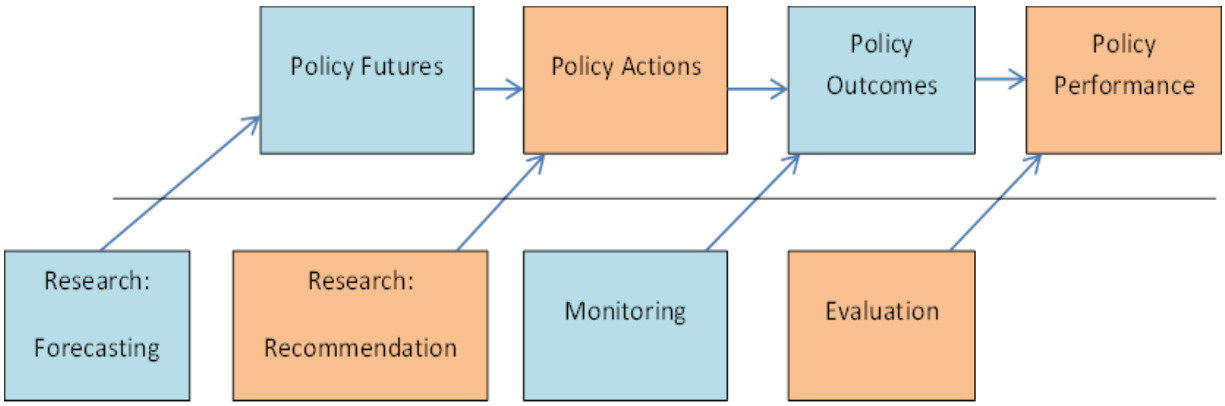



Figure 1: Policy-Based Evidence (Adapted from Dunn, 1994)

From the above diagram, one can deduce that there are three main and/or common forms of evidence (research, monitoring data, and evaluation), the choice of which is determined by a policy cycle stage at which such policy or programme is (Bussmann, 2008). Research evidence (forecasting) is required at the policy formulation stage to help decision maker make an informed decision. During the implementation stage, monitoring data is required to determine if the policy is likely to achieve that which it was designed to achieve. At the end of the policy cycle, evaluation evidence is required to determine if the policy has achieved its objectives, how and why it has achieved such objectives.

However, there is still ongoing debate on the meaning of 'evidence' and what constitutes valid evidence. On the one hand, some scholars and policy practitioners prefer quantitative research and impact evaluation studies to other forms of evidence. On the other hand, there are those who posit that the evidence-based policy-making practice should not be characterised by a specific type of evidence such as quantitative research but that it should also acknowledge and accept other forms of evidence such as qualitative research, process evaluation and programme monitoring information etc. (Wesselink, Colebatch & Pearce, 2014). This debate raises the question for potential evaluation users whether evaluation findings constitute valid evidence, and/or whether they would regard it sufficient to warrant any action. By the account above, evaluation users' understanding of the meaning of evidence and/or the value they attach to evidence will determine if they will use it or not.

There is a wide range of initiatives that facilitate or promote the implementation of evidence-based policy-making practice, that is, systematic production and use of evidence (Walter, Nutley & Davies, 2005). Some initiatives involve capacity development activities to equip policy practitioners with the skills and expertise to generate evidence, to use evidence and/or to apply evidence-based policy-making practices in general. Other initiatives seek to address the organisational factors such as the people's attitude towards both the evidence and evidence-based policy-making practice. Walter, Nutley and Davies (2005: 348) conducted a "*systematic review of the effectiveness of different mechanisms for promoting research use across the health, social care, criminal justice and education sectors"* in which they have identified the following common requirements for effective evidence-based policy-making practice:

i. "*adequate resources, in terms of training, skilled staff, administrative support, money, materials, time and ongoing assistance;*
ii. *leadership, commitment, and support at a sufficiently high level;*
iii. *buy-in, motivation and a sense of ownership among frontline staff; and*
iv. *agency stability and good communication"*.

On the other hand, Cherney, Head, Povey, Ferguson and Boreham (2015) identified three key factors that support or hinder the practice of evidence-based policy-making (i.e. (1) availability of infrastructure to access research-related products, (2) availability of time for policy practitioners to read and engage these products, and, (3) policy practitioners' preferences in sources and/or type of evidence), and concluded that these factors are, in turn, influenced by the organisational ethos and culture that is research-oriented. In other words, an organisational culture that is pro-research increases the odds of research uptake.

The evaluation system is one of the interventions that facilitate the practice of evidence-based policy-making. It is actualised through the following packages of activities (for a detailed discussion of the packages, see a section on literature review):

i. Facilitating the demand for evaluation amongst potential and real users,
ii. Building the capacity (within government departments and organisations) to conduct evaluations,
iii. Fostering a culture of using evaluation findings,
iv. *"Fostering a culture of organisational support for evaluation activities, [which includes] an appropriate learning environment and a sufficient level of resources".* Naccarella, Pirkis, Kohn, Morley, Burgess & Blashki (2007: 235), and
v. Creating an enabling environment for the above to take place.

Although the 'golden rule' for the rational choice model is that a plausible problem-solving exercise can only be realised through rational and/or systematic evidence use, some scholars argue that policy-relevant evidence is also influenced and shaped by the political context within which the policy is to be or being implemented (Wesselink, Colebatch, Pearce, 2014). These authors charge that it is naïve to expect a linear and context-free relationship between evidence and policy based on the fact that:

*"rather than a single problem and only a single policy-maker concerned with solving it, it is more likely that a number of participants will be involved and that they will have distinct, overlapping and perhaps conflicting views on both the nature of the problem and of the sort of knowledge most appropriately mobilised in determining a response"* (342).

It is in this context that this study also employs the political system model to explicate political process of policy-making.

### 3.2 Political System Model

Political system model regards the policy-making process as a (by)product of a 'political system', which *"receives [and process] inputs and responds with outputs"* (Birkland, 2005: 201). Inputs refer to the methods that individuals and groupings utilise to communicate their policy preferences to policymakers (Birkland, 2005). Inputs are characterised by a host of political activities "*public opinion, organized pressures, constituency interests, the personal views of legislators, and the views of those who implement"* (Neiman & Stambough, 1998: 449). Inputs also involve negotiation, bargaining, and accommodation of many different interests (Osman, 2002: 38).

For some scholars, the political environment (the standing socio-economic variables) is also part of the policy input (Anderson, 1997; Birkland, 2005). For example, per capita income and poverty level influence what government can and cannot do. In fact, the inputs (e.g. service delivery protests) that are registered by political actors are informed by certain socio-economic factors (Anderson, 1997; Birkland, 2005). It is also argued that not only is policy-making affected by the political environment in which it is to operate but policy decisions, in turn, affect the environment as well (Birkland, 2005). In other words, policy decisions (outputs) of today will influence future policy responses (inputs).

Policy inputs are said to navigate their way into policy outputs, that is, policy decisions to do or not to do something (Birkland, 2005; Easton, 1957). What is not clear is precisely how these inputs navigate into policy outputs. In other words, it is not clear how some policy inputs, and not others, translate into policy outputs. For this reason, it is often viewed as too

simplistic or lacking in specifying of cause and effect. However, although the political system model is viewed as overly simplistic, it offers a fundamental guidance for analysing public policies (Birkland, 2005; Osman, 2002).

The proponents of the political system model point to an added virtue of the model, that is, its deployment supports the maintenance of democratic governance wherein everyone is encouraged to participate in policy-making, and policymakers are held accountable by the citizens (Neiman & Stambough, 1998).

The political system model subscribes to 'participant political culture' where citizens fully understand their country's political system, input process, output process and their role as political participants, and most importantly, are free to participate in policy-making (Anderson, 1997; Neiman & Stambough, 1998; Osman, 2002). This also takes a form of stakeholder participation where a range of different role players and interest groups are able to engage each other to hammer out differences and deepen the common understanding over policy issue and preferences (Paine-Cronin & Sadan, 2015). The participation of stakeholders in the policy-making enhances the relevance and the uptake of the policy, and it secures ongoing active support required to sustain the policy (Paine-Cronin & Sadan, 2015). However, it is important to note that the political system model may not be as effective in countries where citizens do not have the freedom to participate in policy-making (Osman, 2002). By this account, democratic governments (as opposed to authoritarian governments) are viewed as a pre-condition for the participant political culture and, thus the political system model.

Just like any public policy, a national evaluation system involves a significant number of policy actors with diverse and, sometimes, conflicting policy preferences (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). Governments, parliaments, non-governmental organizations, civil society, international development organizations, and donors are amongst those policy actors that can participate in the development of a national evaluation system (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa, 2015; Gaarder & Briceño, 2010; Kusek & Rist, 2004; Leeuw & Furubo, 2008; Mackay, 2007). The profile of these actors as well as the nature of

the contestation amongst them (policy contest) change as the system evolves, and influence and shape the system throughout the policy cycle from agenda-setting to implementation.

A significant body of literature suggests that most (if not all) national evaluation systems came about as a response to a growing pressure on governments to demonstrate service delivery results, accountability, transparency, and thus good governance (Kusek & Rist, 2004; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). Civil society (especially citizen-based organisations and movements) put pressure on governments to demonstrate results for promised service delivery. In South Africa, much of this pressure has been registered through service delivery protests and loss of political support (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014). Therefore, service delivery protests can be seen as citizens' input into the political system. On the other hand, international development organisations and donors pressurise governments to demonstrate accountability (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). A case in point, international development organisations and donors offer governments to fund development programmes both outside and inside government sector on condition that such programmes are evaluated to make sure that their funding is accounted for (Mouton, 2010). In response to the pressure alluded above, many governments are said to have established national evaluation system serving various purposes, such as policy-making and policy management (government programme planning, monitoring and improvement), holding government ministries accountable and reporting results to the citizens, etc. (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). Put in the language of the political system model, the civil society, and international development organisations and donors submitted policy input (pressure for governments to demonstrate results and be accountable) and governments, in turn, responded with policy output (national evaluation system) to address those demand (inputs).

As indicated above, the profile of policy actors and the nature of policy contest change as the system evolve from the agenda-setting to implementation. During the implementation of evaluation systems, the policy contest is characterised by a 'turf' battle between coordinating or central planning and finance ministries on the one hand and line ministries on the other (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). Scholars warn that government line ministries are prone to resist and/or resent the national evaluation system due to the fact "*they do not want to publish data about their performance and outcomes…for political reasons*" (Kusek & Rist,

2004: 21-22). Mackay (2007) also posits that no government ministry wants to be told what to do especially by another government ministry (coordinating ministry). The above is particularly true if line ministries were never given the opportunity to make input and/or if there is no incentive to accept the system (Mackay, 2007). Resistance from line ministries may be registered through a sheer lack of cooperation or passive cooperation where they merely submit programmes (to be evaluated) for the sake of complying without any intention to use the findings of evaluation (Mackay, 2007). The potential resistance to evaluation system by government departments threatens the uptake of the system (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone, 2015). It is important to note that the national evaluation system stands or falls by the level of the uptake of the system by government departments, which is characterised by the participation (in good faith) of all government departments in the evaluation system as well as the utilisation or the use of the evaluation findings by the very same government departments. It is the above political issues (and others) that make the process of developing a national evaluation system more than just a technical task, only requiring a scientific approach (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). Building a national evaluation system requires both technical infrastructure and the political literacy to manoeuvre through the political landscape of the system. It is for this reason that a comprehensive study of a national evaluation system needs to employ a hybrid of the rational choice model (evidence-based approach) and political system model to provide a balanced analysis of the system.

### 3.3 A hybrid of the rational choice model and political system model

As indicated above, although the ‘golden rule' for the rational choice model is that a plausible problem-solving exercise can only be realised through rational and/or systematic evidence use, some scholars argue that the systematic evidence is also influenced and shaped by political context within which the policy is to be or being implemented (Wesselink, Colebatch, Pearce, 2014). These scholars argue that a policy process based only on [research] evidence is less adequate in providing a well-balanced policy solution. According to this school of thought, it is naïve to ignore the role of politics in policy-making and/or to think that politics are avoidable. However, these scholars are not arguing that [research] evidence is not important or useful but that, although it is important, scientific evidence is just one of many

sources of influence in policy-making (Mackay, 2007; Wesselink, Colebatch, Pearce, 2014). By this account, the evidence-based policy-making approach ought not to remove the space for political debate. Contrary to a popular view that evidence-based approach 'shuts out' other policy actors (especially civil society), it can actually facilitate debate. Various policy actors would debate, deliberate, and lobby for a particular policy solution using different and, sometimes, contrasting research evidence (Wesselink, Colebatch, Pearce, 2014). For example, in the field of the evaluation system, there is a school of thought that advocates for evaluation to be conducted by external evaluators while another school of thought supports the idea of evaluations being conducted internally by the departments themselves (Dhakal, 2014). Both of these groups utilise evidence to back their preferences. This shows that evidence is actually embedded in policy negotiation and lobbying. It is important to note that evidence does not speak for itself; somebody must interpret and/or communicate it. By this account, a plausible policy-making process involves a hybrid of both empiricism and politics (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007; Wesselink, Colebatch, Pearce, 2014). Scientific evidence and political engagements should not be seen as 'either/or'.

Likewise, although the evaluation system is intended to facilitate systematic production and use of research/evaluation evidence (which resonates with the evidence-based policy-making practice and rational choice model), the process of establishing such a system is crowded with different policy actors with diverse and, sometimes, conflicting preferences. Therefore, it goes without saying that establishing the evaluation system requires not only the technical infrastructure but also a political skill to manoeuvre through the political landscape of the system.

# 4 Chapter 4: Literature Review

Literature review reveals the work that has already been done thereby identify the knowledge gap in the body of literature (Neuman, 2011). This helps a researcher not repeat the study that has already been done but rather to design a research in such a way that would contribute to filling the knowledge gap in the topic of interest. This section reflects on the existing literature on the evaluation systems. It highlights what has already been said about the accessible evaluations systems around the world.

## 4.1 National Evaluation System or Monitoring and Evaluation System: What is it?

The concept evaluation system is widely and often used interchangeably with the concept Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). The United Nations Evaluation Group (2012: 7) observed the following with regard to the loosely use of the concepts evaluation system and M&E system:

> *"These are somewhat ambiguous terms and not always well understood. What may be deemed to be a country's 'national evaluation system (NES)' may, in fact, have little to do with the practice of 'evaluation' per se. In fact, the more widely used term for developing countries is 'monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system' and this is often used interchangeably when talking about a country's NES".*

However, those who regard evaluation system and M&E system as different concepts are not as expressive on what exactly distinguishes the two concepts except to say that M&E system is purported to include the evaluation system. Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon (2014), in their attempt to distinguish the two concepts, refer to M&E system as 'system of systems', which houses both monitoring system and evaluation system. However, in most cases (countries), what is regarded as M&E system is actually the monitoring system; the evaluation system part is not active or is non-existent (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa, 2012; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). Gaarder & Briceño (2010) posit that although the two concepts are related, they have different functions; they operate through different institutional arrangements, and within different timelines.

Nevertheless, it suffices to accept that the two concepts are not the same although most literature used them interchangeably.

### 4.2 Definition of Evaluation System

The literature review found that there are few definitive definitions of an evaluation system. This is attributed to the fact that an 'evaluation-focused' system is still emerging (Haarich, 2008; Porter & Goldman, 2013). It used to be under the umbrella term, monitoring and evaluation system as deliberated above. Secondly, it could also be attributed to the fact that authors use a variety of phrases in reference to the evaluations system, phrases such as evaluation capacity building, evaluation capacity development, institutionalization of policy evaluation and so on (Gueye, 2013; Hachem, 2013; Mihalache, 2010; Naccarella et al., 2007; Varone, Jacob & Winter, 2005). Thirdly, most scholars prefer to narrate the process of establishing an evaluation system rather than to define the concept of an evaluation system itself.

Nonetheless, Haarich (2008: 1) defines the evaluation system as *"the integrated and planned development of skills, resources and infrastructures and the intentional shift towards an evaluation culture in an organization, department or government".* According to this author, an evaluation system entails four components, namely, the demand for evaluation, the supply of evaluation, the resources and infrastructure of the system as well as the external contextual factors be it political, social and economic, etc. (Haarich, 2008).

Naccarella et al. (2007: 235) posit that the definition of an evaluation system should, at least, make reference to the following:

i. *"Equipping staff within organisations with the appropriate skills to conduct rigorous evaluations in a routine, ongoing fashion,*
ii. *Acknowledgment of local context,*
iii. *Fostering of a culture of organisational support for evaluation activities, [which includes] an appropriate learning environment and a sufficient level of resources, and*
iv. *The use of evaluations".*

It is important to note that these (and other) definitions emphasise different features of an evaluation system, which, in turn, result in varying conceptualisations of the evaluation system (Haarich, 2008; Naccarella et al., 2007). For example, while the conceptualisation of some evaluation systems is about equipping staff of organisations or departments to conduct their own evaluations, other evaluation systems subscribe to an outsourcing approach where evaluations are conducted by external service providers.

However, while some scholars are concerned about lack of common definitions others contend that it is necessary and, perhaps inevitable, to have different definitions due to diverse local context within which those evaluation systems are to be implemented (Naccarella et al., 2007). By this account, every evaluation system is or ought to be tailored to the needs, contextual requirements and priorities of that particular country. Furthermore, although there are differing definitions of evaluations, these definitions do not necessarily oppose each other but they seem to build on one another. For example, using two scenarios above, it would not be unusual for an evaluation system to have a hybrid of both self-evaluation and independent evaluation.

### 4.3 Features of the National Evaluation System

There is a consensus amongst both evaluation scholars and evaluation practitioners that there is no single form of evaluation system (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa, 2012; Mackay, 2007; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). The form that an evaluation system would take depends on country-specific factors, such as *"the government's demand for M&E information; the uses to which M&E information will be put; the availability and quality of data and information; the existing evaluation and analytical capacity within the country; the amount the government is prepared to spend on M&E, etc."* (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012: 17). Therefore, determining how to go about establishing an evaluation system starts with an understanding of these country-specific factors.

However, although there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model of an evaluation system, there are few key common features of an evaluation system that cut across most evaluation system models.

According to the available literature the key common features can be categorised into four main components, namely, capacity to demand evaluation, capacity to supply evaluation, the utilisation of evaluation and the enabling environment (Haarich, 2008; Naccarella et al., 2007; Porter & Goldman, 2013; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). By this account, any evaluation system should at least take care of the demand for evaluation, the production of evaluations, the use of the evaluations as well as the environment (e.g. politics) in which such evaluations are produced and/or used. These four components are unpacked below.

**Enabling Environment**

The enabling environment may be political, cultural, social, etc. Chief among the enabling environment is the political will for the establishment of an evaluation system (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). The political involves a commitment from both political and bureaucratic principals to launch and resource evaluation function and to sustain it over time to allow it to develop and mature (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). This will also include deflecting any resistance to the establishment of an evaluations system.

Related to the political will is the ownership of evaluation by implementing departments. The Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa (2014) posits that the ownership of evaluation is enhanced when the demand-supply configuration is internally activated as opposed to being driven by external forces (including but not limited to donor conditionality), which in turn increases the chances of evaluation findings to be used. In other words, when the evaluation system is advocated and supported from within government, the implementing departments are more likely to accept and make use of evaluation.

An enabling environment is also characterised by a culture of citizen participation in policy-making and holding government accountable (Anderson, 1997). Independent Evaluation Office and International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (2015) found a strong correlation between countries that practice democratic governance and their capacity to conduct evaluations and to ensure the independence and use of evaluation findings. Gaarder & Briceño (2010: 2), on the other hand, identified "*the existence of a democratic system with a*

*vocal opposition"* as one of the key ingredients required for a successful institutionalisation of an evaluation system.

Government's management approach also underlies an enabling environment for the evaluation system. The literature links the evaluation system to a number of governance principles, namely, transparency, accountability, results-based management, good governance and evidence-based policy-making (Cloete, 2009; Mackay, 2007; United Nations Development Group, 2011; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). Various scholars and evaluation practitioners identify at least one or a couple of these principles as the driver(s) for the establishment of an evaluation system depending on country-specific context. By this account, these government management principles become a pre-condition for an evaluation system (Dhakal, 2014). However, although various scholars and evaluation practitioners identify various government management principles as drivers for the evaluation system, the evidence-based policy-making practice seems to be the most popular one. This is evidenced by a consensus amongst scholars that one of the major success factors for evaluations system is the culture of evaluation (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mihalache, 2010; Naccarella et al., 2007). By this account, if an evaluation coordinating department manages to convince implementing departments to conduct evaluations as part of their routine management practice an evaluation system shall have been established.

Evaluation culture refers to a practice where implementing departments conduct evaluations not only regularly but also systematically (Gaarder & Briceño, 2010; Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mihalache, 2010). However, it is important to note that the culture of evaluation may not necessarily produce a culture of using evidence that emanates from those evaluation studies. It is possible for a country to have a culture of evaluation (as compliance exercise) without a culture of utilisation of evaluation information. So, the ideal evaluation culture should involve both a culture of conducting evaluations studies and a culture of using the information that emanates from those studies. This kind of culture can be fostered through a balanced combination of incentives and disincentives to conduct evaluations (Mackay, 2007). For example, a government can make a requirement that all large programmes be evaluated regularly. On the other hand, a treasury department may refuse to fund (or to provide additional funding for) a programme until scientific evidence that supports the request for

funding is provided. Incentives may also be in the form of a requirement that evaluation should be incorporated into a programme cycle of every government programme (Dhakal, 2014).

**Demand for Evaluation**

The Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa (2012) posits that when decision makers require evaluation evidence to make an informed policy decision, demand for evaluation is generated. In other words, the demand for evaluation is dependent on the 'potential' and 'real' users realising the need and value for evaluation. However, it is not enough for decision-makers to realise the need and value for evaluation but they should also have capacity and capability to request such studies to be conducted (Mackay, 2007). It is for this reason that some scholars argue that real demand should be driven from within government structures as opposed to externally driven by donors to ensure ownership and thus sustainability of the evaluation system (Porter & Goldman, 2013).

Some scholars believe that the demand for evaluation and the utilisation thereof is interdependent (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, (2007). By this account, the nature and extent of the demand determines the extent to which the evaluation evidence would be used. Furthermore, if the demand for evaluation is episodic or haphazard and/or if the evaluations are not used the evaluation system would collapse. The capacity to demand evaluation evidence would, therefore, include the capacity to use it, which includes a clear understanding of where and how evaluation evidence can be used within the programme cycle (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012).

In addition to the origin of the demand, the purpose or the reason for the demand is also an important factor. Real and meaningful demand for evaluation should be for bringing development in people's lives, and not for internal bureaucratic requirements (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa, 2012).

**Supply of Evaluation**

The third key component of an evaluation system involves the capacity to supply evaluation. As indicated above, different scholars use different features to define this component. While some scholars define the supply of evaluation by the capacity of line departments to conduct evaluations, quality of evaluations, number of skilled evaluators (Haarich, 2008; Naccarella et al., 2007) other scholars characterise it by managerial traits such as evaluation guidelines and standards, training, and authenticated monitoring data (Bustelo, 2006; Mehrotra, 2012; Mihalache, 2010). However, this report will only reflect on those features that featured in most evaluation systems, namely, coordinating department, evaluation infrastructure, human capital, quality evaluation products, and data monitoring system.

A coordinating department is considered to be one of the key features of the evaluation supply. Usually, this government agency is tasked with providing policy direction for evaluation function as well as with coordinating evaluation studies across all levels of government (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). Inherent in the role of the coordinating department are the evaluation infrastructure as mechanisms through which the coordinating department is able to provide policy direction.

Evaluation infrastructure refers to guideline documents that seek to ensure a systematic and a well-coordinated approach to evaluation (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). It includes documents such as evaluation policies, annual national evaluation plans, norms and standards, practice notes, etc. Dhakal (2014) posits that without this type of guideline documents the practice of evaluation would be unsystematic and uncoordinated and the methodologies would not be robust.

The capacity of line departments to conduct evaluations is also one of the key features of the evaluation supply. This is mainly characterised by the availability of qualified and skilled personnel (evaluators) who can conduct rigorous evaluation studies (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Naccarella et al., 2007; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012).

Apart from equipping personnel within line departments, universities and 'think-tank' organisations are also required to prepare students who are aspiring to become evaluators (Varone, Jacob & Winter, 2005). This is imperative especially for those evaluation systems whose evaluations are conducted by external evaluators.

Inherent to highly qualified and skilful evaluators is the quality of evaluation products. Evaluation supply is also reflected by the nature and quality of the products the system produces (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa, 2012). As indicated above, both the competency of an evaluator and the quality of data source play a significant role in the quality of evaluation product.

In addition to human capital, the evaluation supply also requires a sustained and standardised information-gathering system (Leeuw & Rozendal, as cited in Varone, Jacob & Winter, 2005; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). Kusek & Rist (2004) postulate that statistical capacity is an essential component of building an evaluation system. However, data, in itself, is insufficient. Various scholars emphasise the fact that data should be credible, valid, reliable, transparent etc. in order to be useful (Dhakal, 2014; Mackay, 2007). It is important to note that the competency of an evaluator is as good as the strength of their data (Kusek & Rist, 2004; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). It is for this reason that in most countries a national statistical agency would be required to assist line departments in ensuring that their information gathering system is credible and reliable (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012).

**Evaluation Utilisation**

Most scholars agree on the fact that an evaluation system is incomplete if it does not take care of how the evaluation information is going to be used (Mackay, 2007). In fact, some scholars are as bold as to posit that the utilisation of evaluation information is the ultimate measure of the success of an evaluation system (Gaarder & Briceño, 2010). By this account, the real value for both evaluations and evaluation systems does not come from producing evaluation information but from using the information.

A consistent theme that cut across most literature is that the nature and extent of the utilisation of evaluation information determines the sustainability of the system (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). Simply put, the utilisation of evaluation information is one of the major prerequisites to the system sustainability for if evaluation information is not used the system would collapse.

There are a number of reasons for which evaluation information is required and/or used, which include, supporting government policy-making, for programme and project management, and for accountability purposes (Mackay, 2007). However, Bussmann (2008) found that evaluation is mainly used in the area of programme implementation as compared to other policy cycle areas.

Various scholars have highlighted a number of factors that affect the utilisation of evaluation information in one way or another. One of the factors that affect the utilisation of evaluation is the negative perception that some of implementing agencies have towards the evaluation. The Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa (2015) found that some of the government departments consider evaluation as a punitive to rather than as a learning mechanism. Therefore, before these role players are requested to participate in the evaluation and the use thereof, it is imperative that the coordinating department, as the representative of government authority, should first dispel their anxieties for evaluation. This could be done through an advocacy programme for change management where role players are persuaded to participate in the evaluation instead of it being imposed on them, and where evaluation is seen as a managerial tool instead of a control tool (Gaarder & Briceño, 2010).

Another factor that affects the utilisation of evaluation is the involvement of the role players (especially the primary intended users of evaluation findings) in identifying the issues to be addressed by the evaluations, in designing and managing evaluation project as well as in deciding the use of evaluation (Gaarder & Briceño, 2010; Mackay, 2007). Patton (2008: 38) posits that *"intended users are more likely to use evaluations if they understand and feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings; they are more likely to understand and feel ownership if they have been actively involved, and by actively involving primary intended*

*users, the evaluator is training users in use, preparing the groundwork for use, and reinforcing the intended utility of the evaluation every step along the way"*.

The commitment of implementing agencies to implement recommendations is also a factor that affects the utilisation of evaluation. In some countries implementing agencies are required to develop or prepare improvement plans to implement the recommendations (Dhakal, 2014; Goldman, Mathe, Jacob, Hercules, Amisi, Buthelezi, Narsee, Ntakumba & Sadan, 2015). However, Independent Evaluation Office and International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (2015) found out that the challenge still lies on the lack of process to follow up on the implementation of recommendations outlined in the improvement plans especially in cases where the recommendations involve more than one implementing agency.

The quality of evaluation products is also said to influence the utilisation of evaluation (Dhakal, 2014). Evaluations that are conducted externally are often perceived to be more independent and, thus, of high quality (Mackay, 2007). However, it is important to note that the debate is still going on, whether it is best to have evaluations conducted by external evaluators. On the one hand, there is a view that although the 'externally conducted' evaluations are likely to be taken seriously they may not necessarily be found relevant or applicable given the fact that the evaluator may not be familiar with the context of the organisation (Mackay, 2007). As a result, the evaluation information may not be used nor taken up. On the other hand, there is also a view that evaluations that are conducted internally are likely to be owned (by respective organisations), although they may not necessarily be of good quality, which can also undermine the use thereof. Hence, a hybrid of the above-mentioned two practices where, external evaluators are commissioned to conduct evaluations but the questions of evaluations are determined by the owners of the programme, and where owners of the programme also play an oversight role in the evaluation project is often now deployed to draw on the advantages of each of the two options (external evaluation and internal evaluation) (Patton, 2008).

Furthermore, it does not always follow that external evaluation results in high-quality evaluation product. A case in point, in some countries such as South Africa and Nepal, the quality of evaluations may be undermined by a procurement practice where departments are

required to contract the lowest bidder (Dhakal, 2014: 55). It is important to note that not all lowest bidders are capable of producing quality work. Secondly, being an external evaluator does not always guarantee that they are free from pressure to write findings in a certain way given the 'politics of stomach'. The question is to what extent are external evaluators willing to 'tell truth to power' even if it means losing on the next tender.

The timing of an evaluation also plays a role in whether it is worth to be used. Mackay (2007) posits that an evaluation is likely to be used if it is made available at a time when decision-makers are looking for such information. The timing of evaluation involves an alignment of "*the timing, scope, and focus of the evaluations with the timing, scope and focus of the programme to be evaluated*" (Independent Evaluation Office & International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, 2015: 84). This means that in addition to the timing of evaluation, the evaluation ought to include answers to the right questions. Simply put, an evaluation that poses and answers an irrelevant question would not be used.

The location and/or identity of the coordinating department have a bearing on the utilisation of evaluation (Gaarder & Briceño, 2010). A case in point, if the coordinating department is located within the office of a president or prime minister, both the evaluation system and evaluations are likely to be taken seriously and, thus be accepted. The same applies when the coordinating department happens to be the treasury. By virtue of it being a department with a national purse or the department bearing the face of a president or prime minister they have an inherent power to foster the adoption of recommendations and, thus the utilisation of evaluation (Gaarder & Briceño, 2010).

Lastly, the role played by a coordinating department and/or departmental evaluation unit is also a factor in the utilisation of evaluation. This may involve the skills to communicate and market evaluation findings and recommendations. Mackay (2007: 106-107) warns that it is not enough for evaluators to just produce "*competent evaluation reports … and mailing out the evaluation report to a long list of names and addresses"*. He implores evaluators to 'sell' their evaluation findings and recommendations to enhance the use.

## 4.4 The policy process of establishing an evaluation system

Just as it is widely accepted that there is no single form of the evaluation system, it also stands to reason that there is no template that dictates the process steps of establishing an evaluation system (Mackay, 2007). This is owing to country-specific factors that are associated with the capacity to demand and supply evaluation and, most importantly, the politics of policy-making (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). However, although there is no template for establishing an evaluation system, most evaluation systems subscribe to the following broad policy-making process, albeit called by different names (Birkland, 2007; Morse & Struyk, 2006; Pűlzl & Treib, 2007; Sidney, 2007):

i. Agenda-setting (Defining policy issue)
ii. Policy formulation (Identifying, evaluating and comparing alternative policies)
iii. Policy adoption
iv. Policy implementation
v. Policy assessment

Within each of this policy phase, there is a range of policy research and policy analysis activities that occur, namely problem structuring, forecasting, recommendation, monitoring, and evaluation (Dunn, 1994).

### Agenda-Setting

Agenda-setting is a process of bringing a policy issue to the attention of decision-makers (Birkland, 2007). During this stage policy analysts or researchers also help decision-makers by conducting what is known (in the policy world) as problem structuring or problem definition (Dunn, 1994). Problem structuring refers to a process of verifying, defining and establishing a policy issue (Gumede, 2015).

In the fraternity of evaluation system, the problem structuring is often referred to as the diagnosis of a county's evaluation situation. It involves an assessment of a country's capacity to demand evaluation, capacity to supply evaluation, capacity to use evaluation, and the enabling environment (Haarich, 2008; Mackay, 2007; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). It provides information on the existing strengths and weaknesses as well as

opportunities and challenges to developing an evaluation system (Mackay, 2007; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). The information that comes out of the diagnosis is used to tailor efforts that address the country-specific factors in establishing the evaluation system (Haarich, 2008). Diagnosis, therefore, serves as an important basis for preparing an action plan for establishing the system.

Problem structuring or definition also includes an analysis of potential policy actors or what is commonly known as stakeholder analysis (Morse & Struyk, 2006). This includes (but not limited to) an identification of key stakeholders, their understanding of a policy issue as well as their interests. This type of information would help policy practitioners in conducting stakeholder dialogue and advocacy work to ensure buy-in from stakeholders and to ensure political will from both political principals and government decision makers (Birkland, 2005). In the context of the evaluation system, this takes a champion ministry to conduct stakeholder dialogue sessions to articulate and lobby for an evaluation system with relevant stakeholders (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). It also involves conducting awareness raising sessions to 'educate' both the implementing departments and oversight agencies such as parliament and the treasury department about the role and the value of evaluation in decision-making and policy-making in general (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone, 2015; Mackay, 2007). Awareness raising sessions are also intended to allay fear of evaluation especially from implementing departments who often hold the perception that evaluation system is intended to police and punish poorly performing departments (Goldman, Ntakumba & Jacob, 2013). Convincing stakeholders of the value of evaluation is a crucial precondition for generating demand for evaluation.

**Policy formulation and adoption**

Policy formulation involves a process of identifying, assessing and comparing alternative policies according to pre-determined assessment criteria (Gumede, 2015). Policy assessment criteria may include budget, cost-benefit analysis, cost-effective analysis, political acceptability and legal requirements (Morse & Struyk, 2006).

Although the establishment process of most evaluation systems does not seem to conform to this policy stage to the book the role of international 'think-tank' organisations somewhat fulfils it. A case in point, the United Nations Evaluation Group and the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) (and other 'think-tank' organisations) assist with the policy formulation of most evaluation systems in the sense that they continually conduct studies on countries' evaluation system experience and share these experiences with countries that are intending to establish one (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa, 2015; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). In addition, aspirant countries would also augment these international studies by conducting their own study tours visiting countries that are considered to have the best evaluations systems (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation & Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development, 2011). Based on both the international best practice studies and study tour reports the aspirant countries would select or adopt policy options that best suit their local context among other assessment criteria. For example, some countries may decide to have government programmes evaluated by external service providers while others may prefer to have programmes evaluated internally (Gaarder & Briceño, 2010). Better still, others opt to have a hybrid of the two options (Kusek & Rist, 2004).

**Policy implementation**

Policy implementation involves a process of translating a policy-on-paper into a policy-in-practice (Gumede, 2015). It involves packaging the adopted policy instruments into an implementable programme plan as well as carrying out those planned activities that are intended to respond to a policy issue. The 'theory of change' or 'results chain' is the best tool for ensuring a relationship between planned activities, a policy issue, and a policy solution before the implementation takes place (United Nations Development Group. 2011). Policy-makers may also decide on the method of programme delivery (Morse & Struyk, 2006). That is, the policy may be implemented solely by the government or through government-private partnership.

One of the first activities for the implementation of an evaluation system is to establish a government department (coordinating department) that would manage the system (United

Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). The coordinating department is normally tasked to coordinate the process of institutionalising evaluation function across all government departments, and across all levels of government (Varone, Jacob & Winter, 2005). Put it differently, the coordinating department ensures that evaluation function is integrated into government-wide performance management practice. Inherent to the role of the coordinating department would be the development of evaluation guidelines, evaluation norms and standards, and practice notes to ensure that the evaluation practice is standardised (Bustelo, 2006).

The implementation of an evaluation system would also take recruiting and/or training evaluators to conduct the evaluation as well as training programme staff to use evaluation findings (Mackay, 2007). In cases where programmes are evaluated by external evaluators, both internal evaluation officers and programme staff would be trained to know how to commission, oversee and manage evaluation studies.

It goes without saying that the implementation of an evaluation system involves actual evaluation of government programmes. Depending on the adopted model of the evaluation system, evaluations may be conducted either externally or internally (Mackay, 2007). As indicated above, some models of evaluation system adopt a hybrid of external and internal evaluations. Dhakal (2014) suggests that the implementation of the actual evaluations, be it external or internal, is best managed through a time-bound national and departmental evaluation plans. Most scholars posit that evaluation efforts are incomplete if there are no concerted efforts to ensure that evaluation findings are actually utilised (Independent Evaluation Office & International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, 2015). Various scholars suggest a range of incentives to foster the use of evaluation. One of the common incentives is to involve and to get government oversight bodies interested in the evaluations to ensure that evaluation recommendations are not ignored by implementing departments and/or political principals (Varone, Jacob & Winter, 2005).

Inherent in the above implementation activities is the provision of the budget for both the upkeep of evaluation system and evaluation studies (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Ideally, this should

be reflected in both the treasury allocations and departmental budget planning, not just in the budget planning of the coordinating department.

Related to the implementation of an evaluation system is also the question of sustainability. When evaluation practice (evaluation production and evaluation use) is embedded in a routine government-wide performance management practice, the system can be said to be sustainable (Mackay, 2007; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). In other words, when evaluations are both produced and utilised through permanent arrangements (Leeuw & Furubo, 2008).

The sustainability of evaluation also requires keeping stakeholders, particularly implementing departments, motivated to do their part in the system especially when the evaluation system is still young. Some scholars have suggested a variety of incentives that can be used to keep stakeholders actively involved in the system (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). For example, a treasury department can make an evaluation evidence a requirement for programme funding decision.

It also involves conducting constant dialogue and awareness raising sessions with stakeholders especially given the constant change of government administration. It is important to note that the implementation of most public policies (including evaluation system) usually outlasts the government administration that developed such policies (Gaarder & Briceño, 2010; Mackay, 2007). The change of government administration or even a government minister can either strengthen or undermine an evaluation system. Thus, the coordinating department would have to secure a buy-in of every new political principal almost always after every election and whenever there is a new appointment of a political principal.

**Policy assessment**

Policy assessment involves a process of monitoring and evaluating the implementation and the effects of a policy (Morse & Struyk, 2006). The concepts of monitoring and evaluation are already defined and distinguished above. Although policy assessment may be construed to be separate from implementation, the actual monitoring and some forms of evaluation take

place throughout the implementation of the policy (Dunn, 1994). Likewise, most scholars appreciate the fact that monitoring and evaluation should take place throughout the process of establishing evaluation system (Haarich, 2008; Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). Regular mid-course evaluations seek to answer questions about what is working, what is not, and why, with an objective of identifying implementation gaps and to inform possible mid-course corrections (Gumede, 2015). Regular mid-course evaluation of the system also provides an opportunity to review the status quo of all four components of the evaluation system on a regular basis, namely, the demand for evaluation, the supply of evaluation, the use of evaluation and the enabling environment for the evaluation. This way, the coordinating department is able to notice when the demand for evaluation, for example, is going down and/or when the evaluations are not used.

## 4.5 A synoptic analysis of the establishment of the South African Evaluation System

This section provides a synoptic analysis of the establishment of the South African national evaluation system. The analysis is packaged according to policy phases, namely, agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, and policy implementation, but in the context of the conceptual framework for the study as well. It is important to note that the final phase of the policy-making process, namely policy assessment (which comprises monitoring, evaluation, and review) could not be included in this analysis because the system (South African national evaluation system) was at the implementation stage of a policy, at the writing of this report.

### Agenda setting

As indicated above, agenda setting usually becomes a contested area by various policy actors with different and, often conflicting interests (Morse & Struyk, 2006). Similarly, with regard to the institutionalisation of the national evaluation system in South Africa, a number of policy actors participated in the setting of the agenda, that is, international development organisations, civil society, South African government (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation & Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development, 2011;

Mouton, 2010). The gist of their participation in the agenda-setting was the advocacy for government accountability (Mouton, 2010).

There is a consensus amongst both evaluation scholars and evaluation practitioners that the need for evaluation practice was first brought to South Africa through the international donor funding activities and, thus occurred from the bottom up (Mouton, 2010: i). International development organisations such as the World Bank would fund development programmes both outside and inside government sector and attach a condition that such programmes be evaluated in order to make sure that their funding is accounted for (Mouton, 2010). This donor funding conditionality created the demand on South African government to start conducting evaluations especially on those programmes that are funded by international donors. The pressure for accountability was amplified by the international development organisations' (such as the United Nations Development Group) advocacy for effective performance management reforms such as the new public management, evidence-based policy-making and results-based management models – accountability mechanisms of which evaluation function was one (Cloete, 2009; Mackay, 2007; United Nations Development Group, 2011).

In 2005 the South African government is seen to be responding to this pressure by establishing the Government-Wide Monitoring & Evaluation Framework (Presidency, 2007). This framework was supposed to incorporate both the monitoring system and evaluation system. However, the framework was focused more on establishing the performance monitoring system than evaluation system (Engela & Ajam, 2010). This is probably due to the fact that South African government was not ready for such a complex function. As a result, the demand for evaluation function as an accountability tool continued to build up.

In addition to the international pressure from development organisations, the pressure from the local policy actors started to build up as well. The pressure was mainly registered in the form of service delivery protests and loss of some political support for the African National Congress (ANC) in 2009 elections (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014). This pressure translated into a desire by key policy actors such as the ANC, the Cabinet and the parliament portfolio committees "*to get early warning of problems, to understand what was*

*going wrong, and how it could be corrected"* something that the monitoring system alone could not provide (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014: 3-4). It would appear that service delivery protests and loss of some political support in 2009 elections broke the Camel's back (so to speak) when it comes to government accepting this function. The government's reluctance to introduce evaluation function could be attributed to the fact that no government wants its issues to be exposed (Mackay, 2007). It takes a paradigm shift for any government to see that the value for evaluation outweighs the costs of covering up problems.

**Policy formulation**

The presence of international development organisations again dominated the policy formulation stage of the institutionalisation of the evaluation system. A case in point, the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank and the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) influenced the policy formulation through its inherent role of building capacity and documenting countries' evaluation system experience and sharing these experiences with client countries as accounted below:

> *"There was a discussion around lessons from different [countries'] M&E [evaluation function] experience, and possibly [the] support the World Bank could provide South Africa"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation & Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development, 2011: iv).

Furthermore, other international donors such as the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), '*Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit'* (*GIZ*)[8] and Canada International Development Agency (CIDA) are also said to have been central in formulating the policy in terms of both developing and piloting the system as recollected below:

> *"While the system is domestically driven and primarily domestically resourced, some donor support has enabled the system to develop much more quickly… Support from*

8 GIZ or German Corporation for International Cooperation in English is a German organisation that specialises in international development.

*the DFID, GIZ, and CIDA has also been important in helping to develop and pilot new systems"* (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014: 12).

The South African government, on the other hand, took a 'back-seat position' during this policy stage since it relied on international 'best practices' suggested by the international development organisations as outlined above. This gave these international development organisations a 'free-run' in terms of influencing how South African national evaluation system is formulated. Since the national evaluation system is a procedural policy the citizens were not interested in how it is formulated.

**Decision-making**

Although the South African government took a back-seat position in terms of influencing the policy formulation, the decision to choose the policy option for the institutionalisation of the national evaluation system still rested with the South African government, and specifically, the Presidency (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). To this effect, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (now called the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation) was established in 2011, whose task was to institutionalise the national evaluation system, among others (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014a). In 2014, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation was merged with the National Planning Commission to create Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (still DPME) to take care of both national government planning and monitoring and evaluation (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya, & Leon, 2014). The decision was also made to move the performance monitoring function from the National Treasury to the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), the move, which many scholars interpreted as government's effort to balance the perceived over-concentration of power in National Treasury through performance monitoring (Mouton, 2010; Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014). It was intended to minimise "turf battles" between departments with somewhat overlapping mandates of government performance oversight.

Although the international development organisations did not have the power to decide on the policy option, they have, in actual fact, influenced the decision indirectly given the fact

that they have dominated policy formulation stage as 'think tanks'. The cabinet's decision to establish the DPME (and to outline its mandate) was based on the 'best practice' studies, which were mainly led by these international development organisations (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011a; Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014a).

**Implementation**

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation is central to this policy stage by virtue of it being a coordinating department to coordinate the implementation of the evaluation system in government (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). It (DPME) has developed a plan for institutionalising evaluation practice in government, which comprises the following activities, among others (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011):

1. DPME to develop evaluation guidelines, practice notes and norms and standards,
2. DPME to develop rolling three year and annual national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments,
3. DPME to implement the national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments,
4. DPME to conduct and/or facilitate capacity building to equip aspiring evaluators in partnership with other skills development institutions such as PALAM (now called School of Government), universities, research service providers, South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) and other capacity development organisations,
5. DPME to ensure quality assurance of evaluation processes and products,
6. DPME to facilitate sustainable demand for and use of evaluation,
7. Departments to develop and implement the departmental evaluation plans,
8. Departments to ensure that there is an evaluation budget for all programmes,
9. Departments to establish Evaluation Units with required skills to conduct evaluations,
10. Departments to ensure that the results of evaluations are used to inform decision-making, and

11. National Treasury to ensure the government annual performance plans and budgets are informed by evidence, including evaluation reports.

In addition to coordinating evaluations at national level (through the National Evaluation Plan), DPME has introduced a requirement (in the form of MPAT Evaluation Standard), which require government departments to establish their own departmental evaluation systems, using the national evaluation system as a prototype Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a). The requirement to establish departmental evaluation systems is fostered through the DPME's Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT), which is a tool *"to assess the quality of management practices in departments in four management performance, namely, Strategic Management, Governance and Accountability, Human Resource Systems and Financial Management"* (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a: 1). The purpose of introducing the requirement to establish departmental evaluation systems (as part of MPAT standards) is *"to widen the use of evaluation, promote the culture of evaluation and to initiate steps to institutionalise the evaluation function in government"* (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a: 1). The MPAT Evaluation Standard consists of the following elements, which, according to the DPME, constitute a 'blueprint' for a departmental evaluation system (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016d: 10-11):

i. *"Department has planned capacity to manage/conduct evaluation projects,*
ii. *Relevant staff is in place,*
iii. *Department has approved or adopted guidelines that follow the national evaluation system,*
iv. *A multi-year evaluation plan that follows the national evaluation system,*
v. *Department has undertaken at least 1 evaluation of a major programme, policy, plan, project or system in the previous 2 years, or is currently undertaking one,*
vi. *Each evaluation has a steering committee ensuring effective oversight of the evaluation process,*
vii. *Each completed evaluation has an approved management response and improvement plan, and*
viii. *Departmental evaluations are made public on departmental websites".*

However, according to Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya and Leon (2014), the role of institutionalising evaluation system is proving to be more challenging than expected. This is partly due to the negative attitude by some government departments towards the evaluation function. A case in point, the survey which was conducted by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in 2012 (amongst national and provincial departments) identified the following evaluation culture barriers in government departments:

i. *"Problems not treated as an opportunity for learning and improvement,*
ii. *M&E is seen as policing and a way of controlling staff, and*
iii. *Senior management does not champion M&E and honesty about performance"* (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2013a: 9).

The challenge of institutionalising the evaluation system in South Africa is also attributed to "turf battles" between departments, as well as differences in views on the best approach to institutionalise evaluation system (Engela & Ajam, as cited in Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014). This seems to suggest that the formulation of this policy relied more on evidence-based policy-making (using international best practice studies) and overlooked the value of inter-governmental consultations. It would appear that not all departments were adequately consulted in developing the approach to institutionalise evaluation system. The potential resistance to evaluation system by government departments threatens the uptake of the system (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone, 2015).

# 5 Chapter 5: Discussion of Research Findings

This section presents the empirical findings of the study. The packaging of the findings is instructed by an interplay of the framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government, the key research questions, and the conceptual framework, as reflected by table 4 (framework for data analysis and packaging of findings) below. Put differently, this section attempts to discuss and provide some answers on the extent to which the framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government is being implemented. The discussion is guided by the key research questions and in the context of the conceptual framework for the study.

| Framework for Data Analysis and Packaging of Findings | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **DPME's framework for institutionalising evaluation practice** | **Key Research Questions** | | **Themes in the report** |
| 1. Presidency to establish a coordinating department (DPME)<br>2. DPME to develop evaluation guidelines, practice notes and norms and standards,<br>3. DPME to develop rolling three year and annual national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments<br>4. DPME to implement the national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments<br>5. DPME to conduct and/or facilitate capacity building to equip aspiring evaluators in partnership with other skills development institutions such as PALAM (now called School of Government), universities, research service providers, South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) and other capacity development organisations<br>6. DPME to ensure quality assurance of evaluation processes and products<br>7. DPME to facilitate sustainable demand for and use of evaluation | 1. How is the implementation of the national evaluation system faring against the benchmarks outlined in the National Evaluation Policy Framework? **(Relates to activity 1-7 of the DPME'S Framework)** | Theoretical Framework for the Study: Hybrid of the Rational Choice Model (Evidence-Based Policy-making) and the Political System Model | 5.1.1 Establishment of a coordinating department for the evaluation system<br>5.1.2 Development of evaluation policy guidelines<br>5.1.3 Development and implementation of National Evaluation Plans<br>5.1.4 The capacity to conduct evaluations<br>5.1.5 Quality Assurance<br>**(The above themes were packaged to deal with activity 1-7 of the DPME's Framework and thus answer Key Research Question #1)** |
| 8. Departments to develop and implement the departmental evaluation plans<br>9. Departments to ensure that there is an evaluation budget for all programmes<br>10. Departments to establish Evaluation Units with required skills to conduct evaluations<br>11. Departments to ensure that the results of evaluations are used to inform decision-making | 2. What is the level of the uptake of the evaluation system in participating departments? **(Relates to activity 8-11 of the DPME'S Framework)** | | 5.2 The uptake of the evaluation system by line departments<br>5.2.1 Post-evaluation Improvement Plan<br>5.2.2 Departmental evaluation system<br>5.2.3 Factors that influence departments to take-up the evaluation system<br>**(The above themes were packaged to deal with activity 8-11 of the DPME's Framework and thus answer Key Research Question #2)** |
| | 3. What are the implementation successes and challenges the institutionalisation of the system is experiencing? **(Relates to all activities 1-11 in the DPME'S Framework)** | | These questions do not have a specific theme because they are inherent in the discussion of themes 5.1.1 to 5.2.3 |
| | 4. What are the lessons that are being drawn from these implementation challenges? **(Relates to all activities 1-11 in the DPME'S Framework)** | | |

Table 4: Framework for data analysis and packaging of finding

Furthermore, it is imperative to understand that the subject of this study is the South African national evaluation system, based on the experiences of two national departments (Department of Human Settlements and Department of Trade and Industry). The findings were packaged according to themes that address the key research questions (as shown in table 4 above) as opposed to the categories of participants, in an effort to protect the identity of participants. Reporting the findings according to the categories of participants (DPME officials, departmental officials, external evaluators) would reveal the identities of participants (through their responses) since the researcher interviewed only a few officials per department (e.g. two officials per department – one programme official, and one M&E official) (see table 5 below on the sample structure). Furthermore, the majority of participants consented to be interviewed on condition that their identities are kept confidential (see section 2.6 of the report on Research Ethics). Babbie (2008: 439) had this to say in emphasising the need to protect the identity of research participants:

> *"[…] qualitative research makes protecting subjects' privacy particularly important [because] a researcher will often analyse and report data collected from identifiable individuals. Throughout the book, I have indicated the importance of not revealing what we learn about subjects, as in the case of data collection. When writing up the results of your analyses, you will often need to make concerted efforts to conceal identities. […] Sometimes, you may need to suppress details [quotes] that […] would give away a subject's identity. The key principle is to respect the privacy of those we study".*

Nonetheless, this report has attempted to organise themes in a funnel approach from generalities of the evaluation system to specific experiences of the selected departments. The first key research question allows for generalities of the evaluation system while the second key research question requires the report to deal with specific experiences of the selected departments. Questions three and four in the table seek clarification on the results achieved in the drive to institutionalise the evaluation system and possible points for particular consideration going forward. Findings on these aspects for both the DPME and the specific departments are thus identified and incorporated in the two respective sections outlined above.

Although the research methodology (including the case selection or sampling method) employed for this study was described in detail in Chapter 2, it is worth stating, here, that the data was collected through a combination of document review and semi-structured interviews with selected participants. The table below provides a snapshot of officials who were selected to participate in the study.

| Sample Structure | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Segments of Key Informants** | **Number of Key Informants** | **Total** |
| DPME officials | 4 Directors and 2 M&E Officers | 6 |
| Trade and Industry | 1 Programme Official and 1 M&E Official | 2 |
| Human Settlements | 1 Programme Official and 1 M&E Official | 2 |
| Service providers[9] | 2[10] x 1 External Evaluator | 2 |
| **Total** | | **12** |

Table 5: Sample Structure B

### 5.1 Framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government

As stated above, the discussion of the research findings talks to the below-listed activities, which constitutes a framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011):

1. Presidency to establish a coordinating department (DPME),
2. DPME to develop evaluation guidelines, practice notes and norms and standards,
3. DPME to develop rolling three year and annual national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments,
4. DPME to implement the national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments,
5. DPME to conduct and/or facilitate capacity building to equip aspiring evaluators in partnership with other skills development institutions such as PALAM (now called School of Government), universities, research service providers, South African

9 External evaluators are those who were responsible for evaluating the programmes of selected departments.
10 This number represents the number of evaluations of programmes from two selected departments (one evaluation per department).

Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) and other capacity development organisations,

6. DPME to ensure quality assurance of evaluation processes and products,
7. DPME to facilitate sustainable demand for and use of evaluation,
8. Departments to develop and implement the departmental evaluation plans,
9. Departments to ensure that there is an evaluation budget for all programmes,
10. Departments to establish Evaluation Units with required skills to conduct evaluations, and
11. Departments to ensure that the results of evaluations are used to inform decision-making.

However, it is important to note that the Policy Framework does not map-out the theory of change for the above-listed framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government. This is a surprising finding given the fact that DPME emphasises the fact that all programmes should ideally have a theory of change (I. Goldman, personal communication, 22 September 2004). Nonetheless, this framework is to be cascaded down to provincial and local government level. However, the focus of this study was at national level, with specific reference to two departments, namely, the Department of Human Settlements and Department of Trade and Industry.

### 5.1.1 Establishment of a coordinating department for the evaluation system

As a coordinating department, the DPME was established to coordinate the implementation of the framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government, as noted above. DPME was established in 2010 to coordinate[11] the process of developing and institutionalising the evaluation system among other systems (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). In 2014, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation was merged with the National Planning Commission to create Department of Planning,

11 To be specific, the process of developing and institutionalising the evaluation system is led by the Evaluation and Research Unit within the DPME and supported by a cross-government Evaluation Technical Working Group. This group is made of national departments with evaluation capacity as well as the Public Service Commission, Department of Public Service and Administration, National Treasury and the Auditor General (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011).

Monitoring and Evaluation (still DPME) to take care of both national government planning and monitoring and evaluation (Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya, & Leon, 2014). However, the study found that not all line departments understand and/or appreciate the role of DPME as a coordinating department for the national evaluation system, as reflected by a quote below:

> *Some departments perceive the role of DPME as a threat to their territory; they feel that the evaluation system is a discreet way of DPME to superimpose itself on other departments.* **(Participant 03)**

> *The department also feels that it is better if these evaluations are done by the department itself or commissioned by the department because in some sections of the department there is the feeling that the evaluations that are being driven from there [DPME] are about catching out the departments on its inefficiencies and then they don't become objective enough.* ***(Participant 10)***

This seems to suggest that the inter-governmental consultations between DPME and line departments were not adequate in terms of either coverage or dosage, if not both. Be that as it may, as shown in Chapter 3, these perceptions affect the attitude of line departments to participate (in good faith) in the evaluations system.

### 5.1.2 Development of evaluation policy guidelines

One of the key activities towards the institutionalisation of the evaluation practice in government was the development of the National Evaluation Policy Framework, which was approved by Cabinet in 2011 (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014a). The DPME has also developed various types of evaluation guidelines and templates to ensure the standardisation of the practice of evaluation across all government departments. Since 2011, it has developed 24 guidelines document including templates (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016c). In addition to guidelines, the DPME has also developed evaluation standards to ensure quality assurance of evaluations (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014a). Generally, the participants

(in the study) from both the selected departments[12] had positive remarks about DPME's effort to develop evaluation guidelines, as reflected by quotes below:

> *I think for me it is still difficult to find a way that they can improve because what they are trying to sell to us is: 'please use our tools even if your evaluations are not in the national evaluation plan'. So their tools for me are good and they keep on trying to improve them […] So I don't think they can do more.* ***(Participant 09)***

> *I think we are the ones who have learned most from them. For instances, the steering committee and the technical committee would have the terms of reference and in our own evaluation, we would not have the terms of reference. So, that, we learned from them.* ***(Participant 10)***

### 5.1.3 Development and implementation of National Evaluation Plans

Following the approval of the National Evaluation Policy Framework, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation has also started to develop and implement the National Evaluation Plans (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014a). The plans consist of the list of strategic evaluations that are to be conducted each year. The evaluations in the National Evaluation Plans are registered and implemented in partnerships with custodian departments. The first National Evaluation Plan was in 2012, and since then, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation has developed and implemented six National Evaluation Plans (2012/13, 2013/4, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17 & 2017/18). Collectively, these plans currently encompass 65 evaluation projects that are either at a planning stage, underway, completed, deferred, delayed or abandoned (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016c). Figure 2 below portrays the number of evaluation projects registered per plan[13].

12 Department of Human Settlements and Department of Trade and Industry.

13 It is important to note that the number of evaluation projects registered per plan does not necessarily reflect the number of evaluations carried out in that particular year since some of these were dropped and/or deferred during the course of the year. Nevertheless, it still reflects the DPME's workload per year because DPME officials would still have worked on those projects until they were stopped and/or deferred.

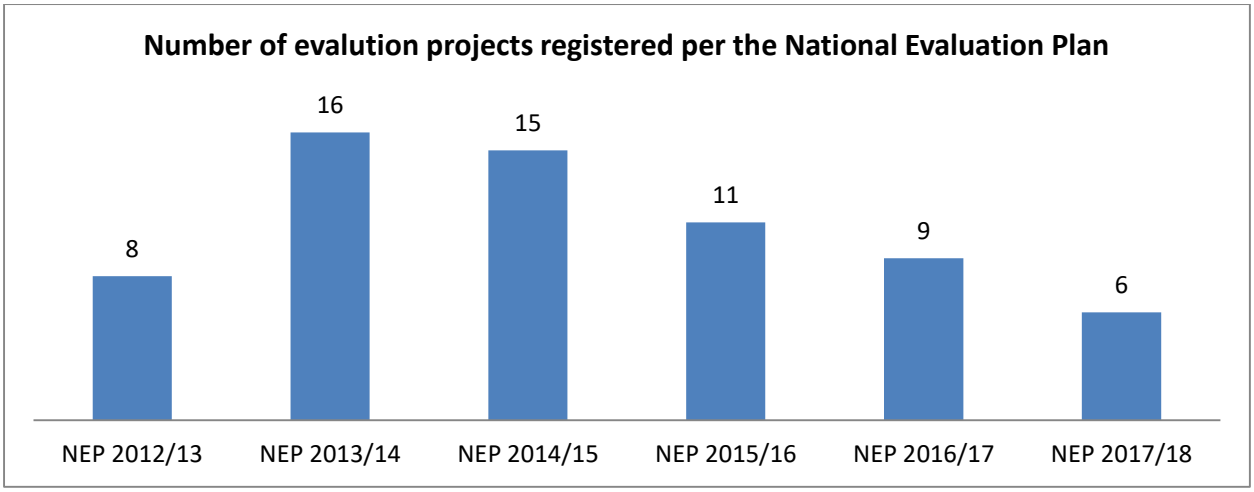



Figure 2: Number of Evaluations per the National Evaluation Plan

Figure 2 above portrays the volume of evaluations that the DPME handles each year. It shows that the volume of evaluation has taken a downward trend since 2013/14. The downward trend is attributed to two mains reasons.

Firstly, it is attributed to DPME's shift of focus from coordinating evaluation projects from the national centre (through the National Evaluation Plans) to actually rolling (cascading down) the system to individual national departments and provincial governments, as reflected by quotes below:

> *We started with one evaluation as a pilot, and then we said let's just do eight evaluations. The feeling was that let's start small...let's just learn...it was still pilot phase…the first evaluation plan. But later on, the feeling was that let's increase the pool of these evaluations. By then we have recruited some more directors...eventually we have four directors. Then we just decided to do 15 evaluations in 2013/14. Thereafter, we said let's pilot the provincial evaluations because we were thinking that, later on, this must expand also to provinces. So we piloted with Gauteng and Western Cape provinces. So because of that expansion and the fact that directors should also oversee what the provinces are doing in terms of establishing their own evaluation system, the feeling was that 15 evaluations in the NEP [National Evaluation Plan] would be too much. But then, in 2014/15 we still had 15 again because we had not rolled them out [provincial expansion]. I think it is only in 2015/16 where we started to reduce the number of evaluation because provinces were also developing their*

*plans. Partly that was the reason why we reduced the number of evaluations.* **(Participant 02)**

*This was a plan all along. We had planned that we would do many evaluations in the beginning, and in the later years we would have fewer evaluations but more system-wide support - that means helping other people to do evaluations.* **(Participant 01)**

Secondly, the downward trend is attributed to a slow turnaround time from registration of an evaluation (in the NEP) to a submission of an improvement plan. When evaluations are not processed within the planned turnaround time, they are likely to crowd out the new evaluations that need to be registered. As a result, DPME had to create a space to clear the backlog of the evaluations in the system. Participants had the following to say about the issue of evaluation backlog and the need to clear it:

*But another reason was the problem of overlaps [of evaluation projects from one financial year to the next]. We were not completing some of these evaluations that were already in the National Evaluation Plans because of some challenges. So we wanted to unblock and make sure that we complete them, and we said let's reduce.* **(Participant 02)**

*The assumption was that by the end of the financial year, the ones [evaluation projects], which started at the beginning of financial year, you are already reporting them to Cabinet but the reality is that by the time the financial year ends, in most cases we are still at the heart of evaluation...and the new ones are coming in and it is just too much to manage.* **(Participant 06)**

Participants have identified a number of factors that contribute to delays in finalising evaluations within the specified timeframes. The first one has to do with the fact that DPME has too few Evaluation Directors to coordinate all evaluation projects that are in the National Evaluation Plans. In other words, they are inundated with too many evaluations projects to perform optimally. Participants had this to say regarding the number of Evaluation Directors versus their workload:

*"We [Evaluation Directors] are very few and we have too many projects. The structure of the unit [Evaluation and Research Unit] also just does not work because you got directors and you have got evaluation officers who are at level 8; there are no deputy directors [level 11-12] and assistant directors [level 9-10] to provide adequate support to directors [level 13]. So it is just impossible because you can't delegate to an evaluation officer to attend a meeting on your behalf, you can't delegate to an evaluation officer to be the only one who has read [studied] the report ...you have to have checked the report in quite a detail. So it is difficult when there is just too many [projects], you can't pour your heart into it when there is like ten projects that you are also working on at the same time.* **(Participant 03)**

*I think what you are beginning to see here in terms of the trend is that [DPME] is beginning to respond to the fact that we are seriously over-worked. I used to get an additional five evaluations per year; we are now down to getting two additional evaluations, which makes sense but then the quality of our work should go up, I would like to see that.* **(Participant 04)**

*I think the DPME's role and what they are trying to do is very ambitious. They are trying to do so much with a very small team.* ***(Participant 11)***

However, despite the high workload narrative, DPME Evaluation Directors also contribute to the delays in processing evaluations. A case in point, DPME Evaluation Directors sometimes do not prepare comments (evaluation reports) in time as reflected by a quote below:

*Let me also say...let me say...I want to be quite frank because a lot of what I have said is all directed to [others]. Sometimes we delay; I have delayed significantly on providing feedback on evaluation reports, and the reason is that I am managing so many evaluations already...I get these evaluation reports and I must read every single page of a 150-page report. I can only read it so fast. And if I [need] to do my job properly where am critically evaluating and providing feedback on the general coherence of that big document, the writing, the methodology, the technical aspects and the content of the report, don't tell me I can do that in three or four days; I can't...I cannot…I cannot...I cannot. It takes me, on average, three to four weeks to do that*

*properly with one big evaluation report because this is not the only thing that I will be doing.* ***(Participant 04)***

The delay that is caused by DPME Evaluation Directors in providing feedback is exacerbated by the fact they are required to read a report about a department of which they have limited knowledge, which contributes to a slow pace of studying the report. It is easier to quickly read something if one is already familiar with what they are reading. This view is exemplified by **participant 03's** view below:

*I have only worked with [these departments]. And I actually wanted my work to be structured that way because I did not want to be working on things that I have no interest in. Our technical competency is just one part of what we do. I will not be able to deal with SARS, for example; so I wouldn't work on things like taxation...I will not be able to add value.*

This view seems to suggest that an Evaluation Director would be more effective in managing the evaluations in the sector that they have a working knowledge and, thus interest. By this account, ideally, DPME should deploy Evaluation Directors to the sectors of which they have some working knowledge and experience.

The unavailability of the steering committee members to attend meetings and to perform some incidental work (such as perusing and approving documents) also contribute to the delay in finalising the evaluation project, as reflected by a quote below:

*At times you can't schedule a [steering committee] meeting, and this sometimes keeps dragging on, and it delays the evaluation. You ask the steering committee to comment [on the document] in preparation for a meeting; you come to a meeting and you find that people are not prepared - they have not read the report. And then maybe they will simply say give us another day [for a meeting], we want to go through the document or they will simply go with the flow but later on they will start making some comments that should have been made earlier.* **(Participant 02)**

*It takes too long to process evaluations because the process is laborious and too heavily consultative.* ***(Participant 04)***

The process of drafting the management response and drafting the improvement plan also affect the turnaround time for evaluation project (from registration to submission of the final report on improvement plan). The delays around management response and relates to government bureaucratic protocols that need to be followed in drafting a management response, as reflected by a quote below:

> *Most departments take a while in getting this done due to government bureaucratic process where a draft management response is circulated to a long hierarchical list of signatories before it [eventually] gets to a DG to sign and approve. It can take four months for the DG to sign. We have drafts, in one department, that are sitting unsigned since January this year [2016], and it is now December [2016]. We have reports that have been approved more than a year but still management response and improvement plan are yet to be signed.* **(Participant 04)**

On the other hand, the delays regarding the development of improvement plans relate to a passive attitude of departments towards the development of improvement plan and the reports thereof. There are a number of factors that could explain the passive attitude of government departments towards the development of improvement plan (see section 5.2 on the uptake of the system by departments).

Service providers (evaluators) are also said to contribute to the delay in finalising the evaluations. Participants indicated that the work of some service providers require multiple iterations, which sometimes take five or six drafts before the report can be accepted and approved.

The study also attempted to look at the type(s) of evaluations that are mostly conducted since the inception of the National Evaluation Plan as depicted in the paragraph below.

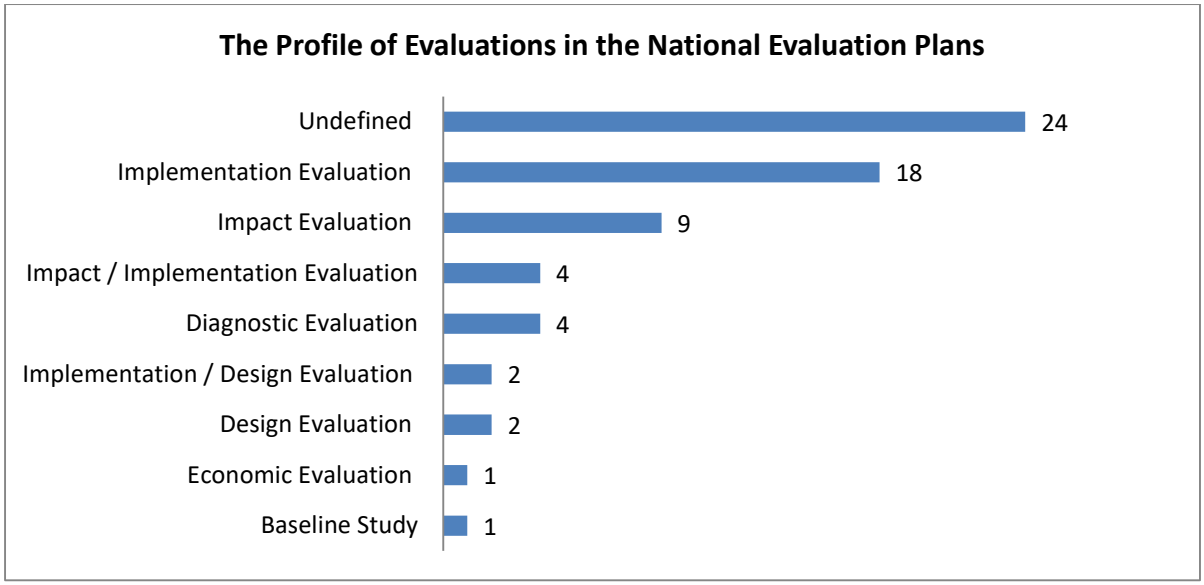



Figure 3: The Profile of Evaluations in the National Evaluation Plans (2012/13-2017/18)

Firstly, the document review found that (as depicted in figure 3 above) most of the evaluations in the National Evaluation Plans are undefined. In other words, it is not clear if these evaluations are implementation evaluations or impact evaluations for example. Nevertheless, apart from the undefined evaluations, the document review found that implementation evaluations have been the most registered type of evaluation followed by impact evaluations and diagnostic evaluations respectively. Although it is encouraging to notice that departments are also interested in diagnosing the problem it is concerning that only few design evaluations have been registered given the finding that most of the government programmes are poorly planned. One would imagine that this type of evaluation would be one of the most encouraged and/or prioritised evaluations in the National Evaluation Plan.

Since the inception of the National Evaluation Plan in 2012, 54% (25 out of 46) of national departments have participated (and/or currently participating) in the national evaluation plans. The figure 4 below depicts a structure of the national departments that have participated (and/or currently participating) in the national evaluation plans.

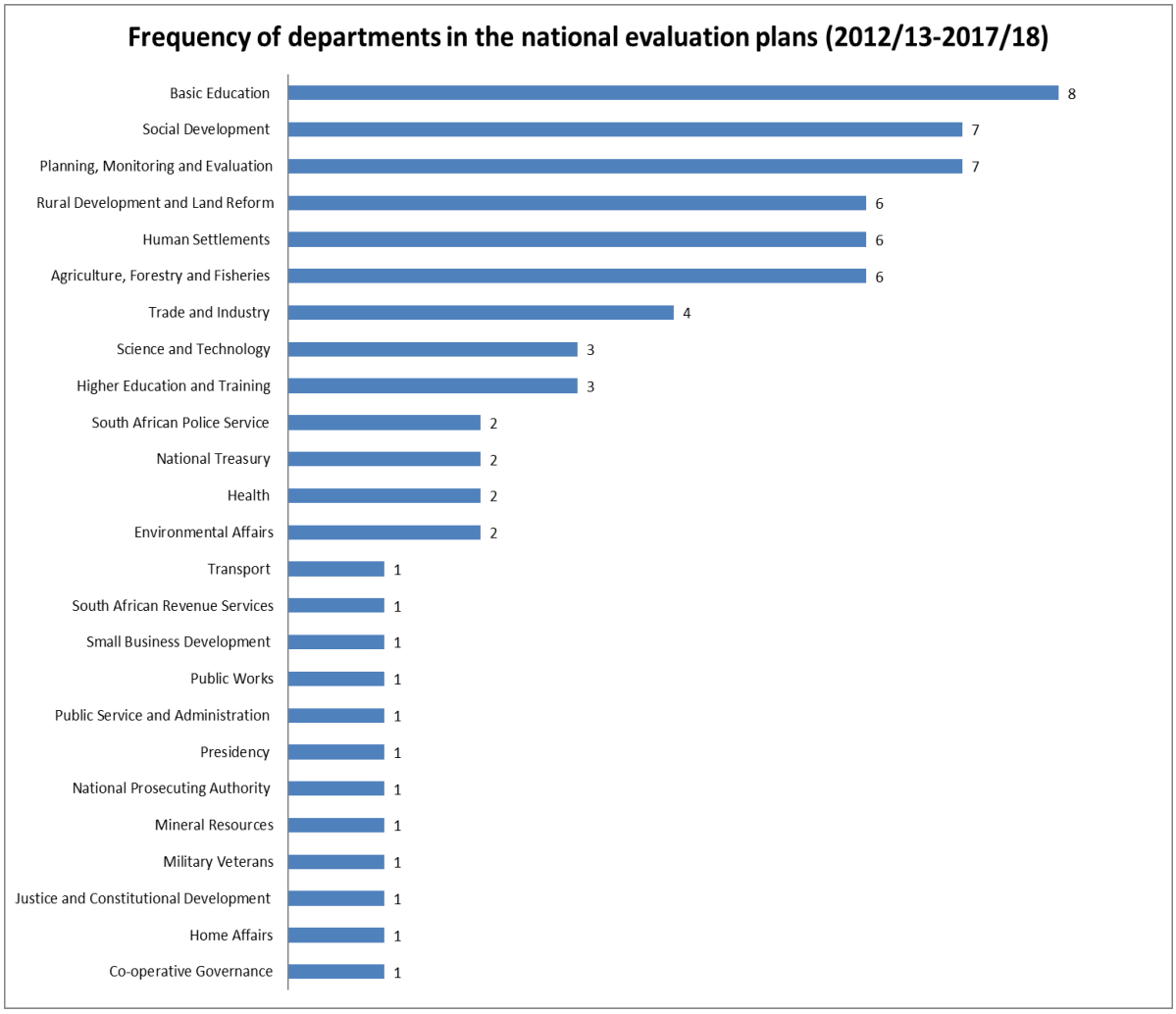



Figure 4: Frequency of Departments in the National Evaluation Plans (2012/13-2017/18)

The figure 4 above, shows that some departments such as Basic Education and Social Development are registering (or participate in) more evaluations as compared to other departments such as the departments of Health and Justice and Constitutional Development. The National Evaluation Policy Framework prioritises evaluations of the interventions that are linked to the top five of the 14 outcomes, that is, health, education, crime, rural development, and employment (Department of Performance and Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). However, the Department of Health, which is responsible for one of the top five priority areas (health) does not seem to be receiving priority focus (as compared to the Department of Basic Education, for example) in terms of the number of evaluations that are done through the National Evaluation Plan. This skewed picture would need to be addressed to ensure a balanced coverage of all priority areas. Furthermore, it would seem that as the system matures, a sound balance between the strategic focus and coverage of the system is

necessary, possibly, through the introduction of departmental evaluation system requirement (see section 5.2.2).

### 5.1.4 The capacity to conduct evaluations

The capacity of South Africa to conduct evaluations currently undermines the DPME's effort to institutionalise the evaluation system. In this report, the capacity to conduct evaluations is also looked at in terms of both the number of individuals who can perform the required tasks and the skills of those individuals. According to the participants in the study, the lack of capacity to conduct evaluations is observable in all tiers of the supply of evaluation, that is, DPME human resource, service providers (external evaluators), and government departments (internal evaluators).

#### 5.1.4.1 Competency of DPME Evaluation Directors

The competency of DPME Evaluation Directors is one of the critical areas of the capacity to conduct evaluation studies. Although DPME Evaluation Directors are not conducting evaluations themselves, they guide the evaluation process from the development of the terms of reference to the drafting of an evaluation report[14]. The evaluation report is as good as its terms of reference hence the competency of those who develop the terms of reference is also critical, as reflected by a quote below:

> *[…] if you don't have assurance and confidence that the correct approach and methodology were taken throughout the process leading to the product then you begin to question the validity of the findings, the conclusions and the recommendations emerging from that evaluations. You begin to ask yourself a question: can I trust this evaluation. Because if the whole process, the logic is flawed you cannot accept the conclusions and the recommendations in the end...you can't.* **(Participant 04)**

14 Save the management response, improvement plan as well as the report on the implementation of the improvement plan.

One of the advantages with the current team of DPME Evaluation Directors is that they are able to straddle both the evaluation space and the public sector policy space because they have both the evaluation knowledge and public sector knowledge, as reflected by the quote below:

> *[…] as evaluators themselves, they can speak the same language with evaluators but at the same time, they can speak the same language as government officials because they work in government. So that model is already quite useful.* **(Participant 03)**

However, there is also a view amongst some participants that that DPME Evaluation Directors are not adequately equipped (with knowledge and skills) to do all that they are required to do, as reflected by quotes below:

> *Most of them [DPME Evaluation Directors] are not solid enough on evaluations in my view. If you look at the quality of evaluations that are coming out of the evaluation system you would see that if the person directing the evaluation is not confident in evaluation they [tend to] make wrong calls and judgements. They make wrong decisions along the way about how to structure the TOR, what they want from the consultant [external evaluator], what must be contained in the key evaluation questions etc.* **(Participant 04)**

> *So I would say mainly it is because [DPME Evaluation Directors] lack project management skills. [As a DPME Evaluation Director] you can't operate as somebody who is just doing an evaluation because managing evaluation is not just about doing an evaluation. In fact, it is not even about doing an evaluation because the service providers are the ones who are doing evaluations. So in actual fact, a [DPME Evaluation Director] is a project manager, and so if he is operating in that space he needs to understand project management skills, he needs to marry it with whatever he studied as an evaluator...he needs to understand that, that skills of his, needs to be married or combined with the skills of project management for evaluation projects to run efficiently and effectively.* **(Participant 05)**

*Our technical competency is just one part of what we do. I will not be able to deal with SARS, for example; so I wouldn't work on things like taxation...I will not be able to add value.* **(Participant 03)**

From the above-mentioned knowledge and skills gap, one can deduce that DPME Evaluation Directors require a skill 'toolbox' that comprises the following knowledge areas:

i. Evaluation knowledge
ii. Project/programme management knowledge
iii. Sector knowledge

#### 5.1.4.2 The capacity of service providers

There is a general belief that the number of evaluation service providers in South Africa is too low. Furthermore, it is also believed that the profile of existing pool of evaluation service providers does not resemble the demographic profile of South Africa. The majority of the existing pool of evaluation service providers is stated (by the participants) to be mostly white. Participants had this to say about the capacity of evaluation service providers:

*[…] we have a low number of evaluators in terms of both the quantity and quality. There are very few people who are good professional evaluators.* ***(Participant 03)***

*[…] you have a few white people who can do evaluation; you don't have enough previously disadvantaged individuals who can do evaluation...and that is a challenge that needs to be addressed.* **(Participant 02)**

However, this author is not aware of any scientific national skills audit that supports this observation that there are a greater number of white than black professionals who can conduct evaluations. The assumption that there are more white evaluation professionals than black professionals seems to have influenced the demographic profile of the pre-qualified panel of service providers that the DPME established earlier in the system[15]. It is

15 Initially, the DPME was using a closed procurement system, which had a pre-selected panel of service providers from which to appoint a service provider.

said that majority of the members on the panel were white older males as reflected by the quote below:

> *The consultants who are in the panel are mostly white, and they are getting very rich of the system…and it shouldn't be like that because we are a state that supposed to be facilitating transformation.* **(Participant 04)**

Furthermore, the assumption that there are more white evaluation professionals than black professionals created an impression that DPME prefers white evaluation professionals over professionals of other race, especial black professional. This observation is informed by the following remarks from the participants:

> *Most of the evaluations commissioned by DPME seem to be allocated to white consultants. Black consultants rarely get the work from DPME. When White consultants do not bid for work, and all the bidders are Black, the work is not allocated. It is re-advertised to get the "right" evaluators. DPME doesn't trust the work done by black consultants…if you want them to accept your work you should submit it through a white person and they will accept it. Even blacks who work in the DPME are brainwashed to believe that the work of a white person is better than the work of a black per*son*. My question is: whose capacity is DPME building if they only contract white people? What is their transformation agenda?* **(Participant 12)**

> *It advantages white consultants or white-owned consultant firm based on false assumption that they are more experienced than other racial groups when in fact they themselves are not great evaluators…they themselves do not know evaluation. Some people who got into the panel do not necessarily deserve to be there because they themselves are not great evaluators…they themselves don't know evaluation but they managed to get into the panel.* **(Participant 04)**

DPME seems to have noted the challenges associated with the pre-qualified panel hence it is now using the open-tender system. However, it is important to note that, doing away with the pre-qualified panel system will not insulate DPME from the accusation that it prefers white evaluation professionals to professionals of other races in the absence of more thorough research on this issue.

Inherent to the number of evaluation service providers is the question of skills of the existing pool of service providers. Participants from both DPME and sampled departments have indicated that most of evaluation service providers who are in the pre-qualified panel are not competent enough to conduct robust evaluations. Participants had the following to say regarding the evaluation skills of the service providers who are in the pre-qualified panel:

> *There are instances where you hire a service provider and you don't know how they made it but they scored well during the bid evaluation, and they were appointed but they don't know what they supposed to do. They can't design a questionnaire, they can't collect data, they can't write the report. In other instance, a service provider got appointed but when we requested them to produce the first document…the inception report, then we realised that the service provider is unable to provide what is required, and then he got fired; the tender had to be re-advertised.* ***(Participant 08)***

> *In South Africa, evaluation is just emerging, and as a result, very few people are actually evaluators by trade. Some policy analysists and researchers are doubling as evaluators.* ***(Participant 03)***

> *Most of these companies are not good in Theory of Change; they cannot produce a proper Log-Frame. It takes a lot of work to get them up to speed [whilst] they are charging full fees. So we are not getting the kind of value for money that we should be getting.* ***(Participant 06)***

#### 5.1.4.3 The capacity of government departments to conduct evaluations

In 2012, the DPME conducted an audit of evaluations competency in government and found that few departments have enough capacity to conduct evaluations (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2013a). In other words, the capacity to conduct evaluations across government departments is uneven, as reflected by a quote below:

> *In some departments, you get a team of M&E people and they are dedicated while in other departments you get only one person who has a planning function plus an evaluation function plus some other reporting function. That person only has 20% of*

*their time that they could spend on evaluation. So you can imagine...they know very little about evaluation but they have been given such function.* **(Participant 04)**

The study found that both of the sampled departments, DTI and DHS have the capacity to conduct evaluation studies. Both of these departments have been conducting evaluations even before the introduction of the national evaluation system, as reflected by quotes below:

*The good thing for us is that we have an M&E framework that guides all the M&E activities that are done in the department, we have an M&E unit, we have the Departmental Evaluation Plan, we have been conducting evaluations even before the DPME was put in place. The only new thing that came about for us was the management response and improvement plan. We had them but not in a structured way that this evaluation system is putting forth.* **(Participant 08)**

*Before the introduction of the national evaluation system, we would do evaluation ourselves…I think there is capacity here because there is M&E unit, then there is the Policy unit in the incentive division…, then there is ERPC [Economic Research and Policy Coordination Unit], which I think, to a certain extent, they also do evaluation. So I think there is sufficient capacity.* **(Participant 09)**

From the above-mentioned responses, it is clear that both these departments have the capacity, in terms of the M&E units, to conduct evaluations; it is only the structure and the positioning of M&E units that still need to be addressed in both these departments (See a section on the uptake of the system by government departments). If the structure and the positioning of the M&E units were addressed in these departments, it would enhance the capacity of these departments to conduct evaluations and to uptake the evaluation system. However, the same cannot be said about those government departments that do not have M&E units. It is imperative to note that DPME is not (and cannot be) responsible for the establishment of M&E units in government departments save the issuance of the MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement that seeks to foster the establishment of the departmental evaluation systems, which includes the establishment of M&E units, among others.

The DPME has been conducting and/or coordinating a number of capacity-building initiatives (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016a). These involve 'learning-by-doing support' where departments' staff (whose evaluations are registered in the National Evaluation Plan) are involved in the development of Concept Notes as well as Terms of Reference, under the guidance of DPME evaluation directors. The 'learning-by-doing support' also involves a skills transfer condition, which DPME has created. One of the requirements in the evaluation terms of references is that service providers should develop a skills transfer plan, which outlines how they are planning to transfer their skills to junior evaluation officials, in the process of conducting an evaluation.

DPME also provides (through DPME-appointed service providers) a suite of short training courses (namely Managing and Commissioning Evaluations, Deepening Evaluation, and Evaluation Methodology) to departments' officials that are directly involved in the evaluations that are registered in the National Evaluation Plan. These short courses are meant to equip the staff to manage the evaluation throughout the evaluation cycle. The capacity-building programme also involves awareness raising sessions with both government senior managers and parliamentarians to develop their understanding of how evaluation can assist in their work, i.e., improving decision-making as well as an oversight (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014a). In addition, the DPME is also running a training course in Evidence-Based Policy-Making and Implementation, which is aimed at Directors General and Deputy Directors General. According to the Annual Report on National Evaluation System (2015/2016), *"the course has now been attended by around 140 participants from a range of government departments and sectors, including Education, Health, Human Settlements, Environmental Affairs, Justice and Constitutional Development, Public Service and Administration, Science and Technology, and Public Works"* (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016a: 29).

Participants from the sampled departments identified the 'learn-by-doing support' as the most helpful capacity building initiatives, as reflected by quotes below:

> *But with the introduction of National Evaluation Plan, once they have accepted your evaluation then you have got a team that is assigned to you to help you develop a Terms of Reference. They [DPME] organise seminars, and then you sit and have a*

*discussion around the conceptualisation of your evaluation project. So by the time that you actually sit and develop the Terms of Reference you have already had engagements and discussions with experts from all over the world. Previously we used to sit and write our own Terms of Reference (by ourselves). I would sit here and draft my own terms of reference and get it approved by my Chief Director, and then the DDG and the DG and then we would commission out the study. Its disadvantage is that it was a 'one person's thinking'; I would still get insights and advice from our Chief Director and DDG but it would still be a single line of thinking because we are in the same department and you are influenced by what you see here.* ***(Participant 08)***

*The notion of involving the service provider during the design clinics to develop the Terms of References is good because they [DPME] recognise that there are diverse skills from different people, not just the department sitting there developing the Terms of References.* ***(Participant 11)***

*The skills transfer affair was excellent because the lady who was a candidate for skills transfer was directly involved and the presentation that she gave to us as part of the service provider team showed that she has really gained the necessary skills from the process. So every time the steering committee met there would be a section on the agenda where she would have to present to us what have they done, where was she involved as a skills transfer candidate and what has she gained, which is what we are now doing as well.* **(Participant 10)**

However, these training initiatives are not designed into a measurable training programme with clear sets of outcomes. In other words, DPME does not have a structured capacity-building programme with its theory of change that paints a clear picture of the type of the evaluation capacity that DPME intends to achieve in five or ten years' time, for example. Training is not just for the sake of training; it should ideally have a measurable goal.

### 5.1.5 Quality Assurance

According to the National Evaluation Policy Framework (2011), DPME is also responsible for quality assuring evaluation processes and products. Various evaluation scholars posit that quality of evaluations enhances the likelihood of the use of those evaluations (Dhakal, 2014; Mackay, 2007). According to the National Evaluation Policy Framework (2011: 19), DPME had planned to implement the following activities to ensure quality assurance of evaluation processes and products:

i. *"Be involved in evaluations in the national evaluation plan, e.g. reviewing TORs, reviewing the methodology in proposals, being part of steering groups, reviewing; evaluation documents, ensuring that key systems are in place like steering groups*
ii. *Develop a national panel of evaluators;*
iii. *Ensure a set of competencies and standards for evaluators are developed and applied;*
iv. *Provide guidance through standardised procedures and practice notes; and*
v. *Undertake meta-evaluation of evaluations".*

DPME has, so far, implemented and continues to implement the above-mentioned activities geared towards ensuring quality assurance with the exception of the meta-evaluation of evaluations. A case in point, DPME has established a peer review process in which two peer reviewers[16] are appointed by DPME (in consultation with respective departments) to *"quality assure or review [evaluation] products submitted by service providers"* (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017b: 1). The peer reviewers review both the methodology and the content of the evaluation, preferably at appropriate stages of the evaluation process.

However, some participants indicated that although the concept of peer review is a noble practice, the DPME's peer review process has its own challenges. The challenges range from the timing of the peer review (in some cases) to the competency of peer reviewers, as reflected by quotes below:

16 One with knowledge of the sector concerned, and the other, a methodology expert in the type of methodology needed for the evaluation in question (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017: 3).

*But the challenge is that the methodological peer reviewer will come at the end of evaluation and start to ask questions that reflect issues in the Terms of Reference or on the evaluation design, and at that time the service provider cannot do anything...we are not going to resample. But it is an important process. We like the peer reviewer...some people may think we don't like peer reviewer because we don't want anyone to come and tell us we are not doing a good job but that is not the case...we want the peer reviewer to be checking but it needs to be at a logical point in time to make it is useful and valuable, and actionable. Reviewing the draft in relation to methodology and the Terms of Reference at the end of the report is completely unhelpful.* ***(Participant 11)***

*In terms of peer review for evaluations, the reviewers were only whites and some of their comments boarded on being personal attacks on us. Some of the peer reviewers were even allowed to tell us to go back and cite so and so. We felt there was a certain discourse that was being promoted and that discourse did not include the ideas/ contributions of Black academics. When we cited whoever/whatever they wanted, which appeared anti-government we were again told to remove it. Not all peer reviewers were biased and in fact, there are those that made useful inputs into the evaluation and we are grateful for these as they helped to shape the study. But some of the officials appeared so dependent on White consultants that they would not give their views unless they had consulted with their so-called "experts" who all happened to be White.* ***(Participant 12)***

*There are service providers who conduct quality assurance. However, we also have competency challenge in this area as well because the people conduct quality assurance are not competent in evaluation themselves.* ***(Participant 04)***

Furthermore, despite all these efforts, some participants (in the study) still pointed out that the quality of evaluations is still a challenge facing the evaluation system, as reflected by quotes below:

*Service providers are not writing good quality evaluations; report writing is generally their main weakness. Even the universities, when we appoint them, they produce very*

*poor reports. Most professors I have met [worked with] look like reasonable professors but in many cases, they also don't know evaluations. They are not evaluators but policy specialists, content specialists...and that generates so many problems.* ***(Participant 04)***

*I have also experienced that there were whole lot factual inconsistencies in the report, incorrect assumptions in their work [that the service provider made]. So we took back their report several times before we approved it.* ***(Participant 10)***

Results from evaluation quality assessments complement above observations. According to these assessment results, the average scores for both national and provincial evaluations was 3.47 (out of 5), which translates to 69% in percentage terms. Although this is promising, it shows that indeed the quality of evaluations is still low, considering the fact that these evaluations are intended to inform the decisions that affect billions of rand worth of programmes. It is worth repeating that the quality of evaluation influences the attitude of potential users to use such evaluation.

### 5.2 The uptake of the evaluation system by line departments

The study also sought to establish the extent of the uptake of the evaluation system by line departments based on the experiences of the selected two departments. The DPME has devised two key mechanisms of change to foster the uptake of both the evaluation evidence and the evaluation system by government departments, namely the post-evaluation improvement plan and the MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement that government departments should develop their own departmental evaluation system.

#### 5.2.1 Post-evaluation Improvement Plan

Once an evaluation is completed, departments that are responsible for implementing the programme under evaluation are required to study the report including recommendations and to draft a management response document (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). The purpose of the management response is to afford departments an

opportunity to indicate which recommendations they are in agreement with and which ones they do not agree with, and provide reasons for disagreement. The management response is submitted to DPME as coordinating department.

Once the management response is drafted and approved, departments responsible for implementing the evaluand[17] are required to draft an improvement plan, which outlines how they are going to implement the recommendations (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014c). They are also required to monitor implementation of the improvement plan and report to DPME every 6 months over a period of 2 years (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011; Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a). In turn, the DPME briefs Cabinet on the general progress on the implementation of National Evaluation Plan among others. The purpose of an improvement plan is to foster the use of evaluation findings and recommendations by the implementing departments to improve their programmes. It (Improvement plan) is, therefore, one of the best practices to foster and facilitate the evidence-based decision-making (and/or policy-making) practice in government departments. Some participants from the selected departments had the following to say, to register their appreciation of the usefulness of the practice of post-evaluation improvement plan:

> *The initiative of the management response is very good because it facilitates the participation of the top executive [DG and DDGs] in the uptake and use of evaluation findings. Before the introduction of the national evaluation system, we would do evaluation ourselves, and the evaluation report and its findings will just end up here at the level of Chief Directorate; it did not have the space for audience from the top executive. So the management response and improvement plan require the signature of the DG and therefore it forces top management to engage with the evaluation and recommendations and to support the implementation of the improvement plan.* ***(Participant 09)***

17 Evaluand refers to a programme or project under evaluation (Owen, 2007).

*[…] we have been conducting evaluations even before the DPME was put in place. The only new thing that came about for us was the management response and improvement plan.* **(Participant 08)**

In terms of the departments and/or the evaluation projects that were selected for the study, participants have cited few practical examples of the use of evaluation recommendations as a result of the introduction of improvement plan initiative, as reflected below:

*And for me, something that I won't forget is when the Minister relaunched the BPS[18] outsourcing scheme, based on the evaluation recommendations. The guideline, policy, strategy for BPS were revised based on the recommendations. So it was very good. Almost all the recommendations were taken into account.* ***(Participant 02)***

*[…] I mean immediately after that (evaluation) we commissioned the review of the BPS incentive. It was as a result of the evaluation of the BPS. We revise the incentives every 5 years but had the evaluation not happened we would revise the incentives in the older fashioned [way]. So it did help a lot. Most of the things that are in the revised BPS incentive emanated from what evaluation came up with.* ***(Participant 10)***

*We are now revising the legislation…we are now drafting the Human Settlements Act based on the findings and recommendations from these evaluations because these evaluations force them to say look at your programmes, here are the recommendations that are coming out...what are the changes that you are making.* ***(Participant 08)***

However, the notion of improvement plan is also fraught with its own challenges. The study found that the main challenge with post-evaluation improvement plans was the delays in drafting and developing the management response and improvement plans respectively, as reflected by a quote below:

*Most departments take a while in getting this done due to government bureaucratic process where a draft management response is circulated to a long hierarchical list of*

18 BPS stands for Business Process Services.

*signatories before it [eventually] gets to a DG to sign and approve. It can take four months for the DG to sign. We have drafts, in one department, that are sitting unsigned since January this year [2016], and it is now December [2016]. We have reports that have been approved more than a year but still management response and improvement plan are yet to be signed.* **(Participant 04)**

This observation is supported by the analysis of time lag (between the approval date of the evaluation report and the approval date of the improvement plan), which found that the time lag ranges from three months to 13 months, with an average of seven months (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016c). In term of the two evaluation projects[19] that were selected for the study the Department of Trade and Industry took 13 months (from the date on which the evaluation report was approved) to submit the approved Improvement Plan to DPME while the Department of Human Settlement was yet to submit the Improvement Plan (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016c).

The study also found that some programme managers within the selected departments are yet to understand the role and the value of post-evaluation improvement plans, as reflected by a quote below:

*The idea of improvement plan which is separate from the departmental plan…here they call it the burden of administration. We need to simplify the process.* ***(Participant 10)***

Finally, participants also indicated that DPME should move beyond just developing the improvement plan and monitoring the implementation thereof. It should begin to strive to map out the real impact or long-term value of this exercise, as reflected by quotes below:

*But we feel that maybe we need to strengthen the improvement plan system…the improvement plan mechanism. Maybe it is shallow because just to say well we have implemented this recommendation...So what? We should take it further, and say let's see the impact of the revised policy.* ***(Participant 02)***

19 Implementation Evaluation of Business Process Services Programme from Department of Trade and Industry, and Implementation Evaluation of Integrated Residential Development Programme from Department of Human Settlements (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014b: 5-6).

*The value of the evaluation is not the formal part of the management response and the improvement plans... that's not the value; the value is the learning and the insights and the deepening understanding of the policy issues and what is required to make things work better in government.* ***(Participant 04)***

These observations call for regular evaluation studies of the components (collectively or individually) of the national evaluation system. It also calls in to question, the evaluability of these improvement plans. Based on the author's review of the improvement plans, they do not seem to be prepared with a long-term impact evaluation in mind. Furthermore, the theories of change (including logical frameworks) do not seem to feature in the development of these plans.

### 5.2.2 Requirement for line departments to establish departmental evaluation systems

In addition to coordinating evaluations at the national level (through the National Evaluation Plan), DPME has introduced a requirement (in the form of MPAT Evaluation Standard), which require government departments to take-up the evaluation system (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a). In other words, government departments are expected to establish their own departmental evaluation systems, using the national evaluation system as a prototype. The requirement to establish departmental evaluation systems is fostered through the DPME's Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT), which is a tool *"to assess the quality of management practices in departments in four management performance, namely, Strategic Management, Governance and Accountability, Human Resource Systems and Financial Management"* (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a: 1). The purpose of introducing the requirement to establish departmental evaluation systems (as part of MPAT standards) is *"to widen the use of evaluation, promote the culture of evaluation and to initiate steps to institutionalise the evaluation function in government"* (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017a: 1).

The MPAT Evaluation Standard consists of four sequential levels as reflected in table 6 below (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016d: 10-11).

| ***Standards*** |
|---|
| ***Level 1***<br>• *Evaluation system in the department is not formalised and implemented.* |
| ***Level 2***<br>• *Department has planned capacity to manage/conduct evaluation projects.* |
| ***Level 2+***<br>• *Relevant staff is in place.*<br>• *Department has approved or adopted guidelines that follow the national evaluation system.* |
| ***Level 3***<br>• *A multi-year evaluation plan that follows the national evaluation system.* |
| ***Level 4***<br>• *Department has undertaken at least 1 evaluation of a major programme, policy, plan, project or system in the previous 2 years, or is currently undertaking one.*<br>• *Each evaluation has a steering committee ensuring effective oversight of the evaluation process.*<br>• *Each completed evaluation has an approved management response and improvement plan.*<br>• *Departmental evaluations are made public on departmental websites.* |

Table 6: MPAT Evaluation Standard

According to the DPME, the MPAT Evaluation Standard reflected in table 6 above, constitutes a 'blueprint' for a departmental evaluation system. However, it is important to note that although the above Evaluation Standard adequately addresses the need for government departments to establish the capacity to conduct evaluations it does not seem to cater for the need to generate demand for evaluation. There needs to be a balanced tension between the demand for evaluation (with an intention to use it) and the capacity to supply evaluation for an evaluation system to be sustainable (Porter & Goldman, 2013). The above Evaluation Standard should ideally incorporate a requirement for government departments to generate the demand for evaluation (with the intention to use it), which should come from programme managers, facilitated by heads of departments. This should ideally be in all programme managers' performance agreements.

Nevertheless, in 2015, DPME decided to pilot the MPAT Evaluation Standard (during the 2015 MPAT assessment cycle) to test the readiness of departments to establish their own departmental evaluation system (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation,

2017a). The 2015 MPAT assessment found that the evaluation system in many[20] departments is yet to be formalised and implemented, as reflected in figure 5 below (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015).

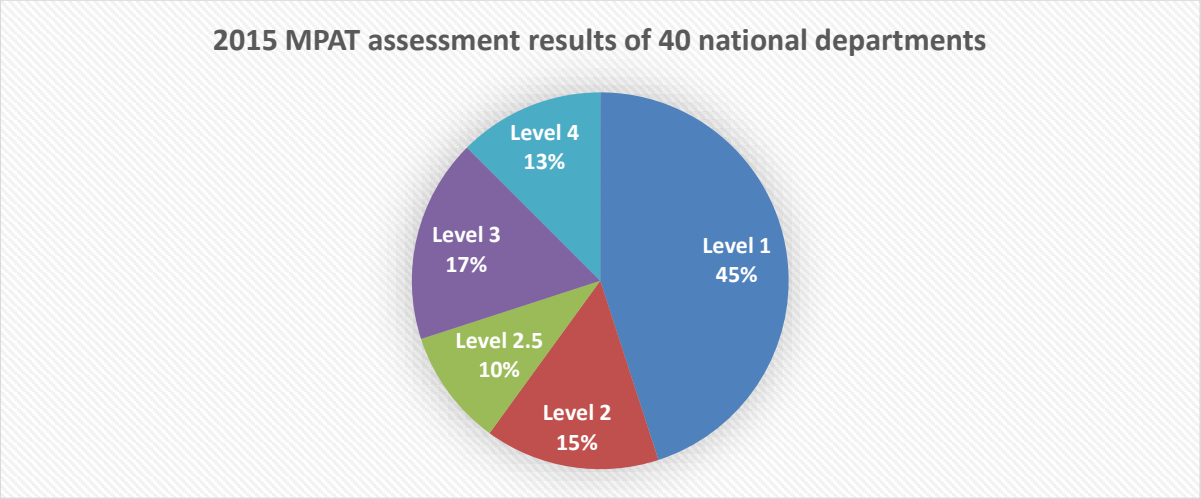



Figure 5: 2015 MPAT Assessment Results of 40 National Departments

Figure 5 above also shows that only 13% (5 out of 40) departments achieved a level 4 score, which means that they have a fully-fledged departmental evaluation system. However, according to 2016 MPAT assessment, there has been a somewhat noticeable improvement in department's effort to establish their own evaluation system as reflected by figure 6 below (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016e).

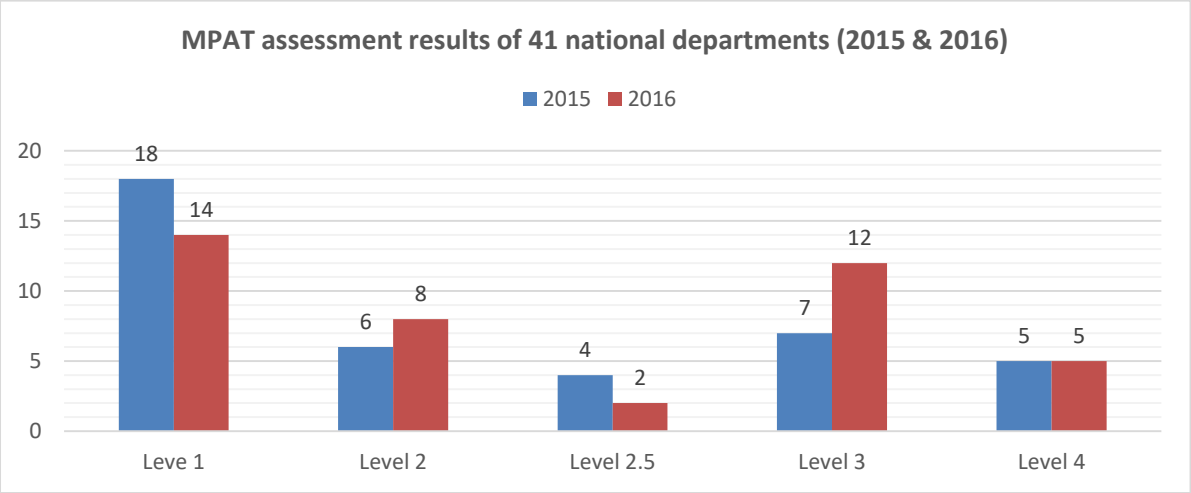



Figure 6: MPAT Assessment Results of 41 National Departments (2015 & 2016)

20 18 out of 40 national departments.

As reflected in figure 6 above, the 2016 MPAT assessment found that the number of national departments that did not have a formalised evaluation system (i.e. were found to be at level 1) went down from 18 to 14. On the other hand, departments that achieved level 3, that is, they were found to have a multi-year evaluation plan increased from 7 to 12. However, the number of departments that were found to have a fully-fledged departmental system (level 4) remained unchanged at five. This means that only five national departments were found to have the desired standard of an evaluation system. By this account, DPME still has a long way to go in terms of institutionalising evaluation system in government. However, it is important to note that the 2015 MPAT assessment report identified many assessment challenges in assessing the Evaluation Standard. The challenges ranged from lack of common understanding of evaluation terminologies (by departments) to submission of wrong evidence. Therefore, the results might have also been influenced by departments' failure to submit the correct evidence and/or evidence in the correct format, and not necessarily by the fact that departmental evaluation systems are non-existent. The following instances (as reported in the 2015 MPAT assessment report) support the observation that the misunderstanding of what was required as evidence and/or difficulty to produce correct evidence might have influenced the results as well (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015:10):

i. *"Evidence of a multi-year evaluation plan in line with the national evaluation system was expected from departments. It was however found that departments were not following the proper format of evaluation plans, which led to important elements being omitted".*
ii. *Some provincial departments submitted their provincial development plans instead of their department specific ones whilst some national departments submitted the approved National Evaluation Plan.*
iii. *…and that there was a lack of understanding of the terms used e.g. management response and improvement plan".*

In responding to a lack of common understanding of what is required as evidence, DPME has developed a guideline (Toolkit for addressing the Evaluation Standard in the Management Performance Assessment Tool) to clarify the type and the nature of the required evidence in order to assist departments in submitting the appropriate evidence (Department of Planning,

Monitoring and Evaluation, 2017). However, it is important to note that the toolkit was developed in December 2016 after the 2016 MPAT assessments. This means that the lack of common understanding influenced the 2016 assessments results as well.

In terms of the departments that were selected to participate in this study, the MPAT assessment results show that the Department of Human Settlements has progressed from level 2 to level 4 whereas Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has regressed from level 4 to level 2, as reflected by figure 7 below.

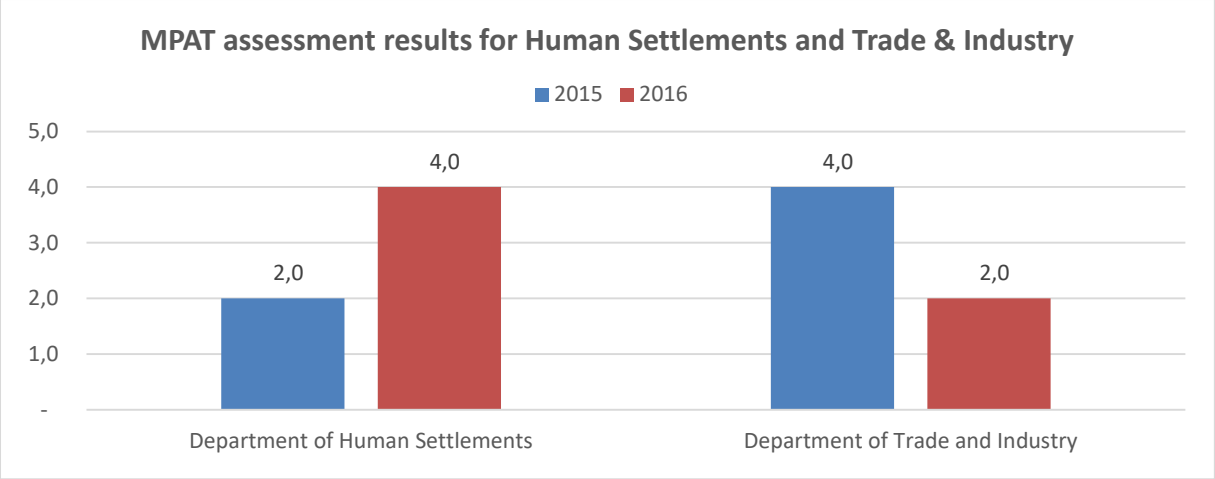



Figure 7: MPAT Assessment Results for DHS & DTI

DTI's regression means that, in 2016 MPAT assessment cycle, it was found not to have the following evaluation requirements in place, as outlined in the MPAT Evaluation Standard (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016d: 10-11):

i. *"Relevant staff is in place,*
ii. *Department has approved or adopted guidelines that follow the national evaluation system,*
iii. *A multi-year evaluation plan that follows the national evaluation system,*
iv. *Department has undertaken at least 1 evaluation of a major programme, policy, plan, project or system in the previous 2 years, or is currently undertaking one,*
v. *Each evaluation has a steering committee ensuring effective oversight of the evaluation process,*
vi. *Each completed evaluation has an approved management response and improvement plan, and*

vii. *Departmental evaluations are made public on departmental websites".*

On the other hand, the Department of Human Settlements was found to have ticked all the boxes, as it were, in terms of meeting the MPAT Evaluation Standard. This is also confirmed by the quote below from one of the participants from Human Settlements:

> *The good thing for us is that we have an M&E framework that guides all the M&E activities that are done in the department, we have an M&E unit, we have the Departmental Evaluation Plan, we have been conducting evaluations even before the DPME was put in place. The only new thing that came about for us was the management response and improvement plan. We had them but not in a structured way that the national evaluation system is putting forth.* **(Participant X)**

It is not clear why and how the Department of Trade and Industry moved from having these requirements in 2015 to not having them in 2016. It could mean that, in 2015 assessment, wrong and/or misleading evidence was accepted as correct, which led to this department achieving level 4. The structure and the position of the M&E Unit might have also influenced the assessment score as well. Interviews with the participants from the Department of Trade and Industry revealed that the department does not have a dedicated Evaluation Chief Directorate that is responsible for the evaluation of all the departmental programmes. There is a Chief Directorate: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation but this Unit is not responsible for the evaluation of all the programmes in the department; but only the programmes of one Division in the department, namely, Incentive Administration and Development Unit, as reflected by a quote below:

> *My role is to conduct or to do monitoring and evaluation of all the incentive programmes that are offered within the IDAD. We are a Unit within the division called Incentive Administration and Development Unit.* ***(Participant 09)***

There is also a Unit called Economic Research and Policy Coordinating Unit (in the Office of the Director-General). The mandate of this Unit is *"to provide economic intelligence, research, data, and policy coordination support to the Minister, Deputy Minister, Director-General and divisions of the DTI"* (Department of Trade and Industry, n.d.: 3). Although the Unit is well placed (in the sense that it is in the Office of the Director-General), it has a diverse mandate

(as the name suggests), which swallows up the evaluation function. Furthermore, the above observations also show that the department's M&E function is scattered or not well coordinated as evidenced by the quote below:

> *I think there is capacity here because there is M&E unit, then there are the policy guys in the Incentive Division; M&E unit is also in the Incentive Division. There are policy guys apart from us…am in a different policy division. And then there is ERPC [*Economic Research and Policy Coordinating Unit*], which I think, to a certain extent, also do evaluation.* ***(Participant 10)***

It is, therefore, possible that the 2015 MPAT assessment could not fully understand the working dynamics of these two units, and that, it was only clarified in 2016 MPAT assessment hence the regression score of the department.

The Department of Human Settlements, on the other hand, has one M&E Unit, which is responsible for the evaluation of all programmes in the department. However, the Unit is not big enough to handle all the evaluations in the department, as reflected by the quote below:

> *Due to capacity constraints, there was no way that the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit could drive the registration of all the seven evaluations.* ***(Participant 08)***

Be that as it may, participants from DPME appear to be convinced that the above-mentioned initiatives (post-evaluation improvement plan & MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement) are yielding positive results in terms of facilitating the uptake of the evaluation system by departments, as reflected by quotes below:

> *There is buy-in; they [departments] feel the need for evaluation. Some departments have been voluntarily suggesting topics even before we make a call to submit proposals. They also involve us (and/or share with us) in their evaluation projects that are not in the national evaluation plan. For example, the DTI M&E Chief Director was just telling me about other evaluations that will not be in the national evaluation plan. [so] the mere fact that I am still meeting with champions of departments on an informal basis just to update each other shows that one has built some good relationships…professional relationships.* **(Participant 02)**

*The system is beginning to take root. MPAT system[21] kind of forces departments to take on board the evaluation function, and at least show something that they are doing in relation to evaluation. So I think the system is beginning to take root.* **(Participant 04)**

However, it would appear, from the above-quoted text that most of the people that are regarded as departmental champions for evaluation system and/or who bought into the system are M&E officials; not necessarily programme and/or policy officials, which gives a false or misleading indication of the uptake of the system. Furthermore, the participants' observation of the positive indications of the uptake of the system also appears to be based on the fact that departments keep on consulting with DPME for further guidance, as reflected by a quote below:

*The second component [of the evaluation system] is that we want [departments] to start to do some of the evaluations themselves...but most of them they still come back to us and say please come and be in our steering committee, please help me do this, please review our report…* **(Participant 03)**

However, it might also mean that departments are not ready to do it on their own, that is, to have their own departmental evaluation system. At best, it could be an indicator of their willingness to do it, not necessarily the capacity and capability to do it.

While the participants from DPME are convinced that the uptake of the evaluation system by departments is happening, participants from other categories of the sample (departmental officials and external evaluators) are not as optimistic, as reflected by quotes below:

*Yes, given the fact that there is departmental evaluation plan that is approved, we are forced to participate. Evaluations are required for evidence to support policy development and review.* ***(Participant 07)***

*The department also feels that it is better if these evaluations are done by the department itself or commissioned by the department because in some sections of the*

21 MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement for government departments to develop their own departmental evaluation system.

*department there is the feeling that the evaluations that are being driven from there [DPME] are about catching out the departments on its inefficiencies and then they don't become objective enough.* ***(Participant 10)***

*The challenge comes in at line departments… the challenge comes in when a department has ulterior [motive] or different reasons for being part of the evaluation process [system]. The [M&E officials of the departments] have been a real pleasure to work with because [there are] knowledgeable about evaluation. But when you get to the programme staff, there are different perspectives. Sometimes the programme staff thinks that we are checking their job and as a result, they are not buying into the evaluation process [system].* **(Participant 11)**

The study also found that the cooperation and uptake of the system by departments varies from one department to another, and even within one department as reflected by a quote below:

*I think it varies, even within one department it can vary; it depends also on the [individual] personalities of the officials that you are working with. The Department of Human Settlements is one of those examples where it varies within a department. There are units (programmes) [within a department] where, when you work with them, it is smooth sailing...the [the programme officials] want to learn together with you, the relationship is collegial. And then, there are programmes where everything is difficult...they don't want to follow the system...they want to do it their own way...they don't want it to be approved by the steering committee; they want it to be approved through their own management, they are not too keen on taking it to Cabinet and stuff like that.* ***(Participant 08)***

This seems to suggest that the cooperation and uptake of the system by departments is not necessarily dependent on the Director-Generals (or the top executive) of departments but it is largely influenced by the attitude of few individuals within a department who are directly responsible for managing the programmes of the department. Hence, the finding that in one programme the uptake of the evaluation practice is good and promising while in another programme the uptake is non-existent due to passive resistance or even 'full-on' resistance

from programme managers. However, this does not absolve the Directors-General of their responsibility to reign in those who are directly responsible for managing the programmes of departments, and ensure that there is buy-in for the evaluation system.

### 5.2.3 Factors that influence departments to take-up the evaluation system

In addition to the above-mentioned experiences of the two selected departments, participants from all categories of the research sample (DPME officials, departments officials, external evaluators) highlighted a number of factors that influence (positively or negatively) system uptake by line departments in general.

The capacity of line departments to conduct evaluation studies on their own is one of the critical enablers for departments to take up the evaluation system. The capacity of line departments to conduct evaluation entails the availability of qualified and skilled personnel (evaluators) to conduct evaluation studies, the ability of decision-makers and/or policymakers to demand and to use evaluation studies, and the budget and infrastructure to roll out the evaluations (Mackay, 2007; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). The study found that due to the fact that the South African national evaluation system is still relatively new, most departments do not yet have the capacity to uptake the evaluation system as reflected by quotes below:

> *Of course, [some departments] are saying they are not ready for it[22]; they don't have a budget; they don't have capacity but if you don't measure them, when are they going to get it; if you get measured against it then you know you need to put your plan in place. When you send the plan to the National Treasury you indicate that you will need the budget to do this evaluation.* **(Participant 05)**

> "*Some [departments] are really keen [on conducting evaluation] but they don't have that capacity. And all of us are like evaluators-stroke-researchers and something in*

22 MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement that all government departments should develop their own departmental evaluation system.

*between, but some departments don't even have one researcher who can easily learn the trade of evaluations and build on their research skills".* **(Participant 03)**

It is worth noting that the above observation agrees with the results of the 2015 and 2016 MPAT assessments on MPAT Evaluation Standard that only 13% (5 out of 41) of government departments have a fully-fledged departmental evaluation system (see section 5.2.2 above).

Inherent to the availability of qualified and skilled evaluators to conduct evaluations, is the structure and the position of M&E Unit in the department. Ideally, a department needs one M&E Unit that is placed in the office of the Director-General, and that is responsible for the evaluation of all programmes in the department. Placing the M&E Unit in the office of Director-General would provide it (M&E Unit) with both the authority and independence (to a certain extent) to evaluate most (if not all) of the programmes of a department. In most government departments, Directors General are the ones who are directly manning departmental programmes; Director-Generals rarely man any departmental programme directly. Therefore, placing M&E units in the office of Director-General would ensure that evaluators are free from the influence of Deputy Directors-General while able to influence the use of evaluation evidence as well.

However, as alluded above, the establishment of M&E unit in departments is not the only force that is required to drive the uptake of the system. An evaluation system also requires an unwavering championing from the top executive of the department. As indicated above, this element seems to be missing from both the MPAT Evaluation Standard and the departments that were selected for the study. This observation is informed by the following quotes:

*I think the challenge is although the evaluation of BPS was seen as a success the evaluation of EMIA was not liked that much within the department because the findings were not that positive. For me, although negative, the findings were good because that's where you need to improve, but they were not liked internally. In my view, I don't see the national evaluation system being implemented soon because you have to have a very strong buy-in from the top...to be honest.* ***(Participant X)***

*Yes, those evaluations had an impact but they have also created tensions especially when outcomes are negative, and that becomes sensitive given that they end in Cabinet. [Also] there is lack of political will [at the top] to endorse negative feedback.* **(Participant 07)**

By this account, the top executive of departments, as well as programme managers, are required to drive the demand, and the use of evaluation evidence, and to create a culture of evidence-based decision-making in the organisation. For evaluation evidence to inform programme management and budget decisions, it is important that senior managers are interested in using evidence to improve their performance.

As indicated above, the culture of the organisation is also one of the factors that affect departments' willingness to buy into evaluation system, as reflected by a quote below:

*There are departments that fundamentally want to do a better job of their mandate, which is their incentive to want the evaluation to give them information as to how to do their job better… And then, there are also departments who are like 'meh'…they don't have the motive to do a better job of their mandate. So they are actually dis-incentivised to do evaluation.* **(Participant 11)**

By this account, a culture of evidence-based decision-making serves as an enabling environment for an evaluation system to thrive in the organisation. As indicated above, this goes deeper than the culture of a department to a culture of a programme within a department hence a finding that in one programme the uptake of the evaluation practice is good and promising while in another programme there is resistance from programme officials.

Another factor is that the practice of evaluation in South Africa (especially within public sector) is still relatively new, and therefore, some departments do not yet understand the role and the purpose of evaluation. Participants had the following to say regarding the departments' misconception about the role and the purpose of evaluation:

*Some departments do not understand the purpose or role of evaluation; they regard evaluation as a policing tool for punitive purpose; they do not see it as a learning tool to know what is happening with their intervention and where they can improve. Their mindset is that 'if there are negative findings then I may be viewed in a bad light; I may*

*lose my job; they want to use this to get rid of me'. So they don't want to look bad...hence they seem to be resisting.* **(Participant 02)**

*Some departments regard evaluation as an investigation or an audit that is going to result in punitive measures. And if you try to get evaluation going in those departments you will see the most defensive behaviour imaginable and there is a good reason for that because there is fear.* **(Participant 04)**

The observation that some departments regard evaluation as a policing tool (as opposed to a learning tool) is also supported by the finding that some departments are loose interest because of the practice of posting the evaluation reports on DPME's and departments' website for public consumption. **Participant 02** had the following to say regarding the discomforts of some departments over posting evaluations reports on DPME's and departments' websites:

*Based on our interactions with departments, there is one thing that they don't like. It seems to discourage them [to participate in the evaluation system]. It is the issue of posting the evaluation [reports] on the website. People feel that: no, why air dirty linens [in public, so to speak] more especially when the report is not positive. They feel [that] the report must [only] be presented to top managers...it should be their own thing. But we say to them that we don't post the report only; we also post the management response and the improvement plan. In other words, we offer departments opportunity and platform to state where they don't agree with recommendations, and [also] to say here are the planned improvements, where they agree with recommendations. But that's one area that people don't like; they feel [that] it is their private thing. [And] we also tell them that these are government programmes using taxpayers' money; taxpayers also have the right to know what is happening with their hard-earned money.*

In addition to perceiving it as a policing tool (with punitive end), some departments also perceive evaluation as 'a nice to have' function as reflected by a quote below:

*People don't actually value evaluations; they would say stuff like 'we have too much to do and we don't have money for evaluation, we are too concerned about the*

*delivery'. In a way, they don't really see how that evaluation [would] help them in what they want to do. It is only once they have gone through an evaluation that they start realising that this is why this is important.* **(Participant 03)**

The finding that there are departments that still do not understand the role and purpose of evaluation recurs despite the DPME's claim that it has been conducting awareness-raising sessions with both senior managers (in government) and parliamentarians. According to the Annual Report on National Evaluation System (2013-2014), DPME has been conducting awareness-raising sessions with these two stakeholders on *"how evaluation can assist in their work – improving oversight, improving understanding, and improving decision-making"* (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014a: 5). Furthermore, the DPME has also been running a training course on Evidence-Based Policy-Making and Implementation, directed at Directors-General and Deputy Directors-General (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016a). The intention of the course is to sell the concept of evidence-based policy-making practice and, in so doing, encourage line departments to buy into the evaluation system.

However, it would seem that these initiatives (awareness-raising sessions and the Evidence-Based Policy Making and Implementation training course) are limited in terms of their effect in changing the mindset of some departments (or some senior managers within departments) that are still struggling to appreciate the role and the purpose of evaluation. The challenge with the efficacy of these initiatives may lie with their limited coverage or dosage or both. It could also be attributed to the fact that the Directors-General are constantly and regularly being replaced or moved from their positions.

Lastly, a stakeholder management skill was also identified as a critical factor in ensuring the uptake of the evaluation system by line departments, as reflected by a quote below:

*"You know, I always say to people that, working as an Evaluation Director in the DPME, you are part-technical, part-political; so establishing and knowing your relationships is very important".* **(Participant 03)**

By this account (and as posited by the literature), building an evaluation system requires more than just the establishment of a technical infrastructure (evaluation policies, annual national

evaluation plans, norms and standards, practice notes, etc.). It also requires stakeholder analysis skills to understand various stakeholders and their interests (both negative and positive).

# 6 Chapter 6: Conclusions

This study has attempted to review the institutionalisation of the South African national evaluation system as well as the extent of system uptake by participating departments. However, due to the magnitude of the subject of the study, viewed against available academic time to complete a mini-research, this study sought to review the institutionalisation of the South African National Evaluation System using or based on the experiences of only two national departments (Department of Human Settlements and Department of Trade and Industry). The study was executed through the following key research questions:

i. How is the implementation of the national evaluation system faring against the benchmarks outlined in the National Evaluation Policy Framework?
ii. What is the level of uptake of the evaluations system in participating departments?
iii. What are the implementation successes and challenges the institutionalisation of the system is experiencing?
iv. What are the lessons that are being drawn from these implementation challenges?

The study was necessitated by the need to understand how the institutionalisation of the evaluation system is navigating through the negative attitudes (by line departments) towards the practice of evaluation. These negative attitudes were identified by the baseline study that was conducted by DPME in 2012 (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2013). The baseline study found the following among others (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, as cited in Goldman, Ntakumba & Jacob, 2013: 3):

i. *"evaluations are not seen as opportunities for learning and improvement but as means of policing with a punitive attachment where programme performance is found to be wanting,*
ii. *senior management often fails to champion M&E and M&E is regarded as the job of the M&E unit* [with little influence] *rather than all managers, and*
iii. *M&E information had limited or no influence on decision-making".*

Therefore, this study has attempted to establish how the implementation of the evaluation system is beginning to achieve results in dealing with those challenges.

The study was a qualitatively informed study, which adopted a combination of descriptivism and interpretivism research paradigms. The descriptivism research paradigm was followed in describing how the national evaluation system is being institutionalised. On the other hand, the application of the interpretivism research paradigm was especially useful when one had to deal with the sub-questions about the uptake of the system by participating departments, implementation challenges, lesson learnt and how the system can be further improved. The study was done through a combination of document review and semi-structured interviews with the selected participants. The table below provides a snapshot of officials who were selected to participate in the study.

| **Sample Structure** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Segments of Key Informants** | **Number of Key Informants** | **Total** |
| DPME officials | 4 Directors and 2 M&E Officers | 6 |
| Trade and Industry | 1 Programme Official and 1 M&E Official | 2 |
| Human Settlements | 1 Programme Official and 1 M&E Official | 2 |
| Service providers[23] | 2[24] x 1 External Evaluator | 2 |
| **Total** | | **12** |

Table 7: Sample Structure C

In terms of the conceptual framework for the study, this study was anchored on a hybrid of rational choice model (evidence-based approach) and political system model to provide a balanced analysis of the system. It (this study) subscribes to a school of thought that posits that building a national evaluation system requires both the technical infrastructure and the political literacy to manoeuvre through the political landscape of the system.

The study also looked at the existing and accessible literature on evaluation systems. The literature review found that there is no single form of evaluation system (Centre for Learning

23 External evaluators who were responsible for evaluating the programmes of selected departments.
24 This number represents the number of evaluations of programmes from two selected departments (one evaluation per department).

on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa, 2012; Mackay, 2007; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012). A form that an evaluation system would take depends on country-specific factors such as *"the government's demand for M&E information; the uses to which M&E information will be put; the availability and quality of data and information; the existing evaluation and analytical capacity within the country; the amount the government is prepared to spend on M&E, etc."* (United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012: 17). However, the literature also found that, although there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model of evaluation system, there are few key common features of evaluation system that cut across most evaluation system models, namely the capacity to demand evaluation, the capacity to supply evaluation, the utilisation of evaluation and the enabling environment (Haarich, 2008; Naccarella, Pirkis, Kohn, Morley, Burgess, Blashki, 2007; Porter & Goldman, 2013; United Nations Evaluation Group, 2012).

This chapter summarises key findings of the study, the discussion of which is organised according to the following two key research questions. The questions on implementation successes and challenges as well as the lesson learnt have not been used to guide the discussion since their variables are inherent in the discussion of these two questions:

i. How is the implementation of the national evaluation system faring against the benchmarks outlined in the National Evaluation Policy Framework?
ii. What is the level of uptake of the evaluations system in participating departments?

However, before one delves into each of the key research questions, it is imperative to note that the discussion of the summary of key findings is also guided by the framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government as outlined below (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011):

1. Presidency to establish a coordinating department (DPME),
2. DPME to develop evaluation guidelines, practice notes and norms and standards,
3. DPME to develop rolling three year and annual national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments,
4. DPME to implement the national evaluation plans in partnership with participating, volunteering departments,

5. DPME to conduct and/or facilitate capacity building to equip aspiring evaluators in partnership with other skills development institutions such as PALAM (now called School of Government), universities, research service providers, South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) and other capacity development organisations,
6. DPME to ensure quality assurance of evaluation processes and products,
7. DPME to facilitate sustainable demand for and use of evaluation,
8. Departments to develop and implement the departmental evaluation plans,
9. Departments to ensure that there is an evaluation budget for all programmes,
10. Departments to establish Evaluation Units with required skills to conduct evaluations, and
11. Departments to ensure that the results of evaluations are used to inform decision-making.

**How is the implementation of the national evaluation system faring against the benchmarks outlined in the National Evaluation Policy Framework?[25]**

One of the foundational work towards the institutionalisation of the evaluation practice in government was the establishment of evaluation system infrastructure, that is, establishment of DPME as a coordinating department, the development of the National Evaluation Policy Framework as well as evaluation guidelines and templates to ensure the standardisation of the practice of evaluation across all government departments. Both the National Evaluation Policy Framework and evaluation guidelines initiatives were commended by participants. However, the study found that not all line departments understand and/or appreciate the role of DPME as a coordinating department for the national evaluation system. The above observation is confirmed by the literature review, which posits that, during the implementation of evaluation systems, the policy contest is characterised by a 'turf' battle between coordinating or central planning and finance ministries on the one hand and line ministries on the other (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). Mackay (2007) also postulates

25 This question deals with activities 1 to 7 of the framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government listed above.

that no government ministry wants to be told what to do especially by another government ministry, the coordinating ministry. This is particularly true if the inter-governmental consultations between the coordinating department and line departments were not adequate in terms of either coverage or dosage, if not both. Be that as it may, these perceptions affect the attitude of line departments to participate (in good faith) in the evaluations system, which in turn, affect the uptake of the system by government departments.

Another key component of South Africa's national evaluation system is the development and implementation of annual National Evaluation Plans (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). Since its inception (2011), DPME has developed and implemented six annual National Evaluation Plans. The plans contain a list of strategic evaluation projects that are to be conducted each year. However, the study found that some departments such as Basic Education and Social Development are registering (or participating in) more evaluation projects as compared to other departments such as the departments of Health, and Justice and Constitutional Development. The National Evaluation Policy Framework prioritises evaluations of the interventions that are linked to the top five of the 14 outcomes, that is, health, education, crime, rural development, and employment (Department of Performance and Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). However, the Department of Health, which is responsible for one of the top five priority areas (health) does not seem to be receiving priority focus (as compared to the department of Basic Education, for example, in terms of the number of evaluations that are done through the National Evaluation Plan.

One of the critical components for the institutionalisation of the evaluation practice in government is the capacity of line departments to manage and conduct evaluation projects. While the MPAT assessments show that a significant number of government departments still do not have M&E units, this study found that both of the sampled departments (departments of Human Settlements & Trade and Industry) are just some of the few departments that have the capacity to conduct evaluation in terms of M&E units. It is imperative to note that DPME is not (and cannot be) responsible for the establishment of M&E units in government departments, save the issuance of the MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement that seeks to

foster the establishment of the departmental evaluation systems, which includes the establishment of M&E units, among others.

**What is the level of uptake of the evaluations system in participating departments?**[26]

The study also sought to establish the extent of the uptake of the evaluation system by line departments. The uptake of the evaluation system by line departments is also one of the critical elements towards the institutionalisation of the evaluation practice in government. In the case of the South African evaluation system, the uptake of the system is mainly facilitated through the MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement that government departments should develop their own departmental evaluations system. However, the study found that although the above MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement adequately addresses the need for government departments to establish the capacity to conduct evaluations it does not seem to cater for the need to generate demand for evaluation. As Porter and Goldman (2013) asserted, there needs to be a balanced tension between the demand for evaluation (with an intention to use it) and the capacity to supply evaluation, for an evaluation system to be sustainable. The above MPAT Evaluation Standard should ideally incorporate a requirement for government departments to generate the demand for evaluation (with the intention to use it), which should come from programme managers, facilitated by heads of departments. This should ideally be in all programme managers' performance agreements.

Nonetheless, both the 2015 and 2016 MPAT assessments found that only 13% of Departments (5 out of 41) had a fully-fledged departmental evaluation system (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2015; Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016e). By this account, DPME still has a long way to go in terms of institutionalising evaluation system in government.

In terms of the departments that were selected to participate in this study, the MPAT assessment results show that the Department of Human Settlements has progressed from

26 Therefore, this question deals with activities 8 to 11 of the framework for institutionalising evaluation practice in government listed above.

level 2 to level 4 whereas Department of Trade and Industry has regressed from level 4 to level 2 (refer to table 6, page 86 for the meaning of these numbers). It is not clear why and how the Department of Trade and Industry regressed from level 4 to 2. It could mean that, in 2015 assessment, wrong and/or misleading evidence was accepted as correct, which led to the department achieving level 4. The structure and strategic position of the M&E Unit might have also influenced the assessment score as well. Interviews with the participants from the Department of Trade and Industry revealed that the department does not have a dedicated Evaluation Chief Directorate that is responsible for the evaluation of all departmental programmes. There is a Chief Directorate: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation but this Unit is not responsible for the evaluation of all the programmes in the department; but only the programmes of one Division in the department, namely, Incentive Administration and Development Unit. There is also a Unit called Economic Research and Policy Coordinating Unit in the Office of the Director-General. Although the Unit is well placed (in the sense that it is in the Office of the Director-General), it has a diverse mandate (as the name suggests), which swallows up the evaluation function. It is possible that the 2015 MPAT assessment could not fully understand the working dynamics of these two units, and that, it was only clarified in 2016 MPAT assessment hence the regression score of the department.

The Department of Human Settlements, on the other hand, has one M&E unit, which is responsible for the evaluation of all programmes in the department. However, the unit is not big enough to handle all the evaluations in the department, as reflected by a quote below:

> *Due to capacity constraints, there was no way that the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit could drive the registration of all the seven evaluations.* **(Participant 08)**

Be that as it may, while participants from DPME appear to be convinced that the above-mentioned initiative (MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement[27]) is yielding positive results in terms of facilitating the uptake of the evaluation system by departments, the participants from other categories of the sample (departmental officials and external evaluators) are not as optimistic. Participants from DPME appear to base their observation on the fact that most of the departments that have participated in the national evaluation system bought into the

27 for government departments to develop their own departmental evaluation system.

evaluation system, and they actually have champions for the evaluation system. However, a closer look at this fact reveals that most of the people that are regarded as departmental champions for evaluation system and/or who bought into the system are M&E officials; not necessarily programme and/or policy officials, which gives a misleading indication of the uptake of the system.

Furthermore, the DPME participants' observation of the positive indications of the uptake of the system also appears to be based on the fact that departments keep on consulting with DPME for further guidance. However, it might also mean that departments are not ready to do it on their own, that is, to have their own departmental evaluation system. At best, it could be an indicator of their willingness to do it, not necessarily the capacity and capability to do it.

The study also found that the cooperation and the uptake of the system by departments vary from one department to another, and even within the same department. This seems to suggest that the cooperation and the uptake of the system by departments is not necessarily dependent on the Directors-General (or the top executive) of departments but it is largely influenced by the attitude of few individuals, within a department, who are directly responsible for managing the programmes of the department. Hence, the finding that in one programme the uptake of the evaluation practice is good and promising while in another programme (within the same department) the uptake is non-existent due to passive resistance or even 'full-on' resistance from programme managers. However, this does not absolve the Directors-General of their responsibility to reign in those who are directly responsible for managing the programmes of departments, and ensure that there is buy-in for the evaluation system.

In addition to the above-mentioned experiences of the two selected departments, participants from all categories of the research sample (DPME officials, departments officials, external evaluators) highlighted a number of factors that influence (positively or negatively) the uptake of the system by line departments. These factors include (but not limited to) the following:

i. The capacity of line departments to conduct evaluation studies, which entails the availability of qualified and skilled personnel (evaluators) to conduct evaluation studies, the ability of decision-makers and/or policymakers to demand and to use evaluation studies, and the budget and infrastructure to roll out the evaluations,
ii. The unwavering championing of evaluation practice by the top executive of line departments,
iii. The culture of evidence-based policy-making in the organisation,
iv. Poor (or lack of) understanding of the role, purpose and value of evaluation by government departments, and
v. Stakeholder analysis and management skills.

These factors are also confirmed by the literature review on the features of the national evaluation system (see section 4.3).

In conclusion, DPME appears to be succeeding in rolling out the national evaluation system as per the National Evaluation Policy Framework notwithstanding the implementation challenges alluded to in chapter 5. However, the uptake of the evaluation system by line departments still poses a major challenge for the system. It appears that the MPAT Evaluation Standard requirement would go a long way in fostering the uptake. However, it remains to be seen if this intervention would drive a genuine uptake as opposed to a mere compliant uptake.

Lastly, it was not possible to cover all the components of the national evaluation system with the required depth. Therefore, there are few components that require further in-depth specific review than what this study was able to offer. Firstly, there is a narrative that there is a dearth of qualified and skilled evaluators, especially in government departments. However, this author is not aware of any recent scientific national skills audit that supports this observation. Perhaps the study of this nature is required, the results of which would help the government to properly plan for the capacity to conduct evaluations. Secondly, DPME has been conducting and/or coordinating a number of capacity-building initiatives (Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, 2016a). However, this study found that these training initiatives are not designed into a measurable training programme with clear sets of outcomes and its theory of change. In other words, it is not clear if these training

initiatives are evaluable. It would, therefore, be prudent to conduct an evaluability assessment to determine the evaluability of these training initiatives.

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# 8 Appendices

## 8.1 Annexure A: Interview Guide for DPME Officials

**Introduction**

Good day, my name is Thomas Tshilowa. I have an interest in the field of monitoring and evaluation as well as policy research. I am currently working as a senior researcher at the National Prosecuting Authority, entrusted with both research and evaluation of strategic programmes and projects of the organisation. It is for this reason that I have decided to enrol for a Master of Management in Public Policy at the University of Witwatersrand.

Part of the requirements towards the fulfilment of this degree is that students should conduct research of their choice and submit the research report thereof. I have therefore decided to conduct a study on the institutionalisation of the national evaluation system in South Africa. It is for this reason that I have requested to conduct an interview with you.

The objective of this interview is to elicit information about the implementation of the national evaluation system as well as the level of the uptake of the system by selected departments. Your response will be used (together with other data source) to write a research report as an output of this research. Although your response may be used verbatim in the report it will be presented in a way that your identity is not revealed, and without compromising the confidentiality of the interview. Should you wish to ascertain that your response has been captured correctly the transcript of this interview will be made available to you, at your request. The interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw your consent to participate any time during the interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Are there any questions that you would like to ask before we begin?

| |
|---|
| |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you consent to this interview? | Yes | No |
| Do you consent to be recorded? | Yes | No |

**Biographical Information**

| | |
|---|---|
| Name and Surname | |
| Job title | |
| Telephone numbers | |
| Email address | |

**Interview Questions**

1. What has been your responsibility in implementing the tasks/activities outlined on page 18 of National Evaluation Policy Framework and/or outlined on page 4 of Annual Report on Evaluation System?

2. How has been your experience in implementing the activities you have highlighted earlier?

3. Which departments have you worked with so far?

4. How was (has been) your experience in working with each of these departments?

5. In general, what do you think are the factors that either encourage or discourage departments to buy into the practice of evaluation as prescribed by the national evaluation system?

6. What could be done to encourage departments that are reluctant to participate in the system?

7. What are the challenges that DPME is currently experiencing in the following areas?
   i. Registration of evaluations in the NEP
   ii. Managing evaluations once they are registered
   iii. Getting department to prepare management response & improvement plan
   iv. Budget & Time
   v. Implementing the system in general

8. In your view how can the challenges you have highlighted above be resolved?

9. Do you think that the practice of evaluation (as prescribed by the national evaluation system) is becoming a permanent feature of performance management practice in government departments? (Elaborate)

10. If you wanted to evaluate this system (national evaluation system) from the perspective of departments what questions would you ask them?

**Thank you for your participation**

## 8.2 Annexure B: Interview Guide for Selected Departments Officials

**Introduction**

Good day, my name is Thomas Tshilowa. I have an interest in the field of monitoring and evaluation as well as policy research. I am currently working as a senior researcher at the National Prosecuting Authority, entrusted with both research and evaluation of strategic programmes and projects of the organisation. It is for this reason that I have decided to enrol for a Master of Management in Public Policy at the University of Witwatersrand.

Part of the requirements towards the fulfilment of this degree is that students should conduct research of their choice and submit the research report thereof. I have therefore decided to conduct a study on the institutionalisation of the national evaluation system in South Africa. It is for this reason that I have requested to conduct an interview with you.

The objective of this interview is to elicit information about the implementation of the national evaluation system as well as the level of the uptake of the system by selected departments. Your response will be used (together with other data source) to write a research report as an output of this research. Although your response may be used verbatim in the report, it will be presented in a way that your identity is not revealed, and without compromising the confidentiality of the interview. Should you wish to ascertain that your response has been captured correctly the transcript of this interview will be made available to you, at your request.

The interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw your consent to participate any time during the interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Are there any questions that you would like to ask before we begin?

| |
|---|
| |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you consent to this interview? | Yes | No |
| Do you consent to be recorded? | Yes | No |

**Biographical Information**

| | |
|---|---|
| Name and Surname | |
| Job title | |
| Telephone numbers | |
| Email address? | |

**Interview Questions**

1. What would you say is your role in the evaluation of your departmental programme(s)?

2. How did your department come to participate in the national evaluation system?

3. What was your involvement in the evaluation that was undertaken by your department?

4. How has been your experience with the following evaluation process as prescribed by the evaluation system:
    i. Registration of the programme in NEP
    ii. Conceptualisation of the study (including the development TOR)
    iii. Appointment of the service provider
    iv. Managing the actual evaluations
    v. Responding to findings and recommendation (through management response)
    vi. Developing improvement plan
    vii. Implementing and monitoring the improvement plan

5. In view of the process, we have just talked about, what could be done differently to make it easier for the department?

6. In your personal experience or observation, has evaluation had any practical impact in the department? (Elaborate and/or give example)

7. Do you think that the practice of evaluation (as prescribed by the national evaluation system) is becoming a permanent feature of government performance management practice in your department? (Elaborate)

8. In your view, what are the factors that are likely to either encourage or discourage your department to buy into the practice of evaluation as prescribed by the national evaluation system?

**Thank you for your participation**

## 8.3 Annexure C: Interview Guide for External Evaluators

**Introduction**

Good day, my name is Thomas Tshilowa. I have an interest in the field of monitoring and evaluation as well as policy research. I am currently working as a senior researcher at the National Prosecuting Authority, entrusted with both research and evaluation of strategic programmes and projects of the organisation. It is for this reason that I have decided to enrol for a Master of Management in Public Policy at the University of Witwatersrand.

Part of the requirements towards the fulfilment of this degree is that students should conduct research of their choice and submit the research report thereof. I have therefore decided to conduct a study on the institutionalisation of the national evaluation system in South Africa. It is for this reason that I have requested to conduct an interview with you.

The objective of this interview is to elicit information about the implementation of the national evaluation system as well as the level of the uptake of the system by selected departments. Your response will be used (together with other data source) to write a research report as an output of this research. Although your response may be used verbatim in the report it will be presented in a way that your identity is not revealed, and without compromising the confidentiality of the interview. Should you wish to ascertain that your response has been captured correctly the transcript of this interview will be made available to you, at your request.

The interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw your consent to participate any time during the interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Are there any questions that you would like to ask before we begin?

| |
|---|
| |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you consent to this interview? | Yes | No |
| Do you consent to be recorded? | Yes | No |

**Biographical Information**

| | |
|---|---|
| Name and Surname | |
| Job title | |
| Telephone numbers | |
| Email address? | |

**Interview Questions**

1. May you briefly tell me about your career to date?

2. According to the DPME Evaluation Update you were responsible for evaluating programme X from department X, are there any other evaluations that you were involved in?

3. How was your experience in working with both DPME and the department in formulating, conducting the evaluation and presenting the findings and recommendation?

4. The National Evaluation Policy Framework prescribes that evaluations should be undertaken through x, y & z; what is your view about these processes?

5. What could be done differently to improve the system?

6. In your view, what are the factors that are likely to either encourage or discourage evaluators to participate in the evaluation system?

7. In your view, what are the factors that are likely to either encourage or discourage departments to buy into the practice of evaluation as prescribed by the national evaluation system?

8. In your observation, do you think that the practice of evaluation (as prescribed by the national evaluation system) is becoming a permanent feature of performance management practice in government departments? (Elaborate)

**Thank you for your participation**

### 8.4 Annexure D: Research Interview Participant Consent Form

| | |
|---|---|
| Interview Schedule Number | 1 |

**Introduction**

Good day, my name is Thomas Tshilowa. I have an interest in the field of monitoring and evaluation as well as policy research. I am currently working as a senior researcher at the National Prosecuting Authority, entrusted with both research and evaluation of strategic programmes and projects of the organisation. It is for this reason that I have decided to enrol for a Master of Management in Public Policy at the University of Witwatersrand.

Part of the requirements towards the fulfilment of this degree is that students should conduct research of their choice and submit the research report thereof. I have therefore decided to conduct a study on the institutionalisation of the national evaluation system in South Africa. It is for this reason that I have requested to conduct an interview with you.

The objective of this interview is to elicit information about the implementation of the national evaluation system as well as the level of the uptake of the system by selected departments. Your response will be used (together with other data source) to write a research report as an output of this research. Although your response may be used verbatim in the report, it will be presented in a way that your identity is not revealed, and without compromising the confidentiality of the interview. Should you wish to ascertain that your response has been captured correctly the transcript of this interview will be made available to you, at your request.

The interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw your consent to participate any time during the interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Are there any questions that you would like to ask before we begin?

| |
|---|
| |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you consent to this interview? | Yes | No |
| Do you consent to be recorded? | Yes | No |

**Biographical Information**

| | |
|---|---|
| Name and Surname | |
| Job title | |
| Telephone numbers | |
| Email address | |

_____ _____

**Participant's Signature** **Date**