

https://dspace.org/

Institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe District Municipality

Ndou, Tshipfuralo

2023

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/43979

Ndou, Tshipfuralo. (2023). Institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe District Municipality [Master's dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg].WireDSpace.https://hdl.handle.net/10539/43979

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe District Municipality

Tshipfuralo Ndou
WITS Graduate School of Governance

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public Sector Monitoring and Evaluation) to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, University of the Witwatersrand

August 2023

DECLARATION

I Tshipfuralo Ndou declare that this research report entitled 'Institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe District Municipality' is my own unaided work. I have acknowledged, attributed, and referenced all ideas sourced elsewhere. I am hereby submitting it in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management (Public sector monitoring and evaluation) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I have not submitted this report before for any other degree or examination to any other institution.

Name of candidate	**Tshipfuralo Ndou**
Student number	**706374**
Signature	
	Signed at Johannesburg on 30th June 2023
Telephone numbers	**0820636988**
Email address	**706374@students.wits.ac.za**
First year of registration	**2019**
Date of proposal submission	**2021**
Date of report submission	**2023**
Name of supervisor	Kambidima Wotela

ABSTRACT

Author: Tshipfuralo Ndou **Supervisor** Kambidima Wotela

Thesis title Institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe District Municipality

The utilisation of monitoring and evaluation systems holds immense potential in elevating the performance of institutions, programs, and projects. These systems, when effectively designed and implemented, play a crucial role in promoting evidence-based policy-making, fostering good governance and contributing to knowledge production by analysing the efficacy of interventions. Central to the effectiveness of these systems is the establishment of well-suited internal institutional arrangements.

To explore the current state of institutional arrangements and their contributions towards effective monitoring and evaluation, a qualitative case study design has been adopted. Employing a non-probability, purposive sampling technique, individuals possessing the capacity to furnish pertinent insights into institutional arrangements have been deliberately selected as respondents. The study drew from mixed data sources. Primary information was gathered through semi-structured interviews, enabling a direct exploration of viewpoints. Complementing this, secondary data was collected by reviewing documents such as reports, policies, and records. Thematic content analysis was employed in analysing the collected data. Systems theory and theory of change were employed since they both focus on the interconnection of the systems and the change that systems undergo.

The findings reveal that while M&E is practised, the institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation system is not well established showing weaknesses such as inadequate staff, lack of skills, and insufficient support from leadership. Interconnected subsystems within the municipality show potential strengths, but changes in leadership disrupt consistency. The recommendations for improving monitoring and evaluation systems at VDM include establishing a dedicated unit with skilled staff, district leadership support, collaboration with external experts for framework development, awareness workshops, fostering trust between M&E and project teams, and involving stakeholders for comprehensive project monitoring.

Johannesburg, August 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION....ii
Abstract iii
Table of Contents....v
List of tables vii
List of figures viii
List of tables and figures in the appendices....x
Acknowledgements....xi
1 Introduction to the research....13
1.1 Background....13
1.1.1. A brief introduction to South African monitoring and evaluation system....13
1.1.2. Introduction to institutional and organisational arrangements....14
1.2 Research conceptualisation: Toward exploring institutional arrangements for effective monitoring and evaluation system....16
1.2.1. The research problem statement....16
1.2.2. The research purpose (aim and objectives) Statement....18
1.2.3. The research questions....18
1.3 Delimitations of the research....18
1.4 Justification of the research....19
1.5 Preface to the research report....19
2 Reviewing Literature to derive the conceptual framework....21
2.1 History and description of the Vhembe District Municipality....21
2.2 Ineffective monitoring and evaluation; symptoms, root cause, and consequences....24
2.3 Methods, data, findings, and conclusions of studies on monitoring and evaluations of institutional arrangements policies....32
2.4 An introduction to public policy studies and its components and process....35
2.4.1 Describing public policy....36
2.4.2 The purpose of public policy....37
2.4.3 Established facts in public policy....38
2.4.4 Key issues and debates in the study of public policy....39
2.4.5 Major components of public policy....40
2.4.6 Major processes of public policy....41
2.5 Key Variables in public policy studies that are key to institutional arrangements....43
2.5.1 Context....43
2.5.2 Commitment....44
2.5.3 Capacity....45
2.5.4 Communication....45
2.5.5 Coordination....46
2.6 Established framework for interpreting results on the monitoring and evaluation system....47
2.7 Institutional arrangements for effective monitoring and evaluation system, a conceptual framework....52
3 Research strategy, design, procedure and methods....56
3.1 Research Strategy....56
3.2 Research Design....57

3.3 Research procedure and methods 58
3.3.1 Research data and information collection instrument(s) 58
3.3.2 Research target population and selection of respondents 59
3.3.3 Ethical considerations when collecting research data 61
3.3.4 Research data and information collection process 62
3.3.5 Research data and information processing and analysis 64
3.3.6 Description of the research respondents....65
3.4 Research strengthens—reliability and validity measures applied 65
3.5 Research weaknesses—technical and administrative limitations....67
4 Presentation of research results....69
4.1 Extent to which the existing institutional arrangements contribute to fostering an effective monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe district municipality?....70
4.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the institutional arrangements that are in place in Vhembe District Municipality....78
4.3 Institutional arrangements required for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe District Municipality....82
5 Discussion of research findings....87
5.1 Description of Explanatory frameworks for interpreting results of institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation system....87
5.2 Discussion of the research findings in the context of the research conceptualisation 88
5.3 The interpretation of the empirical results to explain the institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation System....97
6 Summary, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations 100
6.1 Summary.... 100
6.2 Conclusions.... 103
6.3 Limitations 104
6.4 Recommendations 105
References 109
Appendices 114
Appendix 1.1: Data or information collection instrument.... 115
Appendix 2.1: Letter permitting the researcher to carry out the research 117

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Vhembe District Municipality Map 21
Figure 2.2 Vhembe District Municipality Organisational Structure 23
Figure 2.3 Problem Tree Analysis: Ineffective monitoring and evaluation 24
Figure 2.4 Presenting elements of the results chain and the result framework.....30
Figure 2.5 Public policy and its components 36
Figure 2.6 Conceptual Framework for institutional arrangements for effective monitoring and evaluation system 53

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES IN THE APPENDICES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest gratitude and heartfelt appreciation goes to the remarkable individuals who have been the driving force behind the realization of this research endeavour:

- **Prof K. Wotela** (my research supervisor): I am deeply grateful for his invaluable assistance, guidance, and unwavering encouragement throughout this journey. His expertise and support have been instrumental in shaping this research.
- **My mother, Emily Ndou**: Your love and unwavering belief in me have been a source of motivation and encouragement.
- **My children, Tsumbedzo and Murwa**: Your presence in my life has given me the determination to push forward and succeed. Your understanding and encouragement have been invaluable.
- **Family and friends**: To the rest of my family and friends, thank you for your unwavering support and encouragement throughout this process. Special mention to **Dr. Tebogo Mokganyetji, Phathutshedzo Murovhi, and Lizzy Khwareli** for their moral support and the courage they instilled in me to complete my dissertation.
- Colleagues at the Department of Statistics South Africa – Vhembe District office: A heartfelt appreciation to **Mr Nemauluma and Mrs Mathagu** for their encouraging words that motivated me to move forward.

I deeply appreciate the valuable support you've provided, and I'm genuinely thankful for each and every one of you. Thank you for being a part of this journey and for helping me accomplish this research.

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 Background

More generally, this research explores institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe District Municipality. However, before getting to the research problem statement (Section 1.2) and consequently the purpose of this research (Section 1.2.2) as well as the research questions (Section 1.2.3), we briefly introduce the terms and concepts that we have used in conceptualising this research. Section 1.1.1 introduces the research context generally and broadly—while Section 1.1.2 introduces but briefly the programme under study as well as accompanying key terms and concepts. Similarly, Section 1.1.3 provides a brief description of the study physical setting

1.1.1. A brief introduction to the South African monitoring and evaluation system

There is a growing awareness and recognition worldwide of the significance of using monitoring and evaluation systems (Hardlife & Zhou, 2013:70). Notably, South Africa stands as a prime example where the significance of M&E initiatives gained substantial traction following the democratic transition in 1994. Historical socioeconomic challenges were seen as a driving force behind the government's decision to establish these systems, to provide useful information to prioritize resources and enhance government performance. While the need for monitoring and evaluation was recognized early on in South Africa's democracy, it wasn't until the early 2000s that a heightened interest in these practices emerged, culminating in a more pronounced role for M&E within the Presidency (Masuku & Ijeoma, 2015).

In response to the pressing demand for effective monitoring and evaluation, South Africa established various frameworks, commissions, and mandatory bodies. Noteworthy among these was the approval of a comprehensive government-wide monitoring and evaluation system in 2005, with its framework formalized in 2007. This framework addressed the need for program performance information frameworks, as well as the quality and evaluation of statistical data. To equip all government departments for effective execution of their M&E responsibilities, the framework provided an array of tools encompassing standards, processes, strategies, plans, information systems, reporting hierarchies, and performance indicators.

A monitoring and evaluation system is "a set of institutional arrangements such as organisational structures, management processes, standards, strategies, plans, indicators, information systems, reporting lines and accountable relationships which enable spheres and institutions of government to fulfil their monitoring and evaluation functions effectively" (PFGWM&E, 2007:4). In addition, Cloete et al, (2014:279) emphasise that these systems should be impartial and independent; relevant and useful; credible and transparent; evade duplication of effort and information.

1.1.2. Introduction to institutional and organisational arrangements

Institutional arrangements are defined by Langill (1999:8) as the "rules of the game" that shape member behaviour and encompass shared understandings about problem-solving approaches. Nutt-Powell (1978:5) emphasizes that institutional analysis examines the creation, transmission, maintenance, and evolution of social meaning. Institutions exert considerable influence over public policy adoption and content. They provide the contextual backdrop against which dynamic political factors like parties and public opinion interact (Anderson, 2003). While organizations are a subset of institutions, not all institutions take the form of organizations. Organizational structures, on the other hand, determine roles, responsibilities, and coordination within groups striving for shared goals (Ahmady et al., 2016).

The institutional and organizational arrangements play a role in shaping the landscape of public policy implementation. This framework not only dictates how various components of an organization interact but also influences its essence and robustness. The monitoring and evaluation serves as a crucial mechanism in the public sector. It is designed to oversee and ensure the effective execution of policies, with a specific focus on identifying potential deviations, activating pre-emptive warning systems, and proposing corrective actions when necessary (GWM&E, 2007:12).

In this pursuit of effective monitoring and evaluation in the South African public sector, the "Framework for Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation" serves as a guidepost. This framework outlines the institutional structure necessary to implement a successful monitoring and evaluation system. While recognizing the variability in organizational structures across different entities within the government, this framework

places significant emphasis on the visibility of monitoring and evaluation processes within each organization. Additionally, it highlights the need to empower officials responsible for managing these systems with ample authority. This empowerment ensures that the insights gathered from monitoring and evaluation efforts hold the weight to influence decisions pertaining to policies, programs, and the allocation of resources (GWM&E, 2007:12).

1.1.3. A brief description of Vhembe District Municipality; systems and performance

The Vhembe District Municipality, established in 2000 under the framework of the Local Government Municipal Structure Act No. 117 of 1998, operates as a category C municipality and employs a distinctive mayoral executive system. This system is characterized by entrusting executive authority to an executive mayor, supported by a mayoral committee. Notably, the executive mayor assumes a central role in the municipality's leadership (Vhembe District Municipality IDP Review 2020/2021).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 (Act 27 of 1998), the Municipal System Act of 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) and the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 (Act 56 of 2003) have empowered municipalities to provide necessary services to their respective communities, covering areas such as water, waste management, electricity, sanitation, roads, and transportation planning. To accomplish these objectives, municipalities are expected to develop their service delivery plans such as the Integrated Development Plan, Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan, Performance Management System and monitoring and evaluation system.

The VDM has been developing an Integrated Development Plan for service delivery through various stakeholder engagements, as mandated by the Municipal System Act of 2000 (Act 106 of 2000). IDP, as noted by Phago (2009), is an all-inclusive city-wide strategy that must incorporate departmental sector plans, policies, and plans of municipal entities focused on developmental initiatives. The Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) is compiled in line with the IDP and Budget on an annual basis. The SDBIP is approved by the Executive Mayor in line with the legislation and it forms the basis for performance management and reporting.

Furthermore, as noted in the VDM IDP (2017: 344), the VDM has a Performance Management System Framework that aims to effectively execute the municipality's strategy and enhance performance. It serves as the foundation for monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing the implementation of the IDP. Quarterly performance review meetings are conducted to measure the performance of the municipality based on the SDBIP. Quarterly organizational performance reports are compiled and an annual report is produced for submission to Treasury, COGHSTA and Auditor General. Quarterly organizational performance reports are issued regularly. The Annual Report is tabled to the council for approval. The Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) is appointed to produce an oversight report on the annual report (VDM IDP 2017/2018:174).

Despite all the service delivery measures in place, the VDM, still faces several service delivery challenges. The service delivery challenges in the VDM are experienced regardless of the Performance Management System attached to it. However, there has been no research report addressing how institutional and organizational setups is necessary to contribute to the successful implementation of monitoring and evaluation processes in the context of Vhembe District Municipality (VDM). This research is centred on the premise that local levels of government require effective institutional and organizational frameworks to establish robust monitoring and evaluation systems. These systems can enhance the municipality's ability to provide services efficiently, enhance overall performance, and effectively manage policies, programs, and projects.

1.2 Research conceptualisation: Toward exploring institutional arrangements for effective monitoring and evaluation system

1.2.1. The research problem statement

The rapid rise of institutionalizing and implementing monitoring and evaluation systems within South Africa's public sector has not gone unnoticed. These systems, as highlighted by Kusek et al. (2004:19), play a pivotal role as management tools, enabling the public sector to attain results and meet specific objectives. Their value extends beyond mere management, contributing to the principles of good governance by ensuring responsiveness to the needs of the populace and fostering engagement in policy formulation. Furthermore, they bolster transparency and accountability (Constitution of

the Republic of South Africa, 1996:99). In alignment with this concept, the national government has established support structures to facilitate monitoring and evaluation across various public sectors.

Despite these concerted efforts, a disconcerting trend emerges. The service delivery performance of the Vhembe district municipality is on a declining trajectory (Auditor General's 2017/2018 report). This situation is particularly critical given that district municipalities like Vhembe occupy a unique position in governance, as the government closest to the people they serve. The Vhembe District Municipality has a significant obligation to provide essential public services that meet the needs of its communities. To accomplish this goal, it is crucial to monitor and evaluate the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the municipality. Equally important is the adoption of an effective monitoring and evaluation system and appropriate institutional arrangements, which are essential for the successful implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system.

The 2017 review report of the Vhembe District Municipality's IDP highlighted that the lack of monitoring of services provided by external service providers was a significant factor that contributed to sub-standard services. The annual report for 2017/2018 also identified poor-quality monitoring of projects as a major concern that the municipality needs to address. Furthermore, the VDM IDP (2017/18) highlights that the municipality faces challenges in striving for continuous improvement in service delivery due to poor monitoring regimes that are currently in place. This has resulted in most of the projects residing in high and critical risk.

Wotela's viewpoint (2017:5) adds another layer of insight, emphasizing a pressing need for substantial shifts within institutional and organizational frameworks to seamlessly integrate the monitoring and evaluation function. The prevalent "business as usual" approach, Wotela contends, may be inadequate to fully integrate monitoring and evaluation into the existing fabric of governance structures. Consequently, there arises a clear imperative to conduct a thorough reevaluation of current institutional and organizational arrangements and, where necessary, introduce modifications that will holistically and effectively embed the monitoring and evaluation function.

1.2.2. The research purpose (aim and objectives) statement

We had the choice of five research approaches: narrative, descriptive, explanatory, interpretive, and exploratory. However, for the purpose of this study, we opted to explore the institutional arrangements for effective monitoring and evaluation system. We pursued institutional arrangements to articulate the fostering of an effective monitoring and evaluation system at Vhembe District Municipality.

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To find out whether the current institutional arrangements within the Vhembe District Municipality support the implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system.
- To identify the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the current institutional arrangements of the Vhembe district municipality.
- To provide recommendations that will enhance the effective monitoring and evaluation system at Vhembe District Municipality.

1.2.3. The research questions

We framed three key questions to guide the exploration of the institutional arrangements necessary for the successful implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe District Municipality:

1.2.3.1 Question: To what extent do the current institutional arrangements foster an effective monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe district municipality?

1.2.3.2 Question: what are the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the current institutional arrangements in fostering effective monitoring and evaluation?

1.2.3.3 Question: What institutional arrangements are required to foster effective monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe District Municipality?

1.3 Delimitations of the research

The study is exclusively focused on examining the role of institutional arrangements in fostering an effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system. It does not explore other aspects of the public policy context, such as leadership dynamics, governance structures, or political economy factors. Furthermore, it does not aim to evaluate the M&E system's overall success or impact beyond the scope of institutional influence.

While the study involves a public policy matter, the investigation is restricted to the specific area of institutional arrangements within the context of M&E. Broader public

policy formulation, implementation, or evaluation processes are not covered. The research does not explore alternative approaches to fostering an effective M&E system beyond the lens of institutional arrangements. Other potential factors or strategies are not within the scope of this study.

1.4 Justification of the research

Previous research has mainly focused on monitoring and evaluating systems (Kariuk & Reddy, 2017; Mello, 2018; Umlaw & Chitepo, 2015) without adequate attention to the institutional arrangements required for implementing interventions. Consequently, monitoring and evaluation interventions fail to achieve their intended goals. Thus, detailed research is necessary to explore institutional arrangements required for effective monitoring and evaluation systems. This study aims to do just that and provide recommendations for more efficient institutional arrangements.

1.5 Preface to the research report

To this end, the report has six chapters.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the research. It begins with the background of the study, providing context for the research topic. It introduces the research problem statement, clearly outlining the gap in the existing literature and the need for the study. The research purpose statement explains the overarching aim of the research, and the research objectives outline the specific goals the study intends to achieve. The chapter also acknowledges the research limitations, highlighting the boundaries within which the study operates, and provides justifications for the research's significance.

Chapter 2 delves into the details of the research context and problem. It establishes a solid foundation by reviewing the relevant literature on effective monitoring and evaluation systems, public policy studies, and the key components and attributes associated with them. This literature review provides the theoretical frameworks for understanding the subject matter. Additionally, the introduction of interpretive and conceptual frameworks offers a lens through which the research was approached.

Chapter 3 detailed the approach, design, procedures, and methods the research adopted. This includes explaining how empirical evidence was collected and analysed. The discussion on reliability and validity measures indicates the steps taken to ensure the

credibility of the research findings. The consideration of technical and administrative limitations was crucial for contextualizing the scope and potential impact of the research.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings in alignment with the research questions posed earlier. The presentation of these findings is organized according to theoretical and empirical key themes. Comparing these results to those of past studies reviewed in Chapter 2 adds depth to the analysis and enhances the understanding of the research's original contributions.

Chapter 5 interprets the research findings from Chapter 4 using the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 2. This is the stage where the significance of the institutional arrangements and the conceptualization of the research are discussed in depth. Additionally, the chapter bridges the empirical research results with the broader theoretical context, providing a holistic understanding of effective monitoring and evaluation systems at Vhembe District Municipality.

Chapter 6 offers a recap of essential points covered in Chapters 1-3. It draws conclusions from the research results and relates these conclusions to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. The limitations of the study are acknowledged, followed by practical policy recommendations derived from the research. Furthermore, suggestions for future research indicate potential pathways for building upon this study's foundation.

2 REVIEWING LITERATURE TO DERIVE THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter has four broad objectives; namely to understand the research problem (Sections 2.1 and 2.2) to identify the knowledge gap (Section 2.3), to develop a theoretical framework for interpreting the findings (Sections 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6), and to conceptualise the research approach (Section 2.7). Specifically, in Section 2.1, the study briefly describes the research context in preparation for Section 2.2 in which we detail the research problem. In Section 2.3, we review the literature on studies that have attempted to explore institutional arrangements that foster an effective monitoring and evaluation system. With this knowledge, we situate our research within public policy studies and its key components and attributes in Sections 2.4 and 2.5. Having identified the systems theory and theory of change as the most relevant explanatory frameworks for this research, we discuss these theories in section 2.6. The last Section (2.7) provides a road map of how this research intends to explore the institutional arrangements for effective monitoring and evaluation systems in the Vhembe District.

2.1 History and description of the Vhembe District Municipality

The study conducted a comprehensive review of South African literature to gain a deep understanding of the Vhembe District Municipality. This municipality forms part of Limpopo province. It also shares borders with neighbouring countries, to the northwest, it shares a border with Botswana; to the north, it extends its boundary with Zimbabwe; and to the southeast, it is contiguous with Mozambique. (Vhembe District Municipality IDP, 2017/18-2012-22; Masiapato & Wotela, 2017).

The Vhembe district was first inhabited by Khoisan tribes and later the Venda people, who now make up the majority of the population. Beginning in 1820, the Tsonga people settled in the southeast part of Venda. The term "Vhembe" comes from the Tshivenda language and refers to the Limpopo River. The district encompasses all regions that were once part of the Venda Bantustan but also includes two highly populated areas from the former Tsonga homeland of Gazankulu, namely Hlanganani and Malamulele. As a result, the district is ethnically diverse (Coghta, 2020).

Figure 1: Vhembe District Municipality map



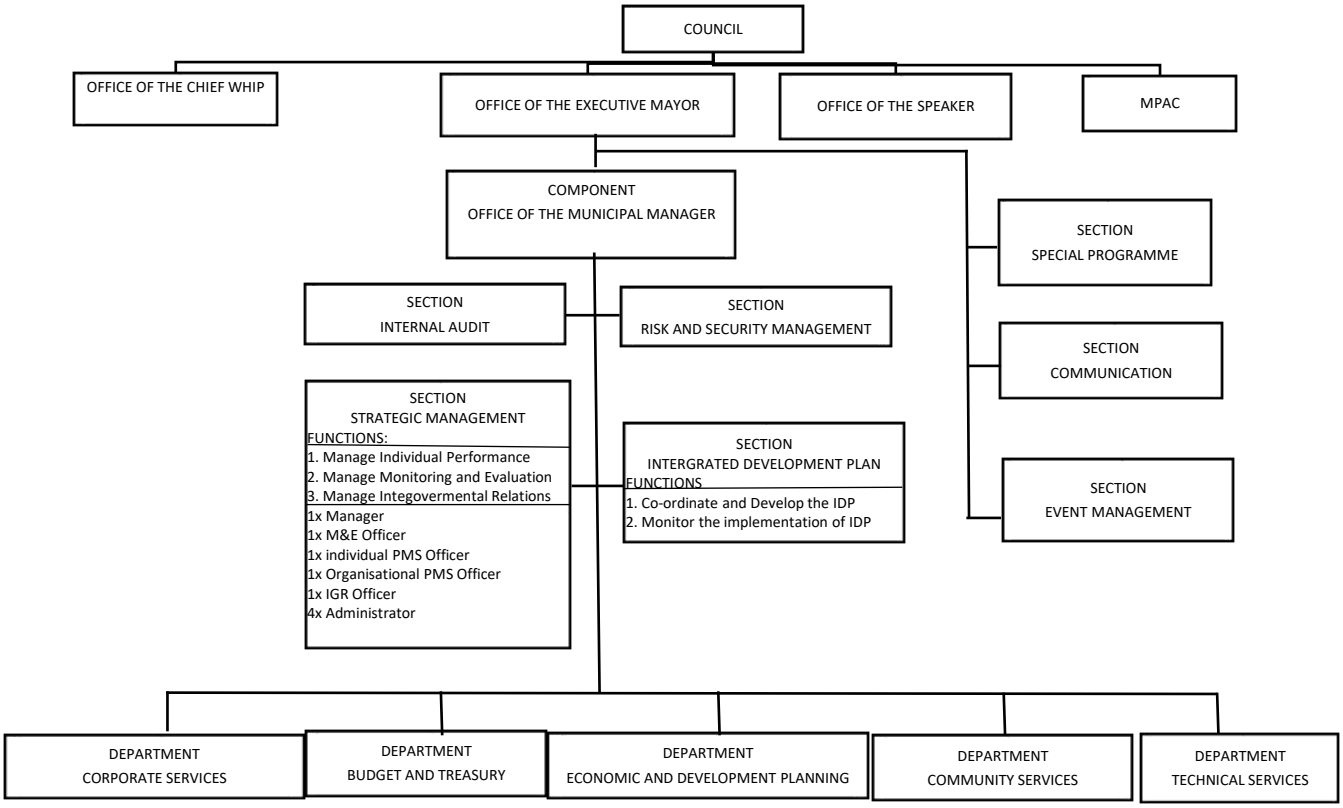
Source: www.municipalities.co.za

Figure 1 provides a layout of the Vhembe District Municipality as of 2016. The figure shows the four local municipalities within the Vhembe District Municipality. Since its establishment in the year 2000, the Vhembe District Municipality has undergone significant transformations in its municipal framework. Notably, in 2016, the Mutale local municipality underwent integration into the Musina local municipality, streamlining administrative boundaries. Concurrently, the Collins Chabane local municipality emerged as a result of merging segments from the Thulamela local municipality and the Makhado local municipality (Vhembe District Municipality IDP, 2017; Malima et al., 2019; Cooghta, 2020). Covering a vast land expanse of approximately 27,969,148 square kilometers, the district stands as a significant geographical entity. As of 2019, its population stood at 1,393,948 individuals, distributed across 382,357 households. Within this demographic tapestry, the constituent municipalities each play a distinct role. Notably, Makhado hosted 416,728 residents, Thulamela accommodated 497,237, Collins Chabane embraced 347,974, and Musina catered to 132,009 individuals. These statistics highlight Thulamela's prominence as the most populous municipality within the district, while Musina emerged as the least populous (Stats SA, 2016).

The Vhembe District Municipality has a Performance Management System Framework that aims to effectively execute the municipality's strategy and enhance performance. It recognizes the challenge of providing quality services with limited resources and stresses the significance of regularly reporting on municipal performance. The framework guides how activities such as performance planning, monitoring, measurement, review, reporting, and improvement cycle and processes should be conducted, organized, and managed within the municipality. One of the key goals of the PMSF is to ensure

accountability. The system strives to maximize accountability while also providing a mechanism for learning and improvement. By analysing the impact of different approaches, the municipality can identify effective strategies and make adjustments to improve service delivery.

Figure 2.2: Vhembe District Municipality organisational structure



Source: Adapted from VDM IDP Review 2020/21

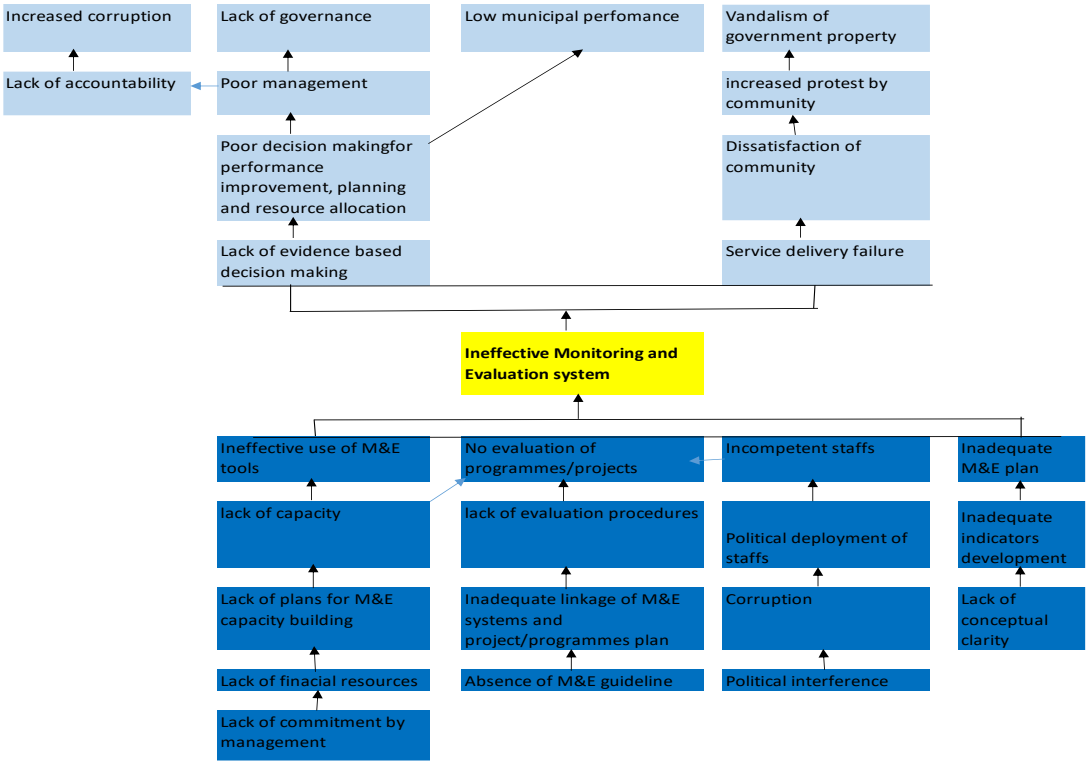
Figure 2 provides a summary of the organisational structure of the Vhembe District Municipality. It shows that the management of monitoring and evaluation in the municipality is a municipal manager's responsibility which is delegated to the strategic unit manager. Administratively, the municipal manager is tasked with the implementation of the IDP, monitoring of its progress and management of performance in collaboration with section and department managers (Structures Act 55 (1)(c)).

2.2 Ineffective monitoring and evaluation; symptoms, root cause, and consequences

In this section, the research problem is thoroughly examined using a problem tree analysis. This analysis begins by identifying the symptoms of the focal problem. These symptoms serve as indicators that there is a problem that needs to be solved. Following this, the root causes of the problem are investigated. These are the fundamental factors contributing to the existence of the problem. Finally, the consequences of the focal problem are outlined, highlighting the negative outcomes and implications that arise due to its presence. The section also presents the proposed intervention for effective implementation.

Figure 3 below illustrates the brainstorm we undertook to identify the symptoms, root causes, and consequences of an ineffective monitoring and evaluation before sourcing literature to support the identified factors and their relationship.

Figure 3 Problem Tree Analysis: ineffective monitoring and evaluation



Source: Author 2023

2.2.1 Symptoms of ineffective monitoring and evaluation

According to Kusek et al. (2004:19), the effectiveness of achieving desired outcomes and meeting specific targets relies heavily on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

These systems serve as essential tools for tracking progress within organizational management. Thus, the need for a strong M&E system is crucial. However, despite good intentions, literature indicates challenges in systematically implementing and managing M&E, including issues like underdeveloped systems, inadequate planning, and ineffective tool utilization.

Inadequate M&E system design leads to poor execution, negatively impacting the overall system's performance. For instance, in the Vhembe district municipality IDP for 2017/18, a major obstacle to enhancing service delivery is the presence of ineffective monitoring practices. Consequently, numerous projects face a heightened risk of failure. Scholars such as Mthethwa & Jili (2016) emphasise comprehensive systems at the municipal level, stressing the importance of continuous assessment of structures, processes, and systems. This alignment should be with each municipality's IDP, service delivery targets, and budget plans.

During Vhembe the IDP public consultation meetings, poor project monitoring emerged as a significant concern (VDM IDP 2017/18). Municipal officials, as highlighted by Mthethwa & Jili (2016), often fail to grasp the significance of monitoring and evaluation of projects. Consequently, there's a lack of a structured M&E system, including plans, indicators, and tools. This leads to problems such as excessive or insufficient performance indicators, irrelevant starting data, disconnected reporting systems, delays in managerial input (negatively impacting decisions), redundant monitoring methods, and other complexities (Hardlife and Zhou, 2013). These factors collectively contribute to the malfunctioning of M&E systems.

There are situations where the monitoring and evaluation system encounters difficulties in presenting precise information. For instance, the 2017/18 VDM IDP reveals that incomplete projects from 2014/15 were excluded from the 2015/16 project register. Consequently, poorly performing programs might not be accurately identified in the M&E report. This omission means that ineffective projects remain unrecognized, leading to a lack of effort in pinpointing the causes behind their underperformance. Additionally, although compliance monitoring was purported to have started, there is minimal evidence to support this claim in the IDP. Hardlife and Zhou (2013) explain that implementation

failures can stem from human errors such as manipulation, mistakes, sabotage, incapacity, or resistance, which often occur due to improper system implementation by management.

2.2.2 Root causes of ineffective monitoring and evaluation

The ineffectiveness of monitoring and evaluation can be ascribed to several factors, encompassing the lack of commitment from leadership or management, insufficiency in resources and capability, the absence of guidelines for monitoring and evaluation, and a deficiency in conceptual clarity.

To design and build an effective monitoring and evaluation system, the management or leadership must prioritize and champion its development. Despite the widespread recognition of M&E systems as essential managerial tools, their effectiveness is often hindered by management lapses. This results from insufficient attention given to their development, which is a management weakness. A successful monitoring and evaluation system requires ownership by those in leadership positions at all levels of governance (Hardlife & Zhou, 2013; Kariuki & Reddy, 2017).

The scarcity of both material and human resources often impairs the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems. Monitoring and evaluation are processes and therefore there is a need for linkage with other activities in the project cycle, such as planning and budgeting. The weak linkage between planning and budgeting on the one hand and project monitoring and evaluation on the other adversely affects the ultimate aim of monitoring and evaluation (Tengan & Aigbavboa, 2016: 390). Eresia-Eke & Boadu (2019) posit that this situation may be particularly severe in the public sector, where political considerations wield significant influence over decision-making and resource allocation.

At the local government level, a predominant challenge in monitoring and evaluation lies in the dearth of capable technical personnel equipped with essential skills. Despite substantial investments in enhancing the skills of public servants, the literature highlights persistent shortcomings in capacity within municipalities (Mello, 2010; Kariuki & Reddy, 2017). The IDP of Vhembe district municipality (2017/18) corroborates that although an organizational structure is in place, a majority of positions lack budgetary provisions. These gaps are particularly pronounced in rural municipalities compared to urban ones.

Insufficient capacity to sustain a productive monitoring and evaluation system results in the improper execution of its function (Mello, 2010; Kariuki & Reddy, 2017; Mthethwa & Jili, 2016)).

Traditional approaches, methods, and tools continue to be prevalent in monitoring and evaluation across most institutions, as indicated by Wotela (2017:5), rather than adopting result-based, outcome mapping, and participatory methods. The data collected through monitoring and evaluation often suffers from subpar quality and inaccuracies, preventing municipalities from making decisions grounded in evidence. Consequently, many municipalities are likely to lag behind in delivering basic services due to an inability to accurately track progress in reducing service backlogs (Kariuki & Reddy, 2017). If these deficiencies are not addressed, they could significantly undermine the potential of the monitoring and evaluation system to facilitate performance enhancement.

2.2.3 Consequences of ineffective monitoring and evaluation

Majority of South Africa municipalities are falling short of expectations and legal requirements, leaving citizens dissatisfied with the services they are paying for. According to Mello (2010), this is largely due to a weak system of monitoring and evaluation. Kariuki & Reddy (2017) further add that inadequate when the oversight of development efforts is insufficient, it results in services that fall below standards. Consequently, many municipalities are failing to fulfil their responsibilities towards citizens.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are crucial for managers seeking to achieve results and meet targets. Hardlife & Zhou (2013) explain that such systems provide valuable information on progress, performance, and problems. However, developing effective monitoring and evaluation is a challenge, and municipalities are struggling with the task of providing equal services to all citizens without compromising quality (Kariuki & Reddy, 2017).

Moreover, the consequences of poor service delivery are visible through community protests, which often turn destructive and violent (Mello, 2010). The observations by Kariuki & Reddy (2017) suggest that the rise in service-related protests signifies citizens' impatience with the slow pace of basic service provision. If these protests persist, there

could be significant implications for South Africa's democratic stability (Mthethwa & Jili, 2016).

2.2.4 Intervention for effective monitoring and evaluation

The research aligns with the perspective that effective monitoring and evaluation system is crucial in various domains. It supports decision-making in the formulation of government policies and plans (Mackay, 2000). Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation aid in achieving desired outcomes from development interventions (Rossi et al., 2003). The practice also promotes evidence-based policy-making (Kusek & Rist, 2002), fostering good governance and contributing to knowledge production by analysing the effectiveness of interventions (Rossi et al., 2003; Stufflebeam, 2002). Importantly, the utilization of monitoring and evaluation data can lead to an enhancement in the allocation of resources. This enhancement is facilitated by providing deeper insights into the results of expenditures within the sphere of local governance. Thus, this information becomes a valuable resource for making informed decisions about how resources should be distributed (Roche, 1999), provided that these practices are correctly implemented.

Scholars have argued that for effective monitoring and evaluation of projects, a plan must be an integral part of the project design (Passia, 2004; McCoy et al., 2005). This integration is necessary to identify and realize the project objectives. It also involves managing and monitoring inputs and activities to produce outputs, which are expected to lead to intended outcomes and impact (Wotela, 2017). To facilitate effective M&E during policy implementation, Wotela (2017) and Masilo (2021) suggest using an M&E result chain and framework. This framework is a critical tool that brings together performance processes to enhance service delivery (Masilo, 2021). Regardless of the management approach, monitoring functions must be instituted to manage inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes (Wotela, 2017:11).

Figure 4 on the next page presents a framework of the important elements of the results chain and the results framework. It shows the strategic link of the five important elements

of a development intervention – that is, the perceived 'impact' to the required 'outcomes' and 'outputs' to their corresponding 'activities' and 'inputs' – (Kusek & Rist 2004). First, the inputs provide information about the resources needed for the intervention such as the financial and personnel, computers, gadgets, vehicles and trainers. The next step involves the activities that need to be done which include staff recruitment, developing manuals, training, approve and implement monitoring and evaluation strategy and action plans, data collection, quality assurance, and producing reports. Outputs indicating the expected results to come from the combination of inputs and activities will follow, which would be improved quality intervention guidance manuals, improved quality intervention strategy and framework, built capacity among district staff, regular training provided, collection of quality data, production and dissemination of intervention results. In order to guarantee the complete achievement of the intended outputs, the inputs and activities should strictly be within the scope and capabilities of the intervention (budget, time, and competencies of the implementer). The outcomes will be strengthened monitoring and evaluation coordination within the district, enhanced capacity to manage and conduct high-quality monitoring and evaluation, the monitoring and evaluation will be a routine and accepted part of the policy, programme and project cycle, and monitoring and evaluation evidence is available and gaps are identified and filled. This might contribute to the impact of the intervention, which is an improved quality of planning and implementation of monitoring and evaluation. This impact would improve district service delivery performance and a better standard of living in the long term for Vhembe district communities. Assumptions and risks are outlined to keep all stakeholders aware of the potential factors that might hinder and enable the intervention implementation.

Figure 4: Presenting the important elements of the results chain and the results framework.

		Results Framework				
		Indicators	**Baseline values**	**Target Values**	**Assumptions**	**Risks**
ResultsChain	**Impact** Higher and long-term aspirations (positive and negative, primary and secondary) towards which an intervention must contribute.	Direct or indirect qualitative attributes or quantitative variables are used to measure the impact being created by the intervention. Should include sources of data for each impact indicator.	Values of impact indicators describing the situation before an intervention … against which progress towards attaining impacts can be measured or comparisons made.	Values of impact indicators describe the situation that should be realised because of (or after) an intervention.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention but necessary to guarantee the achievement of its desired impact.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention that might negatively affect attaining the desired impact.
	Outcome The expected or achieved short to medium-term results due to an intervention's outputs which are relevant to the achievement of the intended impact	Direct or indirect qualitative attributes or quantitative variables are used to measure the outcomes being created by the intervention. Should include sources of data for each outcome indicator.	Values of outcome indicators describing the situation before an intervention … against which progress towards attaining outcomes can be measured or comparisons made.	Values of outcome indicators describing the situation (number, proportion, timing, and location) that should be realised because of (or after) an intervention.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention but necessary to guarantee the achievement of its desired outcomes.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention that might negatively affect attaining the desired outcome.
	Outputs Products and services as well as changes resulting from activities of an intervention are relevant to the achievement of outcome. These are under the control of the intervention management team.	Direct qualitative attributes or quantitative variables are used to measure the outputs of an intervention. Should include sources of data for each output indicator.	Values of output indicators describing the situation before an intervention … against which progress towards attaining outputs can be measured or comparisons made.	Values of output indicators describing the situation (number, proportion, timing, and location) that should be realised because of (or after) an intervention.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention but necessary to guarantee the achievement of its desired outputs.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention that might negatively affect attaining the desired outputs.
	Activities Actions taken or work performed through which inputs or resources are mobilised to produce outputs of an intervention	Direct qualitative attributes or quantitative variables are used to measure the activities of an intervention. Should include sources of data for each activity indicator.	Values of activity indicators describing the situation before an intervention … against which performance can be measured or comparisons made.	Values of activity indicators describe what should be done (number, proportion, timing, and location) to realise the intended outputs of an intervention.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention but necessary to guarantee its activities.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention that might negatively affect implementing the desired activities.
	Inputs The financial, human, and material resources required by the intervention management to produce outputs.	Direct qualitative attributes or quantitative variables are used to measure the inputs of an intervention. Should include sources of data for each input indicator.	Values of input indicators describing the situation before an intervention … against which availability and consumption of inputs can be measured or comparisons made.	Values of indicators describing inputs (number, proportion, timing, and location) required to perform prescribed activities of an intervention.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the intervention control but necessary to guarantee the availability of its inputs.	Hypotheses about events, conditions, decisions, and factors outside the control of the intervention that might negatively affect the availability of the desired inputs.

Source: Adapted from the Wotela (2017)

In addition, for M&E to be effective, enough human resources, commitment, effective communication, a conducive implementation environment, and technical expertise are required. This means that projects should be allocated a clear and adequate budget for M&E. The resource allocation for M&E can be clearly defined within the overall service delivery project budget to give the M&E process the required recognition for the roles it plays not only in project management but also in the realization of project objectives

(Gyorkos, 2003). The process must be developed such that it measures the project's achievement against its stated objectives (Monyane, 2014:41). The lack of funds allocated for M&E development projects is a setback to M&E in enhancing the realization of projects.

The effectiveness and success of the monitoring and evaluation plan largely depend on the capacity of the institution or individual mandated to undertake the activity (Tengan & Aigbavboa, 2016: 390). There should always be a competent individual assigned to take charge of M&E (Kelly & Magongo, 2004). Different experts in such M&E activities as the ability to construct indicators, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, report writing, and the dissemination of M&E findings should also be responsibly identified. It is therefore significant to have a designated staff and respective M&E roles. This ensures the availability of experts to oversee the implications of the projects apart from the project manager. This expert is supposedly going to value M&E not just as compliance but as a tool for project management that may enhance project performances and outcomes (Mjingo, 2017).

Furthermore, for M&E to be effective, the process should be participative. Stakeholders' involvement is a core factor that facilitates the best practice of M&E. The M&E of development projects is efficient and effective if it allows the active involvement of all key stakeholders in the M&E process. This gives stakeholders a chance to learn more about the projects and how to affect the process or the impact of the project intervention. All stakeholders, including beneficiaries, implementation staff, and communities, should be involved in the M&E of the projects (Chaplowe, 2008:5). Ultimately, the lack of participatory M&E is a challenge in the process of realizing projects through the improvement of the project strategies and operations.

Moreover, an effective and efficient M&E requires well-organized communication among stakeholders and the community. The results of monitoring and evaluation, including impacts, need to be communicated to the people who need to use the report or those who are affected by the report. Reporting project achievements and evaluation findings serves to advance learning among staff as well as the larger community, improve the quality of the services provided, inform stakeholders on the project benefits and engage them in work that furthers project goals (Chaplowe, 2008:15).

2.3 Methods, data, findings, and conclusions of studies on monitoring and evaluations of institutional arrangements policies

This section presents research studies on and evaluation of effective monitoring and evaluation by examining the research strategies, design, procedures and methods adopted as well as findings and conclusions grasped by these studies. This allows us to establish methodological options that we should employ during our empirical part of this research. Lastly, we uncover the knowledge gap on this subject in general and Vhembe district municipality in particular.

Eresia-Eke and Boadu (2019) employed interpretive qualitative research design to investigate the readiness of South African public sector institutions for Monitoring and Evaluation. The study reveals that monitoring and evaluation systems in a number of public sector institutions have been created in a bid to comply with a mandate from higher authorities or governance expectations in the public sector. The study concludes that this type of foundation for the monitoring and evaluation system is weak and could compromise the ability of the system to generate meaningful information that would aid decision-making. The study suggests sensitization of employees by highlighting the benefits that a good monitoring and evaluation bodes for the institution. It further suggests repositioning the monitoring and evaluation unit in organizations in a way that enables employees and managers to better appreciate the role of monitoring and evaluation.

Mthethwa and Jili (2016) applied case study qualitative research to identify and analyse challenges that hamper the successful implementation of monitoring and evaluation. They used desktop analyses, gathering data from different documents such as the municipality's IDP and annual reports. They found that the main challenge faced by the municipality is that the knowledge, skills and competence required for those aspiring and performing duties related to monitoring and evaluation of public projects is limited. Municipal officials fail to understand the importance of monitoring and evaluation at the local government level of the various projects. Therefore, they have failed to develop an institutional monitoring and evaluation system (including monitoring and evaluation plans, indicators and tools).

Vyas-Doorgapersad and Zwane (2014) undertook a quantitative case study to explore the challenges of monitoring and evaluation and its impact on sustainable development. An empirically based questionnaire on the monitoring and evaluation, and service delivery were utilized. This quantitative study has revealed gaps in relation to lack of capability mainly in primary resources, viz. financial, technical and human. The capabilities of the municipality require effective utilization of these primary resources, resulting in acceptable standards of service delivery to satisfy community needs. The study suggests that municipal performance to address community needs can be identified, reviewed, prioritized and strategized through a Municipal Assessment Tool.

Mubangizi (2019) conducted a desktop qualitative research based on complex systems theory to understand the challenges that rural municipalities are faced with the need for a unique monitoring and evaluation model. The study reveals that while rural and poorly resourced municipalities stand to gain from strong monitoring and evaluation models, there are, currently, inadequate monitoring and evaluation processes being followed by most local municipalities in South Africa, and this could be a result of insufficient requisite skills. The study concludes that without detailed monitoring and evaluation processes, through an all-inclusive plan, with contributions from various stakeholders at the different levels of government and the local communities, along with skills development and political will – monitoring and evaluation initiatives will remain one of the failures, with the potential to further marginalise South Africa's rural areas.

Govender and Reddy (2014) employed a mixed method research strategy using a case study research design to evaluate monitoring and evaluation activities in KwaZulu-Natal municipalities. The main findings emanating from the survey is that monitoring and evaluation are impacted by numerous aspects such as: (i) lack of human resources and capacity, (ii) the use of numerous templates, frameworks and meeting of deadlines create the perception that monitoring and evaluation are exclusively about reporting and compliance, and lastly, (iii) lack of buy-in from senior managers; change management issues; feedback from plan owners; and developing the correct performance indicators. Further findings included the fact that the monitoring and evaluation units should be created as the custodians of municipal governance. The study was limited by dearth of information in respect to systemic municipal-wide monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa. Other limitations of the study were as that Monitoring and Evaluation

systems are not fully implemented in municipalities resulting in the respondents having limited knowledge of a municipal-wide monitoring and evaluation system, and Municipalities that did not submit the questionnaires within the available time had to be excluded.

Motingoe and van der Waldt (2013) conducted a study based on a qualitative research strategy to determine the extent to which COGTA and Departmental of Cooperate Governance utilise the Monitoring & Evaluation system in support of municipalities. The study utilised semi-structured interviews and questionnaires as data collection methods to obtain data. The research found that municipalities do not receive feedback on intergovernmental support, which is required in areas of underperformance. Furthermore, intergovernmental support to municipalities is inadequate, not provided timeously and does not address appropriate challenges. The study suggests that the utilisation of the monitoring and evaluation system should take into account the varying capacities and unique environments of municipalities, as this is critical for targeted support.

In summary, the studies reviewed underscore that effective monitoring and evaluation rely on (i) the knowledge, skills, and competence of those responsible for monitoring and evaluation tasks, (ii) robust monitoring and evaluation processes, and (iii) the efficient use of primary resources, including financial, technical, and human resources. Another vital factor is the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation unit as a guardian of municipal governance. Moreover, repositioning monitoring and evaluation in a way that highlights its role is crucial. The level of intergovernmental support for municipalities is also identified as a significant factor in effective monitoring and evaluation.

These studies do not deeply delve into the fundamental institutional structures that facilitate the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation in local government. Notably, the prevailing research approach used is qualitative, possibly due to the relatively early stage of exploration into monitoring and evaluation in South Africa. As a result, this study puts forward a qualitative research methodology and a case study design to uncover the organizational arrangements that support efficient monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe district municipality.

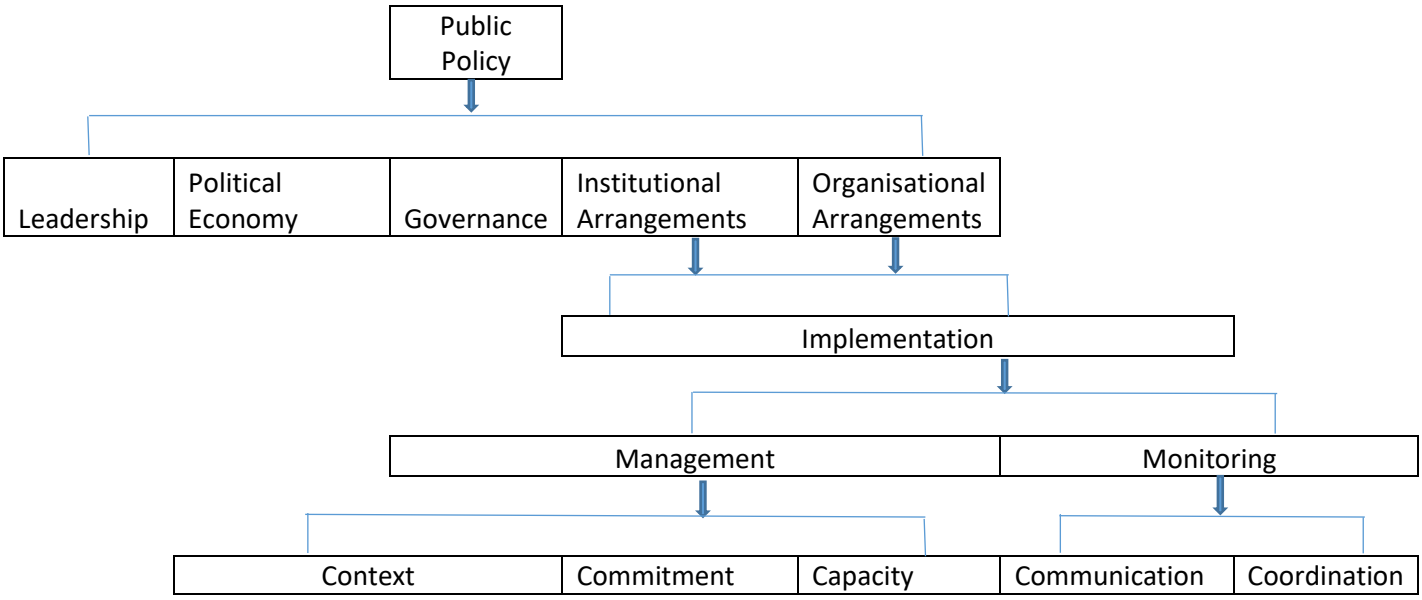
2.4 An introduction to public policy studies and its components and process

This section establishes and then discusses the academic field of the study and its important components encompassing the research with the purpose of giving our research an academic home. The discussion begins with describing the field of the study (2.4.1), followed by discussing its purpose (2.4.2), established facts (2.4.3), key issues and debates (2.4.4), major components (2.4.5) and finally the major processes (2.4.6). This was done to identify the key variables and understand their linkage with the broad field of the study and its components. These relationships were used to identify the theoretical framework to interpret the results.

Figure 5 on the next page illustrates the public policy field of the study, its key components and their linkages, and then the identified key variables. South Africa is a three-tier state made up of the national government, provincial and local government (municipal government). The national government's primary focus is policy making, while implementation is mainly facilitated at subnational levels (South African Constitution, 1996). The municipalities as a level of government closest to the people are expected to provide quality services that their communities need ((South African Constitution, 1996; the Municipal Structures Act of 1998 Act 27 of 1998).

Public policy embodies governmental decisions, actions, and strategies aimed at addressing societal issues (Anderson, 2003). Municipalities are expected to develop an IDP as an operational plan for service delivery in their jurisdiction. The IDP is then divided into PKAs, programmes and projects. Budgets are compiled and the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) is formulated. Within the SDBIP, for each KPA, objectives, indicators, baselines and targets are set that should be utilised to manage individual and departmental performance. The M&E system is then used to monitor and evaluate inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the programmes and projects emanating from the IDP (Municipal System Act of 2000 Act 32 of 2000; Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 Act 56 of 2003; Govender & Reddy, 2014: 167).

Figure: 5: Public policy and its components



Source: Adapted from Wotela (2017)

2.4.1 Describing public policy

Various scholars have approached the definition of public policy from distinct perspectives, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of this concept. Cochran & Malone (2014) succinctly frame public policy as "government decisions and actions designed to address matters of public concern." This definition emphasizes the active role of governmental bodies in formulating strategies and taking steps to tackle issues that affect society at large. In a similar vein, Hanekom & Bain (1990) offer a broader lens, defining public policy as "a desired course of action and interaction intended to guide the allocation of resources necessary for achieving societal goals and objectives." Here, the focus extends beyond mere decisions to encompass the overarching direction that policies chart in resource allocation to realize broader societal aspirations.

Knill & Tosun (2020) streamline the notion, encapsulating public policy as "a course of action undertaken by a government or legislature to address specific issues." This succinct description underscores the tangible actions governments take in response to particular challenges or opportunities, thus encapsulating the dynamic essence of policy formulation and implementation. Adding to this perspectives, Anderson (2003) introduces a

dimension of stability and purposefulness in defining public policy as "a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern." This viewpoint highlights the intentional and enduring nature of policy decisions, capturing the essence of policies as strategic responses to persistent issues.

Despite that these descriptions are different, it is clear that public policies are governmental decisions, and are the result of activities which the government undertakes in pursuance of certain goals and objectives. These descriptions provide different ways in which public policy can be understood; as a government decisions; desired or purposive course of actions; guideline in the allocation of resources; dealing with a problem or matter of concern (Hanekom and Bain, 1990; Anderson, 2003; Cochran and Malone, 2014; Knill and Tosun, 2020)

2.4.2 The purpose of public policy

Public policy serves as a structured framework that guides governments in addressing complex societal issues and facilitating positive change. This process encompasses distinct stages, including policy formulation, adoption, implementation, and enforcement through various means such as laws, regulations, government actions, and resource allocation by relevant public agencies. The crucial objective of public policy is the response to perceived problems that affect the well-being of society (Cochran & Malone, 2014:3).

According to Anderson (2003:3), the emergence of public policies is closely intertwined with the demands made by various actors within society. These actors can range from private citizens and advocacy groups to elected representatives and public officials. Their claims for action or inaction on public matters compel government officials and agencies to take a stance and enact relevant policies. This dynamic interaction shapes the policy landscape and reflects the intricate interplay between public concerns and governmental actions.

Moreover, Knoepfel et al. (2011:23) emphasize that public policy translates into concrete actions with the intention of modifying the behaviour of specific social groups. These groups are perceived as being closely connected to or capable of resolving the identified societal challenge. These targeted actions aim to bring about changes in behaviour that

will address the root causes of the problem. By doing so, policies work towards benefiting the larger social groups that bear the negative consequences of the issue at hand.

The outcome and impact of good policies may be catastrophic if there is no mechanism in place to supervise and calculate implementation. Anything can go wrong despite well calculated decisions. The institutional arrangement of local government is the framework within which public policy is determined and implemented. The structure of an organisation not only determines the relationship between the organs but also its character and strength. As such, monitoring and evaluation in government observe policy implementation to detect possible deviation, activate early warning systems and recommend corrective measures.

2.4.3 Established facts in public policy

The evolution of research into policy implementation, as elucidated by Brynard (2005:651-653) and Anderson (2008:137-141), unfolds in three distinct generations, each offering unique perspectives and methodologies for understanding this intricate process. The first generation of research challenges the conventional assumption that policy implementation naturally follows policy establishment. By examining cases where implementation falters, this generation underscores the complexities inherent in translating policy directives into tangible actions. It places a spotlight on identifying potential pitfalls and issues that hinder successful execution. This is often accomplished through in-depth case studies, which vividly illustrate the vulnerabilities of policy implementation and the imperative for remedial measures.

The second generation introduces a paradigm shift by recognizing policy implementation as a profoundly political endeavour, rivalling the prominence of policy formulation. Within this generation, two contrasting research approaches emerge: the top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The top-down approach meticulously scrutinizes the policy's goals and strategies, meticulously analysing the gaps that may arise between intended objectives and actual outcomes. In contrast, the bottom-up approach suggests investigating implementation from the grassroots level upwards, offering insights into the practical efficacy of policies. This dual lens acknowledges the multifaceted nature of policy implementation and power dynamics in shaping its trajectory.

The third generation, aptly termed the Analytical Generation, represents a concerted effort to synthesize the strengths of its predecessors. It strives to provide a comprehensive model for understanding policy implementation, informed by both top-down and bottom-up insights. This generation delves into dissecting the structural aspects of policies from a high-level vantage point, all while acknowledging the inherent potential for deviation or alteration during the implementation phase. By blending macro-level analyses with an appreciation for on-the-ground realities, this generation seeks to enhance the prospects for successful policy implementation.

2.4.4 Key issues and debates in the study of public policy

The academic examination of public policy emerged as a significant subfield within political science during the 1960s, aiming to provide deeper insights into the processes, decisions, and outcomes that shape a society's governance. Cochran & Malone (2014) emphasize that this field assists scholars, political figures, and the public in dissecting policies comprehensively, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and thereby enhancing formulation and implementation of quality policy.

Knill & Tosun (2020) further provides that the studying public policy is instrumental in comprehending the intricate mechanisms that define a political system's outcomes. Beyond mere examination, policy research also illuminates the broader consequences stemming from these decisions. Conducting systematic research into development, and implementation of public policies enhances our comprehension of governance processes and the policies in question (Anderson, 2003).

The literature (Anderson 2003; Cairney, 2011; Anyebe, 2018) presents several theoretical lenses through which public policy is analysed:

Political Systems Theory: This framework perceives public policy as a response generated by a political system in reaction to demands originating from its external environment. It involves interconnected institutions that make binding decisions for society, while the environment encompasses all external factors. Inputs include demands from individuals and groups, which, after undergoing the system, yield outputs such as laws, rules, and judicial verdicts, collectively forming public policy.

Group Theory: This theory underscores that public policy materializes through the contestation among various societal groups. It delves into the strategies and efforts of different groups to shape policy decisions in their favour during the formulation stage.

Elite Theory: Challenging the pluralist notion of equitable power distribution, the elite theory posits that public policy predominantly aligns with the interests of the ruling elite. This perspective suggests that a small, influential group exerts a significant sway over policy outcomes.

Institutionalism: Focusing on the formal structures and functions of government institutions, this approach investigates how public policy emerges through official channels. It scrutinizes the organization and hierarchy within government departments to illuminate the policy formulation process.

Rational-Choice Theory: Originating from economics, this theory applies microeconomic principles to elucidate political decision-making. It seeks to explain how individuals and groups select policies based on a rational calculation of anticipated costs and benefits.

These distinct theoretical frameworks offer researchers diverse tools to analyse and interpret the complexities of public policy (Anderson 2003; Cairney, 2011; Anyebe, 2018). The study unravels the inner workings of societies, shedding light on power dynamics, and comprehending the far-reaching implications of policies on people's well-being.

2.4.5 Major components of public policy

According to Wotela (2017:5), "public policy comprises five fundamental components: leadership, governance, political economy, institutional arrangements or analysis, and organizational arrangements or analysis". These components serve as a comprehensive framework for comprehending the intricacies of policy development and implementation. As described by Wotela (2017:5) the leadership component provides for the individuals or groups that play a significant role in shaping and driving policy decisions. The governance component involves the structures, processes, and mechanisms through which policies are formulated, implemented, and monitored. It considers how power dynamics, interests, and economic factors shape policy choices and outcomes. The final two elements establish institutional structures that enable the development, execution, oversight, and assessment of development initiatives.

The focal point of this study centres on institutional and organizational arrangements. Notably, institutions and organizations are related but distinct concepts. North (1990) (cited in Langill, 1999:8) characterizes institutions as the formal and informal rules, organizations, and structures that govern behaviour in society, while organizations are assemblies of individuals pursuing common objectives. Similarly, Ahmady et al. (2016:455) assert that organizational structure governs roles, systems, processes, and individuals striving for goal attainment. This structure determines the extent of delegation, control, coordination, and information flow within an organization (Renani et al., 2017:990). At its core, organizational structure aims to coordinate activities. Renani et al. (2017:992) stress that an organizational structure's purpose lies in directing and synchronizing employee actions to achieve organizational objectives. Ahmady et al. (2016:456) concur, highlighting the crucial role of organizational structure in linking principles, coordination, reporting relationships, and internal interactions.

Funminiy (2018:580) emphasizes that the selected organizational structure can significantly influence employee engagement and ultimately impact productivity. High productivity is vital for an organization's competitive edge, whereas low productivity can jeopardize its sustainability. Unsuitable structures can hinder coordination across different organizational levels, straying from the overarching organizational goals (Renani et al., 2017:991).

2.4.6 Major processes of public policy

The process of policy-making, as noted by Knill & Tosun (2020), is a multifaceted endeavour that necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the various stages and actors involved. The intricate nature of public policy creation involves a sequence of key stages, each contributing to the development, implementation, and evaluation of effective policies. These stages provide a structured approach to dissecting the policy-making process, enabling policymakers to navigate the complexities of governance and address societal challenges.

The first stage is p**roblem identification and agenda setting:** At the outset, policymakers identify and define pressing issues that warrant governmental attention. This stage serves as the foundation for the entire policy process. It involves recognizing problems, understanding their significance, and determining whether they merit policy

intervention. The agenda is set by strategically selecting which issues will be prioritized for policy formulation. The second stage is **formulation:** Once problems are identified, policymakers engage in the formulation stage. This phase entails the creative generation, exploration, and evaluation of potential solutions or courses of action. Various alternatives are considered, with their feasibility, costs, benefits, and potential impacts analysed. This stage requires a deep understanding of the issues at hand, as well as the ability to anticipate the ramifications of different policy choices. The third stage is **adoption:** Building upon the formulated options, policymakers make critical decisions about the policy alternatives that will be embraced to address the identified problems. This selection process may involve adapting existing policies, merging different solutions, or even refraining from taking action altogether. The chosen policy direction is a pivotal juncture that paves the way for subsequent implementation efforts. The fourth stage is **implementation:** Transitioning from decisions to actions, the implementation stage involves translating selected policies into tangible outcomes. Resources are allocated, administrative structures are established, and coordination mechanisms are put in place. Effective execution requires meticulous planning, efficient resource management, and continuous monitoring to ensure that policy intentions materialize in practice. The final stage is **evaluation:** This stage of the policy cycle centres on assessment and reflection. Policymakers rigorously evaluate the impact and outcomes of implemented policies. This appraisal encompasses an examination of whether the policy is achieving its intended objectives and its potential unintended consequences. Evaluation findings feed back into the policy cycle, informing decisions about policy continuation, adjustment, or discontinuation (Hanekom & Bain, 1990; Anderson, 2003; Cochran & Malone, 2014; Knill & Tosun, 2020).

As Knill & Tosun (2011: 10) highlighted, it's important to note that the policy cycle serves as a valuable heuristic tool. While the stages are presented sequentially, the reality of policy-making often involves interplay, iteration, and responsiveness to evolving circumstances. Additionally, the engagement of diverse stakeholders, including governmental bodies, interest groups, and private entities, underscores the collaborative nature of effective policy development.

2.5 Key Variables in public policy studies that are key to institutional arrangements

Contextualised with public policy (Section 2.4) and following the discussion on components of public policy, this section breaks the component(s) in which this research is sitting to ultimately get to the attributes that are key to this research. On identifying these attributes, we discuss them paying attention to their information needs and sources as well as how they link with each other.

2.5.1 Context

Policy implementation is far from occurring within a vacuum; it is intrinsically tied to the surrounding context. As Mokhaba (2005:129) suggests, policies do not unfold in isolation but within an environment that encompasses the developmental influences of the policy itself and its ongoing implementation (Munshedzi, 2020:96). This contextual framework sets the boundaries and directives for the implementation process, shaped by factors such as the policy's organizational position, the strategic course of the institution, and the degree of leadership support (Cloet, et al. 2018)

The underpinning of effective public policy, however, extends beyond context alone. A well-structured institutional foundation is essential for effective public policy implementation because it has implications for how the organization is designed and operates (Knill & Tosun, 2012:165). Organizational structure and culture are important considerations during the conceptualization of the implementation process. These variables can significantly impact the success or failure of policy implementation (Brynard, 2005:659). Changes in institutional structures can pose challenges to policy implementation, emphasizing the need for a sound leadership approach to establish a system that facilitates proper and accurate implementation of public policy (Knill & Tosun, 2012:166).

To provide a comprehensive institutional context, certain elements must be recognized and addressed within an institution. Foremost, identifying the key actors within the institution who influence the implementation process is important. Secondly, understanding the power relationships between relevant institutions is crucial. Lastly, recognition of the "social, economic, political, and legal" settings within which these

institutions operate is necessary for successful realization of policy objectives (Cloete et al, 2018).

2.5.2 Commitment

According to Vance (2006:4), commitment is defined as the fusion of a tenacious willingness to adhere to a chosen path and an unwavering reluctance to alter plans, often stemming from a profound sense of obligation. The fulfilment of policy objectives relies intrinsically upon the dedication of those tasked with implementation. Cloete et al. (2018) underline the critical nature of commitment from a spectrum of stakeholders including politicians, managers, and others intricately involved in the policy execution process. These authors advocate for a demonstrative commitment from leadership, be it political or managerial, even preceding the actual policy rollout. To bolster this commitment, a viable proposition is the establishment of binding contractual agreements among responsible parties, ensuring the requisite resources are at hand for effective implementation.

Furthermore, the level of commitment influences the approach taken to address potential implementation challenges. When there is a strong commitment to policy implementation, efforts are made to close any loopholes that may hinder the desired outcomes. In essence, the triumph of policy implementation rests upon the unwavering commitment of those entrusted with its execution (Cloete et al., 2018:208). It's noteworthy that despite an institution possessing ample resources, clear policy delineation, and a robust structural framework, a dearth of commitment from policy implementers precipitates implementation failure (Mokhaba, 2005:129; Cloete et al., 2018:208).

Mokhaba (2005:96) emphasizes a symbiotic relationship between commitment and other variables. However, Brynard & de Coning (2006:199) counterbalance this perspective by asserting that while commitment is undoubtedly influenced by these variables, its primary nexus is anchored within the institutional context. This underscores the institution's overarching backdrop; comprising organizational ethos, environment, and prevailing structures; as the predominant influencer of commitment.

2.5.3 Capacity

The notion of capacity, within the framework of policy implementation, as noted by Cloete et al. (2018:208) relates to the ability to deliver fundamental public services, aiming to improve citizens' quality of life in accordance with government objectives over an extended duration. The success of these policies hinges on the capabilities, skills, motivations, and attitudes of public servants responsible for their execution. Cloete & Wissink (2000:17) emphasize that the mere existence of legislation doesn't guarantee policy implementation; skilled administrators play a pivotal role in translating policy decisions into actionable strategies.

Within the context of policy implementation, capacity also encompasses the ability of implementers to orchestrate all available resources—both tangible and intangible—to fulfill policy objectives (Muzhedzi, 2020:97). Knill & Tosun (2012) emphasize the indispensable requirement of providing resources to administrators to ensure successful policy execution. Tangible resources, spanning material, human, financial, technological, and logistical dimensions, significantly influence the realization of policy outcomes within the public sector. Equally vital are intangible resources, such as qualifications, motivation, and courage, which intricately shape policy execution (Cloete et al., 2018). Consequently, the selection of public servants should be founded on their competencies to carry out their duties and oversee the tasks of their subordinates.

Enhancing administrators' capacity involves implementing training programs to refine their skills and knowledge and reinforcing performance management systems to optimize institutional outcomes (Muzhedzi, 2020:97). Furthermore, the appointment of administrators should be based on their competence to not only fulfil their duties but also to effectively supervise their subordinates. Capacity, as defined, extends beyond mere competence; it encompasses the structural, functional, and cultural underpinnings that undergird the achievement of predetermined goals and objectives (Bernard, 2001:181).

2.5.4 Communication

According to Okumus (2003), communication within organizations holds a dual significance—both as a formal conduit and an informal channel for transmitting policy actions and directions. This dynamic process extends its reach both internally, among organizational members, and externally, involving stakeholders beyond the organization's

boundaries. This dynamic communication landscape plays a pivotal role in ensuring the seamless realization of policy objectives.

Furthermore, Okumus (2003) sheds light on the fundamental significance of effective communication. It serves as the bridge that connects policy intentions with successful implementation. By articulating policy intentions clearly and transparently, organizational leadership can pre-emptively address challenges that might emerge during execution. These unforeseen challenges could manifest as surprise, misunderstandings, resistance, frustration, or speculative notions among citizens and various stakeholders. Indeed, as Cloete et al. (2018:212) emphasize, adept communication regarding policy intentions offers an invaluable opportunity for leaders to not only elucidate the positive motivations underlying a policy but also to avert unintended repercussions that could mar its implementation.

Meyer (2002) echoes these sentiments, emphasizing the pivotal role of well-defined communication in policy execution. By minimizing misconceptions, allaying concerns, and fostering understanding, effective communication becomes the cornerstone for cultivating trust and acceptance among those influenced by the policy. It is a potent instrument for aligning stakeholders' perspectives and expectations with the policy's objectives.

Mudzhedzi (2020:98) highlights the importance of establishing proper communication structures and processes in policy implementation. Without these structures and processes in place, the implementation of policies is unlikely to be effective. Clear channels of communication, well-defined roles and responsibilities, and effective information-sharing mechanisms are necessary to facilitate the successful implementation of policies.

2.5.5 Coordination

Burger (2015:94) notes the central role of coordination as the prerequisite for ensuring the effectiveness of policy implementation. Echoing this sentiment, Cloete & Burger (2018: 214) elaborate on the detrimental outcomes of inadequate coordination, which often manifests as a stumbling block to forming fruitful alignments and partnerships.

Both inter-organizational and intra-organizational coordination emerge as indispensable conduits for orchestrating seamless policy execution.

Coordination, both inter-organizational and intra-organizational, plays a paramount role in ensuring the effective execution of policies. Inter-organizational coordination occurs when different government departments or organizations collaborate to provide specific services. This collaboration allows for the efficient allocation of resources, prevents duplication of efforts, and enables synergies between different entities. Intra-organizational coordination, on the other hand, refers to cooperation and collaboration within a single department or organization. When employees within the same organisation work together to improve their working relationships, it enhances their ability to achieve successful implementation and deliver services effectively (Riech & Hershcovis, 2011:11).

Effective communication is crucial in facilitating coordination during policy implementation. Without communication or with ineffective communication, coordination becomes difficult (Munzhedzi, 2020:99). Communication tools and channels must be utilized to trigger active coordination among stakeholders. It is essential to use communication tools that facilitate active coordination, such as regular meetings, clear and concise information sharing, and feedback mechanisms. However, while other factors play significant roles, coordination serves as the prerequisite for turning well-crafted policies into tangible realities.

2.6 Established framework for interpreting results on the monitoring and evaluation system

Contextualised within public policy studies (Section 2.4) and linked to key attributes of decoding of institutional arrangements (Section 2.5), this section identifies and discusses established frameworks that this research will employ to interpret its empirical research results in Chapter 5. Various theories such as institutional theory, policy implementation theory, theory of change and system theory can be used to explore institutional arrangements to foster an effective monitoring and evaluation system at the subnational level. However, for the purpose of this study, we opted for theory of change and systems theory

2.6.1 Systems theory

Systems theory emerged as a response to the limitations of linear theories in clarifying complex phenomena. As observed by Philips (1969:3) "Systems theory seems to have originated from the dissatisfaction felt with the old-fashioned technique for studying complex systems". Similarly, Friedman & Allen (2010:4) posit that existing theories tended to be reductionist. They note that this outdated strategy was to isolate a framework into discrete parts each of which was examined in seclusion from the others. The entire system was then viewed similarly to the entirety of these detached parts; according to this traditional view, it was the parts which regulate the environment of the entire system (Friedman & Allen, 2010:3). However, Bertalanffy introduced the idea that living organisms are complex systems composed of interconnected and interdependent parts, and that understanding these systems requires looking at the interactions and relationships between these parts, rather than isolating individual components (Amagoh, 2008:2; Heil, 2017:2).

Ludwig von Bertalanffy stands as the visionary behind systems theory, an approach that revolutionized how we understand complex systems. While he introduced the concept of General Systems Theory in 1937, its true significance came to light in the 1960s (Heil, 2017; Amagoh, 2008:2). Bertalanffy's vision of the theory was organization, serving as a blueprint for orchestrating interactions among the various components of a larger organism. This concept, as highlighted by scholars like Leighninger Jr. (1978:449) and Friedman and Allen (2010:4), not only accentuated the unity within systems but also laid the foundation for a profound paradigm shift.

Central to systems theory is the notion of interconnectedness – the intricate web of relationships binding the components of a system together. This philosophy, succinctly captured by Bertalanffy (1968:4) and echoed by Phillips (1969:3), shatters the notion of isolating individual components for analysis. Instead, it underscores the necessity of studying the system as a whole to unveil the underlying mechanisms at play. To fully grasp complex phenomena, systems theory champions a holistic analysis. This perspective, as articulated by Connors (2007:1), is a call to unravel the intricate tapestry of a system's properties. Bertalanffy (1969:4) further extends this concept to public issues, policies, and programs, arguing that understanding these facets demands viewing them as interdependent elements of a larger systemic framework.

Harry (1990) highlights several factors that serve as indicators of a high-quality system. These factors encompass: i) Components: An ideal comprised of multiple parts or components that work together to achieve the system's purpose. These components can be sub-systems, elements, or any identifiable parts within the system. ii) Connection: The components of an ideal system are interconnected, meaning there are well-defined relationships and interactions between them. The connections facilitate the flow of information, energy, or any other relevant factors within the system. iii) Structure: The arrangement of the connections in an organized and fixed manner is known as the structure of the system. iv) Interaction: The principle emphasises that components within the system influence each other through their interactions. The presence or removal of one component affects the behaviour and functioning of other components within the system. v) Process: Processes describe the dynamic nature of a system and how it evolves. vi) Holism and Emergent Properties: the properties and behaviours of the system cannot be fully understood by merely studying its individual components. Instead, they emerge from the interactive processes of its components. vii) Identity: Every system has specific properties and characteristics that distinguish it from other entities or systems. Understanding a system's distinct identity is crucial for analysing and comprehending its behaviour and functioning. viii) Environment: A system operates within an environment that consists of external factors, events, or entities that can influence the system. While the system may marginally affect the environment, it is significantly affected by external elements. ix) Conceptualization: The notion of a system is a conceptual construct created by individuals or groups with specific aims and values. This conceptualization shapes the way the system is defined and perceived, influencing its design and functioning (Harry, 1990).

Govender & Reddy (2014: 167) note that the municipality is a complex system that consists of multiple parts or components who work together to develop and implement strategic, tactical and operational plans, respectively. The same authors note that municipal plans commence with the integrated development plan (IDP) through various stakeholder engagements, which means no service or priority can be funded if not included in the plan. The contents of the IDP are informed by the regulatory Key Performance Areas (KPA's), provincial and national programmes, stakeholder participation and progress reports generated by the municipal management information

systems (MIS) for the previous IDP period. The IDP is then divided into KPAs, programmes and projects. Budgets are compiled and the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) is formulated. Within the SDBIP, for each KPA, objectives, indicators, baselines and targets are set that should be utilised to manage individual and departmental performance. The M&E system is then used to monitor and evaluate inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of the programmes and projects emanating from the IDP. Performance management reports are then generated and distributed to the relevant stakeholders for comments and corrective action to be taken. The IDP, SDBIP and both the individual and departmental performance management systems should feed data into the monitoring and evaluation system. The information gained from the M&E system should be used to enhance local governance in municipalities (Govender & Reddy, 2014:167).

Nguyen (2016) and Dubrovsky (2004) share the perspective that systems theory offers a beneficial approach to grasping how the components within a system are arranged to create a unified whole. Systems theory's primary benefit lies in its ability to thoroughly assess all potential sources of a problem within a given system. By individually examining each component and grasping its role within the system, practitioners gain insights into the problem's origins and underlying causes. This comprehensive approach aids in effective problem-solving by revealing hidden issues and causal links.

Regardless of being conceptually interesting, systems theory faced many criticisms. Yoon & Kuchinke (2005:16) assert that the systems model lacks specifics on how collaboration with an organization should occur. It doesn't provide a roadmap for managing conflicts that may arise between different elements of the system, such as organizational and work environments. This lack of guidance creates uncertainty when implementing changes or interventions. Additionally, systems theory's focus on complexity and interconnectedness can create difficulties for organizations in formulating appropriate responses amid conflicts or uncertainty. The absence of clear guidelines on addressing such scenarios makes implementing effective solutions more challenging. Furthermore, critics argue that systems theory fails to offer direct guidance on manipulating specific elements within a system to achieve policy goals. This ambiguity can hinder policymakers' ability to determine how to effect desired changes within a complex system.

Another criticism is that systems theory may struggle to provide a practical approach when different constituents within a system are in conflict or possess varying levels of power and resources. Resolving these conflicts and imbalances may necessitate more nuanced strategies beyond the scope of systems theory (Stewart & Ayres, 2001:82).

2.6.2 Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) approach was founded in the mid-1990s, according to Weiss (1998 in Aurlacombe, 2011:41), has since evolved into a powerful framework that facilitates the design, implementation, and assessment of initiatives, policies, strategies, and programs geared towards transformative change. Although Hamdy (2019:6) acknowledges its roots in the 1980s and 1990s, the approach has undergone significant development and refinement over time.

Essentially, the Theory of Change provides an outcome-centered methodology that emphasizes the logical progression of interlinked events leading to a desired outcome, as eloquently described by Serrat (2017:239). This approach doesn't just focus on the end goal but also takes into account the crucial early and intermediate outcomes, often referred to as formative evaluations. These intermediate outcomes serve as vital milestones toward achieving overarching long-term objectives. By monitoring and assessing these incremental changes, the Theory of Change allows for strategic adjustments if circumstances dictate, as highlighted by Serrat (2017:237).

A key facet of the Theory of Change is its departure from simplistic linear models of change. It aspires to capture the intricate nuances and systematic insights into the mechanics of change, an evolution highlighted by Hamdy (2019:6). This complexity-driven perspective offers a more accurate representation of how change unfolds, steering clear of overly simplified cause-and-effect notions.

Moreover, O'Flynn & Moberly (2017) underscore the Theory of Change's particular relevance for intricate organizational setups involving multiple partners. Its ability to foster a shared understanding of the change process among diverse stakeholders proves invaluable, as it aligns everyone's contributions with the overarching objectives, thus enhancing collaboration and synergy.

2.7 Institutional arrangements for effective monitoring and evaluation system, a conceptual framework

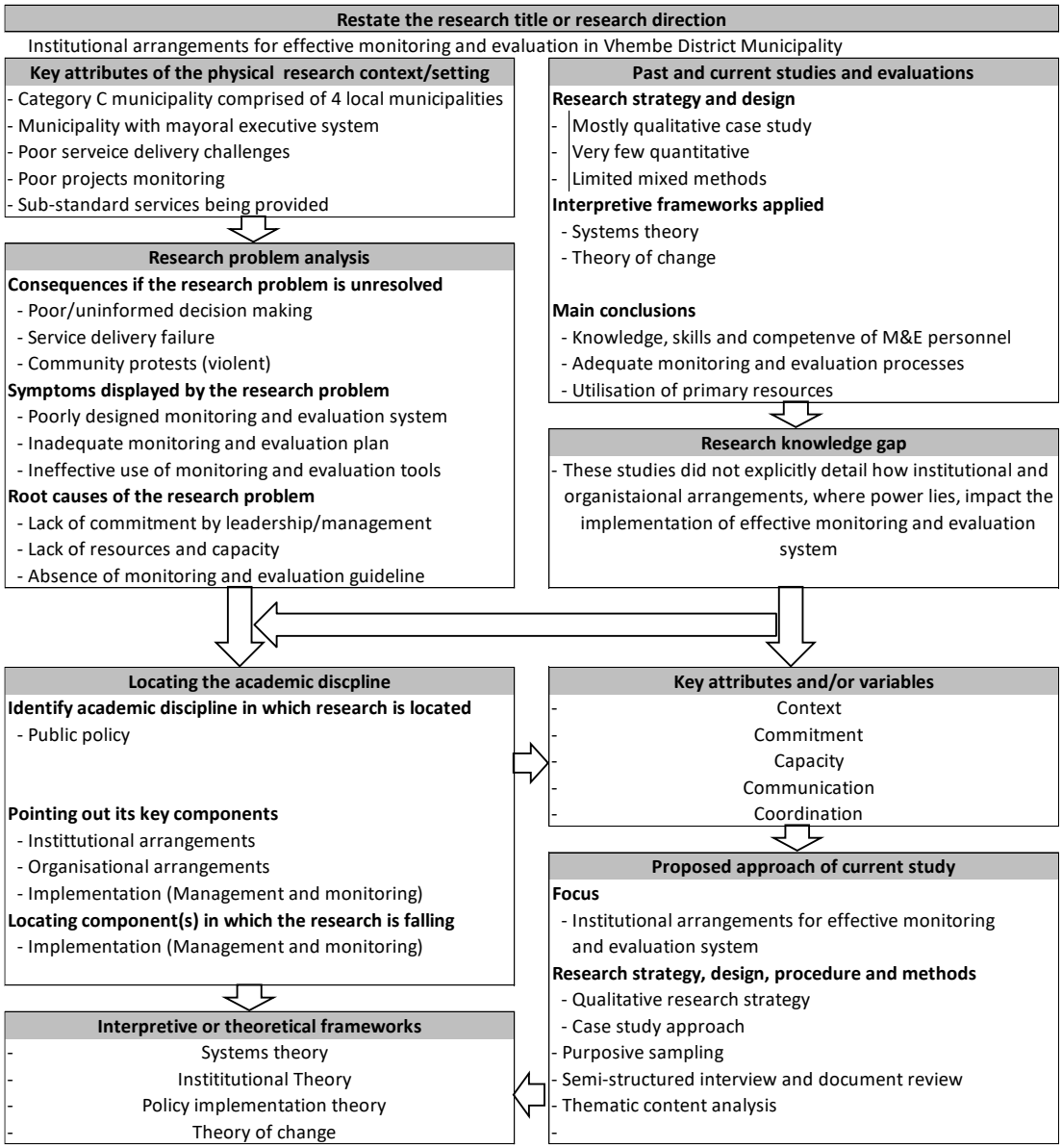
This section presents a proposed conceptual framework for examining the Vhembe District Municipality institutional framework for fostering an effective monitoring and evaluation system. We outline how the research will proceed beyond the literature based on summary discussions of sections 2.1 to 2.6. The discussion summary provides us with the direction to propose our research strategy, design, procedure and methods. It begins with the restatement of the problem, thereof, present a summary on the literature that helped us to understand the roots causes, symptoms and consequences of ineffective monitoring and evaluation in the local government context. We then presented a summary of the previous studies that attempted to examine the effective monitoring and evaluation system. This is followed by presenting the summary of the public policy as an academic field of study most relevant to our research, including its components and key variables. We then presented a summary of the established frameworks that this research will employ to interpret its empirical research results in Chapter 5.

Figure 6, on the next page, presents the proposed conceptual framework for examining the Vhembe District Municipality's institutional arrangements for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation, as highlighted by Kusek et al. (2004:19), play a pivotal role as management tools, enabling the public sector to attain results and meet specific objectives. However, despite the existence of the monitoring and evaluation unit, the service delivery performance of the Vhembe district municipality is on a declining trajectory (Auditor General's 2017/2018 report). The VDM 2017/18 Annual report underscored inadequate project monitoring as a primary concern resulting in substandard service provision.

Existing literature concerning monitoring and evaluation systems reveals persistent challenges in their implementation and management, despite the evident intentions and high expectations. Scholars such as Mthethwa & Jili (2016); and Hardlife & Zhou (2013) have pinpointed indicators of ineffective monitoring and evaluation. These include inadequately designed systems, deficient monitoring plans, and underutilization of evaluation tools. Addressing the root causes of these issues, as identified by Kariuki and Reddy (2017), Wotela (2017), and Kusek and Rist (2004), reveals leadership's lack of commitment, deficits in resources and capacity, and a lack of clear monitoring and

evaluation guidelines. The works of Kariuki & Reddy (2017), Mthethwa & Jili (2016), and Mello (2010) emphasize the wide-ranging consequences stemming from ineffective monitoring and evaluation practices. These outcomes encompass subpar municipal performance, deficiencies in service delivery, and instances of community protests.

Figure 6: A proposed conceptual framework for examining the Vhembe District Municipality Institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system



Source: Author 2023

The research conducted by Mthethwa & Jili (2016), Mubangisi (2019), and Govender & Reddy (2014) collectively highlight the key components that play a pivotal role in ensuring

the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation processes. These studies provide that effective monitoring and evaluation revolve around the competence, skills, and knowledge of individuals carrying out monitoring and evaluation tasks, as well as well-structured processes and the optimal use of essential resources like finances and human resources. Additionally, the study by Eresia-Eke & Boadu (2019) reveal that many institutions establish monitoring and evaluation systems to meet mandates from higher authorities or governance expectations, leading to a weak foundation that could compromise the system's ability to generate meaningful decision-making information. Furthermore, Mubangizi (2019) conducted qualitative research utilizing the complex systems theory approach. The primary aim was to comprehend the difficulties faced by rural municipalities and to recognize the necessity for a customized monitoring and evaluation system. it revealed that a significant number of local municipalities in South Africa lacked effective monitoring and evaluation procedures. This insufficiency could potentially be attributed to a shortage of the essential skills among the personnel responsible for these tasks.

However, prior studies have not adequately examined the intricate relationship between institutional arrangements and the successful implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems. To bridge this gap, our proposed adopting a qualitative approach and case study design. By focusing on the Vhembe district municipality, we aim to thoroughly investigate the role of institutional arrangements in driving effective monitoring and evaluation. Recognizing the complexity of this subject, our study seeks to shed light on the dynamics at play and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the matter.

The study was conducted within the context of public policy. Reviewed literature provide that public policies represent governmental decisions driven by activities aimed at achieving specific goals and objectives. Knoepfel et al. (2011) highlight that public policy results in formalized actions, often restrictive, intended to modify the behaviour of social groups addressing collective problems (target groups) in favour of those suffering the problem's negative effects (final beneficiaries). Cochran and Malone (2014) assert that public policy studies assist scholars, politicians, political scientists, and the informed public in thorough policy analysis to enhance choices, formulations, and implementation. Knill and Tosun (2020) emphasize studying public policy to comprehend the processes and decisions shaping a political system's outcomes.

Wotela (2017) outlines five fundamental elements of public policy, which include leadership, governance, political economy, institutional analysis, and organizational analysis. The study focuses on the last two elements, specifically emphasizing their role in facilitating the formulation, execution, oversight, and evaluation of developmental initiatives. Institutional arrangements significantly influence policy adoption and content, offering a policymaking context alongside dynamic political aspects like parties, groups, and public opinion (Anderson, 2003). Organizational arrangements determine how roles, power, responsibilities, and information flow among management levels (Renani et al., 2017). Additionally, public policy scholars provide that critical elements for successful policy implementation include understanding the institutional context, securing implementer commitment, appointing skilled public servants, clear policy communication, and effective coordination. Considering these factors can alleviate challenges, enhance outcomes, and elevate policy success chances.

The research utilized both systems theory, proposed by Bertalanffy in 1937, and the Theory of Change to interpret findings from empirical studies. Systems theory was employed to clarify how institutional setups for monitoring and evaluation systems functioned in the Vhembe district municipality. Meanwhile, the Theory of Change shed light on the interconnected causal pathways necessary for achieving successful monitoring and evaluation outcomes.

3 RESEARCH STRATEGY, DESIGN, PROCEDURE AND METHODS

In Section 1.2.3, we posed three questions that this research report intended to answer—that was, "To what extent do the existing institutional arrangements contribute to fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe district municipality? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the institutional arrangements that are in place to foster effective monitoring and evaluation? What institutional arrangements are required for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe District Municipality? We reviewed the literature and developed an interpretative as well as conceptual framework that guided the choices of techniques we used. This chapter identifies and describes the research approach, design as well as procedure and methods that we employed in this research to collect, process, and analyse empirical evidence. Broadly, it had three objectives; namely, to identify and describe the research strategy (Section 3.1), the research design (Section 3.2), as well as the procedure and methods (Section 3.3). The chapter also describes the reliability and validity measures (Section 3.4) that this research applies to make it credible as well as the technical and administrative limitations of the choices we make (Section 3.5).

3.1 Research Strategy

In our study, as defined by Bryman (2012:37), research strategy refers to the methodological orientation guiding social research. Matthews & Ross (2010:57) note that research strategy is essentially a research plan. These various strategies include a range of approaches, such as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Bryman, 2012; Matthews & Ross, 2010). In the context of our study, we intentionally opted for a qualitative research strategy.

The decision to embrace a qualitative research strategy for this research stemmed from that it is known for its inductive approach, which focuses on generating meaning and understanding from the data (Leavy, 2014:9). This choice aligned seamlessly with our study's objective, which was to gain insights into the institutional arrangements for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation in Vhembe District Municipality. The approach also emphasizes the use of words and textual data rather than quantification (Neuman, 2014; Bryman, 2012). Given that the study aims to unpack the meanings and

perspectives of participants regarding a topic, the approach was well-suited to capture the richness and depth of these experiences.

Mthethwa & Jili (2016) employed a qualitative research approach, using interviews and content analysis, to comprehend the viewpoints of individuals involved in this process. Their primary objective was to explore, illustrate, and interpret the beliefs and opinions of stakeholders dealing with these systems' implementation. The research aimed to uncover in-depth insights into the challenges faced by these stakeholders and gain a more profound understanding of the complexities related to monitoring and evaluation system implementation.

Another example involves the research conducted by Hlatswayo & Govender (2015), where they examined the monitoring and evaluation procedures associated with the execution of public policies. Their research questions guided the selection of a qualitative approach, encompassing a multi-method, interpretive, and naturalistic analysis. Notably, the flexibility and cost-effectiveness of the qualitative strategy facilitated comprehensive information gathering.

3.2 Research design

A research design functions as a foundational framework that provides structured guidance for systematically gathering evidence, while considering specific criteria and the central research question. As outlined by Bryman (2012), it acts as a navigational tool for shaping the course of the investigative process. Reflecting this sentiment, Leavy (2017) illustrates research design as a plan that structures and directs the path of a research undertaking. Notably, five fundamental research designs exist: cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study, comparative, and experimental (Bryman, 2012; Kumar, 2011; Leavy, 2017).

Case study research entails a variety of data sources, including interviews, observations, documents, and archival records. The use varied data collection sources helped the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of the case, enabling them to analyse the intricacies of the subject matter (Bryman, 2012; Neuman, 2014). This approach proved fitting in this context, as it permitted the collection and analysis of qualitative data, thereby

nurturing the development of novel concepts, conceptual definitions, and inter-concept relationships (Neuman, 2014).

An illustration of the efficacy of the case study design is demonstrated by Mthethwa & Jili (2016), who utilized it to uncover monitoring and evaluation system implementation challenges. They shared that the advantage of applying this research design is that a rich understanding of the phenomenon was acquired which ultimately allowed the implementation challenges to be interpreted.

3.3 Research procedure and methods

This section documents the actual procedure and the methods employed in this research to collect, process, and analyse empirical evidence. Broadly, we detail the data and information collection instruments (Section 3.3.1), the target population and sampling of respondents (Section 3.3.2), the ethical considerations during the research process (Section 3.3.3), data and information collection process and storage (Section 3.3.4), data and information processing and analysis (Section 3.3.5) as well as the background description of the respondents who provided empirical evidence for this research study (Section 3.3.6).

3.3.1 Research data and information collection instrument(s)

Leedy & Ormrod (2015:26) a research tool or instrument is a mechanism or strategy employed by a researcher to collect, manipulate, or interpret data. Kumar (2011:41) research tool or instrument is anything that serves as a means of gathering information for a study. It can include various types of data collection instruments such as observation forms, interview schedules for structured interviews, and interview guides for semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Kumar, 2011; Matthews&Ross; 2010).

In this particular study, we opted to utilize an interview guide as the primary means of gathering information. This guide was carefully developed and consisted of a thoughtfully crafted set of predetermined questions. These questions were intentionally designed to guide the flow of the interviews with the participants in a purposeful manner. The process of formulating these questions served a dual purpose: it enabled the researchers to proactively anticipate potential challenges in the interview process while also providing a framework to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant topics.

According to Bryman (2012:472), an interview guide serves as a concise compilation of memory prompts, specifically outlining the areas to be covered. It finds its application in both unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Leavy (2017:140) extends this notion by describing interview guides as tools ranging from broad lines of inquiry to more intricate collections of open-ended questions. Similarly, David & Sutton (2011:620) define it as a compilation of overarching themes, specific questions, and pertinent keywords that accompany interviewers during the interaction. The primary rationale behind adopting the interview guide was to remind the interviewer of things to bring into the interview and to ensure consistency in asking questions to all respondents. The interview guide helped ensure consistency in data collection by providing a framework for the interviewer and ensuring all questions are covered during the interview process.

Leavy (2017:139) indicates that data collection instrument range from unstructured to semi-structured to highly structured format. In this research undertaking, a semi-structured data collection structure was employed. Matthews & Ross (2010:263) describe a semi-structured as "a data collection method (such as an interview or questionnaire), in which questions and answers may vary in wording and length; answers to questions are often in the respondent's own words". The selection of a semi-structured data collection instrument was underpinned by the rationale that it fosters participant expression in their preferred language, facilitates comprehensive and extensive responses, and allows for unrestrained exploration of directions prompted by the questions (Leavy, 2017:139).

The adoption of a semi-structured data collection instrument allowed the researcher to to vary questions and ask more details since there was no rigid script to follow and respondents were able to tell what they want in their way. This approach, consequently, empowered the researcher to employ probing questions, unearthing rich and contextual insights concerning the support of monitoring and evaluation. For interview guide, kindly refer to the Appendix.

3.3.2 Research target population and selection of respondents

3.3.2.1 Research target population

According to Neaman (2014:252) the concept of "target population" refers to a well-defined, extensive group comprising numerous cases. Researchers draw samples from this

population and subsequently extend their findings from the sample to the entire group. This notion aligns with Leavy's (2017:76) portrayal of the study population, which encapsulates the elements from which a sample is derived. Kumar (2011:348) further contributes by emphasizing that the study population consists of individuals from whom researchers seek insights. This can encompass various groups, such as residents in a geographic area, employees within an organization, a community, or individuals dealing with specific challenges.

The study population was the senior managers and assistant managers including the executive mayor and the municipal manager. within the Vhembe district, which serves as the subject of this case research. To examine whether the organizational arrangements are effectively promoting a monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe district municipality, it was vital to directly hear from the municipal officials responsible for the development and implementation of the IDP and monitoring and evaluation system. This is important because these officials possess varying viewpoints and interpretations of how their institutional operations are functioning.

3.3.2.2 Sampling or selecting respondents from the target population

According to Kumar "sampling is the process of selecting a subset (sample) from a larger group (sampling population) to estimate or predict unknown information, situations, or outcomes about the larger group" (2011:177). Bryman (2012:14) adds that sampling is the selection of cases that are relevant to the research question. Neuman (2014:46) assert that sampling entails a detailed examination of a limited number of cases. The insights gathered from these cases are then applied to comprehend a larger group of cases.

To ensure the collection of pertinent and focused data, the research employed non-probability, purposeful sampling strategies when selecting participants. Purposive sampling, as defined by Babbie (2013:128), is a type of nonprobability sampling involves a deliberate selection of specific cases by the researcher based on their relevance or representativeness. We purposefully sampled 10 participants (executive mayor, acting municipal manager, five managers, and 3 officers) responsible with the development and implementation of the IDP and monitoring and evaluation system of the municipality. By intentionally selecting individuals who were well-informed in this specific area, we were

able to obtain focused and relevant data that addresses our research purpose and questions effectively.

A study conducted by Hlatswayo and Govender (2015) and the one conducted by Dipela and Mohapi (2021) both employed purposive sampling as their preferred sampling method. In both cases, the researchers deliberately selected participants based on specific criteria related to the research objectives. This allowed them to gather relevant data from individuals who were best suited to provide insights into the research topics under investigation.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations when collecting research data

A researcher must comply with professional ethics when conducting a study. According to Neuman "ethics defines what is or is not legitimate to do or what "moral" research procedure involves" (2014:145). Matthews & Ross (2010:503) emphasize its significance as a framework adopted by individuals and societies to uphold moral norms in their lives. Furthermore, David & Sutton (2011:630) position ethics both as philosophical discipline and a fundamental aspect of everyday cognition, deliberating on matters of right and wrong.

In line with these perspectives, the researcher conformed to the standards of ethical conduct, demonstrating unwavering commitment to refrain from any conduct that might encroach upon ethical boundaries. Throughout the research process, a vigilant alignment with ethical principles was consistently upheld. This conscientious dedication to ethical considerations served as a guiding light, ensuring that the research was conducted with unwavering integrity and a strong sense of responsibility. The researcher adhered to the following ethical principles:

3.3.3.1 Informed consent

Prior to the commencement of interview, participants were provided with comprehensive details about the study's background, objectives, and ethical considerations. The researcher explained the objectives and ethical considerations of the research to the participants before obtaining their consent to participate. Participants were allowed to choose whether or not to take part in the study, and it was emphasized that their decision would not have any negative consequences for them. Participants who chose to

participate were requested to provide their consent by signing interview and audiotape consent forms. By doing so, the researcher ensured a tangible and documented record of each participant's agreement, further safeguarding their rights and ensuring accountability.

3.3.3.2 No harm to the participants

The study took measures to safeguard the well-being of the participants, ensuring they were no physical, psychological, or emotional harm. The researcher also made sure that the information gathered was not of an embarrassing nature and did not pose any potential threats to their lives.

3.3.3.3 Confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy

The researcher maintained privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality throughout the entirety process of gathering information. The interviews took place in secluded settings to offer participants a comfortable and private atmosphere, ensuring confidentiality. This helped create a safe space where participants could freely express their thoughts and opinions without concerns about being overheard or judged. The researcher maintained confidentiality by not associating individual participants with their specific responses. This means that no names or identifying information were recorded or linked to the data. Instead, the responses were grouped or aggregated to maintain anonymity and protect the participants' identities. The collected data, both physical and electronically, were securely stored to safeguard unauthorised access. Physical data, which included tapes, field notes, and transcripts, were carefully stored in a secure, lockable locker. Electronic data were safeguarded in a password-protected file.

3.3.4 Research data and information collection process

The process of collecting research data involves a dynamic interaction with a targeted sample or population, as highlighted by David & Sutton (2011:628). According to Bryman (2012:14), this engagement is crucial for acquiring relevant data that contribute to answering the research questions at hand. Bryman (2012:14) further emphasizes that the essence of research data collection lies in effectively gathering data from the selected sample to derive meaningful insights.

Various methods are employed to gather information, including participant observation, ethnography, interviews (conducted face-to-face, over the telephone, or via the internet),

focus group discussions, and document analysis (David & Sutton, 2011; Bryman, 2012). Within the scope of this study, a mixed data sources were employed. The primary data collection involved conducting interviews, facilitating direct interactions to gather fresh insights. On the other hand, secondary data was sourced from municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), publications, and reports, offering a broader context for the investigation. The data collection process took place in March and April 2023.

3.3.4.1 Interview

For interviews, potential respondents were contacted through telephone and physical visits to their offices to schedule appointments. To accommodate participants' schedules, appointments were thoughtfully arranged. The following six (6) respondents were interviewed: strategic unit manager, deputy director (M&E), IDP manager, communication manager, events manager, and officer (M&E). Before each interview participants were asked for clear consent to record the conversations. The use of face-to-face interviews allowed the respondents to answer questions adequately, with the number of details they preferred, and to qualify and clarify their answers, open-ended questions were used. The interviews, lasting between 45 to 60 minutes each, provided participants with sufficient time to offer in-depth insights. During the interviews, the researcher requested any relevant documents that could contribute to the study's purpose.

In the early phase of data collection, we conducted a pilot study by conducting interviews with three officials of one of the local municipalities in the Vhembe District Municipality. The purpose of piloting was to gain initial insights into the research topic and refine the interview process. By conducting these interviews, we gathered valuable information and evaluated the effectiveness of the interview questions and prompts. The findings from those interviews were instrumental in refining the subsequent information gathering process. The researcher examined the data from these interviews and identified emerging themes and patterns. These early findings provided important insights that guided the researcher in developing further probing questions and refining the interview schedule.

Previous study conducted by Hlatswayo & Govender (2015) highlighted the mutual exchange of thoughts during interviews, contributing to an enriched learning experience for both interviewers and interviewees. Similarly, Dipela & Mohapi (2021) demonstrated the effectiveness of interviews in their flexibility to elicit responses and probe deeper.

3.3.4.2 Documents review

For this study, existing documents such as the IDPs of 2017/18 – 2021/2022, IDP review 2017/18 and 2018/19, and annual reports of 2017/18 and 2018/19 were obtained from the VDM website. The review of these documents allowed the researcher to gain insights into how these systems are implemented and managed. The process also provided a historical perspective and uncovered valuable information about the institutional arrangement for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation systems for managing service delivery.

3.3.5 Research data and information processing and analysis

3.3.5.1 Research data and information processing

Data processing for research involves arranging the data for analysis (Matthews & Ross, 2010; 144). Recorded interviews were transcribed from voice records to Microsoft Word. All the responses in transcripts were organised according to broad thematic categories. The process involved going through interview transcripts over and over to make sense of the data and arrange them. These involved breaking down extensive information into more manageable sections and then combining them to create a logical overview. Through this, recurring patterns and connections within the data became apparent. The central themes emerging from this analysis were then aligned with the initial research questions. To substantiate the findings, direct quotes from the data were employed, capturing participants' statements verbatim. The outcomes of the research were then organized and presented in a structured manner. Subsequently, the results were analysed to uncover their significance, implications, and contextual relevance within existing knowledge.

3.3.5.2 Research data and information analysis

Data analysis and interpretation are crucial components of the research process, aiding in making sense of collected data. Trent and Cho (2014:652) define analysis as the process of summarizing and organizing data, while interpretation involves finding or creating meaning from it. Bryman (2012:14) highlights that data analysis involves managing, analysing, and interpreting data, encompassing a variety of methods that describe, explain, and evaluate collected information. This multifaceted approach helps identify patterns, address research questions, test hypotheses, and enhance data clarity for better

understanding (Matthews & Ross, 2010:344), ultimately leading to "intelligible accounts" of the data (Leavy, 2014:50). Data analysis provide a thorough account, engage in discourse, assess, and offer insights into the substance and attributes of gathered data in the context of a research project (Matthews & Ross, 2010:344).

We employed thematic content analysis as the chosen methodology for interpreting and analysing the presented data. The approach provided a structured framework for uncovering underlying themes within the data. The entire process resulted in this comprehensive report that captured these steps and findings, ready to be shared with others.

In a study conducted by Dipela & Mohapi (2021), interviews were transcribed and subjected to an exhaustive coding process. This procedural step enabled the researchers to discern underlying themes, which subsequently formed the basis for data interpretation and analysis. Similarly, in the study by Hlatswayo & Govender (2015), a meticulous organization of all data was undertaken using a MicroWord File, followed by the utilization of the Atlas software (CAQDAS) to effectively code topics and synthesize them into coherent themes for analysis.
Top of Form

3.3.6 Description of the research respondents

All study participants were males, depicting a gender preference for Vhembe District Municipality during the research time. The sample comprised officials working as unit managers, deputy directors, and officers, with each having worked for the Vhembe District Municipality for an average of roughly ten years, with an average age ranging between 45 and 55. The respondents were unit managers within the VDM Manager's office (Strategic Manager, IDP Manager, Communication Manager and Events Manager), deputy director: M&E and officer: M&E, reporting to the Strategic Manager.

3.4 Research strengthens—reliability and validity measures applied

Reliability

Leavy (2017:113) defines reliability as the consistency of results. This means that if a study or measurement is reliable, it produces consistent outcomes each time it's conducted. In other words, if you were to repeat the study, you would expect to obtain similar results.

Neuman (2014:212) adds that reliability is about the recurrence of the same thing under identical or very similar conditions. This underscores the need for research methods to produce consistent results not just once, but across repeated instances of measurement or study.

Validity

According to Babbie "validity as the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept being studied" (2013:191). In other words, for a measure to be valid, it should accurately capture the true essence or meaning of the concept being investigated. Kumar's (2011:166) definition of validity aligns with the concept that an instrument (such as a questionnaire, survey, or test) should measure precisely what it is intended to measure. If an instrument has high validity, it means it effectively captures the specific construct it was designed to assess. In this context, when a study is valid, it means that the findings and conclusions derived from the research are trustworthy and can be considered genuine reflections of the phenomenon being studied.

Kumar (2013:172) asserts that four indicators reflect validity and reliability in qualitative research: i.e. credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability

Credibility

Credibility pertains to the quality of the research project and the rigor of the chosen methodology. It involves establishing trustworthiness with the readers of the research findings (Leavy, 2017:154). It is achieved by ensuring that the results of the research are believable from the perspective of the research participants (Kumar, 2013:172). In this study, credibility was diligently upheld by subjecting the research resuts to the scrutiny of the respondents. This approach not only allowed for their confirmation and validation of the accuracy of the findings but also ensured congruence and alignment with their experiences. Their involvement in this verification process enhances the credibility of the research outcomes, solidifying the foundation upon which the study rests.

Dependability

Matthews & Ross (2010) refer dependability to as "a measure of research quality, meaning, for example, that all data is included, and that no data is lost through unreliable audio recorders or inaccurate transcribers". Babbie (2013:353) describes dependability in the

form of a question, “If you made the same measurement again and again, would you get the same result”? It ensures that data is accurately captured and that the same results would be obtained if the research process were repeated. (Kumar, 2013:172). To ensure that all data was included voice records, with permission from participants, were used to record interviews and were kept in a lockable safe. The researcher compared field notes taken and interview transcripts from voice recording to make sure that the data captured correctly represent the verbal proceedings recorded during the interview. The transcribed information was sent to some respondents to go through and edit.

Transferability

Transferability, as outlined by Leavy (2017:156), pertains to the capacity to extend research findings from one particular context to other contexts. This extension is predicated on the notion of "fittingness," which highlights the resemblance between the original and target contexts, elucidated through the richness of the data. To ensure the robust transferability of findings we thoroughly documented research process undertaken in this study to afford other researchers the opportunity to replicate and emulate the methodology.

Confirmability

Kumar (2013) notes that confirmability is about ensuring that the results could be confirmed or supported by others who might approach the same research with different perspectives. To establish confirmability within this study, the data collection tools and methods were rigorously tested on a distinct group. This approach allowed the researcher to identify any unclear aspects and make necessary adjustments. Consequently, this iterative process not only enhanced the quality of information but also fortified the credibility of the results by ensuring they could withstand scrutiny from multiple angles.

3.5 Research weaknesses—technical and administrative limitations

The researcher faced difficulties in finding identified potential respondents with the reason provided being busy schedules. Participants who were identified expressed scepticism about participating due to the researcher's affiliation with Statistics South Africa. Overcoming this scepticism proved time-consuming, as participants needed assurance that the study was solely for academic purposes. Building trust under these circumstances can influence the authenticity of the responses received.

The study had proposed to interview 10 participants, however only six (6) made themselves available for the study. The remaining participants, executive mayor, acting district manager (also a corporate manager), and internal audit manager, kept on postponing our appointment dates citing their busy schedules. The researcher stopped following up on them after concluding writing the research report.

Although the Vhembe district has four local municipalities, the study is limited to the Vhembe district municipality office which is located in Thohoyandou. As such, the target population was drawn from this office and does not include local municipalities within the Vhembe district. Furthermore, the research's geographical confinement to the Vhembe District Municipality constrains the generalizability of findings to other municipalities across South Africa.

4 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

This research set out to assess the local government's institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system in the case of Vhembe district municipality. To undertake this assessment, the study posed three questions:

1. To what extent do the existing institutional arrangements contribute to fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe district municipality?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the institutional arrangements that are in place to foster effective monitoring and evaluation in Vhembe District Municipality?
3. What institutional arrangements are required for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe District Municipality?

In this chapter, each section will present the research finding based on the outlined research questions. The presentation displays the information in terms of the theoretical and empirical key themes that purposively address each research question. Therefore, these results are compared to those of past studies reviewed in section 2.3 to depict a far more comprehensive and critical review of the results (Wotela, 2018).

The unit of analysis of this study is the institutional and organisational arrangements for fostering an effective monitoring and evaluation. The research results account for the information gathered through semi-structured interviews with six respondents (strategic unit manager, deputy director (M&E), officer (M&E), IDP manager, communication manager, and events manager,), and a review of related documents. All the respondents were males. The sampled officials work within the office of the Municipal Manager, with each having worked for the Vhembe District Municipality for an average of roughly ten years. The number of years working in the district was significant since the more experience the respondents had, the better their comprehension and knowledge of issues connected to institutional arrangements and monitoring and evaluation systems in the Vhembe district. The reviewed related documents supported the subject in discussion.

4.1 Extent to which the existing institutional arrangements contribute to fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe district municipality

This section present findings to address the first question of the study, '*To what extent do the current institutional arrangements within the Vhembe District Municipality contribute to fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system'?* The seven themes below were identified from the information provided by the respondents in answering the question. This question aims to critically examine how the existing institutional structures and processes contribute to or hinder the establishment and functioning monitoring and evaluation system within the Vhembe District Municipality.

4.1.1 Presentation of empirical results

4.1.1.1 Discussion of Key Themes

Theme 1: Structural Arrangements

The theme provides an understanding of how the VDM has organised itself strategically and structurally in implementing the monitoring and evaluation from the development of the IDP, SDBIP, monitoring and reporting. The theme sought to clarify the different roles played by various components of the municipality.

During interviews, the participants provided a brief description of structural arrangements and also where the monitoring and evaluation unit is located in the organisational structure of the Vhembe District Municipality. The researcher conducted a document review (IDP) to ascertain the structural arrangements that are in place to foster the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system. The monitoring and evaluation is a subsection within the Strategic unit which is located within the Municipal Manger's Office and responsible for strategic planning and management. The strategic unit manager is also responsible for the Performance Management System (PMS) and Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) subsections. Participant 2 indicated that "…w*e have monitoring and evaluation as a subsection under the strategic unit. Under the same unit, we also have Performance Management System and Inte-Governmental Relations, all these units under local government are very strategic".*

From the interviews and the IDP documents (2017/18) the IDP is a responsible with developing, co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of IDP. Monitoring and Evaluation section is responsible for tracking progress of projects in alignment with the ID. Performance Management System (PMS) Unit focuses on managing the performance of the district municipality and its departments. While the Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) section handles relationships and coordination with other levels of government. Participant 2 noted that *"…you know you cannot divorce Performance Management System from Monitoring and Evaluation".* The same sentiment was shared by Participant 6 who provided that, "…*these three (IGR, PMS and M&E) go hand in hand because from IDP, from planning, we come to this office because IDP is being implemented here. Then the IDP is being monitored under the Strategic Management"*

The district municipality has various departments, including Community Service Department responsible for providing services to the community within the district municipality. Technical Service Department which deals with technical aspects such as infrastructure and engineering services. Budget and Treasury or Finance Department which manages the financial resources of the district municipality.

Theme 2: Leadership and Management Support

Two participants express that both the Municipal Manager's office (MM) and the Executive Mayor support the monitoring and evaluation work. Participant 4 noted that "…*they give us space to work independently. That's the first thing. Secondly, when we bring back our reports, they take them seriously. And thirdly, where the reports are indicating that there are things that are off track that need to be rectified, they make follow up directly with the people. I think they cannot be more supportive than that."* Additionally, sometimes monitoring and evaluation personnel are invited to the management meetings and by the executive mayor to make presentations. These provide an opportunity for the M&E unit to communicate their findings and updates on projects. Another participant added that officials have resources such as car allowances to visit project sites and verify information further which demonstrates support for their work.

Although participants acknowledged the institution's leadership support for monitoring and evaluation, all of them emphasised that the support is not sufficient. Monitoring and evaluation are not being sufficiently supported "… *because we are having challenges with projects*

that are not being executed according to plan." The participants indicated that the monitoring and evaluation office needs more resources and a dedicated team to effectively monitor projects, track payments, and assess progress. Participant 1 noted that "… *We're not giving them necessary support. You have it (M&E office), you need to equip it, give it necessary resources and team, you will complete projects as per deadline and timeframe because they will be there monitoring."* Participants believe that with proper support from district leadership, the monitoring and evaluation office can ensure that projects are completed within deadlines and contribute to efficient service delivery and meeting targets.

Theme 3: Stakeholder Participation

The misunderstanding of the monitoring and evaluation lead to staff members being isolated and not trusted by project managers and other employees. Participants noted that project managers often perceive M&E as a form of investigation or spying, which creates fear and resistance towards M&E staff and that impact the credibility of the information they provide. Participant 4 highlighted that *"… And means that if you find a person who does not understand this thing (M&E) it means that even the information provided might not be trustworthy."*

Since project managers or other employees perceive monitoring and evaluation as a threat to their performance or job security, they avoid or resist interactions with M&E staff, and it makes it difficult for M&E staff to accurately report on the progress or performance of the project, especially if it involves pointing out areas of underperformance. Participant 4 articulated, *"…Because you find that people misunderstand the purpose of M&E and that makes the unit or people in the unit not be liked, develop enemies. That affects the M&E unit performance because they work looking over the should and being careful of what to report and not."* The monitoring and evaluation teams sometimes conduct unannounced visits to the project sites and that sometimes is seen as intrusive, leading to hostility by project managers.

Theme 4: Human Resource, Capacity and Training

The staff complement in a district M&E office is insufficient to handle the workload and meet the monitoring standards. Participants noted that currently, the monitoring and evaluation sub-unit has a deputy manager, administrator and intern. Participant 3 noted that *"… The unit must be used as intended and it must be beefed up with the staff. If you look now the district has only 2 people and they cannot do everything."* Participant 5 shared the same sentiments

stating that *"… It is understaffed. Yes, I suspect is a deputy manager, they could be three including the manager.*

None of the staff hold a formal qualification or have attended training in monitoring and evaluation. Participant 6 shared that *"the M&E administrator is currently enrolled for a degree related to M&E"*. Participant 4 added that *"there is no training of M&E personnel. Some of us because we have been working with projects, we use our own experience"*

Theme 5: Strategies/indicators/plans

There is no framework or guideline developed specifically for implementing monitoring and evaluation activities in the district municipality. Participant 4 articulated that *"… we do not have a framework, if we were to develop a framework we would outsource for the service."*

Two participants noted that the monitoring and evaluation system monitors the implementation of projects and initiatives outlined in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and ensures they are aligned with the plan. Participant 3 *"…IDP develop a plan that needs to be implemented then the monitoring and evaluation unit will check or monitor if the projects are being implemented as planned and in line with the IDP."* The monitoring of projects that are implemented by the municipality follow the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan. Participant 4 shared that *"…You know, as the SDBIP would do, you know, extract projects from the IDP for the particular financial. So we are monitoring if we make any progress in terms of the implementation of those programs, and projects."*

Although participants acknowledge that it's a monitoring and evaluation system, two of them noted that the unit focuses on monitoring, and a comprehensive evaluation is not currently being conducted due to the lack of expertise. Participant 2 shared that *"… Evaluation is very difficult in government because it needs expertise. We're concentrating more on monitoring than on evaluation because you know, evaluation on its own it's a very broad concept."* Participant 4 shared the same sentiments and stated that "…*I wouldn't say we have done a wide evaluation. It's just that the way we in a way when you monitor it is also coupled with evaluation because when we go check out the quality of the work against the money that has been pumped into the project you're evaluating. We don't go deep."*

Theme 6: **Information System**

In terms of collecting data, the M&E team designed instruments for each project and make use of cameras to take pictures for evidence. Data is also collected by engaging the community in the area of project implementation. Participant 4 shared that *"…M&E conduct unannounced visits with an instrument to check if the project is on track and also use cameras to provide evidence when we write reports. We also talk with the community around"*. The "Bill of Quantity" instrument is provided by the finance department to M&E to verify the information in the field before they could make payments to the service provider. Participant 2 highlighted that "…*When finance is in doubt to make payments, they provide us with the checklist which lists all the activities the project had agreed to deliver. We have to go to the field to check and compare in the field then bring that back to finance to decide on the payment"*.

The district does not have a reporting system in place for project monitoring, everything is done manually, but for following up and providing feedback on complaints laid by community members they use the premier/presidential hotline and Khauledza, depending on where the complaint came from. The system allows the M&E office to provide real-time progress reports on the matter until it is resolved. Participant 4 noted that *"… there is no particular reporting system that we use, except when the is complain coming from premier hotline or presidential hotline or khauledza"*.

Theme 7: **Feedback Mechanism**

The M&E unit monitors the performance and compiles monthly and quarterly reports based on the activities, but when issues are identified during site visits, the M&E unit contacts the manager responsible for the project immediately to provide advice and address concerns. Participant 2 shared that "… *to address issues effectively, immediately when we are at the site and found that things are not going well we call the manager of the concerned project to advise. When we are at the site or area we call managers to sensitize them about the concerns we have on the project before we could even write a report"*. This proactive approach allows them to sensitize project managers about the concerns before writing the formal report. The report serves as supporting documentation for the issues already discussed during phone calls or site visits. These reports are submitted to the management and also undergo verification by the internal audit, which is then shared with other spheres of government. Participant 4 highlighted that *"…And at the end of every quarter, we then submit our report to the internal audit*

for verification." Participant 2 added that *"…these reports go also to all other spheres of government. And once you report your target, they are not just words."*

The responsibility for taking action based on the reported matters lies with the municipal manager. He/she is expected to review the M&E reports and make decisions and actions accordingly. Four participants stated that the municipal manager, as an accounting officer, has to use the system to monitor service delivery implementation processes in the municipality. The system provides feedback on the progress of projects. Participant 3 noted that *"… It is like an early warning, so if they provide feedback that things are not going well, it is up to the unit manager to process the information and then attend to the early warning."* Participant 2 added that *"… If the project is reported as completed, M&E will go there to verify if there are no remaining activities at the site then that says the project is still not completed."*

4.1.1.2 Response to the research question

The intention of the question, "*To what extent do the existing institutional arrangements contribute to fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe District Municipality?",* was to establish the web of institutional arrangements that have been established across the Vhembe District Municipality to support the implementation of monitoring and evaluation. The research found that monitoring and evaluation are relatively in place in the Vhembe district municipality. Therefore, respondents were asked to share the existing institutional and organisational arrangements and the level of support the monitoring and evaluation receive from the institution.

As discussed in section 2.5.1., policy implementation does not occur in a vacuum. The context in which a policy is implemented can have both positive and negative effects on the implementation process (Mokhaba; 2005:129). Further to that, the way a policy is situated within an organization's structure, its alignment with the organization's strategic goals, and the level of support it receives from leadership are all part of the institutional context. This context plays a significant role in determining how smoothly a policy can be implemented and how well it fits within the organization's overall objectives (Cloete et al., 2018:8) The respondents highlighted that the structural organisation in the Vhembe District Municipality include the Office of the Mayor, Municipal Manager's Office, and various units and departments. The monitoring and evaluation is a sub-unit located within

the Municipal Manager's Office managed by the strategic manager, along with the Performance Management System and Intergovernmental Relations units.

Participants acknowledged some level of support for monitoring and evaluation from the management. Despite acknowledging some support, participants highlighted the need for more support, including additional resources and a dedicated team, to effectively monitor projects and assess progress. The staff complement in the district M&E office is insufficient to handle the workload and meet monitoring standards. The M&E sub-unit currently consists of a deputy manager, an administrator, and an intern. The district municipality lacks a specific framework or guideline for implementing monitoring and evaluation activities. A comprehensive evaluation is not currently conducted due to a lack of expertise in conducting evaluations.

The misunderstanding of the purpose of monitoring and evaluation leads to M&E staff members being isolated and not trusted by project managers and other employees. Project managers often perceive M&E as a form of investigation or spying, creating fear and resistance. This perception affects the credibility of the information provided by the M&E staff. The fear of M&E staff pointing out areas of underperformance or potential threats to job security leads project managers and employees to avoid or resist interactions with the M&E unit. This hinders accurate reporting on project progress and performance.

The district currently relies on manual processes for project monitoring and does not have a reporting system in place. The M&E unit compiles monthly and quarterly reports based on project activities. The reports are submitted to the management and undergo verification by internal audit. The reports are also shared with other government spheres. The responsibility for taking action based on the reported matters lies with the municipal manager, who reviews the M&E reports and makes decisions and actions accordingly.

4.1.2 Comparison of research results to other similar studies

Mthethwa & Jili (2016) conducted a study that revealed a prominent obstacle encountered by the Mfolozi community. The primary issue identified was a substantial deficiency in the knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary for individuals involved in overseeing and assessing public projects. Additionally, municipal officials demonstrated a restricted comprehension of the pivotal significance that monitoring and evaluation hold within the

sphere of local government, encompassing various projects. This constraint impeded strong institutional framework, including essential components like M&E plans, indicators, and tools. In parallel with the current study, we identified a shortage in the skills essential for designing effective M&E frameworks, plans, indicators, and tools. This shared perspective underscores the crucial need for addressing these capacity gaps and cultivating a deeper comprehension of M&E principles among the relevant personnel.

The study conducted by Motingoe & van der Waldt (2013) revealed the important role of understanding the skillset and capacity of individuals involved in M&E activities. In a related study conducted by Eresia-Eke & Boadu (2019), it was revealed that the absence capacity to support M&E systems signals a lack of readiness for effective implementation. This insight highlights the critical role of capacity-building efforts in ensuring the readiness and functionality of M&E processes. Our study found that staff lack the qualifications or skills necessary to perform certain M&E activities, such as developing result frameworks and planning and conducting evaluations.

A study by Dipela & Mohapi (2021) found that inadequate management and insufficient supervisor support were factors contributing to weak M&E processes. Our study found that there is some level of support for monitoring and evaluation from management. The team is also invited to management and political leadership meetings to present project progress reports and also assist with making follow up where there are misunderstandings with project managers.

The findings from Motingoe & van der Waldt (2013)- study, suggest that for an M&E system to effectively serve its purpose, it needs to be accepted by individuals who have responsibilities related to it or require information from it. This acceptance is achieved through involving stakeholders in the process. In the context of our study, we found that both internal and external stakeholders are not adequately informed about or engaged in the monitoring and evaluation process. This lack of involvement has led to misunderstandings about the purpose of M&E and has resulted in challenges such as a lack of cooperation from the project manager and other employees, ultimately hindering the successful implementation of M&E activities.

A study conducted by Masilo et al. (2021) found that the M&E framework has a significant role in improving service delivery by integrating performance processes. In the context of our study we identified a gap that the district has no specific M&E framework in place to guide its implementation. This suggests that the VDM lacks a structured approach for monitoring and evaluating its performance and impact on service delivery.

4.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the institutional arrangements in Vhembe District Municipality

In this section, we address the second question of this study, *'What are the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the current institutional arrangements in fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe District Municipality?* This question involves uncovering the aspects that are contributing positively to the monitoring and evaluation system and pinpointing the areas that may require improvements or adjustments.

4.2.1 Presentation of empirical results

4.2.1.1 Discussion of key themes

Theme 1: Strengths of the institutional arrangements that are in place to foster effective monitoring and evaluation

The provided strengths of the institutional arrangement for monitoring and evaluation range from collaboration and knowledge sharing, implementation monitoring, effective/timeous reporting, and informed decision. Participants shared that the municipality has an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) system, wherein various sections, units, and departments come together to collaborate on planning. It provides a platform for sharing ideas, knowledge, and assistance among different teams. As part of the IDP, a plan is developed that needs to be implemented. Participant 3 shared that *"… the role of IDP is to integrate everything. So IDP as a coordinating agent, coordinates to ensure that there is platform participation, but the rest of the work is done by departments themselves."*

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit is responsible for checking and monitoring the projects to ensure that the they align with the goals and objectives set on the IDP. Participant 4 noted that "… *M&E unit forms part of the planning process so that they can develop their own M&E plans. They are involved until project implementation where they will do their monitoring and produce reports."* Participant 2 provided that *"… It starts from planning when IDP is being*

developed, M&E will be monitoring whether issues that were raised by the community are being addressed because in IDP it shows that there are needs, then comes the strategies and projects follow. Then from there, the organization PMS comes in to develop a tool to implement IDP which is SDBIP. And then from there every quarter, managers will generate a report on the progress of the implementation of projects in their departments, along the way M&E will go to the site to check progress and compile a report and take pictures and report back."

If the M&E team identifies issues while conducting fieldwork or monitoring, they write a report and communicate with the relevant departments or entities through intergovernmental relations. Participant 2 asserted that "… *IGR get the report from M&E to be able to compile its report to present to those external stakeholders or government entities, by the virtue the municipal organizational performance is a responsibility of the strategic unit, it then links with M&E and IGR from IDP side."*

The organization conducts quarterly research in a specific area before public participation events (Imbizo) to identify central issues within that area. The findings from this research are shared with the M&E office, which helps them stay informed about raised issues and required interventions. This allows the M&E team to make follow-ups accordingly. Participant 1 noted that *"… The other way that we work with M&E, is that we conduct quarterly communication research. Based on our findings the office (M&E) must also have information in terms of issues that have been raised, issues that need intervention and also the actual plan of that matter. So that they can make a follow-up. So, such such such operations, you can't separate our work."*

Theme 2: Weaknesses of the institutional arrangements that are in place to foster effective monitoring and evaluation

Although participants noted the strength of institutional arrangements in fostering effective monitoring and evaluation, they have also reflected on the weaknesses. The weakness range from lack of strategic leadership, leadership gap, limited consideration of monitoring and evaluation, and lack of oversight within the institutional arrangements.

Two participants noted a lack of strategic leadership in fostering effective monitoring and evaluation in the district. The senior management, led by the municipal manager who is an accounting officer, is highlighted as a challenge. Participant 2 shared that *"… Orders and decisions come from above, we cannot blame the unit; this is very systematic, if you fail at a senior*

level you will have a problem because those are the technical of the institution, failure at that level affects the units." One participant attributed the lack of support to the change of leadership that happens every five years in the district. Participant 1 pointed out that, "… *In an institution like a municipality normally municipal manager's office contract is five years. When a new person comes people concentrate on the change of leadership, instead of concentrating on the work and adapting quickly. What is required is change management and organisational discipline.*"

The lack of leadership in the district is also projected by one participant indicating that there is an overemphasis on democracy in areas where it may not be appropriate, particularly in matters of accountability. Participant 6 noted that "… *We still have leadership gaps. What's happening is a sign of leadership gaps."* The participant believes that certain areas require more directive leadership and enforcement of laws and principles. "… *There are areas that you must just enforce laws and principles positions. People must be instructed to do their work."*

The weakness of the institutional arrangements is also projected by one participant indicating that the institution does not receive unqualified audit opinions. The participant noted that if monitoring and evaluation were functioning well, a clean audit opinion would be achievable. However, the presence of financial statement errors, delayed projects, contractor litigations, and the use of the next financial year's budget to cover the previous year's expenses indicate gaps and shortcomings.

The reports produced by the monitoring and evaluation unit are not taken into consideration effectively. Budget constraints are said to hinder the implementation of the recommendations provided by the monitoring and evaluation unit. Participant 3 noted that *"… M&E is producing reports for projects but budget constraints are hindering the implementation of the recommendations we provided".* Participant 4 echoed and shared the same sentiments indicating that "… *budget in terms of implementation by the end user. If monitoring and evaluation finds that there is an issue that needs to be attended by cooperate you find that cooperate intervention is delayed due to budget".* This implies that the organization may not be effectively utilizing the insights and findings from the M&E reports to improve its operations and outcomes.

One participant shared that the placement of the monitoring and evaluation unit within the municipal manager's office limits the executive mayor's ability to play an oversight role on the municipal manager. "… *If it was to report directly on his executive mayor he was going*

to be able to take the Municipal Manager to task in terms of certain things that she/he could have contravened". The concern is that M&E reports may be modified or doctored before being presented to the council through the executive mayor and that they may not accurately reflect the true situation.

4.2.1.2 Response to the research question

In responding to the question *"Strengths and weaknesses of the institutional arrangements that are in place to foster effective monitoring and evaluation in Vhembe District Municipality",* we

Overall, participants indicated some strength of the current institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe district. The noted strengths were described as related Integrated Development Plan system which allows internal and external stakeholders to collaborate and share ideas and knowledge. The monitoring the projects is done according to the plan outlined in the IDP, ensuring alignment with goals and objectives. The M&E unit receives research findings from quarterly communication research conducted in specific areas, which helps them stay informed about raised issues and required interventions. The monitoring and evaluation unit produces reports on the progress of project implementation, and these reports are submitted to the management and also undergo verification by the internal audit.

On the other hand, the participants highlighted the weaknesses of the institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. The lack of strategic leadership and support for monitoring and evaluation. The change of leadership every five years in the district creates challenges in terms of adapting quickly and maintaining organizational discipline. The reports produced by the M&E unit are not being effectively considered, as budget constraints hinder the implementation of their recommendations by end users. The placement of the M&E unit within the municipal manager's office limits the executive mayor's ability to play an oversight role, potentially compromising the accuracy and transparency of M&E reports.

4.2.2 Comparison of research results to other similar studies

Research carried out by Eresia-Eke and Boadu (2019) revealed that many of these institutions established M&E systems to meet mandates from higher authorities or to align with governance standards within the public sector. The study's main conclusion is

that building M&E systems solely for compliance purposes or to meet external expectations can result in a weak foundation for these systems. This, in turn, could compromise M&E efforts in providing valuable and meaningful information that can inform decision-making processes. This particular study found that the lack of strategic leadership and support for monitoring and evaluation compromise the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation.

A study conducted by Mthethwa & Jill (2016) highlighted the challenges faced by project management in local governments, particularly the issue of inadequate finance. This financial challenge often leads to the abandonment of projects by local governments due to insufficient funds. Our study reveals that the recommendations provided by the Monitoring and Evaluation unit are not being effectively implemented due to budget constraints. This suggests that even though the M&E unit produced valuable reports, the lack of funds prevented the recommendations from being put into action by the intended users.

4.3 Institutional arrangements required for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe District Municipality

This section aims to address the third research question of this study, '*What institutional arrangements are required for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe District Municipality'?* This question is directed towards identifying the specific institutional arrangements that are necessary to successfully implement and sustain an effective monitoring and evaluation system within the Vhembe District Municipality.

4.3.1 Presentation of empirical results

4.2.1.1 Discussion of key themes

Theme 1: Proposed institutional arrangements for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system

All participants expressed different opinions regarding the institutional arrangements for fostering effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system within the Vhembe district municipality structure.

Structural Arrangements

Participants were asked if they are happy with the placement of the monitoring and evaluation unit, as well as their suggestions for improvement. Two respondents suggested that the unit should be positioned within the Executive Mayor's office. According to their viewpoint, this positioning would allow the M&E unit to accurately monitor the district performance. Participant 5 asserted that *"…the Executive Mayor has political ideas and can play an oversight role on behalf of the council, including the municipal manager and all employees"*. Participant 2 adds that *"the monitoring and evaluation unit should inform the Executive Mayor about the district's performance, similar to how the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME) informs the presidency at the national level and the Premier's office at the provincial level"*.

Two participants asserted that to produce quality outputs, the monitoring and evaluation unit should have the power to function on its own and be independent. Participant 6 noted that "…*M&E, one it should be independent. Not independent, to say it must function on its own. It must have that power to be able to, you know, to go through all the departments and bring the true reflection of what is happening in all the departments being independent."* Participant 2 noted that the national government plans to advocate for monitoring and evaluation to be a standalone unit. Participant 3 added that the monitoring and evaluation unit should have representation for all local municipalities within the district. As the district serves as a coordinating sphere of local government, the M&E unit should have representatives in each of the four local municipalities. This would allow for the development of M&E plans together and ensure monitoring is conducted in each municipality.

Two participants shared that the monitoring and evaluation system is a tool to use to monitor service delivery, hence its location of in the office of the municipal manager is the right one. Participant 1 *"…it (monitoring and evaluation office) is well placed because, in terms of legislation, accountability of service delivery matters in the administration is the Municipal Manager, hence it is within the office of the municipal manager"*. Participant 6 *"…I think the location is not a matter, it is a tool that a municipal manager, as an accounting officer, has to use to monitor service delivery implementation processes in the municipality"*.

Leadership and management support

Leadership/management support is the main important factor in fostering the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation. Participants noted that district

leadership/management should provide support to the M&E office by ensuring the availability of funds and resources for monitoring and evaluation of projects. This includes appointing more M&E-qualified staff that includes specialists who are experienced in major activities such as developing frameworks, plans and evaluating projects. Additionally, provide bursaries for the M&E field of study. The present monitoring and evaluation personnel should be sponsored and encouraged to attend training to develop and upgrade their education to gain the necessary expertise.

Information system

Information system simplifies the data collection, storage, management and analysis process which makes it easier to compile reports. Participants suggested that there is a need for electronic data collection to reduce errors during capturing and save time between data collection, management and report writing.

Participation

Accountable relationship plays an important role in the M&E of projects, especially in collecting credible information from project managers and other employees. Participants suggested that to ensure participation by stakeholders, there must be an awareness or workshop about M&E in the district. Another participant suggested that *"the units of the institution must be instructed that when you implement your program you must also include monitoring and evaluation for comment and also to participate in that activity for proper reporting"*.

4.3.1.2 Response to the research question

This section provides an overview of the suggestions and recommendations made by the participants regarding institutional arrangements for effective monitoring and evaluation system. Participants suggested that the M&E unit should be located in the Executive Mayor's office. This placement would allow the M&E unit to have a comprehensive view of all departments and provide an accurate reflection of their performance. Participants suggested that the unit should be independent but not isolated, and it should be made up of a qualified manager, deputy director in the district and officer for each local municipality.

District leadership/management should provide support to the M&E office by ensuring the availability of funds and resources for monitoring and evaluation, and by also

appointing more M&E-qualified staff, including specialists, and sponsoring current personnel to attend training were suggested. Participants highlighted the need for an electronic data collection system to reduce errors and save time in data management and report writing. Establishing an accountable relationship and collecting credible information from project managers and employees is crucial. Participants suggested creating awareness workshops about M&E in the district.

4.3.2 Comparison of research results to other similar studies

Eresia-Eke & Boadu (2019) and Govender & Reddy (2014) both emphasize the need to reposition M&E units within organizations. This could involve restructuring the unit to make it more standalone and visible, allowing employees and managers to better appreciate its role. In the context of our study it was found that there is a need for organisational restructuring for monitoring and evaluation unit to be standalone and also relook at its location within the district organisational structure.

Masilo et al. (2021) highlight the importance of strengthening support services within M&E teams. Our study reveals that district leaders, project managers and employees in general should provide the monitoring and evaluation unit with necessary support to function efficiently.

Eresia-Eke & Boadu (2019) and Masilo et al. (2021) stress the need for sensitizing employees and stakeholders about the benefits of effective M&E. It was recommended that communication plans can be instrumental in overcoming misconceptions and lack of information about M&E. Our study reveals that the lack of misunderstanding and cooperation by stakeholders is due to lack of communication regarding monitoring and evaluation of projects within the district.

Mthethwa & Jili (2016) underline the importance of having skilled individuals in M&E roles. It was recommended that people with the suitable skills, knowledge, and experience are essential for successful monitoring and evaluation of projects. Our study reveals a potential gap in the management's comprehension of the necessary skills and capacity essential for capable involvement in the M&E system.

Motingoe & van der Waldt (2013) propose the creation of senior posts within the organization's hierarchy to lead M&E units. This will provide the unit more authority and influence over public decision-making, policy changes, and resource allocation. Our study reveals a need for monitoring and evaluation unit to be a standalone and headed by a qualified and skilled manager capable of overseeing all activities for implementation of monitoring and evaluation system.

5 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter interprets the findings presented in Chapter 4 using the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 2. Section 5.1 discusses a theoretical framework for monitoring and evaluation systems while section 5.2 discussed the research findings about the conceptualization of the research which shaped the foundation of this study and the reasons why the research was legible to be pursued. Lastly, Section 5.3 discuss the results within the ambits of the literature reviewed in deriving the conceptual framework with specific emphasis on the research problem underlying this study and research knowledge gap this study aimed to contribute towards. In the last section, we summarise the empirical research results to provide a meaningful interpretation of the institutional arrangements for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system at Vhembe District Municipality.

5.1 Description of explanatory frameworks for interpreting results of institutional arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation system

The study employs two explanatory frameworks, namely systems theory and the theory of change, to analyse and interpret the outcomes presented in Chapter 4 concerning institutional arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation system. These frameworks provide valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and improvements of the M&E system, ultimately leading to the proposition of an effective institutional arrangement.

Systems theory emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of components within a system. Thus, the M&E system is a complex and dynamic system comprised of various interrelated components. Instead of isolating individual components, the focus is on comprehending how these components interact and influence each other to determine the overall functionality of the M&E system. This approach helps in identifying both the strong aspects and weaknesses of the system by examining how different elements collaborate and potentially lead to systemic improvements. By adopting a holistic perspective, the study gains a more comprehensive understanding of the M&E system, allowing for targeted interventions where necessary.

The theory of change offers a structured framework to comprehend the causal mechanisms that underlie transformations. This theory enables the study to delve into the cause-and-effect relationships between different stages of the M&E process, ranging from

activities and outputs to outcomes and long-term impacts. By mapping out these relationships, the study gains insights into how various components of the M&E system contribute to the desired changes. This approach aids stakeholders in visualizing and articulating the intricate processes of change, thereby facilitating the establishment of an appropriate M&E system. The theory of change guides the study in recognizing how each component's contribution aligns with the overall goals, and assists in refining the institutional arrangement to ensure optimal effectiveness.

5.2 Discussion of the research findings in the context of the research conceptualisation

The findings of this study provide a meaningful discussion within the framework of its original conceptualization. The study aligns itself with the widely acknowledged notion that effective monitoring and evaluation systems are imperative for the optimal functioning of governmental entities, facilitating the achievement of policy objectives and efficient service delivery (Kusek & Rasit, 2004). Nevertheless, a prevailing concern is the underperformance of many South African municipalities, including the Vhembe district municipality, which fails to meet both legal requirements and citizens' expectations. Mello (2010) highlight that this predicament can largely be attributed to the inadequacy of the monitoring and evaluation system.

Central to the researcher's perspective is the belief that well-established institutional framework plays a crucial role in fostering an effective monitoring and evaluation systems. In light of this, the study's primary aim is to comprehend the specific institutional setups that are in place to foster effective M&E implementation within the Vhembe district municipality. To achieve this objective, the study formulated three central research questions, seeking to evaluate the extent of the current institutional contributions to effective M&E, identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing arrangements, and propose necessary institutional adjustments to foster an effective M&E system.

In light of these research goals, the study refers to systems theorists Kast and Rosenzweig (1972:456), who emphasize the necessity of a multi-level analysis approach when assessing organizational effectiveness. They contend that confusion and ambiguity arise from a failure to delineate levels of analysis and to comprehend the relationships among these

levels. To address this, they advocate for considering three levels of analysis: environmental level, organization level, and subsystems within the organization.

Translating this perspective to the context of the study, three distinct levels of analysis are identified; 1) Individual level, this level pertains to the individuals responsible for executing M&E activities within the organization. These individuals engage directly in tasks such as data collection, analysis, and reporting. 2) Organizational level, here, the focus is on the institutions themselves, which strategically plan, allocate resources, and fund M&E processes. This includes activities like goal setting, framework design, resource allocation, and ensuring alignment of M&E with the broader organizational objectives. 3) Enabling Environment or Contextual level (Heider, 2011).

On the first question "To what extent do the existing institutional arrangements contribute to fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system in Vhembe district municipality?"

Systems theory emphasizes the intricate interconnections among various components within a system and their broader contextual relationships. Similarly, the theory of change emphasizes that driving change requires a profound grasp of the contextual backdrop in which change initiatives will unfold (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020:3). This understanding allows designers and implementers to enhance their effectiveness in developing and managing monitoring and evaluation systems. This study reveals that the M&E system is deeply influenced by its surrounding environment. This relationship, as observed by Mele et al. (2010:130), operates on micro and macro levels. At the micro level, the M&E system functions as an interconnected internal system. On the macro level, the environment encompasses the entire VDM system, comprising various subsystems that collaboratively contribute to the municipality's operations. This contextual framework sets the boundaries and directives for the implementation process (Cloete et al, 2018).

Brynard (2005) posit that organisational structure and culture are important considerations during the conceptualisation of the implementation process. This study reveals that with regard to the structural arrangement the M&E is not positioned independently within the district municipality. Instead it functions as a sub-unit within a strategic unit. This strategic unit concurrently oversees other interrelated systems,

including the Performance Management System (PMS) and Intergovernmental Relations (IGR). This consolidation of functions ensures a harmonious contribution to the municipality's overarching goals. Importantly, this strategic unit finds its place within municipal manager's office, illustrating the hierarchical integration of various operational facets.

Systems theory also emphasizes comprehensive examination of the organization's internal dynamics as well as its interactions with the external environment. In the case of the Vhembe District Municipality (VDM), this research reveals a structured subsystem framework. Each unit or department within the municipality is supervised by a designated manager. These managers bear the responsibility of not only overseeing their respective units but also coordinating all activities therein. This hierarchical arrangement ensures a focused approach to managing various aspects of the municipality's operations.

Furthermore, the study reveals that the reporting structure within the VDM is well-defined. The unit or department managers report directly to the municipal manager. This individual assumes the role of overseeing the entirety of the municipality's administrative functions. This hierarchical alignment facilitates streamlined control and coordination across the organization. The municipal manager, in turn, has the responsibility of reporting to the district mayor, who represents the political leadership. This reporting hierarchy establishes a clear line of communication and decision-making, enabling effective governance and collaboration. The hierarchical reporting structure, from unit managers to the municipal manager and onward to the district mayor, is pivotal for maintaining consistency, communication, and synergy within the Vhembe District Municipality. This structured approach ensures that organizational goals are coherent with political directives, fostering an environment of efficient operation and strategic alignment.

Systems theory emphasises that each system possesses a definitive purpose or objective, as highlighted by Von Bertalanffy (1972) and Kast & Rosenzweig (1972). Similarly, the theory of change stresses the significance of comprehending the ultimate outcomes and goals of an organization (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020: p3). This signifies that the actual behaviour of a system is inherently influenced by its foresight of the overarching goal. In

the context of our case study, we found that the M&E system was designed to elevate service delivery standards within the Vhembe district municipality.

The essence of systems theory asserts system comprises three distinct tiers of purpose: the purpose of the M&E system itself, the purpose of its individual components (subsystems), and the overarching purpose of the entire system to which it belongs (in this instance, the Vhembe district municipality) (Ackoff, 1981: p23). Consequently, the focal point resides in the higher-priority objectives of the broader system (Vhembe district municipality) compared to the objectives of its subsystems (such as the M&E system). In essence, the central aim is improving service delivery standards across the entire district. The M&E system, positioned as a subsystem, serves the critical role of facilitating this goal by meticulously monitoring and reporting on the progression of project implementations.

The Theory of Change emphasises that once a team comprehends an organization's objectives, they should deconstruct the path to achieving those outcomes (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020:3). Systems theory adds that the fulfilment of a purpose is a result of the intricate interplay among its input, transformation, and output components, both internally and within the broader external environment (Kast & Rosenzweig (1972). In this study, the external inputs for systems encompass diverse elements like human resources, financial capital, managerial acumen, and technical expertise (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015:3). An examination of the M&E system within the Vhembe district municipality revealed that it is allocated a budget, resources, and personnel to execute planned activities. However, the current staff within the M&E office is limited, consisting only of a deputy manager and an administrator. This scarcity of personnel significantly constrains their ability to effectively monitor all ongoing projects, leading to a situation where only a handful of projects can be adequately supervised. Furthermore, it came to light that the existing M&E personnel lack formal qualifications, indicating a deficiency in the essential expertise required for implementing effective monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, the absence of structured training programs further impedes their capacity to implement monitoring and evaluation systems.

Furthermore, according to systems theory, the inputs that a system acquires undergo a transformation through its primary activity, which serves as the core function of the

system (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). This particular study revealed that to effectively monitor project activities and track project progress, M&E personnel develop data collection tools tailored to the unique requirements of each project. Their purpose is to systematically gather dependable and pertinent data concerning project advancement. Furthermore, to complement the data gathered during the monitoring phase, visual evidence and documentation are obtained using cameras. This multimodal approach enhances the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the monitoring process. Importantly, systems theory emphasises seamless coordination among various components throughout the process of translating inputs into meaningful outputs (McShane & Von Glinow, 2003)

The Theory of Change emphasises the value of soliciting feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020:3). As revealed by the study, the data collection process is marked by intensive engagement with a diverse array of stakeholders. These stakeholders encompass project managers, staff, and community members residing within the project implementation areas. Such engagement facilitates the collection of firsthand information, diverse perspectives, and valuable insights. This approach ensures a holistic comprehension of the project context and its multifaceted impacts.

Moreover, the theory of change emphasises the crucial step of consolidating and analysing the information gathered from monitoring activities. In this study, it was revealed that after data collection, the M&E unit compiles comprehensive reports and shares their findings and insights with pertinent stakeholders. These M&E reports play a pivotal role in conveying the current status of projects to district management and, in certain instances, to political leaders within the district.

Systems theory promotes synergy within the M&E system by ensuring open communication channels and effective feedback mechanisms. When feedback is used to measure organizational progress and necessary adaptations are made, homeostasis (balance) is achieved. The study uncovered that the compiled reports undergo a process of submission to management and subsequent verification through internal audit mechanisms. Additionally, these reports are disseminated to various tiers of government. The onus of taking action based on the highlighted issues lies with the municipal manager,

who meticulously reviews the M&E reports and subsequently formulates decisions and initiates appropriate actions.

Notably, Kusek & Rist (2004:152) emphasize that the purpose of establishing an M&E system is to utilize the insights gained to drive performance enhancements. Consequently, timely delivery of findings to the intended recipients is of utmost importance to render them effective. However, the study's findings suggest that the reports generated by the M&E unit do not receive optimal consideration. This is largely attributed to budgetary constraints, which impede the implementation of the recommendations by end users. This situation implies that the invaluable insights gleaned from M&E efforts are not fully harnessed within decision-making processes and efforts to refine programs.

Systems theory emphasises making meaningful predictions and facilitating proper planning. In the case of this study, it was revealed that VDM has not developed the M&E framework and guidelines. The absence of a specific M&E framework or guideline contribute to inconsistencies and inefficiencies in the monitoring and evaluation processes. A well-structured framework provides a systematic approach to M&E activities, including data collection, analysis, reporting, and learning. It helps ensure that all relevant aspects are considered and that evaluations are conducted in a standardized and reliable manner. By taking a holistic approach to M&E planning, scarce or available resources can be effectively utilized to foster an effective M&E system.

Systems theory provides that when feedback is used to measure organizational progress and necessary adaptations are made, homeostasis (balance) is achieved. In our research we found that evaluation is not conducted, thus no feedback is provided on the outcomes or impact of the implemented projects. Comprehensive evaluations are essential for understanding whether public policies are achieving their intended outcomes and if there are any unintended consequences. Without proper evaluation, it becomes difficult to make informed decisions about allocating resources and improving future projects (Kuzek and Rist, 2004).

Systems theory and theory of change emphasize the need for collaborative harmony among key stakeholders, in this case study that includes political leadership, the Municipal Manager, Unit managers, the M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation) team, and project

managers. The premise is that when these components synergistically function, policy aspirations can be effectively translated into tangible outcomes. However, our study reveals a discrepancy between this collaborative ideal and the actual dynamics at play. It was found that the M&E staff encounter isolation and a lack of trust from project managers and other employees. This stems from a perception that M&E activities resemble investigative measures rather than constructive assessments. Consequently, project managers and employees tend to avoid or resist interactions with the M&E unit, leading to inaccurate reporting on project progress and performance.

On the second question "What are the strengths and weaknesses of the institutional arrangements that are in place to foster an effective monitoring and evaluation in Vhembe District Municipality?"

It was found that there are notable strengths in the current institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation in Vhembe District Municipality. Systems theory emphasises synergy to be generated for a system to work properly. The theory of change emphasises that complex organisations and programme requires an involvement of multiple partners (James, 2011). Husen et al. (2004) assert that the combined effects of a system working together are greater or more powerful than that of the individual component. An observable relationship exists among the systems within the Vhembe district municipality. This interconnection is seen in the IDP planning, monitoring of project implementation, and reports submitted to management. In this context, the IDP system promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders. Further, allows for the coordination of efforts and the integration of different perspectives.

Theory of change emphasises a shared understanding of how change happens and an organisation or programme's role in bringing about change (James, 2011). We found that the dedicated M&E office is responsible for monitoring the implementation of projects following the IDP. This ensures that projects align with the municipality's goals and objectives, enhancing the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation efforts. The M&E unit also receives research findings from quarterly communication research conducted in specific areas. This helps them stay informed about emerging issues and necessary interventions, enabling proactive decision-making and adjustments in project implementation. The monitoring and evaluation unit produces reports on the progress of

project implementation. These reports are submitted to management and undergo verification by the internal audit, ensuring their accuracy and reliability.

Nonetheless, there are several inadequacies within the present institutional frameworks. Kuzek & Rist (2004) emphasize that the effectiveness of the M&E system depends on robust endorsement from either political leaders or managers. These figures are expected to propel the M&E forward, ensuring that the necessary resources, both in terms of materials and personnel, are allocated to ensure the system's optimal functionality. This research found that there is a lack of strategic leadership and support for monitoring and evaluation. This hinders the efforts of these systems, as a clear vision and direction are crucial for successful monitoring and evaluation practices. The frequent change of leadership every five years in the district poses challenges in terms of adaptation and maintaining organizational discipline. This disrupts the continuity and consistency of monitoring and evaluation practices.

On the third question "What institutional arrangements are required for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation in the Vhembe District Municipality?"

In Chapter 4 of the research report, various opinions were presented on how to ensure successful monitoring and evaluation of projects in the Vhembe District Municipality to enhance service delivery. According to the theory of change, people have different perspectives on what needs to change and why (van Es et al., 2015:3). As the theory of change suggests, identifying the most influential views can help individuals explore new options for actions and select the most crucial paths for planning efforts. This, in turn, can help the system break away from the status quo and progress beyond 'business as usual' (van Es et al., 2015:23).

Systems theory emphasizes the importance of continuous environmental scanning and operational improvement for long-term survival. Erisia and Boadu (2019) argue that strategic realignment of the monitoring and evaluation unit is essential to enhance employees' and managers' understanding of its vital role. Our study found that there are different opinions regarding the strategic location of the monitoring and evaluation unit. Currently, it is located within the strategic unit that reports to the municipal manager. However, participants proposed relocating the M&E unit to the office of the executive

mayor so that the monitoring and evaluation report can be submitted directly to the executive mayor for review and play oversight role.

In addition, there was a proposal for structural changes to the M&E unit. The proposal was to make the unit independent, but not isolated. This would mean that the unit would be a stand-alone entity, instead of being under the strategic unit, as it currently is. The proposed changes also included the creation of a well-structured and capable team. This team would consist of a qualified manager, a deputy director for the district, and an officer for each local municipality. All team members would work in collaboration with the district monitoring and evaluation team. This new composition would ensure that monitoring and evaluation activities for all projects being implemented around the district are carried out efficiently and effectively.

Vyas-Doorgapersad and Zwane (2014) highlight the importance of the effective utilization of primary resources such as financial, technical, and human resources by municipalities. This is essential to provide quality services that meet the needs of the community. The findings of this study are that district leadership and management should support the M&E office. They can do this by ensuring that enough funds and resources are available for monitoring and evaluation, hiring more qualified M&E staff (including specialists), and sponsoring current personnel to attend training programs to enhance their M&E skills.

The theory of systems suggests that systems should be designed for continuous improvement, rather than simply maintaining the status quo. In this study, participants emphasized the importance of implementing an electronic data collection system to reduce errors and save time in data management and report writing. By streamlining the data collection process, this system would enhance the accuracy and efficiency of reporting.

Erisia & Boadu (2019) suggest sensitization of employees by highlighting the benefits that a good monitoring and evaluation bodes for the institution. In our study, participants suggested conducting awareness workshops about monitoring and evaluation in the district. These workshops would help raise awareness about the purpose and benefits of M&E, educate stakeholders about its importance, and promote a better understanding of

its role in project management and performance assessment. These would also help to establish an accountable relationship between the M&E unit, project managers, and employees. This would involve creating a culture of trust and transparency, where project managers and employees feel comfortable providing credible information to the M&E unit for accurate reporting.

Govender & Reddy (2014) assert that the monitoring and evaluation units should be created as the custodians of municipal governance. In this study, participants proposed that other units within the institution incorporate M&E into their programs. This would ensure that M&E is not seen as a separate and disconnected process but rather an integral part of project implementation and reporting.

5.3 The interpretation of the empirical results to explain the institutional arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation system

This study focused on examining the institutional frameworks that facilitate monitoring and evaluation within the Vhembe District Municipality. As outlined by Kusek and Rist (2004:1), inadequately supported monitoring and evaluation systems within municipalities could potentially undermine the delivery of services. The authors appropriately assert that, "building and sustaining M&E systems is not easy. It requires continuous commitment, time and effort – but it is doable".

We found that the Vhembe district municipality has taken a minimal stride to implement monitoring and evaluation of the projects. Through this implementation, project progress is being monitored and reported. This study has shown that even though M&E is being practised in the Vhembe district municipality certain issues, challenges, and prospects with the implementation have been observed and their effect on the system and Vhembe district municipality as a whole. Connors (2007:1) argues that to explain something thoroughly and gain a comprehensive understanding, it's essential to analyse the entire system and its holistic properties. This suggests that focusing solely on individual components or aspects of a situation might not provide a complete understanding of the problem. Instead, by examining the entire system and its interactions, one can potentially identify the root causes of issues. Heil (2017:4) posits that "using systems theory helps better identify where a problem lies within a group or organization. Systems theory not

only allows us to take a better look at a problem, but it also helps us to identify why there is a problem".

The M&E unit is not a stand-alone entity but is part of the strategic unit, managed by the strategic manager located within the municipal manager's office. This arrangement may hinder the independence and impartiality of M&E activities, as the M&E unit's effectiveness could be influenced by the strategic manager's priorities.

The current staff complement in the M&E office is insufficient, comprising only a deputy manager and an administrator. This limited capacity results in the monitoring of only selected projects, leaving many others unmonitored. Additionally, the M&E personnel lack formal qualifications, and there is a lack of training to develop their skills, which undermines the of M&E efforts. Moreover, the lack of skills in the district hampers the development of a specific framework or guideline for implementing monitoring and evaluation activities. Without proper expertise, the municipality struggles to define appropriate indicators and strategies to measure project outcomes effectively.

The misunderstanding of the purpose of M&E by project managers and employees leads to mistrust and isolation of M&E staff. This misunderstanding stems from a lack of awareness about how M&E contributes to overall project success. When the M&E team faces resistance or lack of collaboration, it hinders their ability to gather accurate data and insights. This results in inaccurate reporting, as project managers and employees might not prioritize providing accurate data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Moreover, effective M&E requires not just the establishment of monitoring systems, but also strong leadership and support. Without strategic direction and commitment from leadership, M&E efforts can lack the necessary resources, guidance, and authority to be successful. Additionally, the frequent changes in leadership disrupt the continuity and consistency of monitoring and evaluation practices. Consistency in leadership is essential to establish a stable framework for M&E processes and prevent disruptions that might arise from shifts in priorities with new leadership.

Furthermore, while the M&E unit conducts field visits and compiles regular reports, those reports are not effectively considered due to budget constraints. This limits the

implementation of M&E recommendations, rendering the M&E findings underutilized in decision-making and program improvements. Additionally, the placement of the M&E unit within the municipal manager's office limits the executive mayor's ability to play an oversight role. This could compromise the accuracy and transparency of M&E reports, as independence and impartiality are important for credible M&E processes.

6 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the research conducted, including a recap of essential points of Chapter 1-3, while underlining their significance. It outlines how the study was devised to contribute to the field's understanding of the topic. Furthermore, it demonstrates the connection between the findings discussed in Chapter 5 and the research questions posed (Section 6.1). The chapter proceeds to draw conclusions from the study's results, relating them to the literature in Chapter 2 and the significance of the study presented in Chapter 1 (Section 6.2). It addresses the study's limitations and their impact on the conclusions (Section 6.3), concluding with policy recommendations and prospects for future research (Section 6.4).

6.1 Summary

The objective of this research was to explore how a carefully structured institutional framework can enhance the functionality of a monitoring and evaluation system within the context of the Vhembe District Municipality. The study objectives are to: (i) determine the degree to which the current institutional arrangements contribute to the effectiveness of the M&E system and (ii) identify the strengths and weaknesses of these arrangements. (iii) provide institutional arrangements required to enhance effective M&E system. The literature (Kariuki & Reddy, 2017; Hardlife & Zhou 2013; Mthethwa & Jili, 2016) show that poor service delivery, low municipal performance and community protest are all consequences of ineffective monitoring and evaluation.

This has been a result of commonly identified root causes of ineffective monitoring and evaluation that have been detailed in Chapter 2. The first was recognised as the Lack of commitment by leadership/ management; the second was the lack of resources and capacity; the third was the absence of guidelines; fourth was a lack of conceptual clarity (Hardlife & Zhou, 2013; Kariuki & Reddy, 2017); all these were also found in Vhembe District Municipality where our research is located.

The researcher reviewed past studies in Chapter 2 that aimed to understand the extent that research has interrogated the topic of fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa. This exercise exposed an existing knowledge gap in the field of

the study. After reviewing various studies, it has become apparent that most research focuses on the monitoring and evaluation processes rather than the institutional arrangements necessary for effective implementation. Consequently, monitoring and evaluation interventions often fail to achieve their desired outcomes. This study investigated the institutional arrangements required for successful implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems, specifically within the public policy context. The study employs systems theory and the theory of change to interpret its findings.

The research utilized a qualitative case study strategy, semi-structured interviews and document review to acquire relevant information to delve into the institutional setup necessary for establishing for monitoring and evaluation within the Vhembe District Municipality. The gathered data was subjected to thematic content analysis for comprehensive examination.

The empirical research results on the institutional arrangements, their strength and weaknesses, and the outlook of correcting institutional arrangements to foster effective monitoring and evaluation system in the near future were presented in Chapter 4. The results highlighted the municipality's existing M&E, the strengths and weaknesses of the institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, and proposed institutional arrangements for an effective monitoring and evaluation system.

The conducted research demonstrated that monitoring and evaluation are somewhat being implemented within the Vhembe District Municipality. Nevertheless, the findings also brought to light the inadequacies in the design of institutional arrangements, hindering the effective execution of monitoring and evaluation practices within the district. The district municipality operates as a system comprising various subsystems that collectively constitute the larger system. This is evident in the way the system is divided into departments or sections. Each subsystem is overseen by a manager responsible for overseeing and coordinating activities within that particular unit or department. These unit or department managers, in turn, report to the district manager who holds authority over the entire system. It was also discovered that the M&E function was a sub-unit managed by the strategic manager, located within the municipal manager's office. However, the current staff complement in the M&E office was found to be insufficient, consisting only of a deputy manager and an administrator. Moreover, the staff members

lacked formal qualifications and training to develop their skills. This limited capacity meant that not all projects could be monitored.

The lack of M&E skills and expertise within the district municipality also hindered the development of a specific framework or guideline for implementing M&E activities. Additionally, comprehensive evaluations were not conducted due to a lack of evaluation expertise. The success of public policies was found to depend on the skills and knowledge of public servants (Cloet, et al. 2018), emphasizing the need for qualified personnel to be appointed based on their abilities to perform M&E duties.

Another significant weakness identified was the lack of strategic leadership and support for M&E within the Vhembe district municipality. This indicated a potential gap in commitment and involvement from top-level management in effectively driving and utilizing M&E efforts. The frequent change of leadership every five years further disrupted the continuity and consistency of M&E practices.

The study also highlighted a lack of understanding by project managers and employees regarding the purpose of M&E. Staff members were isolated and not trusted, leading to resistance and avoidance of interactions with the M&E unit. This negatively impacted accurate reporting on project progress and performance, diminishing the credibility of the data furnished by the monitoring and evaluation team.

The M&E personnel conduct field visits, compile reports based on project activities and submit them to management for review. However, budget constraints hinder the implementation of recommendations, indicating that the findings and reports produced by the M&E unit were not fully utilized in decision-making processes and program improvements.

It was found that there are notable strengths in the current institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation in Vhembe District Municipality. An observable relationship exists among the systems within the Vhembe district municipality, revealing that the components of the systems are connected. For instance, the subsystem interconnection is seen in the IDP planning, monitoring of project implementation, and report submitted to management. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system consistently interacts with

other subsystems, contributing to the collaborative effort of each component within the broader context of the system.

In Chapter 5, we analysed research findings using systems theory and theory of change. These theories recognize that various components are interconnected and work together to achieve a specific goal. Our research showed that, while the Vhembe district municipality is implementing monitoring and evaluation practices, certain challenges and opportunities have arisen during the process. The revealed that the institutional arrangements are not well established showing weaknesses such as lack of strategic leadership and support for monitoring and evaluation, frequent changes in leadership, inadequate staff, lack of skills, and insufficient support from leadership. Interconnected subsystems within the municipality show potential strengths, but changes in leadership disrupt consistency.

6.2 Conclusions

The application of qualitative case study strategies, including semi-structured interviews, and document review, has provided valuable insights into the institutional arrangements surrounding M&E in the municipality. It has shown that monitoring and evaluation are being practised to some extent in the Vhembe district municipality, however, several weaknesses that are hampering its effectiveness were identified. One significant weakness was the sampling of projects to monitor instead of monitoring all the projects outlined in the IDP. The limited number of staff members, lacking formal qualifications and training, hindered the effective monitoring of all projects. Moreover, the absence of a specific framework or guideline for M&E activities and the lack of evaluation expertise resulted in the incomplete and inadequate evaluation of projects and policies.

The study revealed the frequent change of leadership, every five years, and the lack of strategic leadership and support for M&E within the municipality. This indicated a potential gap in commitment and involvement from top-level management, leading to difficulties in driving and utilizing M&E efforts effectively. The results show that the current staff complement is insufficient, consisting only of a deputy manager and an administrator. Additionally, the staff members lack formal qualifications and training, limiting their capacity to effectively monitor all projects. This lack of M&E skills and expertise within the district municipality hampers the development of a specific

framework or guideline for implementing M&E activities. Consequently, comprehensive evaluations of projects are not conducted due to the lack of evaluation expertise.

It is evident that project managers and some employees lack understanding regarding the purpose and importance of M&E which leads to mistrust and avoidance of interactions with the M&E personnel staff, negatively impacting accurate reporting on project progress and performance.

Furthermore, the evidence shows that despite the M&E personnel conducting field visits, compiling reports, and submitting them to management for review, budget constraints hinder the implementation of recommendations. This suggests that the findings and reports produced by the M&E unit are not fully utilized in decision-making processes and program improvements.

Despite the identified weaknesses, the study also revealed notable strengths in the current institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. A noticeable relationship is evident among the various subsystems within the municipality, indicating that the components of the systems are interconnected. For example, subsystem interconnection is seen in IDP planning, SDBIP, Performance Management Framework, project monitoring, and reporting to management. The M&E system regularly interacts with other subsystems, complementing their efforts in the larger system context.

Drawing upon the research findings and use of systems theory and theory of change to interpret these findings, it becomes apparent that the institutional arrangements within the Vhembe District Municipality are inadequately structured to facilitate the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation system.

6.3 Limitations

The researcher encountered several challenges during the data collection period. Identified potential respondents were difficult to secure due to their busy schedules. Those who were approached expressed skepticism about participating, primarily due to their familiarity with the researcher's role as an employee of Statistics South Africa. Convincing them of the academic nature and genuine interest of the study required a substantial investment of time and effort. Additionally, the participants' familiarity with

the researcher raises concerns about the potential impact on the candidness and openness of their responses. However, to enhance the robustness of data collection, the study employed a triangulation of data methods, which proved valuable in obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

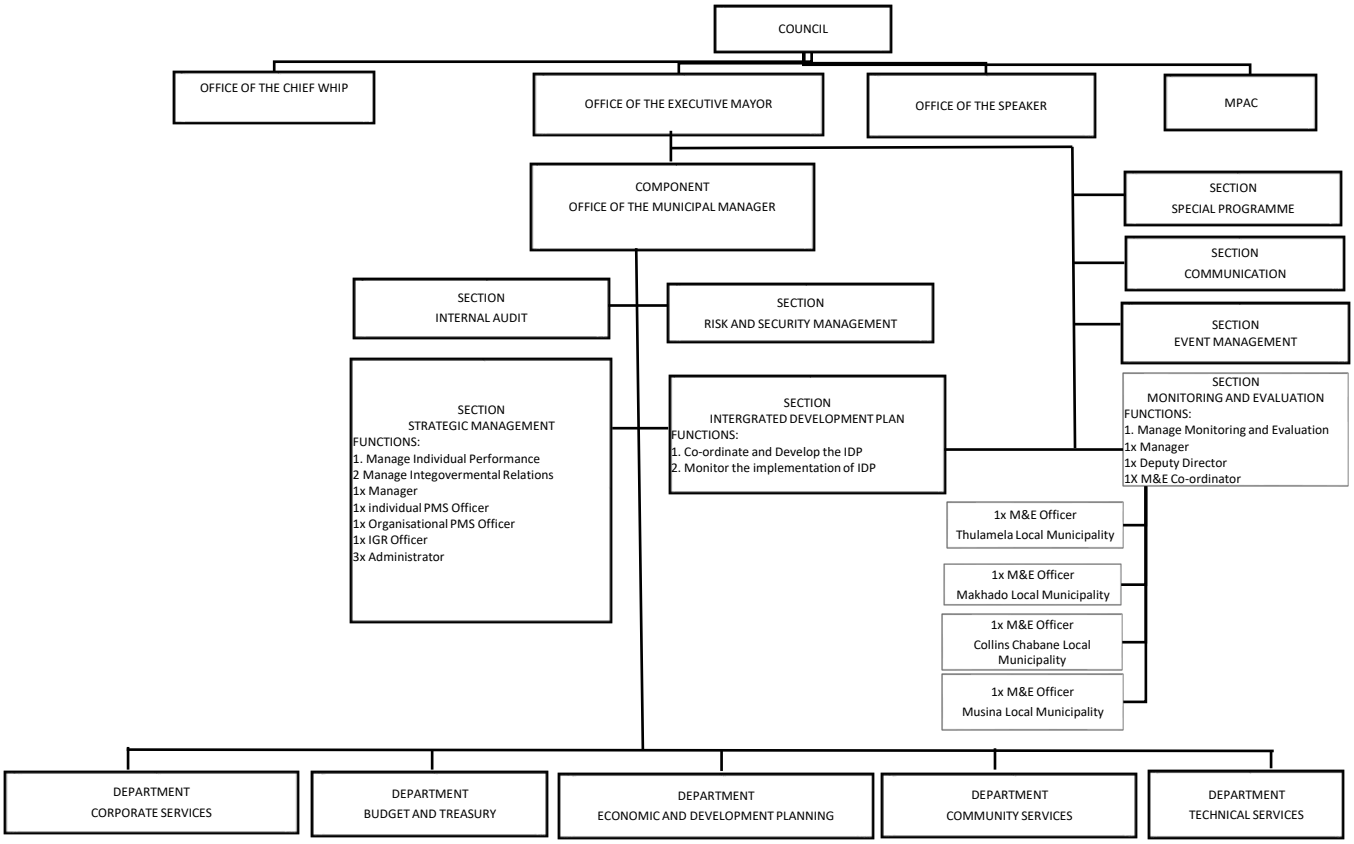
Despite intending to interview 10 participants, only six individuals made themselves available for the study. The remaining potential participants continuously deferred the scheduled appointments, citing their own busy schedules. Consequently, the researcher decided to discontinue pursuing these individuals once the research report had been finalized.

The research's focus was exclusively on the Vhembe district municipality office situated in Thohoyandou. Consequently, the target population for the study was drawn solely from this office, and it does not encompass the broader array of local municipalities within the Vhembe district. This restricted scope has implications for the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, it's crucial to note that the study's findings are constrained by the geographic boundary of the Vhembe District Municipality, limiting their applicability to other municipalities across South Africa.

6.4 Recommendations

The VDM should relook at its institutional and organisational arrangements to foster effective monitoring and evaluation. It is recommended that the M&E unit should be standalone but not isolated and should consist of qualified and skilled personnel such as the manager, deputy director, M&E Co-ordinator and an officer for each local municipality. This composition would ensure a well-structured and capable team to carry out an effective monitoring and evaluation activities to enhance service delivery in the district.

Figure 7: Proposed Organisational Structure for Vhembe District Municipality



Source: Adapted from VDM IDP Review 2020/21

Figure 7 provides a proposed summary of organisational arrangements. The main suggested change is on establishment of a stand-alone monitoring and evaluation section that would be monitoring the implementation of the IDP objectives. The officer will be responsible for field visits and report on the progress of projects in their respective local municipality. The monitoring and evaluation reports will be submitted directly to the executive mayor for review and decision-making.

The district leadership and management should provide support to the M&E office. This support should include ensuring the availability of funds and resources for monitoring and evaluation, appointing more qualified M&E staff (including specialists), and sponsoring current personnel to attend training programs to enhance their M&E skills. The municipality should introduce an electronic data collection system to reduce errors

and save time in data management and report writing. Implementing such a system would streamline data collection processes and enhance the accuracy and efficiency of reporting.

It is recommended that despite limited expertise, the municipality should collaborate with external experts or organizations to develop a comprehensive framework for M&E activities, including appropriate indicators and strategies.

It is recommended that VDM arrange for awareness workshops about monitoring and evaluation in the district. These workshops would help raise awareness about the purpose and benefits of M&E, educate stakeholders about its importance, and promote a better understanding of its role in project management and performance assessment. It is also recommended that the municipality facilitate the establishment of an accountable relationship between the M&E unit, project managers, and employees. This would involve creating a culture of trust and transparency, where project managers and employees feel comfortable providing credible information for accurate reporting.

It is recommended that other units within the institution incorporate M&E into their programs. This would ensure that M&E is not seen as a separate and disconnected process but rather an integral part of project implementation and reporting. Stakeholder participation in M&E activities is also recommended to facilitate proper reporting and ensure comprehensive monitoring of projects.

It is recommended that future studies should consider conducting a comparative study that examines the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems in municipalities categorized as both Category A and C.

REFERENCES

Amagoh, F. 2008. Perspectives on Organisational Changes: Systems and Complexity Theories. The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal, Volume 13(3), article 3.

Anderson, R. E., Carter, I., & Lowe, G. R. 1999. Human behaviour in the social environment (5th ed.). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Auditor General. 2018. Auditor-General of South Africa Annual Report 2017/2018

Bosch, L. 2011. The evolution of monitoring & Evaluation in South Africa, http://copmfdrafrica.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-evolution-of-monitoring-ampevaluation-in-south-africa.

Chikere, H., & Nwoka, J. (2015). The Systems Theory of Management in Modern Day Organizations Study of Aldgate Congress Resort Limited Port.

Bryman, A. 2012. Social Research Methods. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brynard, P. 2001. Policy Implementation. In Cloete and Wissink. (Editors) 2008. Improving Public Policy. Van Schaik. Pretoria.

Brynard, P. & De Coning, C. 2006. Policy Implementation. In Cloete, F., Wissink, H.D. & De Coning, C. (eds). Improving Public Policy. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Burger, R.W. 2015. Integrated Metropolitan Environmental Policy of the City of Cape Town: An Implementation Evaluation. Master's Thesis. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.

Cloete, F., de Coning, C., Wissink, H. & Rabie, B. 2018. Improving Public Policy: Good governance. 4th edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Connors, J.V. 2007. Interpersonal Systems Theory. Systems Thinking Press website, Retrieved from www.hainescentre.com/pdfs/IST_paper_ISSS.pdf.

David, M. & Sutton, C.D. 2011. Social Research: An Introduction. (2nd ED). Sage, Los Angeles.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.Y. 2008. The landscape of qualitative research. (3rd Ed.). Sage, Los Angeles.

Department of Cooperative governance & traditional affairs. 2020. Vhembe District Municipality LP. Profile and Analysis District Development Model 34/52

Dunn, W.N., 2017. Monitoring observed policy outcomes. In Public policy analysis (pp. 250- 319). Routledge.

Eresia-Eke, C.E. & Boadu, E.S. 2019. Monitoring and evaluation preparedness of public sector institutions. Journal of Review on Global Economics, Vol.8: 532-542

Goldman, I., Engela, R., Phillips, S., Akhalwaya, I., Gasa, N., Leon, B., & Mohamed, H. (2012). Establishing a national M&E system in South Africa (PREM Notes 21: Nuts and Bolts of M&E). World Bank.

Govender, I.G. & Reddy, P.S. 2014. Monitoring and Evaluation in Municipalities: a case study of Kwazulu-Natal Province. Administratio Publica, 22(40):160-177

Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (GWMEF). 2007. Monitoring and Evaluation Concepts. Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, Pretoria, South Africa.

Hardlife, Z., & Zhou, G. 2013. Utilization of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems by Development Agencies: The Case of the UNDP in Zimbabwe. American International Journal of Contemporary Research. Vol 3 No. 3 March 2013.

Harrison, H., Birks, M., Franklin, R. and Mills, J., 2017, January. Case study research: Foundations and methodological orientations. In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: qualitative social research (Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 1-17).

Heil, A. 2017. Systems Theory. Retrieved from: http:/www.siue.edu/~adheil/Systems%20Theory%20Paper.pdf.

Kanyamuna, V., Kotzé, D.A. and Phiri, M., 2019. Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: The Missing Strand in the African Transformational Development Agenda. World Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 5(3), pp.160-175.

Kariuki, P. & Reddy, P.S. 2017. Operationalising an effective monitoring and evaluation system for local government: Considerations for best practice. African Evaluation Journal 5(2), a240. https://doi.org/10.4102/aej.v5i2.240.

Kast, F. E., & Rosenzweig, J. E. (1972). General systems theory: Applications for organization and management. Academy of Management Journal, 15(4), 447–465. https://doi.org/10.2307/255141.

Knill, C. & Tosun, J. 2012. Public policy: A new introduction. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kumar, R. 2011. Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners. (3rd Ed). Sage, New Delhi.

Kusek, J.Z. & Rist, R.C. 2004. Ten steps to a results-based monitoring and evaluation, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Leavy, P. 2017. Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based and Community-Based Participatory Research Approach New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Malima, T., Kilonzo, B., & Zuwarimwe, J. 2019. Challenges and coping strategies of potable water supply systems in rural communities of Vhembe District Municipality, South Africa. J Biomed Sci Appl, Vol.3 No.1:1

Masiapato, N.M. & Wotela, K. 2017. A conceptual framework for subnational citizen-based participatory democracy and empowerment: Case of Vhembe District Municipality. African Journal of Public Affairs, 9(5):103-122.

Masuku, N.W.K. & Ijeoma, EOC. 2015. A global overview of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and its meaning in the local government context of South Africa. Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review, Vol.3, No 2: a79

Mele, C., Pels. J. & Polese, F. 2010 A Brief Review of Systems Theories and Their Managerial Applications. Service Science 2(1-2):126-135. https://doi.org/10.1287/serv.2.1_2.126.

Mello, D.M. 2010. Monitoring and evaluation: The missing link in South African municipalities. The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa 14(1), a409. https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v14i1.409.

Mokhaba, M.B. 2005. Outcome-based Education in South Africa since 1994: Policy Objectives and Implementation Complexities. University of Pretoria

Mthethwa, R.M. & Jili, N.N. 2016. Challenges in Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E): The Case of Mfolozi Municipality. African Journal of Public Affairs 9(4): 2016.

Mubangizi, B.C. 2019. Monitoring and evaluation process critical to service provision in South Africa's rural-based municipalities. Journal of Review on Global Economics Vol.8: 555-565.

Neuman, L.W. 2014. Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Pearson, Essex, UK.

O'Flynn, M. and Moberly, C. 2017. Theory of change. INTRAC 2017

Phago, K. 2009. Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in South African local government: the case of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Journal of Public Administration, 44(3): 483–491.

Phillips, D.C. 1969. Systems Theory: A Discredited Philosophy. Abacus, 5(1), 3–15.

Presidency. 2007. Policy Framework for a Government-Wide M&E System. Pretoria: The Presidency.

Reinholz, D.L., Andrews, T.C. 2020. Change theory and theory of change: What's the difference anyway? *IJ STEM Ed* **7**, 2. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-020-0202-3

Republic of South Africa. 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Government Printers, Pretoria.

Serrat O. (2017) Theories of Change. In: Knowledge Solutions. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9_24.

South Africa. (MFMA) 2003. Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003.

South Africa. (MSA) 2000. Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000.

South Africa. (MSA) 1998. Municipal Structure Act 117 of 1998.

STATSSA. 2016 Limpopo community survey. Statistics South Africa, Pretoria.

Trent, A. and Cho, J. 2014. The Oxford Handbook of Evaluating Qualitative Research. Oxford University Press

Umlaw, F., & Chitepo, N. 2015. State and use of Monitoring and evaluation systems in national and provincial departments. African Evaluation Journal 3(1), Art. #134, 15 pages. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/aej.v3i1.134.

Vancouver, J.B. 2005. Living system theory as a paradigm for organizational behaviour; understanding, humans, organizations and social processes. Retrieved from https// www. research gate. net/ profile/Jeffrey uver/publication/14348397

Von Bertalanffy, L. 1968. General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications. New York. George Braziller.

Vhembe District Municipality. 2021. Integrated Development Plan Review 2020/2021. Thohoyandou: Vhembe District Municipality.

Vhembe District Municipality. 2017. Integrated Development Plan 2017/2018. Thohoyandou: Vhembe District Municipality.

Wagner, C. Kawulich, B. and Garner, M. 2012. Doing Social Research: A Global Context. Maidenhead, Berkshire. McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Wickham, H., 2016. Data analysis. In ggplot2 (pp. 189-201). Springer, Cham.

Wotela, K. 2017. Using systems thinking to conceptually link the monitoring and evaluation function within development interventions and public policy. The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in South Africa 13(1), a398. https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v13i1.398.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1: Data or information collection instrument

Information sheet

Dear Sir/Madam

You are invited to participate in research with a working title "Institutional and organisational arrangements that foster effective monitoring and evaluation system at the subnational level: the case of Vhembe District Municipality". The objectives of this research are: firstly, to find out if the existing institutional and organisational arrangements support the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems at Vhembe district municipality. Secondly, to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the existing institutional and organisational arrangements of Vhembe district municipality in fostering effective monitoring and evaluation system. Thirdly, to provide the framework of an institutional and organisational arrangement that will foster the implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system at Vhembe District Municipality. The findings of this study will contribute towards the existing knowledge of implementing monitoring and evaluation systems in local government and further support the development of institutional and organisational arrangement framework that will entrench effective monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe district.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview which will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes at a place of your choice. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you wish so and you may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative effect on you. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate the collection of information and will be destroyed once the analysis has been completed. All information you shared will be confidential. Your name will not appear in any research report of this study. Data will be stored in secured lockable storage and electronic data will be stored in a password-protected computer which is only accessible by the researcher. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information, you may speak to me and I will do my best to answer your questions. You may contact my supervisor, Dr Kambidimi Wotela at 011 717 3677/email kambidima.wotela@wits.ac.za.

Consent Form

I have read the information presented in the information sheet about a study being conducted by Tshipfuralo Ndou of the School of Governance at the University of Witwatersrand. I am aware of the objectives of the planned research, procedures, and confidentiality of my personal information. I agree to take part in this study and I understand that my participation is voluntary.

Your name: _____

Your Signature: _____ Date: _____

Interview schedule

The extent to which institutional and organisational arrangements facilitate the implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system in the Vhembe district

Where is the monitoring and evaluation unit situated within the municipality?
Where would you prefer the monitoring and evaluation unit to be positioned within the department? Why is that location desirable?
What is your specific function in monitoring and assessing the district?
If you do not have a direct role, what is your connection or interaction with the team in the monitoring and evaluation unit?
What kind of assistance does the monitoring and evaluation unit receive from the municipality in relation to its responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation tasks?

The strengths and weaknesses of the institutional and organisational arrangements that are in place for supporting monitoring and evaluation

How does the leadership of the district facilitate and endorse the practice of monitoring and evaluation?
What obstacles have you recognized within the district regarding the implementation of monitoring and evaluation processes?

Institutional and organisational arrangements required for fostering effective monitoring and evaluation

What measures could be taken to overcome these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation system within the district?
What steps are necessary to elevate the quality of monitoring and evaluation processes in the municipality?

Appendix 2.1: Letter permitting the researcher to carry out the research