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Utilisation of evaluation information in the Gauteng Department of Health

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

December 2016

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis/research report titled 'Utilisation of the evaluation information in the Gauteng Department of Health' is my own work, completed with the guidance and support of Dr. Kambidima Wotela as the academic supervisor. I have acknowledged and referenced all sources that I have used and quoted. I hereby submit it in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Management in 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.

Sibulele Sidzumo

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Date: 14 December 2016

ABSTRACT

The evaluation information has a critical role in informing decision making relating to implementation of the development interventions. This study is underpinned by the fact that the worth of evaluation information is determined by the extent of its influence on decision making. It is premised from the fact that there is limited utilisation of the evaluation information for decision making in the Gauteng Department of Health. Thus, the study is aimed at establishing the underlying institutional features and evaluation characteristics that serve as facilitators and/or barriers for the use of evaluation information.

Past studies are reviewed to identify the knowledge gap and develop a conceptual framework to inform the research enquiry. Based on the purpose of the study and the conceptual framework, a qualitative research strategy with interpretive case study design and a purposive sample are applied to obtain in-depth description of the factors pertaining to the use of evaluation information. In addition, three research theories are employed simultaneously to understand the subject phenomenon and inform interpretation of the research findings, based on their unique concepts. The triangulation method is applied in data collection and analysis to ensure reliability and validity of the research results, with one-on-one semi-structured interviews conducted through an interview guide.

The findings reveal that there are no systematic processes and procedures for identification of the users and uses of the evaluation information prior to implementation of the evaluation process. The emphasis on alignment of the evaluations to the institutional context is minimalistic in its orientation since there is little focus on the broader development agenda. There is no demonstration of facilitating inculcation of information use during the evaluation process. In general, the evaluation systems are fragmented, with no formal reward system for encouraging effective utility. The adoption and use of the evaluation findings hinges on the type of recommendations versus the institutional development agenda and capacity. There are no formal information dissemination strategies and procedures for confirming implementation of the adopted evaluation recommendations. The role of the evaluation champions is limited and thus manifested by low awareness and application of the evaluation policy framework and limited institutionalisation of the evaluation function. Last, the findings highlight key institutional features and evaluation characteristics that influence use and/or non-use of the evaluation information, which should be considered in-line with the proposed recommendations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

This research examines the utilisation of the evaluation findings for decision making within the public sector environment, with a specific focus on Gauteng Department of Health. A brief background is provided to outline the status of the evaluation function and the utility of its information within the South African public sector context. This chapter further outlines the problem statement, the purpose of the research, the research questions and the justification for the study. The structure of the report is also outlined, inclusive of the brief synopsis of what is covered in the specific chapters.

1.1 Background

Prior to presenting the research problem, which is covered in Section 1.2.1, the purpose of the study in Section 1.2.2 and the main research questions in Section 1.2.3; an overview of the context and the key terms applied in conceptualising this study is provided. Thus, Section 1.1.1 describes the development of the evaluation function within the context of the South African public sector, with Section 1.1.2 explaining the Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework, while Section 1.1.3 introduces the Gauteng Provincial Department of Health as a research setting. Further detail of the research setting is provided in 2.1 of the following chapter.

1.1.1 Monitoring and Evaluation in context of the South African government

The government of the Republic of South Africa is required by Section 195 of the country's Constitution to be development oriented, be effective, economic and efficient in the use of public funds (Republic of South Africa, 1996). It is further required to be accountable and transparent to the public by providing access to accurate, accessible and timely information. This Constitutional provision necessitated the establishment of the monitoring and evaluation systems to provide empirical information to inform decision making relating to planning and implementation of development programmes, both at strategic and operational levels.

It is stated that "at a strategic level the public sector policies and plans contain goals and objectives that are translated into targets and indicators against which monitoring and evaluation takes place" (Ntakumba, 2013, p. 1). Both at strategic and operational levels, monitoring and evaluation provide decision makers with information

that help them to "draw causal linkages and provide evidence for decisions relating to allocation of funds, help to address challenges and replicate successes" (The Presidency, 2007, p. 5). The latter is echoed by Görgens and Kusek (2009) in that monitoring and evaluation helps to provide credible information that enables policy makers to take informed decisions about the developmental interventions.

Monitoring entails tracking implementation of the development programmes in order to measure progress against achievement of the set targets (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, 2012). However, monitoring is unable to explain the underlying factors for certain occurrences (both intended and unintended), which is answered by the evaluation. Evaluation entails objective assessment of a completed or an on-going development intervention in order to establish its relevance and progress towards achievement of the set strategic objectives (Görgens & Kusek, 2009). However, relevance of the evaluation function hinges on effective use of the produced information in informing the decision making process, hence the need for this research.

1.1.2 The Gauteng Department of Health information systems

The government of the Republic of South Africa is divided into three spheres (National, Provincial and Local), with the Gauteng Department of Health falling under the Gauteng Provincial Government, which is a provincial sphere. At the level of the Executive Authority, the Gauteng Department of Health is headed by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC), with the Administration headed by the Head of the Department (HoD). The Gauteng Provincial Government is headed by the Premier who leads the Provincial Executive Council, which is composed of the MECs. The Department is mandated by the constitution of the country and the National Health Act to first; ensure effective provision of the health services and exercise efficiency on the utilisation of public funds; second, to ensure effective administration and integration of the health services with development interventions; third, to implement interventions aimed at improving the standard of living for the poor and disenfranchised members of society (Gauteng Department of Health, 2013).

Some of the main responsibilities of the Department include management of the Provincial and District hospitals as well as the clinics that fall under its jurisdiction. Among the systems that are used by the Department to plan, track and assess implementation of its development interventions is Monitoring and Evaluation, as well as the National District Health Information system. The National District Health

Information system provides a platform for production and storage of information (Shaw, 2005), with the Monitoring and Evaluation aimed at enabling regular tracking and assessment of the development interventions, including public health services. In the Gauteng Provincial Government the Monitoring and Evaluation systems exist within the provincial departments, including Health, with the Office of the Premier playing the overall custodian while the National District Health Information system is hosted nationally.

1.2 Towards examining utilisation of the evaluation information within the Gauteng Department of Health

In this section, a discussion is presented of the research problem in Section 1.2.1, which necessitated this research, including outlining the purpose of the study in Section 1.2.2 as well as the main research questions in Section 1.2.3.

1.2.1 The research problem statement

It is stated that the use of evaluation information within the South African public service is still largely influenced by the need to comply with reporting requirements of the public institutions such as; the Auditor General, Public Service Commission and the Treasury (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, 2012). This results in a shift of focus away from the use of information to inform achievement of the broader development agenda.

There is weak demonstration for the use of evaluation information for decision making within the Gauteng Departments (Manto Management, 2007; Public Service Commission, 2007). Patton (2010) confirms this notion by suggesting that, largely, the growing global need for empirical information results in overproduction of the information, which supersedes the rate of its use for decision making. Gorgens and Kusek (2009, p. 420) also point out that the latter is attributed to the importance attached to information as a "significant and a symbol of competence in decision making", which perpetuates the compliance driven approach. They further argue that this is often characterised by production of empirical information that does not conform to the applicable norms and standards, in terms of scientific rigour. The Gauteng Department of Health (2014, p. 6) confirms the latter by stating that "programme performance information produced by the systems of the Department (Health) lacks integrity and rigour in terms of validity, accuracy and completeness". It is pointed out that the latter has been inherent in the system since 2007, as indicated in the Auditor General's Annual

reports of 2007, 2011 and 2014 (Dube, 2013). Among the deficiencies highlighted, is the inconsistency between the produced information and the programme objectives, which is commonly referred to as lack of validity.

The above detail indicates limited use of the empirical information in informing decision making within the Gauteng Department of Health. This might have a negative bearing on effective and efficient provision of public health services. Research has been conducted on the use of evaluation information in decision making but none or few have been conducted on institutional factors and evaluation characteristics that influence use of empirical information within the public sector environment. Görgens and Kusek (2009) point out that there has been little focus on organisational, political and cultural factors in the efforts of advancing effective use of evaluation information. Thus, this research aimed to establish the underlying institutional and evaluation process factors that serve as facilitators and/or barriers for use of evaluation information in decision making within the Gauteng Department of Health.

1.2.2 The research purpose statement

It is pointed out that the bottom line of the evaluation process is not the product or report but how the actual findings are used to change or improve social problems/ challenges (Patton, 1997). Thus, non-use of empirical information might render the evaluation system ineffective and irrelevant. Hence, the need to determine how the growing demand for evaluation information corresponds equally to its utility in decision making relating to enhancing delivery of the public health services as mandated by the constitution of the country.

Therefore, the purpose of this research entails exploring factors that contribute to the use and/or non-use of the evaluation information, with the objective of helping to add value in the process of building knowledge for the evaluation function and provide insight into enhancing achievement of the public health development imperatives. In order to achieve the objective of the study, Patton's (1978) Utilisation-Focused Evaluation theory is employed to guide the data collection and explain interpretation of findings. The theory puts emphasis on a user-oriented evaluation approach that enables inculcation of utility among the stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

1.2.3 The research questions

In an endeavour to find possible solutions to the research problem and achieve the objectives of this study, the following questions are asked.

a) What are the institutional factors that influence use and/or non-use of evaluation information?
b) What are the evaluation characteristics that serve as determinants and/or barriers for use of evaluation information?

1.3 Delimitations of the research

This study focuses on examining use of the evaluation information in decision making and thus, the research is limited to exploring the aspects of the evaluation component. Specifically, this research does not include assessment of the use of performance information produced through the monitoring component that is linked to the evaluation function. In assessing the actual use of evaluation information, the institutional and evaluation elements that serve as facilitators and/or barriers for effective use are investigated. The institutional factors are inherent in the governance and administration practices as well as business processes and procedures of the institution. The evaluation characteristics are inherent in the evaluation process which include; conceptualisation, planning, implementation, completion, dissemination and actual use of evaluation findings in decision making.

1.4 Justification of the research

The worth of the evaluation information is determined by the extent of its influence in decision making, hence more emphasis should be put on how this objective is achieved so as to avoid negative effects that ensue from non-use of information (Patton, 1997). The negative effects include non-realisation of the constitutional provisions due to ineffective, inefficient and irrelevant development interventions as a result of relying on sentiments and anecdotal evidence in decision making without empirical information (Gorgens-Albino & Kusek, 2009; Kusek & Rist, 2004; Patton, 2010). The latter results in misallocation and inefficient use of the public funds, which compromises delivery of public services, in the context of cost versus benefit (Görgens & Kusek, 2009). In all, non-use of empirical information affects the smooth running of the public administration, in terms of good governance and administration, which derails achievement of the development objectives.

The key root causes for non-use of evaluation information include poor information quality in terms of lack of scientific rigour, which often arises from limited technical capacity (Rogers, 1962; Caplan, 1979; Kusek & Rist, 2004; Fleischer & Christie, 2009; Green et al., 2009; Patton, 1997; Rich, 2010). Limited technical capacity often result from lack of institutional financial capacity (Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Mackay, 2009). However, putting more emphasis on evaluation technical considerations at the expense of the users' information needs also hinders utility (Patton, 1997). He suggest that there should be maintenance of balance between the two aspects without compromising either. The use of technical terms (jargon) also limits users' understanding of the findings and thus, hinders utility (Development Assistance Committee, 1991).

Lack of demand and poor/untimely dissemination of information, including non-inclusive involvement of the key stakeholders/users in the evaluation process also hinders uptake of evaluation findings in decision making (Fleischer & Christie, 2009; Green et al., 2009; Kusek & Rist, 2004; Patton, 1997; Rich, 2010; Rogers, 1962). It is pointed out that producing high magnitudes of information without the necessary demand for its use is futile, as cases of mismatch between supply and demand have been reported (Bamberger & Rugh, 2009; Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, 2012; Qotywa, 2009). Untimely disseminated information normally loses relevance due to the strategic shifts in the public policy environment (Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Green et al., 2009; Mackay, 2009). They also cite lack of the reward system for use of empirical information in decision making as a root cause for non-use. Above all, lack of champions/advocates for production and use of empirical information, affect mainstreaming of the evaluation function, including uptake of information (Mackay, 2009).

1.5 Preface to the research report

Inclusive of this introductory chapter, this research has six chapters. Chapter 2 covers the literature review, which presents an analysis of the research problem, past and current studies as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework, which informs the research inquiry. Chapter 3 present the research strategy, design, techniques and procedures, including the measures of validity and reliability as well as the methodological limitations Chapter 4 presents the findings, while chapter 5 focuses on interpretation of the findings in line with the adopted theoretical framework. Chapter 6 focuses on summarising the findings and providing conclusions and research limitations as well as the recommendations for future studies and improvement measures.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As pointed out by Badenhorst (2007), this chapter entails four broad objectives. First, to understand the research context or setting and problem (Sections 2.1 and 2.2). Second, to identify the research and knowledge gap through reviewing past and current research studies on the subject of interest (Section 2.3). Third, to develop a theoretical (explanatory) framework for interpreting the research findings (Sections 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6). Last, to conceptualise the research approach (Section 2.7). Technically, the main outcome of a literature review is a conceptual framework, defined implicitly by Kumar (2014) as an advanced outline of how the research should proceed after we have interrogated key literature on the research of interest.

Inferring from this, Wotela (2016) points out that we seek understanding of the research setting and problem to contextualise and justify the need for research intervention. He further suggests that, subsequent to identifying the knowledge gap, we establish the academic field of study that underpins the area of research, and identify the key attributes or variables that inform the data or information to be collected. Thus, we situate our research within Strategic Management and its components in Section 2.4, which include the evaluation component that is further broken down into specific attributes in Section 2.5. In establishing the knowledge gap, the research approaches, designs, procedures and methods applied, including findings and conclusions realised by past and current studies on evaluations of evaluation information and its utilisation are interrogated. Other than establishing the knowledge gap, this interrogation is also used to consider methodological options that can be employed for the assessment.

Having identified three theories that offer unique interpretive frameworks for explaining the empirical research findings on use of evaluation information within Gauteng Department of Health, we describe them (theories) in Section 2.6. Worth mentioning is the linkage between this interpretive framework and the attributes of interest whose information was collected during the research. Last, a road map is outlined that guides collection, processing and analysis of information, including interpretation of empirical results emanating from assessing utilisation of evaluation information in the Gauteng Department of Health.

In each of the areas of focus, a thematic summative content analysis is applied when synthesising literature and writing up (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The approach is thematic because key questions have been devised against which the literature is interrogated and synthesised theme by theme. It is summative because these themes have been derived before the literature review and include those that arise during the literature review. Lastly, it is 'content' because when reviewing literature, the focus is on explicit and implied subjective interpretation of the discussions.

2.1 The institutional context of the Gauteng Department of Health

The Republic of South Africa is a Unitary State, governed through the legislature (Parliament), Judiciary, and the executive. Further, the South African Government is demarcated into three spheres—the national, the provincial, and the local. The Gauteng Department of Health falls under the provincial sphere reporting to the Provincial Governance structures as well as the National Department of Health. The Gauteng Provincial Department of Health is headed by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) with its administration headed by a Head of the Department (HoD). On the other hand, the Gauteng Provincial Government is headed by the Premier, who is also the Chairperson of the Provincial Executive Council.

The South African Constitution mandates the Provincial Department to provide the provincial inhabitants with access to effective health care services and emergency medical treatment (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Further, the South African Constitution and the National Health Acts mandate the Department to ensure effective administration and integration of health services and interventions to uplift the standard of living of all inhabitants of the Province (Gauteng Department of Health, 2013). Prior to 2012, the provision of health and social services were under one Provincial Department to realise the constitutional imperative of providing equal access to water, food, health care, and social security. However, in 2012, the health and social services were separated into different Departments. The separation was necessitated by a need to mainstream provision of health services to "improve effectiveness in the provincial health system" which was previously characterised by poor service and compounded by a shortage of human capital and material resources (Independent Online, 2012). Another reason was rapid population growth within the province arising from in-migration and immigration.

According to the Gauteng Department of Health (2008), the vision and mission of the Provincial Department of Health is to excel in the provision of health services in the Province. This implies or includes conforming to internationally accepted norms and standards in fighting susceptibility to diseases and poverty among the Gauteng communities. The National Department of Health (2011) states that the goal of the national and provincial health institutions is to reduce general and maternal mortality rates, reduce the effects of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, as well as improve responsiveness to pubic needs. The National Health Act, 61 of 2003, provides for a legislative framework that enforces provision of quality health services by tracking compliance with expected norms and standards. In order to achieve these goals and objectives, the Gauteng Department of Health is implementing interventions meant to improve provision of "health and wellbeing, with emphasis on vulnerable groups; reduced rate of new HIV infections and deaths from TB and AIDS; efficiency in rendering public services; human capital management and development for better health outcomes, including organisational excellence" (Gauteng Department of Health, 2008, p. 45).

The Gauteng Department of Health (2013) specifies that it undertakes its mandate and implements its interventions through the Provincial and District hospitals as well as clinics falling under its jurisdiction. Among the systems that are used by the Department to plan, track and assess implementation of its development interventions are the monitoring and evaluation as well as the National District Health Information system. The latter provides a platform for producing management or tracking information (Shaw, 2005) and the former tracks and assess public health services and related development interventions. The Gauteng departments hosts their own monitoring and evaluation systems, with the Office of the Premier playing a custodian role for the provincial monitoring and evaluation system.

2.2 Non-use of evaluation information in the Gauteng Department of Health

The rising global demand for accountability on use of government funds and development-oriented public service necessitates the use of empirical information to inform decision making (Byskov & Olsen, 2005). Kusek and Rist (2004) point out that the use of evaluation information adds value in measuring performance of the development interventions and accounting for the use of public funds. Section 195 of the South African Constitution mandates government to be responsive to the public needs, to be effective, economic and efficient in the use of public resources, as well as to

be accountable and transparent to the public by providing accurate, accessible, and timely information (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Obviously, evaluations can provide information that aid decision-making in a quest to ensure organisational excellence and efficiency in delivery of quality health care services. This is underscored by the World Health Organisation (2007) in pointing out that an effective and efficient public health system hinges on empirical evidence-based decision making. However, using the produced and available information for decision making remains a challenge (Khumalo, 2006).

There is no evidence that the evaluation and research information is used for decision-making within any of the Gauteng Provincial Departments (Manto Management, 2007; Public Service Commission, 2007). Most performance reporting is done in compliance with the accountability requirements rather than for enhancing the formulation, implementation, and management of development interventions (Public Service Commission 2007; Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results 2012). Patton (2010) argues that the growing need for empirical information has resulted in its production supply sometimes even surpassing its demand. Görgens and Kusek (2009) suggest that such a status quo leads to producing information that lacks relevance and quality to meet the needs and priorities of the decision makers. This problem is compounded by fragmented information systems across the three spheres of government. This implies that these institutions are producing information of limited use in programme planning, budgeting and implementation (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, 2012). Therefore, there is limited evidence-based decision making in the Gauteng Department of Health.

The reports indicate that "programme performance information produced by the systems of the Gauteng Department of Health lacks integrity and rigour in terms of validity, accuracy and completeness" (Gauteng Provincial Department of Health 2014, p. 6). This status quo has been inherent in the system since 2007 as suggested by the Auditor General's annual reports of 2007, 2011, and 2014 (Dube, 2013). Other deficiencies highlighted include the inconsistency between the produced information and the programme objectives and therefore, lacks validity. This implies the Department cannot achieve the Constitutional provisions outlined in Section 195. Though some research on the use of evaluation information for decision making exists, there is very little on public institutions in general that interrogates actual use or non-use of evaluation and research information in decision-making. Thus, this research established factors that facilitate or

inhibit use of evaluation information within the Gauteng Department of Health. This implies examining how evaluation information is used to make decisions to attain organisational excellence and efficiency in the delivery of quality health care services.

2.3 Methods, data, findings, and conclusions of research studies on, and evaluations of, evaluation information and its utility

In this Section, empirical studies are described and evaluations of evaluation information and its utility. In doing so, research approaches, designs, procedures and methods applied are pointed out as well as findings and conclusions realised by these studies. This allowed the establishment of methodological options that were employed during the empirical part of this research. Lastly, the knowledge gap on this subject in general and Gauteng Department of Health in particular is uncovered.

Cousins and Leithwood (1986) undertook a meta-evaluation—based on 65 studies undertaken between 1971 and 1986—on factors that influence use of evaluation and research information. They found that organisations will use empirical information resulting from a user-oriented evaluation or research, what Fleischer and Christie (2009, p. 160) calls the "user-focused evaluation approach". This implies applying fewer technical strategies, designs, procedures and methods that are understood and accepted by users. The other characteristics include (i.) relevance of findings to the institutional context and (ii.) acceptance of the evaluation results by the users/ decision makers.

Preskill, Zuckerman, and Matthews (2003) have suggested five factors that hinder utilisation of evaluation results. These include, (i.) poor or ineffective evaluation process, (ii.) lack of champions or support from management, (iii.) lack of content or context specialists, (iv.) poor communication, and (v.) poor organisational culture and principles on use of empirical information. Active participation of the programme specialists is fundamental in ensuring context relevant and/or construct valid evaluation information, which is key in inducing demand for its use (Preskill et al., 2003). They suggest that utilisation of evaluation and research information hinges on a constructionist approach—that posits that knowledge about the real world is constructed by social actors through integration and collaboration. Amo and Cousins (2007) point out that the hindering factors mentioned above can be addressed by conducting continuous capacity building for all stakeholders within the organisation (organisational learning).

Fleischer and Christie (2009) used a cross-sectional design to examine utilisation of evaluation information. They point out six determinants of information utilisation, (i.) locating the evaluation within the broader organisation context and culture; (ii.) evaluation capacity building; (iii.) collective planning from the concept stage including the identification and reaching consensus on intended uses and users; (vi.) effective communication and engagement of all stakeholders throughout the evaluation process; (v.) soliciting of feedback from stakeholders regarding the evaluation approach and process, and; (vi.) developing a plan for follow-up on the implementation of findings. By implication, continuously facilitating use of information throughout the evaluation life cycle increases the chances of effective utility, what Greene (1990) calls facilitation of change management relating to uses of empirical information.

The research study of Green and colleagues (2009) has examined the gap between theory and practice in the use of evaluation and research information in decision-making. They found that use of empirical information is influenced by effective engagement with stakeholders, attaining consensus on its utilisation, facilitating its use from conceptualisation to completion of the evaluation, and allowing users to control the process. This implies that exercising a collaborative approach right from the initial phase of the evaluation process serves as a strong determinant for utility of evaluation information. A collaborative approach is fundamental in facilitating stakeholders' understanding of the evaluation technical process and thus, soliciting stakeholder buy-in and demand for use of findings in decision making (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). By implication, weak and/or non-inclusive stakeholder participation results in low uptake of evaluation information.

Further, apart from credibility, the information should be user-friendly, relevant to the organisation, less technical (free of academic jargon), and objective (covers all angles without prejudice). Green and colleagues (2009, p. 164) argue that less technical language "… translates ideas into messages that are tailored, simple, clear, brief, reinforcing, and more concrete than abstract … [and should be] enriched with analogies that can be understood in the local language". Noteworthy, the importance of context-specific and simple empirical information does not supersede the significance of applying scientifically rigorous methodologies. Mitsunaga et al. (2013) point out that credibility of evaluation information is determined by the extent of adherence to the evaluation/ scientific norms and standards in terms of reliability and validity measures.

In addition, dissemination should be timely so as to avoid irrelevance of empirical information. The public policy environment is volatile and thus, untimely disseminated information risks losing relevance and/ or validity in decision making (Van Niekerk, 2002). Noteworthy, in an effective user-oriented (collaborative) approach, the dissemination of empirical information becomes easy since all users would have been aware of the findings and potential uses of the information (Patton, 2010). Importantly, there should be systematic tracking of actual use of the adopted findings and/or recommendations so as to confirm and evaluate utility and associated change as pointed out by Fleischer and Christie (2009) and Rich (2010).

Lastly, the organisational features and context that determine use of evaluation and research information include (i.) availability of resources, (ii.) existence of champions and leaders to maintain legitimacy and practical application of such information, (iii.) desire to change with fewer counter reformers, (iv.) good reward system for effective use of knowledge, and (v.) maintaining effective utilisation procedures as Gorgens and Kusek (2009) have suggested. By implication, the active and/or meaningful role of the institutional leadership and/or management is fundamental in creating a conducive environment for effective production and use of empirical information.

Heunis and colleagues (2011) utilised a mixed research approach to determine effectiveness of the TB-HIV information management systems in Free State province. They also examined disparities between facilities and the provincial level. The study was limited to measuring accuracy and reliability of information. They report high usage of information for operations and resource allocation at facility and district levels. This is in line with Byskov and Olsen's (2005) emphasis on shifting focus from just reporting to using the information for programme improvement. However, they found that lack of data quality control measures results in discrepancies between information recorded at facility level and that at provincial level. Inconsistent and/or poor quality information might have an adverse impact on recipients of public services, especially in the health sector as found by Heunis et al. (2011) that discrepancies in provincial and facility level information result to inconsistencies in patient treatment status records. Negative effects might include, inter alia, misallocation of essential resources and lack of immediate interventions/ actions on undesirable occurrences, as pointed out by Görgens and Kusek (2009).

The study concludes that fragmented information management procedures contribute to production of poor quality data. Limited technical capacity and human

capital as well as lack of feedback to facility level staff are also cited as root causes of these challenges, which one can link to limited leadership. The study did explore the information management process and use.

Kawonga, Blaauw, and Fonn (2012) conducted a cross-sectional survey study on the alignment of programme management supporting functions to the health systems in South Africa with specific focus on HIV/AIDS monitoring and evaluation systems. The study examines the lack of champions or leadership vis-à-vis non-utilisation of evaluation and research information. Their findings reveal that having a monitoring and evaluation framework does not guarantee quality and utility of information. Ineffective leadership or lack of champions for implementation of the monitoring and evaluation functions results in uncoordinated activities that leads to the production of poor quality information—that is, incomplete, inaccurate, and untimely. Kawonga, Blaauw, and Fonn (2012) argue that the use of a silo approach when undertaking monitoring and evaluation activities limits utility of performance information in decision making. By implication, treating evaluation policy framework as a mean to an end is critical and thus, there should be concerted efforts to drive awareness and application of the policy prescripts, with active leadership being fundamental to the achievement of this notion.

Kawonga, Fonn, and Blaauw (2013) undertook a quantitative study to determine the involvement of health service managers in monitoring and evaluation of the HIV/AIDS programme. The study was limited to measuring the relationship between possession of monitoring and evaluation knowledge and the demand for use of monitoring and evaluation information. It covered use and non-use of evaluation and research information comprehensively. The findings indicate that the senior managers do not utilise monitoring and evaluation information due to their limited knowledge of monitoring and evaluation functions. This implies that empirical information is mostly utilised by the vertical/ junior managers since they possess more knowledge of the monitoring and evaluation functions relative to the senior managers. By implication, there is limited evidence-informed decision making relating to policy making, programme design, planning and implementation review/ improvement, which is commonly offered in the evaluation findings. The demand for utility of empirical information is attributed to the possession of knowledge of the monitoring and evaluation and/or research functions. This implies that senior managers are more likely to use performance information if they possess monitoring and evaluation as well as research knowledge. The

study concludes that capacity building for all levels of the organisational staff is imperative in ensuring utilisation of monitoring and evaluation (empirical) information.

Mitsunaga and others (2013) conducted qualitative research on the use of Community Health Workers for programme management and evaluation with specific focus on data quality assessments and baseline results in Rwanda. The study was limited to measuring data quality issues that result in non-use of programme performance information. Their findings reveal that use of evaluation and research information hinges on production of good quality (complete and consistent) data and effective feedback within an organisation as well as other affected institutions. They point out that poor quality data is due to (i.) poor description of indicators, (ii.) insufficient, inconsistent, and unreliable data collection tools, (iii.) data collation and analysis process, (iv.) inconsistent reporting requirements, (v.) limited capacity building and (vi.) lack of supervision or leadership.

Ledikwe and colleagues (2014) conducted qualitative research on health information, with specific focus on data management and reporting systems in Botswana with a view of improving the quality of this information. The findings indicate that a policy framework for data management exists but technical human capital for its implementation is limited. Other limitations include poor technological infrastructure, a lack of needs assessment and engagement of stakeholders. Thus, the latter results in the production of information that is not relevant to the needs and priorities of decision makers. Other effects include poor data quality, inconsistent information dissemination and/or feedback procedures and thus, result in the non-use of the produced empirical information in the decision making process. However, this report does not explicitly detail the underlying factors for non-use of evaluation and research information.

In sum, the described studies reveal that effective use of the evaluation and research information hinges on (i.) continuous capacity building, (ii.) stakeholder participation, and (iii.) production of credible information by adhering to scientific rigour (reliability and validity). The other key determinants for effective use of this information are its relevance to the institutional and organisational development priorities as well as timely dissemination of information. Relatedly, effective champions (advocates) allow for institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation as well as utilisation of empirical information for decision-making. Lastly, there should be a systematic framework for

applying, confirming, and following up the implementation of recommendations arising from evaluation and research.

These studies did not detail the underlying institutional factors that positively influence the use of evaluation and research information, especially within the public sector. Further, the majority of reviewed studies applied quantitative research techniques that measured the extent as well as the significance of this problem but fall short of providing the reason why such a problem is persistent. Therefore, this research applied a qualitative research approach to establish institutional factors and evaluation processes that facilitate use of empirical evaluation and research information for decision making in the Gauteng Department of Health.

2.4 Strategic management as main field of study for understanding non-use of evaluation information

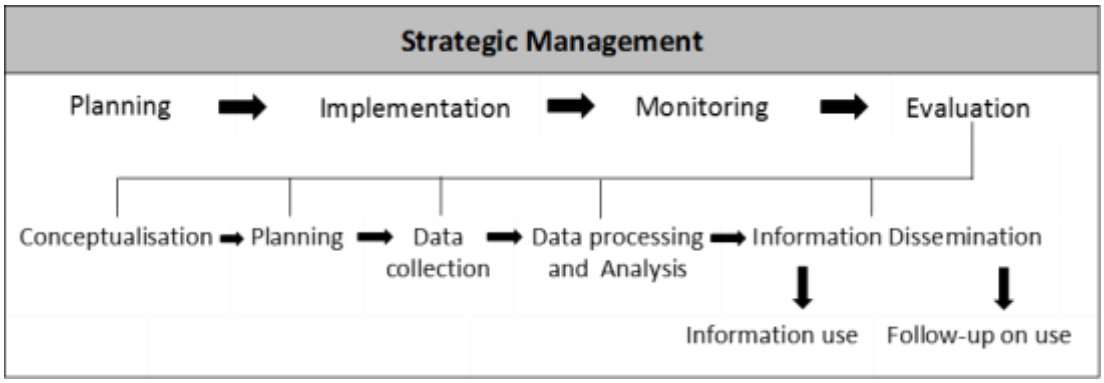
In this Section, Strategic Management is discussed as the main field of study in order to contextualise and understand non-use of evaluation information and breakdown the evaluation component in Section 2.5, to understand its attributes that inform the information to be collected in line with the themes emerging from the reviewed literature.

Strategic management involves a series of concerted efforts to overcome challenges (mostly developmental) that negatively affect societies ('Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus' (1989) in Van der Waldt, Van Niekerk, Doyle, Knipe, & Du Toit, 2002). The efforts entail performing a sequence of functions and activities that are aimed at achieving the development goals and objectives (Ile, Allen-Ile, & Eresia-Eke, 2012; Van der Waldt et al., 2002). Logically, strategic management entails formulation of plans as well as implementation and tracking of programme activities, including evaluation of programmes as shown in Figure 1 (Van der Waldt et al., 2002). Ile, Allen-Ile, & Eresia-Eke (2012, p. 74) point out that public institutions should systematically carry out essential functions of strategic management, which include "…planning, organising, leading and controlling"… in order to be responsive to the public needs. The availability of accurate and reliable empirical information is critical in carrying out the functions of strategic management (Van Niekerk, 2002).

The focus of this research is limited to assessing the utilisation of evaluation information and thus, the evaluation component is broken down into attributes that inform the focus areas of this research. The evaluation component is made up of the

following types; (i.) formative, (ii.) implementation, (iii.) summative, (iv.) impact and (v.) meta-evaluation. Formative evaluation is conducted prior to initiation of a development intervention to assess the current environment so as to inform design and modalities to be adopted in addressing the development challenges (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). Implementation evaluation reviews processes employed and progress made in the implementation programmes (Kusek & Rist, 2004). They further point out that summative evaluation is conducted after completion of development programmes to assess the overall progress against achievement of medium-long term objectives. Depending on longevity of development interventions, impact evaluation is conducted during and post-programme life cycle in order to determine achievement of both intended and un-intended societal change (Patton, 2010). Meta-evaluation is a synthesis of the completed evaluations (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Figure 1 illustrates the components of strategic management and attributes of the evaluation component as the areas of interest, which happen to be same for monitoring.

Figure 1: Components of Strategic Management and Attributes of Evaluation



As mentioned above, the components of strategic management include planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

a) Planning involves outlining programme objectives, targets, indicators, activities and inputs for implementation (Ile et al., 2012). They further point out that it is based on the vision and mission of the institution as well as the strategic objectives (theory of change) of the development interventions. The process includes clarification of the performance standards and identification of strengths and weaknesses of the institution in order to mitigate against the imminent risks that might impede achievement of the development objectives (Rowe, Mason, Dickel, Mann, & Mockler, 1994; Van der Waldt et al., 2002). The evaluation information helps in this instance by providing baseline data, highlighting red flag areas and offering best practices/ alternative models

of implementation (Ile et al., 2012). Noteworthy, non-use of evaluation information during planning might result in programme plans that do not respond to reality and misallocated public funds, that might derail achievement of development objectives (Van der Waldt et al., 2002).

b) Implementation entails use of the programme inputs to carry out activities in order to achieve the short (outputs), medium (outcomes) to long term (impact) development results (Görgens & Kusek, 2009). This involves continuous monitoring and evaluation of progress relating to the achievement of the development results (Smit & Cronje, (1992) in Van der Waldt et al., 2002).

(c) Monitoring entails continuous tracking of implementation activities to measure progress towards achievement of the programme targets, including assessing efficient use of the inputs/ resources (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Information from monitoring provide decision makers with early warning signs on possible stumbling blocks to the achievement of the programme targets and objectives (Ile et al., 2012).

d) Evaluation can take place before, during and post programme implementation. The objective is to inform the nature and design of programmes and assess processes employed in implementation as well as to determine the worth of development interventions (Kusek & Rist, 2004). The purpose is to sustain good practices and initiate improvement measures for under-performance (Van der Waldt et al., 2002). Patton (1997) points out that, for this function to be effective, development programmes should have a clear theory of change (results chain), which serve as a framework for measuring performance towards achievement of development objectives. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) in Kusek and Rist (2004) argue that, if results are not measured, one cannot distinguish between success and failure and if success is not acknowledged and rewarded, failure will prevail. All of this hinges on availability and use of evaluation (empirical) information, which underscores its importance in strategic management.

2.5 Attributes of the evaluation cycle

The evaluation cycle includes the following attributes; conceptualisation, planning, collection, processing, analysis of data, dissemination of evaluation results and follow-up on utility of the information (McCoy, Sonko, Kamau, Ndirangu, & Syengo, 2008).

(a) Conceptualisation entails setting the evaluation agenda prior to the planning process, which includes reviewing the available bodies of knowledge on the areas to be evaluated (Patton, 1997). The measures of ensuring scientific rigour, such as validity, accuracy, reliability and completeness are also discussed during conceptualisation (Bryman, 2012; Merriam & Associates, 2009; Patton, 2010). They point out that this is aimed at ensuring credibility of the evaluation results, which is critical in facilitating its meaningful utilisation.

(b) Planning involves securing resources for the evaluation, which includes procuring services of the service provider in case of the evaluator being external to the institution (Qotywa, 2009; Ile et al., 2012). Patton (1997) points out that the conceptualisation and planning processes should be done in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. This is intended to facilitate buy-in and a common understanding among the key stakeholders. It is argued that being clear on the purpose of the evaluation and being collaborative from the onset helps in formulating the evaluation questions and thus facilitating relevance of the findings to the institutional context (Qotywa, 2009). Noteworthy, the existence of champions/ advocates for use of empirical information also plays a critical role in securing evaluation resources and encouraging inclusive stakeholder participation (Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Patton, 2015). However, there should be careful consideration of stakeholder composition in order to avoid possible delays and deadlocks that commonly result from competing stakeholder interests and priorities which characterise coordination of large groups (Greene, 1987; Patton, 2010).

(c) Data collection involves gathering primary, secondary and tertiary data for the evaluation through the use of instruments such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, etc. (McCoy et al., 2008). It is pointed out that accuracy and completeness of data is critical in ensuring integrity and usefulness of the evaluation information (Patton, 2010).

(d) Data processing and analysis involves preparing and interpreting the collected data/ information in order to make sense out of it, in line with the evaluation objectives and strategy (Patton, 2015). It is pointed out that application of the information quality measures is critical at this stage as it is prone to both human bias and technical errors that might affect integrity of information and thus, hinder its use (McCoy et al., 2008).

(e) Information dissemination entails communication of the evaluation information to the decision makers and other relevant stakeholders. This can be done in two ways, (i.) facilitated throughout the evaluation process as suggested by Patton (1978) or (ii.) provided to the users after completion of the evaluation report as posited by Rogers (1962). The emphasis is for the evaluation information to reach the decision makers in a timely manner in order to avoid it (information) becoming history, as pointed out by Rogers (1962). The packaging should include both detailed and summarised reports as well as a user friendly format and simple language in order to cater for different categories of users (Van Niekerk, 2002). The information should be disseminated systematically and timeously in order to maintain its relevance in the decision making process (Qotywa, 2009).

(f) Information use refers to utilisation of empirical information in decision making, which underpins the whole evaluation process (McCoy et al., 2008). Patton (1997) puts emphasis on the user-oriented approach that entails inculcation of utility through the evaluation process. Utility of evaluation information also depends on the extent to which the findings/ recommendations are pragmatic, in so far as the availability of resources and relevance to the priorities are concerned (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009).

(g) Follow-up on use of the evaluation information is conducted to confirm actual application of the adopted findings/ recommendations (Fleischer & Christie, 2009; Kusek & Rist, 2004). Emphasis is put on undertaking regular reviews on information demand in order to ascertain the extent to which it (information) fulfils the needs and priorities of the decision makers (McCoy et al., 2008). They point out that this enables continuous improvement of the evaluation process.

Based on the above discussion, we conclude that strategic management underpins the initiation, implementation and review of the development interventions. Evaluation is among the four main components of strategic management (planning, implementation and monitoring). The evaluation component generates empirical information that informs decision making concerning strategic management for development interventions. The key attributes of evaluation include conceptualisation, planning, collection, processing and interpretation of data as well as dissemination, use and confirmation of use. These attributes underpin production and actual use of the evaluation and thus, they will inform themes for data collection, processing and analysis

for this research. However, there are various considerations that should be taken into account in creating demand for actual use of evaluation information in decision making.

2.6 Theoretical framework for interpreting non-use of evaluation information

In this section the explanatory framework capable of validating the interpretation of the research findings is discussed (Schwandt, 2015). Considering the similarities between evaluation and research in terms of scientific methods, the theoretical framework relates to the use of empirical information, which, to some extent, includes research though there is more emphasis on the evaluation component. The reviewed literature reveals that the usefulness of evaluation information relies on various conditions/ factors that should be considered in the evaluation process.

Patton (1978) put emphasis on the user-oriented evaluation approach as a main determinant for effective use of the information, since utility is inculcated throughout the evaluation process. He states that inclusive stakeholder participation helps in aligning the evaluation to the institutional context and thus, advancing relevance and use of information. Caplan (1979) points out that acknowledging the complexity of the public sector policy environment helps in dispelling the give and take notion and thus, enables the researchers to appreciate the institutional context and therefore, increases the chances of uptake. McCoy, Ngari, and Krumpe (2005) in Görgens and Kusek (2009) point out that there are high chances of information use by decision makers if they have participated in all phases of the evaluation process. They attribute this to a sense of ownership that emanates from their understanding of the rationale for the evaluation and the basis for the evaluation findings.

Nelson, Roberts, Maederer, Wertheimer, and Johnson, (1987) and Webber (1987) suggest that awareness of the institutional context helps to acknowledge the information needs and priorities of the users as well as the circumstances that determine use of empirical information. Rogers (1962) attributes effective use of empirical information to the sound dissemination strategies of credible evaluation findings. She argues that utility of evaluation information hinges on the extent to which the decision makers become well knowledgeable and get persuaded about an idea. Overall, the role of leadership is critical in entrenching a culture of using of empirical information to inform decision making (Görgens & Kusek, 2009).

Patton's (1978) Utilisation-Focused Evaluation theory is capable of explaining the factors pertaining to the use of evaluation information within the Gauteng Department of Health. It puts emphasis on identification of the actual users and uses of evaluation information as well as the facilitation of active stakeholder participation in order to ensure meaningful utility. It is pointed out that the examination of the real world should be conducted in accordance with values as well as the information needs and priorities of the primary users in order to ensure relevance and induce demand for use (Patton, 1978). He argues that by getting the primary users of information actively involved in the evaluation process, the evaluator is gradually facilitating actual use of information. It is pointed out that utility of empirical information is not a once off event that "one becomes interested in at the end of an evaluation" (Patton, 1997, p. 436). Strategies for implementation of findings should be decided collectively before implementation of an evaluation, with a clear follow-up plan (Patton, 1978).

Noteworthy, the evaluator "does not unilaterally impose a focus and set of methods on a programme, as much as the stakeholders are not set up to impose their initial preferences unilaterally or dominantly" (Patton, 1997, p. 433). Caplan (1979) puts emphasis on maintenance of this balance as sometimes the evaluation process is used to confirm/ support personal or malicious interests or confirm decisions that are already made. Ayers (1987) and Greene ((1990) argue that maintaining a balance between the scientific rigour and alignment to the organisational context is not always possible and thus result in compromised evaluator objectivity and rigour. Greene (1990) points out that the balance between the two cannot always be maximised simultaneously, hence the evaluators/ researchers have to make choices in terms of adopting rigorous procedures while acknowledging a lower probability of utility or vice versa.

Greene (1987) applied the utilisation-focused evaluation theory and suggests that the approach facilitates strong alignment with the organisational philosophy and also enables the evaluators to appreciate the organisational context. She argues that first hand engagement with organisational representatives (policy experts) offers evaluators an opportunity to understand the programme content that cannot be gained through document reviews. Oliver, Innvar, Lorenc, Woodman, and Thomas (2014, p. 6) echoes the latter in suggesting that "having a good understanding of the policy process and context of policy priorities" is critical in increasing uptake of the evaluation information. The institutional features that serve as determinants for use of empirical information

include availability of resources, less complex social conditions, existence of champions to promote the culture of information use as well as the desire to change (Patton, 1978; Green et al., 2009). Willingness from the leadership and programme managers as well as openness to persuasion by the empirical information is critical in advancing its (information) effective utility, hence the need for a user-oriented evaluation approach (Patton, 1978; Görgens & Kusek, 2009).

Sensitivity of the evaluation process to the ethical and cultural standards is also cited as a critical factor for utility of the information (Rogers, 1962; Patton, 1978). Crona and Parker (2011, p. 7) argue that "the form and content of social interactions between researchers and policy makers, influences knowledge utilisation above and beyond the technical quality of science information" as it plays a key role in ensuring credibility and legitimacy of the information. It is stated that empirical information that enables the decision makers to better understand social problems and offer possible solutions helps in advancing its demand for decision making (Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Rogers, 1962).

However, working with large groups of participants is sometimes marred by challenges such as ineffective coordination of inputs and limited adherence to timelines that delays the evaluation process (Greene, 1987). She argues that this is characterised by difficulties in selecting appropriate stakeholders and reaching consensus due to polarised perspectives, interests and principles. She also cites a difficulty in facilitating trade-offs between users' needs and adherence to technical and ethical standards, including soliciting their commitment. Notwithstanding the delays that arise from exercising flexibility on the set timelines, the solicited buy-in and common understanding of the stakeholders is more beneficial in advancing use of findings (Greene, 1987; Patton, 1978).

Patton (1978) posits that inclusive and active participation of the key stakeholders increases their level of awareness of the evaluation technical aspect. He point out that if the decision makers understand the methods applied and feel in control of the evaluation process, there are high chances of ownership and uptake of the findings. Görgens and Kusek (2009) argue that information with disputed evaluation methods is unlikely to be utilised for decision making. They state that the programme officials need to know how to interpret the evaluation findings as much as the evaluators need to be knowledgeable about scientific methods and institutional policy context. They underscore the importance of continuous capacity building to ensure credibility of information, which is a key facilitator for effective use.

Patton's (1978) utilisation-focused evaluation theory further postulates that the active role of the leadership helps in driving inclusive stakeholder participation and promoting the culture of demand for use of empirical information in decision making. It is pointed out that the leadership need to set an example in utilising the empirical information for decision making and creating a reward system for effective use in order to promote a positive organisational culture for utility (Görgens & Kusek, 2009). However, organisational structural changes, including staff turnover might comprise continuity and use of information due to new priorities and different leadership styles (Patton, 2010).

Patton (1978) suggest that the user-oriented approach lessens the lengthy engagement process that is associated with dissemination of information post the evaluation process and thus enabling timely delivery of the findings. According to Rogers (1962), the extent to which the decision makers become knowledgeable and get persuaded about an innovation/ idea hinges on sound information dissemination strategies. Accessibility of information in a timely manner is also cited by Nelson et al. (1987) as a critical facilitator for use, since decisions cannot be put on hold due to unavailability of empirical information in the public policy making space. Inconsistent, unsystematic and delayed dissemination of empirical information is cited by Rogers (1962) and Caplan (1979) as a barrier to utility. The utilisation-focused evaluation theory also advocates for brief, concise and less technical information that enables easy understanding and thus increasing the chances of uptake (Patton, 2010). Görgens and Kusek (2009) point out that packaging the evaluation information in a format that is easily understood by the respective users helps in increasing the chances for its use in decision making. Green et al. (2009, p. 164) states that packaging the findings into messages that are tailored, simple, less abstract and "enriched with analogies that can be understood in the local language" helps in advancing utility.

Patton's (1978) utilisation-focused evaluation theory also postulates that the key stakeholders should agree on strategies for systematic follow-up on actual use of the information during conceptualisation of the evaluation process. This is intended to confirm implementation of the evaluation interventions and thus enable feedback on the factors for use and/or non-use of the information that also helps to improve on future evaluations (Patton, 2010). Görgens and Kusek (2009) suggest that evidence for actual use of evaluation information can be ascertained through improvements in programme

design, budget reprioritisation, review of implementation strategies and reference to the produced information. Noteworthy, confirmed demand for empirical information does not necessary translate to its actual use as there have been confirmed cases of reports gathering dust in offices of the officials without being used to inform decision making (Bamberger & Rugh, 2009; Qotywa, 2009). Thus, the need for systematic and continuous tracking for actual use of empirical information in decision making.

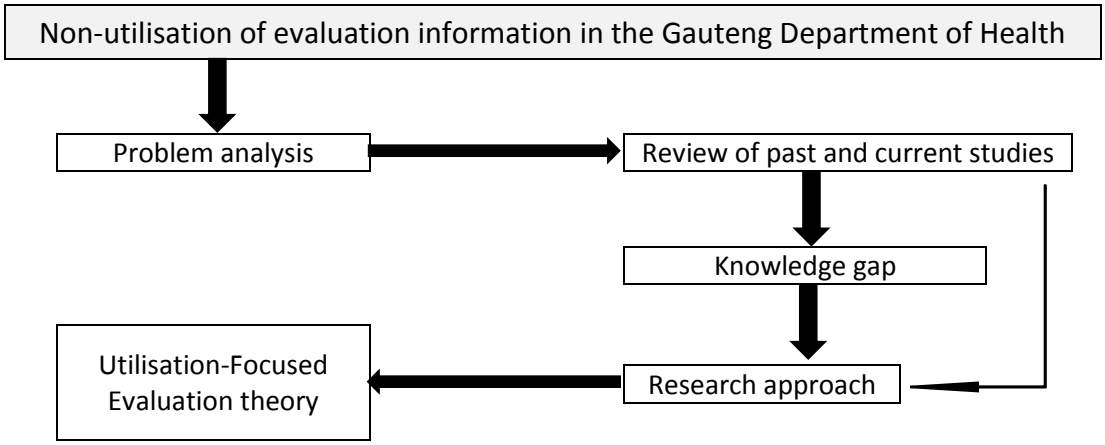
In conclusion, the main thrust of Patton's (1978) utilisation-focused evaluation theory is active and inclusive participation of the key stakeholders in all phases of the evaluation process. The main intention is to ensure relevance of the evaluation information to the institutional priorities without compromising the scientific rigour and thus advancing effective utility. The theory also put emphasis on identification of users and potential uses of the empirical evidence to be produced prior to implementation of the evaluation process. The latter includes agreeing on the action plan for implementation of the evaluation interventions as well as the systematic strategies for confirming implementation of the evaluation interventions. Maintenance of the balance between the institutional context and the scientific rigour is also cited by the theory as a key facilitator for production context-aligned scientifically rigorous empirical information that induces demand for effective utility. Acknowledging the complexities of the public sector environment also helps to tailor make the evaluation information in order to ensure its relevance and thus inducing demand for use.

This approach is intended to embed the culture and demand for use of empirical information by driving technical awareness and ownership among the programme officials and the leadership. Emphasis is put on inculcating use of information throughout the evaluation process rather than at completion and thus ensuring timely dissemination of the evaluation findings. Effective use of empirical information hinges on the extent to which the users/ decision makers become knowledgeable about the facts of social occurrences, hence the importance of effective information dissemination strategies and procedures (Rogers, 1962; Patton, 1997). The user-oriented approach enables users' knowledge and awareness of the evaluation technical aspect, which is critical in driving their active participation and buy-in and thus increasing the chances of uptake in decision making. The active leadership advocacy for use of empirical information plays a critical role in creating the culture of evidence-informed decision making and thus entrenching to institutionalisation of the evaluation function.

2.7 Utilisation of evaluation information in the Gauteng Department of Health, a conceptual framework

In this section (2.7), a road map for collection, processing and analysis of information, including interpretation of findings on utilisation of evaluation information in the Gauteng Department of Health is outlined. Thus, this section includes a diagram (Figure 2) that illustrates the process followed in conceptualising this research. The section also includes a brief review of the research setting, problem, past and current studies, strategic management as a field of study and explanatory framework.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework



This research assess factors that determine use and/or non-use of the evaluation information in the Gauteng Department of Health. The department (research setting) is mandated by the constitution of the country to implement programmes that are intended to "(i.) reduce general and maternal mortality rate, (ii.) lessen the effects of HIV/AIDS and TB and, (iii.) improve responsiveness of the health systems" (National Department of Health, 2011, p. 8). However, there is limited use of the evaluation information in terms of informing decision making, which affects effective and efficient delivery of public health services as mandated by the constitution of the country. There is little or no evidence for the use of empirical information for decision making within the Gauteng Provincial Departments (Manto Management, 2007). Generally, information use is limited to the requirements that are output oriented and thus resulting in shifting of focus away from using the information to inform achievement of the broader development agenda (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, 2012; Public Service Commission, 2007).

The reviewed past and current studies reveal that use of empirical information hinges on the following factors; (i.) inclusive stakeholder participation, (ii.) technical capacity building, (ii.) credible, relevant and user-friendly information, (iii.) sound dissemination strategies (iv) active champions and political support, (v.) action plan for implementation of evaluation interventions and (vii.) systematic follow-up to confirm implementation of the evaluation interventions. In addition, the organisational culture for use of empirical information, availability of resources and a good reward system also creates demand for use of evaluation information. The past studies did not measure institutional factors that result in the use and/or non-use of evaluation information within the public sector. Further, the majority of reviewed studies applied quantitative research techniques. Thus, this research applied qualitative research techniques to establish the institutional and process factors that serve as facilitators for the use and/or barriers for use of the evaluation information for decision making in the Gauteng Department of Health.

The components of Strategic Management as a main field of study include planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The main focus of this study is to establish factors that influence use of evaluation information. The attributes of the evaluation component include conceptualisation, planning, collection, processing and analysis of data, as well as dissemination and use of the information, including confirmation of its use. The execution of the evaluation attributes involves some considerations that should be taken into account so as to ensure credibility and relevance of the produced empirical information to the institutional context and thus increasing the chances of uptake in decision making (Patton, 2010).

Patton's (1978) utilisation-focused evaluation theory is capable of explaining use and/or non-use of the evaluation information within the Gauteng Department of Health. The theory (utilisation-focused evaluation) underscores the user-oriented evaluation approach as a main facilitator for use of the empirical information. The approach enables inculcation of information use throughout the evaluation process by facilitating stakeholder ownership and technical awareness, which are critical in ensuring uptake of empirical information. The nature of the approach also promotes relevance of the evaluations to the institutional context and/or priorities, which is critical in advancing use of the empirical information.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES, PROCEDURE AND METHODS

In Section 1.2.3, two questions were posed that this research intends to answer – that is, 'what are the institutional features that influence utility or non-utility of the evaluation information?' and what are the evaluation characteristics that serve as the determinants and/or barriers for use of findings?'. Literature has been reviewed and an interpretive, as well as conceptual framework that guides the choices of techniques has been adopted. Thus, this chapter identifies and describes the research approach, design as well as procedure and methods that were employed in this research to collect, process and analyse empirical evidence.

Broadly, this chapter has three objectives; namely, to identify and describe the research strategy in Section 3.1, the research design in Section 3.2, as well as the research procedure and methods in Section 3.3. The chapter also describes the reliability and validity measures in Section 3.4 that this research applies to make it credible as well as the technical and administrative limitations of the choices made in Section 3.5. Corbin and Strauss (2014) point out that methodology provides a logic of the road map and vision for the research. It involves a breakdown of the norms, standards and procedures of the research approach (Schwandt, 2015).

3.1 Research strategy

A research strategy is the approach adopted in the study of social reality (Bryman, 2012). He point out that this is informed by the ideas on how the social world should be examined, which Schwandt (2015) describes as a concept of how the research will be conducted. This includes determining what constitutes acceptable knowledge (epistemological consideration) and how the social world is studied, also known as ontological consideration (Bryman, 2012; Schwandt, 2015). This determination is informed by the nature, context, objective and theoretical assumptions of the research (Patton, 2015; Remenyi, 2012). The research strategies include qualitative, quantitative and mixed method. As highlighted in Section 2.3, the majority of the reviewed studies applied quantitative research techniques and did not comprehensively establish institutional and evaluation process factors that positively influence use of empirical information in decision making within the public sector context. Thus, this research applied a qualitative strategy to establish the institutional and evaluation process factors

that serve as determinants and/or barriers for use of evaluation information for decision making in the Gauteng Department of Health.

The qualitative research strategy entails one-on-one encounters with research respondents in an attempt to understand and interpret the social phenomena through the lens of social actors (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Merriam, 2002). It is pointed out that the meaning and sense making about the real world is not discovered but rather constructed by the social actors based on the experiences, cultures and beliefs that shape their understanding, hence the need to apply a constructionist approach (Bryman, 2012; Merriam & Associates, 2009). Noteworthy, the researcher acts as the instrument of the research process in the context of a qualitative strategy (Merriam, 2002). It is stated that sense making of the individuals' social actions is integral to those actions and thus the role of the researcher is to extract the meaning in order to provide answers to the social occurrences (Schwandt, 2015). Merriam & Associates (1998, p. 8) point out that "since the qualitative research focuses on process, meaning and understanding, the product of the qualitative study is richly descriptive". The qualitative strategy enabled this research to obtain thick description of the factors that influence use of empirical information in decision making through the experiences and perspectives of the public health officials. Importantly, the strategy allows for flexibility in the methodological approach since the real world is constantly fluctuating with time and environment (Smit, 1988; Bryman, 2012).

Kuronen (1999) applied a qualitative approach in her cross-cultural study on professional role of maternity and child healthcare workers in influencing motherhood in Finland and Scotland. While the original aim of the methodological question was to compare different settings, the reality proved to be complex as the respective contexts varied in terms of organisational formation, operations, culture, language and conceptualisation (Kuronen, 1999). Language being the "carrier of cultural meanings" also compounded the problem during data collection (Kuronen, 1999, p. 692). The latter necessitated the researcher to contextualise the data collection process in terms of being responsive to the respective contexts. In the context of this study, the interview approach had to be adapted in order to be relevant to the understanding of certain respondents. The unit of analysis was composed of different categories of participants, with varying levels and types of work responsibility and thus their experiences and perspectives of the subject phenomenon differed in context.

Hardcastle, Usher, and Holmes (2006) applied a qualitative strategy in their study on renal nurses' decision making and the approach helped in finding explanations for social behaviour e.g. nurses' dynamic characters in the process of decision making, such as use of charisma, humour, or playfulness to achieve the desired outcomes. The latter was done through relating researchers' observations with participants' responses and meanings attached to responses (Georgiou, Carspecken, & Willems, 1996). They point out that this knowledge helped the researcher to take cognisance of the unspoken language during the interview process, in so far as the human gestures are concerned. In this case, the adopted strategy allowed the researcher to act as an instrument of the research and thus helped to clarify meanings, perceptions, descriptions and features that provide the basis for insight into the diverse social procedures and practices, as suggested by Kuronen (1999).

3.2 Research design

Bryman (2012) describes research design as a plan for data collection and analysis, with Schwandt (2015) calling it a process of linking theoretical assumptions to the real world in terms of finding answers to the research questions. Yin (2014) points out that it (research design) involves logical steps that are followed in order to draw linkages between the research questions and emerging findings, including the associated conclusions. It also includes techniques that are used to interpret the collected data and/or information (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). The main types of research design include; case study, experimental, cross sectional and longitudinal (Bryman, 2012).

This study explored the understanding and experiences of the public officials from the Gauteng Department of Health on factors pertaining to use of evaluation information and the meaning they attach to such experiences, hence a case study design was used. The research participants include officials responsible for production and use of evaluation information and thus a case study design is used since the participants share common characteristics within a single setting. Creswell (2009) describes case study design as intensive examination of a single or multiple research settings at a single point in time or over a sustained period of time. It is pointed out that in a case study design, the subject of the research enquiry is confined and specific within a setting and the social context (Schwandt, 2015). The latter is determined by closed time period, with the research participants sharing similar characteristic features (Merriam, 2002). Bryman

(2012) states that the focus is on intensive assessment of the social world phenomena, with the aim of obtaining rich description about real world occurrences.

The qualitative case study design is vital to this research since it focuses on a confined and manageable research setting and thus helps in obtaining rich description and construct validity of the subject phenomenon (Kohlbacher, 2006; Merriam, 2002). Remenyi (2012, p. 7) argues that a case study is instrumental in providing answers to the "complex or challenging research questions on a unit of analysis", which cannot be obtained through a quantitative design.

Bruns and McKinnon (1993) applied a case study design to reconcile academic prescripts of management accounting. The design allowed them to gain insight into crucial determinants (constructs) of knowledge needs and use, which would not have been possible through a statistical survey (Bruns & McKinnon, 1993). They point out that the case study design also contributed towards increasing validity and relevance of findings. Merchant and Manzoni (1989) also employed case study design in their study on exploration of differences between academic prescripts and reality regarding achievement of budget targets. The parameters of the research were "narrowly framed and clearly defined", hence the design worked (Merchant & Manzoni, 1989, p. 124). The reason for the choice was to allow gathering of contextual descriptions and meanings attached by various respondents that would not have been obtained through survey approaches without one-on-one interviews (Merchant & Manzoni, 1989).

On the other hand, a case study design enabled Abernethy and Lillis (1995) to gain in-depth insight into construct meanings and definitions, in their study that was motivated by the non-existence of tools for measuring performance in complex concepts like manufacturing flexibility. They suggest that the design also helped in "enhancing construct validity" (Abernethy & Lillis, 1995, p. 126). Ezzedeen and Zikic (2015, p. 1) studied finding "work–life interface of entrepreneurs, in particular whether entrepreneurship enhances work–life balance or exacerbates conflict between domains". The objective of the study was to determine the effect of entrepreneurship on family life. The study adopted the basic interpretive research design in order to "explore entrepreneurs' subjective interpretations and experiences with work–life balance" (Ezzedeen & Zikic, 2015, p. 7). The adopted design helped the researchers to focus on understanding how the entrepreneurs perceived and engaged with their social world and the meaning that they ascribed to their experience (Ezzedeen & Zikic, 2015, p. 7).

The case study design enabled this research to gather comprehensive and significant description of the factors pertaining to use and/or non-use of evaluation information since it only focuses on officials responsible for the production and utility of empirical information within the Gauteng Department of Health. Moreover, by focusing only on officials responsible for production and use of empirical information within the Gauteng Department of Health, the construct validity and relevance of the research findings was enhanced.

3.3 Research procedure and methods

In this section the research procedure and methods used to collect and analyse data and/or information is outlined. Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) describe research methods as techniques applied in collection and analysis of data, which include interviews, observation and focus groups. The research procedure outlines the means of putting the research road map and the vision into practice or reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). While the qualitative inquiry has an array of procedures and methods for data collection and analysis, interviews and observations are the most dominant (Schwandt, 2015). This section covers the adopted data collection methods in Section 3.3.1, research target population and sample in Section 3.3.2, ethical considerations in Section 3.3.3, data collection and storage in Section 3.3.4, data processing and analysis in Section 3.3.5, as well as description of respondents in Section 3.3.6.

3.3.1 Data collection instrument

Bryman (2012) describes the data collection instrument as a method of gathering facts about the social occurrences from the unit of analysis in order to provide answers to the research questions. Data and information underpins the process of sense making about the social reality, hence it is important to carefully consider the data acquisition technics and procedures right from conceptualisation of the research (Remenyi, 2012). Noteworthy, the collection of data hinges on the orientation and questions of the research, with the qualitative paradigm mostly dependent on the data constructed through the experiences of the social actors (Schwandt, 2015). The data collection instruments for the qualitative strategy include interviews and observation schedules (Merriam & Associates, 2009; Bryman, 2012).

The reviewed literature and conceptual framework informed the use of qualitative case study design to get perspectives and experiences of public health officials who are

responsible for the production and use of evaluation information in decision making, hence the interview schedule was used.

An interview schedule is described by DeMarrais (2004) as a process whereby a researcher engages the participants in conversations that are aimed at yielding answers to the research questions. According to Merriam and Associates (2009, p. 88), "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them". Bryman (2012, p. 213) points out that the interview schedule is usually composed of a list of topics/ themes to be addressed and allows for flexibility in terms of phrasing and sequencing questions. The adopted data collection instrument helped this research by allowing revision of the interview questions based on the piloted interviews, as suggested by Bryman (2012). The instrument also allowed the researcher to adapt the interview approach based on varying categories of participants, i.e. evaluation specialists and decision makers/ users of information. Moreover, the researcher was able to make follow-ups based on the initial responses that are viewed to be of significance to the research, as pointed out by Bryman (2012).

The research questions and objectives to be achieved inform the structuring of the data collection instruments (Bryman, 2012; Alsaawi, 2014). The structures differ according to objectives and focus and are characterised by open-ended to close-ended questions (Alsaawi, 2014). The types of data collection instrument structures include structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Bryman, 2012).

Based on the content themes that emerged from reviewed literature as well as the main research questions and the explanatory framework, this research used a semi-structured interview schedule. The aim was to obtain in-depth and rich descriptions of the underlying factors that influence use and/or non-use of evaluation information in decision making. A semi-structured interview schedule is a sequence of open-ended or less structured questions which are based on key themes that are significant to the research objective (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2009; Bryman, 2012). Merriam (2002, p. 13) describes a semi-structured interview schedule as a combination of "more and less structured questions", with the large part composed of less structured questions. Bryman (2012) points out that this data collection method is less restrictive on the kind of data/ information that are sourced from the social actors. In this method, an interviewee is allowed to elaborate on the responses in order to solicit more substantial and rich data/ information (Bryman, 2008; Alsaawi, 2014).

Bathe, Diepgen, and Matterne (2012), in their study on effects of Occupational Skin Disease, used a semi-structured interview schedule that was based on a working model. The interview schedule included prompts that allowed for comprehensive coverage of all model aspects, including the underlying factors. The one-on-one semi-structured interviews also encouraged honesty among the participants as well as construct validity and relevance of research findings. The piloting of the interview schedule enabled Phua, Abernethy, and Lillis (2011) to enhance comprehensiveness and reliability of the collected data, in their study on influences of company collaborative controls on changing suppliers. The enhancement of the interview schedule included revising the magnitude of questions in order to cater for the busy schedule of business managers. The semi-structured interviews also enabled Gomez (1998, p. 688) to clarify intricacies involved in their comparative study on two urban settings 'Glasgow and Bilbao', "which seemed to have followed a common path post common de-industrialisation.

The piloting of the interview schedule enabled the researcher in this research to revise the questions in order to enhance construct validity and reduce the duration of the interview process. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview also allowed the researcher to clarify the questions by elaborating further and make follow-ups on responses in order to solicit rich descriptions on the use of evaluation information in decision making.

Themes that emerged from the reviewed literature were used and key attributes of the evaluation component to inform formulation of questions that constituted the interview schedule. The areas recommended for further research from the literature were also considered in formulating the interview questions.

3.3.2 Research target population and sampling

In this section we describe the research population (Section 3.3.2.1) from which a sample is drawn (Section 3.3.2.2) for obtaining data/ responses to the research questions.

3.3.2.1 Target population

With the exception of census, a research is often conducted from a fraction of the target population of interest from which an inference is drawn depending on the type of research strategy (Creswell, 2003). Target population is a broader group (universe) of people or objects from which a fraction is selected for examination, with a sub-group of

the population members (people available for sampling) from which a sample is drawn known as the sampling frame (Bryman, 2012).

The target population of this research include programme managers/ policy specialists and evaluation practitioners. The programme managers/ policy specialists are responsible for the use of evaluation information while the evaluation practitioners are responsible for its production.

Kawonga, Fonn, and Blaauw (2013) included health service senior managers and vertical/ junior managers in their quantitative study to determine the relationship between possession of evaluation knowledge and demand for use of evaluation information. The information from the targeted population helped to reveal that limited evaluation knowledge affects effective use of evaluation information. This implies that managers are more likely to use evaluation information if they possess evaluation knowledge and thus the need to conduct continuous capacity building for all levels of organisational staff.

The selected target population for this research included producers and users of empirical information in decision making. This approach helped in establishing the underlying process and institutional factors that influence use and/or non-use of evaluation/ empirical information in decision making.

3.3.2.2 Sampling

Bryman (2012) describes sampling as a fragment that is selected from the target population for investigation. It is pointed out that sampling can either be 'typical', referring to selection of individuals or objects that "reflect the average person, situation or instance of the phenomenon of interest"; or 'unique', meaning being informed by exclusive attributes or rare occurrences of the research setting and subject of interest (Merriam & Associates, 2009, p. 78). Sampling approaches are informed by the research strategy, with quantitative mostly based on probability or random selection and qualitative based on non-probability or non-random selection (Bryman, 2012). The types of qualitative sampling include purposeful, convenience, quota and snowballing methods, with purposeful being the most common method (Merriam & Associates, 2009).

This study aimed to gain insight into underlying institutional and evaluation process factors pertaining to use and/or non-use of evaluation information in decision making. Thus, a purposive sampling method was used to select participants who are involved in the production and use of empirical information in informing decision making

as they would process detailed knowledge and experiences of the subject phenomenon. Purposeful sampling is concerned with selection of individuals or objects based on their relevance/ significance to the research questions (Bryman, 2012). It ensures meaningfulness of the results as it allows representation of participants who are of relevance to the research purpose, in terms of the research questions and objectives (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

Kawonga, Blaauw, and Fonn (2012) used purposeful sampling in their study on integration of monitoring and evaluation within the district health information systems. They point out that this choice was based on pragmatic reasons since the research team was already operating at the site and the selection criteria required the most functional municipalities in order to gather meaningful data.

Gilson (2012) used purposive sampling to select research participants based on the reported frequency of hospital visits, in their study aimed at establishing hospitalisation costs and the use of coping strategies by hospital patients. Gathering information from patients with more hospital visits enabled the study to discover trends that could have not been possible on patients with fewer visits, hence the purposeful sampling.

Gosadi et al. (2015) applied purposive sampling in their evaluation of the applied public health emergency system at the Mohammed Bin Abdul Aziz International Airport in Almedinah. The categories of key informants were selected based on their level of knowledge of public health operational procedures and involvement in policy making, which helped to solicit rich information about the phenomenon of interest (Gosadi et al., 2015). Patton (1990, p. 169) reiterates this notion in suggesting that since the qualitative information is generated from the perspectives of social actors, it is critical to select individuals from which the vital findings or "information-rich cases" can be established, hence the term purposeful.

This research involved evaluators as they are involved in the production of the evaluation information and programme managers who are responsible for the use of empirical information in policy making as well as the design, implementation and review of development programmes. This helped the research in gathering thick descriptions of the underlying evaluation process and institutional factors that serve as determinants for use of evaluation information in decision making.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

Any research that involves humans requires the investigators to always observe sensitivity to the values, beliefs, principles and culture that define that society. This is meant to safeguard confidentiality, privacy as well as prevent psychological and physical harm of the research participants (Briassoulis, 2010; Bryman, 2012). Bryman (2012) points out that respondents should be informed of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses in order to avoid invasion of their privacy and victimisation. It is stated that the researchers should divulge the research approach and procedures that have a bearing on the participants' decision to partake in the study (Yin, 2011). This entails obtaining permission from the relevant authorities and research participants, including a full briefing by the researchers (Briassoulis, 2010). He points out that this involves assuring respondents of their voluntary participation and the right not to answer questions that are deemed to be intrusive and not being obliged to partake in the research. Ethical issues/ concerns are usually linked to data gathering, analysis and dissemination processes (Merriam, 2002). Thus, the qualitative research inquiry requires researchers to make disclosures about their personal interests and cultural standings that might have a bearing on the study and its results (Merriam, 2002). This is critical as it might not only have a bearing on how the researcher interprets the findings but also on how the participants might relate to the researcher, including the manner in which they frame their responses (Yin, 2011).

This research was conducted within the public sector institution that is responsible for the provision of public health services to the residents of Gauteng province in South Africa. Thus, it is a highly sensitive environment as it has patient health records at its disposal, hence the researcher followed the procedure highlighted below in terms of observing ethical consideration. An ethical approval was sought from the Ethics Committee of the authorising academic institution (University of Witwatersrand) as well as the Ethics Committee of the research setting (Gauteng Department of Health), as shown in appendix 2. Permission to conduct the interviews was obtained from the research participants by providing them with a consent form to sign, including explaining its contents, as shown in appendix 3. The consent form included disclosure of the researcher's personal interests in the study, the rationale and objective of the study, the duration of the interview, their voluntary participation as well as their right to withdraw in case they wished not to continue with their participation, as suggested by Yin (2011).

The research participants were also assured of anonymity, confidentiality and no risks/ harm in their participation, including a guarantee that their responses were to be treated equally, as suggested by Bryman (2012). The researcher also assured the respondents that there will be no personal benefits accrued from the study as it is done for academic purposes. The respondents were also provided with contact details of the researcher's supervisor and the authorising academic institution, in case they needed to confirm authenticity of the study, as pointed out by Yin (2011). They were also shown a copy of approval from the Ethics Committee of the Gauteng Department of Health. The research participants were also given an assurance that the researcher would observe the applicable institutional ethical standards in line with the code of conduct, as pointed out by Patton (2015). The researcher explained to the respondents that the research findings would not be presented in a manner that would reveal their identities. The ethical consideration detailed above helped in soliciting the necessary trust and cooperation of the respondents, which in turn contributed in obtaining in-depth information, with construct validity.

3.3.4 Data collection and storage

In this section the procedure followed in collecting data/ information and keeping it for processing and analysis is discussed. Data collection entails obtaining descriptions of the research phenomenon based on the adopted collection method, which is informed by the research question to be answered (Bryman, 2012). Sources of data might either be original and unique to a specific research (primary) or already generated from another research, also known as secondary data (Yin, 2014). He suggests that these sources can be used separately or simultaneously, depending on the purpose and objective of the research. The methods of data collection include interviews (one-on-one, telephonic and via the internet), focus group discussions, participant observation and document reviews (Yin, 2011).

This study aimed to gain insight into underlying institutional and evaluation process factors that influence the use of empirical information in decision making and thus primary data and/or information was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the participants, as shown in appendix 4. Merriam (2002, p. 13) describes a semi-structured interview as being composed of "more and less structured questions". Face-to-face interviews permit sourcing of social knowledge by allowing the researcher to "participate in the mind of another human being" (Bryman, 2012, p. 399).

Mielke, Martin, and Singer (2003) used semi-structured interviews in their study on factors that inform decision making relating to admission or non-admission of patients to the critical care unit of Toronto hospital, Canada. They point out that the purpose of the study was to evaluate the application of the existing framework and use of fairness and reasonableness in admitting patients to the critical care unit. The use of one-on-one semi-structured interviews allowed gathering of information on a complex and context unique critical care unit, with embedded social processes (Mielke et al., 2003).

Johnson, Buehring, Cassell, and Symon (2007) also used one-on-one interviews in their study on interpretations of how qualitative management research is conceptualised by different relevant stakeholders. With the objective of establishing influences for possible variabilities and attached implications, the interviewees included journal editors, academics, researchers and users of empirical information (both public and private). They point out that using one-on-one interviews helped the research in obtaining context-specific knowledge relating to the "conduct, evaluation and dissemination of qualitative management research" (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 3).

Walugembe, Kiwanuka, Matovu, Rutebemberwa, and Reichenbach (2015) also used face-to-face interviews in their research on establishing the roles of researchers and policy makers in promoting utilisation of empirical information to improve health outcomes within the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh. They point out that this data collection method helped the researchers in gaining rich insight into the information dissemination measures undertaken by the researchers as well as broader political, legal and institutional factors that influence use of empirical information. The use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews helped this research to obtain context-specific insight into the underlying factors that influence utility and/or non-utility of evaluation information that could have not been possible through survey questionnaires.

In the context of this research, the use of one-on-one interviews helped the researcher to observe the unspoken language in terms of gestures and gain insight from detailed description of the subject phenomenon, which could have not be possible through surveys. During the interview process of this research, the conversations/ responses were audio recorded as per the permission of research participants. The audio records were immediately uploaded to a password protected computer laptop and separate hard drive. The aim was to safeguard the collected information against loss and

assure its security in accordance with ethical considerations, i.e. only to be used for the purpose of this research. Recording interviews help to back up the researcher's memory and enabled thorough assessment of the collected data, including allowing the audit trail and re-use in the form of secondary data (Heritage, (1984) in Bryman, 2012).

3.3.5 Data processing and analysis

In this section data processing and analysis procedures that have been applied in this research are outlined.

3.3.5.1 Data processing

Schwandt (2015) describes data processing as a process of organising and preparing the collected information for analysis. In a qualitative strategy this entails inputting or introducing the audio recorded data into a computer so as to enable its processing for analysis, a process known as transcribing (Bryman, 2012). Transcription is a verbatim transformation of the audio recorded data into readable text that can be used for analysis of research findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Yin (2016) refers to this process as compilation of the collected data. In this study, the researcher personally transcribed the collected data immediately after each interview. This helped the researcher to easily recollect the conversations and, thus, helped to fast-track the transcription process and understand the emerging trends and key concepts. Bryman (2012) and Merriam (2002) point out that the researcher's own transcription outweighs the discomfort associated with the time consuming nature of this process, as it allows researchers to engage with the collected information.

The objective of converting audio (oral) records into a script format is to precisely capture the respondents' words (Sandelowski, 1994). Importantly, the length of interviews determines the magnitude of time for transcription and thus the longer the interviews, the longer the transcription (Bryman, 2012). The researcher in this study experienced this notion as the interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes and thus it took longer to finish transcribing. However, the benefit of personal transcription surpasses the tediousness associated with a lengthy transcription process, though lengthy interviews should be avoided considering tight timelines of the academic programmes.

Following transcription, the unique aspects of data were highlighted in specific colours and referenced according to the line numbers allocated to the transcribed data set. Merriam (2002) point out that upon transcription, data are organised and managed

by assigning unique identifies in order to retrieve key similar parts/ chucks of data – a process known as coding, which Miles et al. (2014, p. 71) describes as "labels that assign a symbolic meaning" to the collected data. Yin (2016) describes this process as assembling of the collected data set.

The identified key content expressions were then plotted on an excel spread sheet for the purposes of segmenting the data set into a matrix so as to identify and combine similar data aspects and reorganise them according to the emerging themes and patterns. Grbich (2013, p. 65) states that "these are the working columns and labels; as the data mounts up, new columns and labels are developed and some columns merge with others". Yin (2016) refers to this as a process of arranging/ assembling the collected data into a meaningful order. The assembled database is then disassembled/ fragmented into smaller pieces, which may be coupled with assigned new labels/ codes (Yin, 2016). It is pointed out that "the advantage of word-by-word, line-by-line segmentation and fragmentation is that, data is meticulously examined" (Grbich, 2013, p. 66). The matrix display helps in organising the segmented data set into an "at-a-glance" format that enables reflection and effortless examination (Miles et al., 2014).

3.3.5.2 Data analysis

Analysis of qualitative information is described as a process of presenting, interpreting and making conclusions from the organised data set (Schwandt, 2015). He argues that if the collected information could make sense by themselves there would have been no need for its analysis. The analysis of qualitative information transition through five phases which entails transformation of the collected data from (i.) compilation of database, to its (ii.) fragmentation, (iii.) reassembling, then (iv.) interpretation and, (v.) conclusion (Yin, 2016). In this study, the interview records were transcribed immediately and thus allowed the researcher to test and confirm the emerging theoretical concepts/themes against subsequent interviews and the conceptual framework. Merriam (2002) points out that in qualitative strategy, data analysis commences from completion of the first interview and thus allows the researcher to make adjustments and assess the emerging themes/ concepts throughout the data collection process.

The qualitative analysis strategies include narrative, thematic, content and discourse analysis. This study applied qualitative case study design and collected primary information through face-to-face interviews and thus thematic content analysis was used

to present and interpret the findings. The findings of a qualitative case study design are analysed through identification of recurring content patterns or themes (Merriam & Associates, 2009). Bryman (2012) describes a theme as a concept that relates to the research focus/ main question and conceptual framework, with Silverman (2013) describing content as a theoretical construct that emerges from the identified themes and recurring patterns. In the literal sense, thematic content analysis defines the qualitative data analysis as it entails interpretation of the content of interview transcripts and/or research documents (Merriam & Associates, 1998).

In this study, the segmented data set was reduced into meaningful form by clustering similar codes into emerging patterns, themes and concepts and thus shaping a theoretical construct that responded to the main research questions and conceptual framework. Content theme is described by Bryman (2012) as a category of the collected data that corresponds to the main research questions and the conceptual framework. He points out that building from the identified data codes are the emerging substantive themes that correspond to the research questions and/or the reviewed literature. Thematic content analysis is a process of organising, linking and categorising the fragmented data set in accordance with their relevance to the developing themes and patterns (Schwandt, 2015), which Mouton and Babbie (2001) in Kohlbacher (2006, p. 10) describe as "transforming raw data into a standardised form". Content themes enables the researcher to gain insight into the theoretical concepts that emerge from the collected data in order to answer the main research questions and possibly contribute towards addressing the problem and the objective of the study (Bryman, 2012).

It is pointed out that thematic content analysis should be done by identifying the emerging concepts and counting the number of times they appear (frequency) and their significance so as to guide the interpretation process (Hancock et al., 2009). This process is characterised by combining similar fragmented pieces of data and thus resulting to reassembling of the previously disassembled database (Yin, 2016). The purpose is to identify the recurring data patterns (concepts) and arrange them according to different categories for analysis purposes in accordance with the conceptual and the explanatory framework (Grbich, 2013). The emphasis of thematic analysis is to reduce the research data set into "meaningful groupings that are easier to manage" (Grbich, 2013, p. 62).

Subsequent to the process of re-assembling the fragmented data set into key content themes, the organised data were imported to Microsoft Word and then

summarised and analysed in line with the research problem, main research questions and explanatory framework.

Tisdell (2000) in Merriam and Associates (1998) conducted preliminary analysis of the interview records continuously throughout the data collection process between interviews, in her study on the effects of spirituality and religious upbringing on motivations and actions of multicultural women educators teaching for social reform. She suggested that data was continuously segmented until the themes began to appear and member checks were carried out with respondents in order to ensure dependability of research results. The latter was also aimed at ensuring that interpretations have been captured correctly and cultural ethical conflict/ misunderstanding was avoided (Tisdell, 2000).

Weiner, Amick, Lund, Lee, and Hoff (2011) also applied thematic content analysis in their study on research articles published in selected health services and management journals from 1998 to 2008. They point out that this analysis strategy helped in achieving the research objective, which was to undertake comparability of concepts and identify trends emerging from "nine interdisciplinary journals in health services and management research" (Weiner, Amick, Lund, Lee, & Hoff, 2011, p. 7).

Lauckner, Paterson, and Krupa (2012, p. 1) also used thematic analysis in their cross-case analysis on discovering how community development happens in the "practice of occupational therapy". They state that the objective was to identify common elements between the cases and thus a thematic content analysis strategy helped in providing a general framework (structure) for assessing similarities and dissimilarities between the cases. They point out that "each case's main categories were compared to explore how different contexts and processes varied across the cases" (Lauckner, Paterson, & Krupa, 2012, p. 14).

Merriam and Mohamad (2000) required different researchers to analyse interview transcripts by identifying codes that seemed to address the research question and compared data segments within each interview and then, emerging themes together with concepts were matched across interviews. Subsequently, the coded data from different researchers was combined and compared, and thereby revealing sets of themes that helped to explain the type of learning in adult education from the viewpoints of social actors/ research respondents (Merriam & Mohamad, 2000).

The thematic content analysis method, specifically the fragmentation process helped the researcher in this study to organise and reduce big data sets into manageable forms that in turn, assisted in fast-tracking the sense-making process. The latter included identifying the common data elements from the responses, which informed the emerging themes, as suggested by Grbich (2013).

3.3.6 Description of respondents

A purposeful sample of 11 respondents was drawn from the target population, composed of programme managers and evaluation practitioners from the Provincial and District levels of the Gauteng Department of Health, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics

GENDER				
Male - 64%		Female - 36%		
AGE				
26-35: (18%)	**36-40:** (9%)	**41-45:** (9%)	**46-55:**(45%	**56 & above:** (18%)
JOB DESIGNATION				
Senior Managers: (73%)	Middle Managers: (27%)	Evaluation Practitioners: (45%)	Programme & District Managers: (55%)	
WORK EXPERIENCE				
1-5 Years: (36%)	6-10 Years: (36%)	11-15 Years: (9%)	15 and above: (18%)	

As indicated in Table 1, the programme and district managers constituted 55% proportion and this helped the research in sourcing in-depth information concerning the use of empirical information in decision making relating to design, planning, implementation and evaluation of the development programmes. This category (programme and district managers) also included senior and middle managers and thus helped to obtain information on both micro and macro institutional factors that have a bearing on use of evaluation/ empirical information. The category of evaluation practitioners, which is also inclusive of the middle managers formed a sizable proportion of 45%. The evaluation practitioners are responsible for production and facilitating the use of evaluation information and thus benefitted the research by providing context-specific information on the evaluation process and institutional factors that serve as facilitators and/or barriers for the use of evaluation information. The category of senior managers amounted to 73% and was beneficial in soliciting rich inputs relating to macro-institutional factors that influence use and/or non-use of evaluation information, including factors that determine institutionalisation of the evaluation function. Noteworthy, the category of senior managers also included evaluators, which helped in

obtaining information relating to the evaluation process factors that influence use and/or non-use of its information.

In terms of gender, the majority of the respondents were male (64%), while in terms of age, the biggest proportion ranges between 46 and 55 years. In so far as the experience is concerned, there is a sizable proportion of respondents between 6 and 10 years of experience (36%), including 9% for 11-15 and 18% for 15 years and above. This benefited the research in obtaining context-specific rich in-depth description of the key factors that influence use and/or non-use of empirical information due to the possession of high institutional knowledge by the respondents. Thus, the longer the length of service and experience of the respondents, the higher the chances of achieving the objective of the study, in so far as obtaining information relevant to the research focus. The category of 1-5 years' experience also helped in providing a balanced perspective concerning the link between their levels of knowledge and the context-specific status quo regarding demand for use of empirical information, although their experiences and interpretations could not be drawn from over a longer period of time.

3.4 Credibility strengthening measures – reliability and validity

In this section the methodological measures that have been applied to strengthen quality and credibility of the research findings and conclusions are discussed. It is stated that the research strategies should demonstrate trustworthiness of the research findings, concerning integrity, completeness, transferability and accountability (Bryman, 2012). This is aimed at ensuring that the research findings and conclusions are a true reflection of the reality (Yin, 2016). The focus is on whether broader inference can be made from the research findings (Silverman, 2013). The empirical information that lacks reliability and validity might be less credible and thus result in limited demand for its use (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009; Green et al., 2009; Heunis et al., 2011; Ledikwe et al., 2014). Credibility of empirical information hinges on rigorous methodological procedure and ethical handling of the collected data (Merriam & Associates, 2009). They point out that this is measured through examining the reliability and validity of research findings.

Reliability is concerned with repeatability and replicability of the research findings in different settings (Bryman, 2012), which Neuman (2011) calls dependability or consistency of a measurement. This, according to Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormiston (2014) implies that the same results can be obtained if the same methodology is followed.

Additionally, the same research findings can be replicated in different similar settings if there is demonstration of sound methodologies (Bryman, 2012). Consistency across time is another critical consideration, which is what Neuman (2011, p. 66) calls "stability reliability". In a qualitative context, reliability is concerned with trustworthiness of research findings (Bryman, 2012). He point out that trustworthiness includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility deals with member checks, which implies confirmation of findings by the respondent, while transferability focuses on thick description of a phenomenon so as to properly inform future decisions on replicability (Bryman, 2012). In this study, while respondent validation was not conducted due to tight academic deadlines, the researcher maintained objectivity and ethical sensitivity in the handling of the collected data and the interpretation of findings. This included maintaining a balance between the researcher's own inferences and respondents' account of reality, which helped in enhancing trustworthiness and authenticity of the research findings.

Dependability measurement is assured by safely keeping records of verbatim interview transcripts and providing a detailed account of the methodological decisions, including content and method triangulation (Schwandt, 2015). The audio records and transcripts of interviews, including data analysis tools for this study are safely stored in a password protected computer and hard drive, with the methodological roadmap also outlined in detail for the purposes of enabling an audit trail for repeatability and replicability of research findings.

Confirmability is concerned with the element of subjectivity and personal inclinations of the researcher, which implies that the researcher's community standings and points of view should not be allowed to cloud the presentation and interpretation of research findings (Bryman, 2012). In this study, the researcher's knowledge of the subject construct and familiarity of the research setting benefited the research in gathering sound information and managing distortions that creep up due to limited understanding of the context, as pointed out by Yin (2016). A declaration of the researcher's interests and societal standing in relation to the research setting was developed and shared with the respondents and also stored safely as confirmation of impartially and/or non-subjectivity concerning interpretation of research findings as well as ethical sensitivity on handling the collected data, as suggested by Yin (2011), refer to appendix 1. The respondents of this study were also assured that their inputs would be treated equally and this was done by

only attaching unique labels to the interview transcripts in order to avoid personal identification. This is stressed by Bryman (2012) in pointing out that the researchers should exercise impartiality when dealing with viewpoints of the research participants. Additionally, there is balance in the use of the researcher's inferences and verbatim reference of the respondents' actual account of reality, in an attempt to truly represent the social setting, what Silverman (2013) calls "low-inference descriptors".

Lauckner et al. (2012) in their study about finding how community development happens in practice of occupational therapy, collected data from various sources (e.g. interviews, observation and document reviews) in order to strengthen dependability, credibility and confirmability of results. They further suggest that, upon preliminary analysis, member checking was undertaken in order to explore disagreements and intricacies about proposed interpretations. Researchers made use of journals during data gathering and memoirs of personal reactions during data analysis/ interpretation process (Lauckner et al., 2012).

Validity is another criterion for assuring credibility of research findings and thus it is concerned with truthfulness and/or authenticity of the study and its findings (Bryman, 2012; Neuman, 2011; Yin, 2016). In a qualitative context, this implies that the research findings should be based on an honest, fair and balanced account of reality that is viewed through the lens of social actors (Neuman, 2011; Schwandt, 2015). The types of validity include; measurement and ecological validity as well as internal and external validity (Bryman, 2012). Measurement is mainly concerned with content and construct validity (Neuman, 2011). He points out that content validity focuses on measuring the completeness of the theoretical concept, while construct validity is concerned with the consistency of multiple indicators of a construct/ concept.

In this study, content validity was assured by testing/ piloting the interview guide with some respondents within the research setting in order to clear any ambiguities and close gaps in measures of the theoretical construct, as suggested by Merriam and Associates (2009) and Neuman (2011). The explanatory framework for this study is inclusive of multiple theories in order to ensure complete definition and explanation of the construct and thus allows comprehensive interpretation of the social context/ reality. Construct validity was assured by asking the same questions from different categories of research participants and thus helps to triangulate the respondents' inputs against the emerging theoretical concepts/ themes. Triangulation is described as the establishment

of the linkages between emerging phrases and varying categories of the data sources, in relation to the social reality (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). Patton and Cochran (2002) point out that triangulation allows the researcher to determine whether a feature of the phenomenon has been measured precisely and also helps to manage bias and establish valid suggestions.

Phua et al. (2011) conducted research on the relationship between investment in collaborative business relationships and switching of suppliers. They suggest that in order to assure completeness and credibility of the research results, they piloted the interview guides, documented the interviews through audio-recording and verified accuracy of interview transcripts. For purposes of managing the researcher bias, they employed a logical and auditable data gathering and analysis process in order to allow for an audit trail.

Another criterion for ensuring integrity of research findings is external validity and is concerned with generalisation of the findings to a wider population and/or similar settings (Bryman, 2012). The findings of this study provided a rich thick description of the factors that influence use and/or non-use of empirical information and thus can be used to inform judgements in similar settings and to contribute to literature.

Last, ecological validity is another criterion for ensuring authenticity of research findings and focuses on relevance of the findings to the challenges of social reality (Bryman, 2012). By implication, research findings should be able to enrich social actors' understanding of reality and galvanise them to take necessary actions by providing them with possible solutions to social problems as pointed out by Guba and Lincoln (1994) in Bryman (2012). The findings and recommendations of this study offer in-depth context-specific explanation of the phenomena and therefore will help the Gauteng Department of Health and other similar settings in getting a better understanding of the factors that determine use and/or non-use of empirical information. Thus, will contribute towards enhancing delivery of public health services as well as contribute towards building a development oriented public service.

Piloting the interview guide helped in identifying and closing concept indicator gaps and ambiguity of some interview questions from the data collection instrument. Yin (2003) in Kohlbacher (2006, p. 9) points out that testing the interview guide helps to "refine the data collection instruments", in terms of the link between the research

questions and theoretical framework. Audio recording interviews helped in fast-tracking the actual interview process and enabled verbatim transcription and safe storage of transcripts so as to allow an audit trail and future use. Observing ethical codes and facilitating cordial relationship with the respondents helped in eliciting meaningful information, which contributed in enriching the research. Sourcing information from different categories of respondents helped in obtaining balanced perspectives of the subject phenomena and thus strengthened construct validity of the research findings.

3.5 Research limitations

In this section, limitations of the adopted research strategy, design, procedures and data collection methods are discussed. Yin (2003) points out that a case study design is limited in terms of generalisation on the basis of population representativity, since its sampling frame and research focus are usually limited to a confined setting, but rather contribute to the theoretical or analytical generalisability. The scope of this research is limited to a small fraction of the public officials within the Gauteng Department of Health, hence its results cannot be generalised across the Gauteng Provincial and National Government.

In addition, the study did not include the political principal (MEC) and the heads of department and thus their perspectives do not form part of the findings of this research. Although qualitative study results cannot be generalised to a wider population, their findings can be used in comparison or as a prototype for similar settings and inform future studies (Bryman, 2012). Thus, the findings of this research can be transferred/ extrapolated to similar settings, such as the Gauteng departments and other public institutions. The strengths of the qualitative case study are greater that its limitations since it provides rich in-depth information about the complicated social constructs (Merriam & Associates, 2009).

With regard to thematic content analysis, the common criticism of qualitative strategy is the potential of straying from the context of what is expressed by the social actors in relation to the experiences, values and beliefs that shape their account of social reality (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, since the researcher is an instrument of the research in qualitative strategy, there could be element of bias in so far as the selective presentation and analysis of the findings is concerned. However, the latter notion is dismissed by Flyvbjerg (2006) in pointing that there is no prevalence of bias in the case study design, relative to other research procedures and methods. The researcher in this study

maintained objectivity and impartiality throughout the research process, including ensuring balance between the researcher's own inferences and verbatim reference of respondents' account of reality during the analysis process.

Further, since the research was conducted to fulfil the academic requirements, the time allocated was limited and thus the respondent validation of research findings was not performed, including auditing of the interview transcripts by peers. Additionally, the execution of the whole research process was limited to one person (researcher) in terms of human resource capacity. However, the latter helped in ensuring reliability and validity of the research findings as this offered leverage in terms of consistency in data collection, processing, interpretation and conclusion.

The researcher is also knowledgeable in the research construct and understands the rationale and objective of the study as well as the conceptual framework and this helped in strengthening content validity of research findings. Last, the experiences and viewpoints of the respondents with 1-5 years' experience within the research setting could not be drawn from over a longer period of time. However, this category (1-5 years' experience) amounted to a small proportion of respondents (36%) and the inputs from this category helped in triangulating context-specific experiences between long-term and short-term periods.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This study established the determinants and/or barriers for use of evaluation information in decision making relating to policy making as well as the design, planning and implementation of the public development interventions. The following main research questions were pursued in order to achieve the objective of the study:

a) What are the institutional factors that positively influence effective utility of evaluation information?
b) What are the characteristics of the evaluation process that serve as the determinants and/or barriers for effective use of the findings?

This chapter presents the findings of this study, in accordance with the main research questions listed above. Section 4.1 deals with the institutional features that influence utility or non-utility of the evaluation findings. Section 4.2 focuses on characteristics of the evaluation process that serve as determinants or barriers for use of evaluation information, while Section 4.3 provides a summary and conclusion of the findings. The findings are categorised according to the key research content themes that are linked to the conceptual framework and the reviewed literature.

4.1 Institutional factors that influence use of evaluation information

This section presents the findings of this study that relate to the institutional factors that have an effect on the use of evaluation/ empirical information in decision making. The findings in this section addressed the following key content themes, (i.) key considerations in setting the evaluation agenda in 4.1.1, (ii.) rationale and objectives of the evaluations in 4.1.2, (iii.) evaluation technical principles versus the institutional context in 4.1.3, (iv.) stakeholder participation in 4.1.4, (v.) evaluation champions in 4.1.5, (vi.) evaluation human technical capacity in 4.1.6, (vii.) dissemination of evaluation information in 4.1.7, (viii.) adoption and actual use of evaluation information in 4.1.8, and (ix.) confirming implementation of the evaluation interventions in 4.1.9.

4.1.1 Key considerations in setting the evaluation agenda

There are critical considerations that should be taken into account in the conceptualisation and initiation of evaluations so as to create demand for use of the produced information, as outlined in the reviewed literature and conceptual framework.

In general, evaluations within the research setting are largely conducted through external evaluators due to capacity constraints as well as the nature or gravity of evaluations, which is associated with the magnitude and/or significance of the development programmes. The conceptualisation phase, which involves identifying priority areas for evaluations is spearheaded by the in-house evaluators and is subject to the approval of the administrative authority. However, there is weak/ partial collaboration with the key stakeholders during conceptualisation of evaluations, including non-facilitation of consensus on identified possible uses of evaluation findings. This implies that not all key stakeholders are involved in conceptualisation of evaluations and possible uses of findings are not identified and agreed to prior to implementation of the evaluation process. The latter is linked to low awareness and partial application of the Evaluation Policy Framework and thus results in non-compliance with the applicable evaluation norms and standards. It is pointed out that the "challenge comes with actual implementation and not having drivers at the provincial and departmental levels" (Respondent 1: line 286-287).

The majority of respondents strongly emphasised the importance of aligning evaluations to the institutional development agenda, which is informed by local, provincial and national priorities. Thus, Respondent 10 (line. 1496-1500) states that "we have priority areas like combating TB/HIV and the reduction of maternal and child mortality, of which we are keen on turning around the tide especially when there are negative outcomes". Respondent 2 (line. 1382-1385) reiterates the latter in pointing out that "the key things that we have to take into account is whether we are addressing the problem, which is in line with strategy of the department and also whether the results which are going to be used from the evaluation will have the necessary impact in the department". The objective is to ensure that evaluations do not become some kind of a futile exercise, in the context of not adding any value to the development agenda.

Other key considerations during the conceptualisation and planning phase, include ethical approval and availability of public resources, as stressed by Respondent 8 (line. 1493-1497) that "ethical consideration is critical in the health sector based on sensitivity of the patient records". It is pointed out that "some external evaluators do not maintain ethical considerations, especially for the informants" (Respondent 10, line. 1744-1749) and this jeopardises acceptance of the evaluation reports.

4.1.2 Rationale and objectives of the evaluations

This theme is concerned with highlighting general intentions behind conducting evaluations – considering the instances of generating empirical information to pursue personal interests above the institutional priorities.

In general, evaluations are conducted to generate scientific evidence to inform decision making relating to enhancing delivery of the development imperatives. Thus, evaluations are not conducted to legitimise personal interests of the public officials. For instance, Respondent 3 (line. 3276-3279) points out that "at some point we conducted an evaluation study that was sort of aimed to confirm the kind of ideas that the department was looking at but needed scientific evidence to prove whether that would be a right thing to do". In addition, Respondent 5 (line. 3317-3323) states that "there is an evaluation that was able to justify or confirm what we had been looking at but we didn't have the evidence to say 'the national targets are no longer equivalent to the reality on the ground in terms of what the department is pursuing, hence the provincial performance remained stagnant, which sparked concerns among the Executive Authority and the Legislature".

Respondent 1 (line. 3233-3247) argues that "despite the risk that certain biases may enter the process of undertaking evaluations, for instance the client trying to 'em' exert undue influence over the evaluators in terms attempting to steer things in a certain direction, in the main the intent is to leverage additional resources for the programmes – the intent is genuine". In the main, the intention is to put things into perspective and/or support the decision making process with scientific evidence. Thus, Respondent 11, (line. 3407-3416) points out that "for instance we normally legitimise the issue around the workload by using WISN (workload indicator of staffing norms) that can prove or affirm the issue that people are over/under-worked".

4.1.3 Evaluation technical principles versus the institutional context

Concerning the relationship between maintenance of scientific standards and ensuring relevance to the institutional values and priorities, there is a balance between the two aspects. By implication, evaluation principles and standards are not compromised, while the evaluation process and generated information are consistent with institutional priorities and values. Respondent 2 (line. 1545-1548) points out that "if we think there is a weakness from ourselves as a department we are able to adapt to the scientific technical standards". There is recognition of the unique and important contributions of

all parties involved, specifically policy specialists and evaluators/ social scientists. By implication, programme and/or policy specialists possess knowledge of the institutional context and/or priorities, while evaluators have technical expertise. Thus, finding a balance between the two aspects helps in ensuring production of scientifically rigorous information that is valid, and/or relevant to the information needs of the decision makers.

It is pointed out that although sometimes there will be robust debates on inconsistencies between the content of findings and associated conclusions, the intent is not to dismiss the evaluations but to ensure validity and reliability. Respondent 10 (line. 1743-1747) argues that "we discuss a lot and reach consensus, so in a sense I would say it's a win-win situation – we need their expertise and they need the institutional context". However, in some instances, the external evaluators would go astray of the institutional context but will be corrected accordingly by the institutional representatives. Sometimes the external evaluators would attempt to dominate the evaluation process based on their misconception of technical superiority but there will always be consensus at the end.

Noteworthy, having clear and comprehensive specifications for the evaluations helps in addressing imbalance between scientific rigorous and context-aligned empirical information as it helps to close any gaps. Respondent 6 (line. 1645-1648) points out that "we have strength in internal technical expertise that are able to contribute towards design of evaluations and the health sector has its own evaluation techniques".

4.1.4 Stakeholder participation

In general, participation of the key stakeholders is partially inclusive and inconsistent across the department. Specifically, there is weak involvement of programme managers and/or policy specialists in conceptualisation of evaluations, with sporadic and unsystematic participation throughout the implementation process. Thus, Respondent 1 (line. 139-140) states that "some evaluations happen and we are not aware that they are happening". Respondent 2 (line. 397-402) reiterates the latter assertion in stating that "the evaluations are not yet conducted in a systematic and coordinated manner at a departmental level because you might find some units doing their own evaluations". The Executive Authority ratifies evaluations that are conducted at a provincial level. There is weak participation of the departmental evaluators in the evaluations conducted at the district level. Respondent 10 (line. 2592-2598) points out that "our interaction with the provincial and departmental M&E units is limited to the quarterly and annual reviews".

There is a gap in communication, coordination and/or integration of evaluation and/or research activities.

The relevant stakeholders are selected based on their knowledge, skills and involvement in design, planning and implementation of development programmes. Respondent 7 (line. 542-549) points out that "we basically choose people whom we know don't just have interest in evaluations but 'em' have necessary knowledge and can actually use 'you know' the kind of information that we gonna report on". It is stated that the benefit of having different categories of stakeholders is assurance of objectivity and independence from possible manipulation as well as abundance of rich knowledge and skills so as to ensure scientific rigour. By implication, the higher the number of stakeholders with technical expertise, and policy context, the greater the chances of generating empirical information that has scientific rigour and yet context-specific. Respondent 6 (line. 3990-3992) points out that "inclusive participation guarantees use because if you didn't not have sufficient stakeholder involvement 'em' the findings will be less credible and not likely to be used". Notwithstanding, non-inclusive and uneven stakeholder composition, the specific categories of key stakeholders include programme managers, policy specialists, sector managers and community members. However, some stakeholders still view the evaluation function as a policing or an antagonistic tool that is conducted to expose their weaknesses.

The stakeholder buy-in into the evaluation process has emerged as a main benefit of inclusive participation. Thus, Respondent 3 (line. 3933-3936) points out that "if people know that all relevant people were part of the conceptualisation process, they are likely to buy into the evaluation findings because they know that the project involved more people that were objective and that understand the area that is being evaluated". Respondent 10 (line. 4055-4059) states that, "if its change of policy, they are already on-board, so it is seamless we don't have to be explaining why are we changing this or that" and thus the implementation becomes easy. It is argued that "if relevant stakeholders don't play part in your evaluations there will always be questions around its validity 'ok' – there will always be questions around whether 'em' your results are reliable" (Respondent 7, line. 3995-3997) .

However, it has emerged that inclusive involvement of stakeholders is not always beneficial to the evaluations. It is pointed out that some stakeholders might not agree with the procedure of the evaluation process, while also getting all stakeholders under one

roof might prove to be a challenge and thus contribute to delays. By implication, some stakeholders would have divergent cultural orientation, principles and viewpoints and thus block consensus on procedures to be followed and therefore, hinder progress. Thus, Respondent 8 (line. 4023-4024) points out that "sometimes large stakeholder participation is time consuming". Respondent 5 (line. 3942-3947) argues that "there are some stakeholders who might not add value to the evaluation process, such as the labour (unions) representatives who might not like some of the decisions and procedures and that might have a negative effect on implementation of the recommendations". Respondent 3 (line. 3939-3941) suggests that "not all stakeholders that are relevant to the evaluation should participate, you need to identify as to who is really relevant because some can misdirect, confuse or derail the entire project".

4.1.5 Evaluation champions

This theme is concerned with the role played by the leadership (both at Executive and Administrative levels) in advocating and/or entrenching the evaluation function in order to drive the demand for use of its information in decision making.

The role of decision makers and/or programme managers is limited as evaluations are largely initiated and driven by the internal evaluation specialists. There is limited awareness and application of the evaluation policy framework due to ineffective advocacy for the evaluation function. It is pointed out that the "challenge comes with actual implementation and not having drivers at the provincial and departmental levels" (Respondent 1: line 286-287). The latter is reiterated by Respondent 1 (line. 286-287) in stating that "there is limited champion role for implementation of the evaluation policy framework". Respondent 10 (line. 2590-2594) points out that "we never make reference to the M&E framework, we do what we think is M&E without necessary keeping on referring to see whether we are in-line with the policy framework". Respondent 2 (line. 382-383) states that "some programme managers are still reluctant to participate in the evaluation process because they don't understand what the evaluation function is all about and think that the evaluators are coming to spy on them" and thus demonstrate lack of advocacy for the evaluation function..

At a provincial level the evaluations are subject to vetting and ratification by the Executive Council and thus help to institutionalise the evaluation function and therefore, create demand for uptake of empirical information in decision making. At a departmental

level, evaluations are approved by the administrative authority, which includes availing financial resources for the evaluations. Implementation of the evaluation findings is driven through a departmental circular, which is an official communication from the head of administration. However, the department has separate evaluation units that are not well coordinated, which again shows a lack of central control or central management of the evaluation function. Thus, Respondent 4 (line. 694-697) points out that "there is quite a lot of research and evaluation that is going on but those things are not well coordinated and then there is no visibility".

4.1.6 Evaluation human technical capacity

The human technical capacity is critical in the production of credible and reliable empirical information, which is a key determinant for uptake of findings in decision making.

In general, the departmental evaluation human technical capacity is uneven, thus implying that some units/ sections have more technical capacity than others. Hence, Respondent 6 (line. 713-715) points out that "we have a research and evaluation unit in the programme itself and have the necessary capacity with regards to the evaluation methodologies, techniques and experience". While Respondent 5 (line 494-495) asserts that "actually the strength of evaluation skills capacity of the departmental evaluation unit has diminished over the last 10 years". The Office of the Premier offers some technical support to the departments, but the support is only to provincial evaluations. The majority of evaluations are conducted through external evaluation practitioners and thus bridge the internal capacity gap. The internal evaluators mainly perform the role of developing evaluation specifications, scrutinising proposals and controlling/ managing the evaluation process.

The ability to craft comprehensive (gap-free) evaluation technical specifications has emerged as a critical factor for the internal technical expertise. Thus, Respondent 7 (line. 1156-1159) points out that "our role as internal evaluators is to monitor the work of external evaluators in order to ensure that we are not 'bamboozled' along the way 'you know' 'em' and what we expect from service providers usually is clearly outlined 'you know' in our specifications". Respondent 8 (line. 1154-1158) states that "gaps within evaluation, technical specifications often result in unsatisfactory products", hence the importance of adequate human evaluation technical capacity.

Additionally, the health sector is well established with an abundance of researchers, evaluators and clinical specialists, though the capacity is not well coordinated and thus not fully benefitting the knowledge needs of decision makers within the department. Thus, Respondent 4 (line. 694-697) points out that "there is quite a lot of research and evaluation that is going on in our hospitals but those things are not well coordinated and then there is no visibility". Further, the department also leverages from its good relationship with academic institutions and sector organisations in terms of expert inputs and thus helps the production of technically sound and context-relevant empirical information.

4.1.7 Dissemination of evaluation information

This theme outlines the strategies that are applied in disseminating evaluation/ empirical information to the users to inform decision making.

In general, the evaluation findings are mainly communicated to the users upon completion of the evaluation process/ report. By implication, there is limited inculcation of information use during the evaluation process due to partial involvement of the key stakeholders in the implementation of evaluations. Additionally, there is no uniform and/or systematic approach for dissemination of evaluation findings to the decision makers and other key stakeholders. Thus, Respondent 3 (line 2177-2183) points out that "I think that's another area that we are still not doing well on, because the evaluation findings are 'like' not broadly circulated to everyone". Respondent 6 (line. 2221-2227) reiterates this notion in stating that "this is 'em' part of the process that we are not as good as we should be – we should be doing a lot more although we ensure that the findings find their way into revising and strengthening programmes". Respondent 8 (line. 2304-2315) points out that "the evaluation information is disseminated to the stakeholders within the programme and occasionally to the heads of administration and other programmes, with no framework or systematic way of communicating the information". It is stated that "currently there is no systematic process for disseminating the information to all levels of administration and other relevant stakeholders" (Respondent 1, line. 2401-2411). Notwithstanding unsystematic dissemination, the evaluation findings are expected to trickle down to levels of administration, though this practice is currently weak.

Concerning the procedures and platforms for dissemination, the evaluation findings are presented in the programme performance and policy review meetings, senior management meetings and workshops. There is no demonstration of how the information trickles down to lower levels of administration, despite the mentioned intention to do so. The evaluation findings are repackaged in accordance with the information needs and/or preferences of different categories of decision makers/ users. Respondent 2 (line. 2155-2159) points out that, "the findings are adapted according to the relevance and level of stakeholders". However, there are a few instances where evaluation information will not be disseminated to all relevant stakeholders because some public officials intend to defend their work or mask their shortcomings.

There are instances where evaluations findings get overtaken by the development events in terms of programme implementation and strategic policy shifts and thus become irrelevant in the decision making process. Hence, Respondent 4 (line. 2713-2717) points out that "sometimes 'you know' programmes do the evaluations and by the time the study is complete, the programme is probably halfway and it becomes so difficult to start something halfway and then you find that a very good study is being shelved and just ends up in management discussions and not go down to the facility level".

4.1.8 Adoption and actual use of evaluation information

Acceptance and actual use of the evaluation findings by the users is critical in ensuring uptake of empirical information in decision making in order to maintain legitimacy of the evaluation function.

In general, the majority of the evaluation findings and/or recommendations are usually adopted upon finalisation of reports, based on satisfaction of certain conditions. Noteworthy, it is pointed out that a recommendation is not a mandate (give and take) but rather a guide for helping to enhance realisation development objectives. For instance, Respondent 1 (line. 3427-3429) states that "the adoption is never a yes or no (black and white)… not all recommendations are given equal weight from the point of view of the departmental priorities". Moreover, the evaluation recommendations are not treated in the same manner in terms of their adoption and thus some are not adopted or deferred to a later stage, based on certain circumstances or priorities. Thus, Respondent 3 (line. 3441-3442) points out that "it may not be all the recommendations that are adopted as you may find that only few are the core or critical to what we wanted to find out".

Relevance of the findings to the institutional development agenda and effective stakeholder engagement emerged as the key determinants for adoption of the recommendations. Alignment of the findings with the evaluation objectives as well as consistency of the conclusions with the evaluation content are also cited as critical determinants for adoption of findings and/or recommendations. It is pointed out that findings are adopted provided that the evaluations did not overlook certain critical aspects such as the institutional legislative and policy framework that provides the basis for the alignment of findings to the institutional context. Noteworthy, sensitivity of evaluation findings to the institutional values and ethical standards facilitates buy-in and acceptance of the users and/or decision makers. Thus, it is pointed out that evaluation findings that undermine institutional values, ethics and the development agenda are normally not considered or at least, are treated differently. The latter is done to avoid a negative impact that might arise as a result of implementing insensitive recommendations. For instance, it is stated that one cannot implement an evaluation recommendation that might result in the collapse of an institution, so it is either rephrased or dropped.

Upon adoption of the evaluation findings, the relevant programme managers are requested to develop a management response for implementation of the recommendations, however this is only limited to the provincial evaluations. At a departmental level, a formal communication (circular) from the Head of Department is sent to the affected sections and/or officials to implement some interventions that are recommended in the evaluation findings, though this is not done in a systematic way. Thus, Respondent 7 (line. 2483-2485) points out that "although the evaluation findings are escalated to the Executive and Administrative authority, the actual implementation is limited since the focus is on popularisation of findings, without concrete action plan". Respondent 4 (line. 2698-2701) reiterates the latter notion in stating that "the actual use of evaluation information and other performance data is very poor as programme planning and development of targets are not informed by any empirical evidence". Thus, Respondent 6 (line. 2744-2749) makes an analogy that "if you look at the fires (service delivery complaints) that keep on popping up everywhere in the province 'you know' somehow you get a sense that, 'em' translating evaluation findings into action sort of take a back seat". Respondent 10 (line. 3032-3038) points out that "we are trying to inculcate a culture of using empirical information to inform decision making from the facility level up to the district and provincial levels because we are not doing well in terms of data management and utilisation of information".

The actual use of evaluation findings in decision making is determined by a number of institutional conditions/ factors, including the ability of the institution to implement the evaluation interventions. The institutional ability is informed by the availability of resources (financial, human and technical) as well as the institutional strategic posture in terms of the medium-long term development priorities. Respondent 4 (line. 4181-4183) points out that "sometimes you will find that some recommendations are not left out maliciously but rather shifted because you need to plan for them 'you know', maybe you need to generate so much resources for their implementation". Thus, Respondent 6 (line. 4537-4541) suggests that "if you are going to make a recommendation that requires a Ferrari (expensive) kind of an intervention, you are not going to get it through". Respondent 6 (line. 4229-4235) points out that "we have an evaluation whose findings are not yet utilised, not because they are ignored but because we have not yet strategically organised ourselves to address the key issues raised by the evaluation". Additionally, Respondent 8 (line. 4602-4604) states that "if you don't have the relevant resources 'you know', despite the fact that the evaluation yielded answers to your questions, it's pointless because you won't be able to implement the recommendations".

By implication, the department would use its own discretion to decide on adopting the findings that are deemed critical or easily implementable and defer others for future implementation. Additionally, the political will and/or leadership interest in the evaluations as well as timeliness of the findings are also cited as critical determinants for actual utilisation of empirical information.

Limited knowledge and/or awareness of the value of empirical information also emerged as a deterrent for uptake of findings in decision making. Thus, Respondent 4 (line. 1563-1568) points out that some users/ decision makers still perceive the evaluation function as a policing tool due to lack of knowledge for its benefits in decision making. Hence, Respondent 8 (line. 4585-4589) argues that "peoples' attitudes also matter in terms of bringing about change towards attainment of development objectives as there are instance where people resist change". On the other hand, the frequency of changes in policy and development interventions as a result of evaluation results creates uncertainty and administrative burden among public officials. Thus, some evaluation findings and/or recommendations will be resisted or partially implemented. Hence, the importance of active champions to facilitate change management and embed evidence-informed decision making.

Though not implemented systematically, the evaluation findings are generally used for policy making, programme planning, improvement and termination as well as resource allocation. Thus, Respondent 3 (line 2922-2924) points out that "we can prove to people that it's because of the evaluations that the department has been able to save costs". Additionally, Respondent 6 (line. 2972-2976) states that "the department will be opening an LGBTI clinic in Tshwane and that is a direct result of evaluations".

Concerning the benefits that accrue from the use of empirical information, confidence and certainty in making decisions are cited as main incentives for users. By implication, decisions are not based on sentimental attachment but rather on objective scientific evidence that enables social actors to have a better understanding of the social problems as pointed out by Görgens and Kusek (2009). Hence, Respondent 10 (line. 3899-3902) states that "it makes it easy to decide and commit resources 'yha' and also provide certainty and authority rather than basing the decisions on a hunch". Respondent 3 (line. 3846-3850) points out that "it becomes sort of a basis for decision making and enables the decision makers to then support whatever notion or idea they might have, to say 'we want to do 1, 2, 3 and this is supported by the scientific process". Notwithstanding, the confirmed benefit of using scientific evidence in decision making, there is no clear demonstration for the existence of a systematic institutional reward system for use of empirical information. Thus, this results in ad hoc and/or spontaneous demand for empirical information based on isolated interests on certain evaluation results.

4.1.9 Confirming implementation of the evaluation interventions

In this theme strategies and techniques that are used to confirm actual use of evaluation findings and/or recommendations in decision making are presented. In general, there is no systematic approach for tracking and/or confirming implementation of the evaluation findings. Thus, Respondent 1 (line. 1237-1238 & 2711-2712) points out that "tracking is an area that we are not strong in… follow-ups on actual use of the evaluation findings are less systematic and implemented partially – we don't have a routine system that tracks implementation of findings or recommendations". It is stated that the tracking process is not always formal and thus left to the individual programmes to see what they can do in terms of reacting to the findings. Respondent 10 (line. 3569-3571) reiterates the latter by stating that "it's not formalised in terms of looking at post the evaluation process in order to measure the impact of implementation".

Tracking is indirectly done through quarterly reviews, which are not intended to specifically evaluate implementation of the adopted evaluation interventions. Respondent 2 (line. 2744-2749) points out that "it's difficult to track or monitor implementation of evaluation findings as a result of unsystematic way of translating findings into actions". Respondent 10 (line. 2571-2574) argues that "since tracking is not so formal, we don't measure the outcome for implementation of findings… so we just assume that things will improve – we don't say 'fine this is a proportion of the improvement after the intervention".

The causal link between the evaluation interventions and achievement of the development priorities is weakly demonstrated and/or minimalistic in orientation. Thus, Respondent 10 (line. 3589-3591) states that "despite the adoption of evaluation recommendations, there is still lack of formalised systematic process for looking at post-evaluation process in terms of measuring the impact of implementation". It is pointed out that not all evaluations have gone as far as to try to identify the kind of causal mechanisms or linkages that underpin the development interventions and such evaluations become irrelevant in the context of measuring their contribution towards achievement of the broader development agenda. Moreover, not all programmes have clearly outlined theory of change/ results chain and that makes it difficult to measure the contribution of evaluations and the programmes towards attainment of the developmental objectives.

Noteworthy, it is argued that evaluations are not intended to directly contribute to the achievement of development priorities in proportional terms, but rather to help in highlighting the performance and orientation of the development interventions towards realisation of the broader agenda. Thus, Respondent 1 (line 4342-4347) suggests that "a programme may be performing very well in its own terms but performing very weakly in relation to the overall development context". Hence, the focus of evaluations should be to generate information that will inform achievement of long-term development objectives (outcomes and impact) rather than only focusing on delivery of short-term results (outputs).

4.2 Evaluation characteristics that influence use of evaluation information

In this section the findings of this study that relate to the evaluation elements that serve as determinants and/or barriers for utilisation of empirical information in decision making are presented.

The scientific rigour is the main evaluation element that determines production of credible empirical information that induces demand for use in decision making. In general, the evaluation findings are mostly in line with the applicable standards and principles in terms of the scientific rigour and this is attributed to the comprehensive evaluation specifications, which are crafted by the internal evaluation specialists. Respondent 4 (line. 2039-2044) points out that "the clearer the evaluation Terms of Reference (specifications), the greater the chances of obtaining credible empirical information that are useful for decision making".

It is pointed out that the evaluation findings should be objective and reliable – implying that they should cover both positive and negative elements and be free of manipulation and any bias. Additionally, the structure and logic of the evaluation report should be clear and simple, with little academic jargon (simple language). Thus, Respondent 2 (line. 3792-3802) points out that "most of the time you find that there is too much jargon that people cannot interpret – there is too much statistical analysis – the report is too big and you find that somebody cannot make tail end of this report and therefore would not help in making quick decisions about the programmes". It is suggested that the evaluation report should have the executive summary if it is big and should also be in a rudimentary or simplified form in order for people to understand and increase the chances of uptake in decision making.

There should be coherence in the content of the evaluation report, including consistency between the findings and the conclusions. By implication, evaluation findings should be presented in a logical manner, with conclusions that are based on facts rather than personal opinions. Thus, Respondent 1 (line. 3643-3646) points out that "I have seen evaluation reports where actually you cannot clearly link the conclusions to the programme description as outlined through the evaluation questions – basically the evaluation design sometimes just lacks compelling logic between the questions and the answers…". It is pointed out that a lot of recommendations are of such a generic nature that they are not really useful and left up to the interpretation of programme managers/

users. Noteworthy, sometimes recommendations are drawn from a figment of the evaluations that have been conducted in certain sectors. Some evaluators tend to use a standard set of recommendations e.g. recommendations about budget prioritisation, stakeholder involvement and tend to be quite generic.

However, there are a few instances where evaluation results did not meet the applicable standards in terms of the scientific rigour and are thus less credible and not usable in decision making. Respondent 8 (line. 1469-1471) confirms the latter in pointing out that "we once had an evaluation that had a lot of gaps because our specifications were not adequate and the questions we wanted answered couldn't be answered at the end as it was very thin 'you know' – it didn't have enough muscle". Respondent 1 (line. 4107-4108) reiterates the later in stating that "the scientific rigor hasn't always been applied in systematic way in all the evaluation reports". It is pointed out that the evaluation reports with poor quality commonly result from incapable evaluators and gaps in evaluation specifications.

Moreover, conducting evaluations for programmes that lack explicit theory of change, result in interpretation that is based on assumptions and characterised by gaps as some aspects will be artificially elevated above others in an arbitrary way. Noteworthy, evaluations that make use of various sources of data provide decision makers/ users with alternatives and/or benchmarks that help them to better understand social problems or occurrences and thus, they are able to take properly informed actions.

4.3 Conclusions

The findings of this study show that there is weak stakeholder collaboration during conceptualisation of evaluations, including non-identification of possible uses for the information to be generated prior to implementation of the evaluation process. By implication, there is limited involvement of the policy specialists and other key decision makers throughout the evaluation process. Relevance of empirical information to the needs and priorities of the institution emerged as a strong consideration during conceptualisation of evaluations as well as a strong determinant for effective utility. Equally, adherence to the institutional ethical codes and standards also emerged as a strong determinant for adoption of the evaluation findings. Evaluations are not based on serving malicious personal interests of public officials or any other group of individuals but rather to inform the achievement of development objectives. There is a balance

between maintenance of the scientific rigour and the need to produce context-specific/ aligned empirical information.

Inclusive stakeholder participation benefits the evaluation process by bringing together people with knowledge and skills in various fields and thus, helps to generate credible empirical information that creates demand for use in decision making. It also helps to facilitate a sense of ownership among the stakeholders. However, coordination of large stakeholders groups is also marred by challenges relating to polarised interests, viewpoints, principles and cultural orientation. There is limited leadership advocacy for use of empirical information in decisions, hence there is a lack of awareness and limited application of the existing evaluation policy framework. The institution's evaluation human technical capacity is uneven and fragmented and thus marred by uncoordinated evaluation activities and poor knowledge management. The evaluation findings are mainly disseminated to the users upon completion of the evaluation report, with no systematic procedure for implementation of the adopted evaluation interventions. In some instances the evaluation findings are overtaken by the development progress and policy strategic shifts due to lack of systematic procedures for dissemination of information. The adoption and actual use of the evaluation findings mainly hinges on the credibility of the results and the resource capacity of the institution versus the nature of the evaluation interventions as well as the institution's strategic posture towards development.

There is no systematic procedure for confirming the implementation of the adopted evaluation recommendations, hence there is weakness in measuring the causal link of the evaluation interventions to the development agenda. Notwithstanding the highlighted benefits of using empirical information in decision making, there is no formal reward system to entrench the culture of evidence-informed decision making. The credibility of the evaluation findings hinges on application of the scientific rigour and responsiveness to the information needs and priorities of the users and/or decision makers. The lack of adequate human technical capacity result in production of less credible empirical information. Lastly, the lack of explicit theory of change for the programmes results in presumptive interpretations and arbitrary conclusions of the evaluation findings.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this chapter the research findings are interpreted as per the main questions that aimed to establish the institutional factors and evaluation process elements that serve as determinants and/or barriers for use of empirical information in decision making. The interpretation is conducted through the lens of Patton's (1978) utilisation-focused evaluation theory as the explanatory framework, which is described in Section 2.6 of Chapter 2. The interpretation of the institutional conditions that influence use or non-use of the evaluation findings is presented in Section 5.1, while the evaluation process factors that serve as the determinants and/or barriers for utility are discussed in Section 5.2, with conclusions of both institutional and evaluation process factors presented in Section 5.3.

5.1 Institutional factors that influence use of evaluation information

In this section we interpret the research findings that relate to the institutional factors that influence use and/or non-use of empirical information in decision making. There are key considerations that should be taken into account when conceptualising and initiating evaluations and they include identifying relevant stakeholders and potential uses of information.

As per the findings in Section 4.1.1, there is strong emphasis on alignment of the evaluations to the development strategic priorities and thus ensuring that the findings are consistent with the information needs of decision makers and therefore, increasing chances of uptake, as pointed out by Görgens and Kusek (2009); Patton (2010); Rogers (1962). Uptake of empirical information hinges on responsiveness of the findings to the information needs and priorities of decision makers (Green et al., 2009). There is weak stakeholder collaboration during conceptualisation of evaluations, including non-identification of possible uses and users of empirical information to be generated through the evaluations. This practice might negatively affect uptake of the generated empirical information since inclusive collaboration and reaching consensus on potential uses and primary users of findings are critical in ensuring buy-in and utility, as pointed out by Patton (1978). High uptake of empirical knowledge hinges on the extent to which the expectations for utility are simplified and oriented towards use from the beginning to the

end (Green et al., 2009). Non-identification of potential uses of information prior to the implementation of evaluations result in discretional and/or haphazard use of findings (Patton, 2010).

The confirmed strict adherence and/or sensitivity to the applicable institutional values and ethical standards is a positive practice in terms of obtaining stakeholder buy-in and thus creating demand for use of empirical information in decision making. Noteworthy, the examination of the real world should be conducted in accordance with values, principles as well as needs and priorities of primary users (Patton, 1978). Empathy and acknowledgement of the culture, values and ethics that define the institution and its clients is critical in ensuring relevance and high uptake of empirical information (Nelson et al., 1987; Preskill et al., 2003).

Notwithstanding the strict focus on context-aligned evaluations and adherence to ethical standards – non-identification of the key decision makers and potential uses of empirical information prior to implementation of evaluations limits stakeholder buy-in and thus results in low uptake of the findings in decision making. An inclusive user-oriented approach from conception to completion of the evaluations is a critical determinant for creating a sense of ownership in the evaluation process and thus ensuring buy-in and uptake of findings, as postulated by Patton (1978).

The reviewed past studies suggest that sometimes evaluations and/or research are conducted to legitimise personal interests of the public officials and/or political principals.

The findings in Section 4.1.2 show that evaluations are conducted mainly to support enhancement of development programmes with empirical evidence rather than to legitimise personal interests, what Walugembe et al. (2015) calls 'instrumental use'. By implication, basing decisions on scientific evidence/ information provide decision makers with certainty in taking properly informed decisions. Respondent 10 (line. 3899-3902) underscores this notion in pointing out that "it makes it easy to decide and commit resources 'yha' and also provide certainty and authority rather than basing the decisions on a hunch". This finding dispels the misconception in Caplan's (1979) theory that, empirical information is misused by the public policy makers for political and/or personal gain. It is pointed out that "political pressures, competing priorities and vested interests from the lobby groups" serve as barriers for use of empirical evidence (Oliver et al., 2014, p. 6). Thus, Respondent 3 (line. 4518-4521) points out that "if people are not convinced

that you are doing the evaluation for the right reasons they might look at it like it's a compliance issue or conducted to appease certain individuals or spend money and thus are likely not to buy into it". Webber (1987) argues that misuse might include utilisation of information to confirm decisions that are already taken or conduct more studies in order to delay certain decisions. However, 'symbolic use' as referred to by Walugembe et al. (2015) remains legitimate provided that there is no malicious intent or manipulation by the decision makers (Webber, 1987).

This finding underlines the need for social scientists to understand and acknowledge the nature of the public sector environment, in the context of what drives the demand for use of empirical information from the perspective of public representatives. Nelson et al. (1987, p. 571) point out that such considerations should include determining as to "when, under what circumstances and how the information is used in the policy making process" so as to create the demand for use. In all, this finding highlights a good institutional practice that is critical in maintaining legitimacy of the evaluation and/or research functions and thus ensuring demand for utility of empirical information in decision making, as postulated by Caplan (1979).

Conflicting principles and priorities between social scientists and public policy makers/ specialists serve as a deterrent to the production of empirical information that induce demand for use in decision making, as pointed out by Oliver et al. (2014).

The findings in Section 4.1.3 indicate that there is maintenance of balance between adherence to the scientific standards and alignment to the institutional context and/or priorities, without compromising the scientific rigour. By implication, all parties recognise and respect the importance of each other's unique contribution to the success of the evaluation process. This is a critical determinant for the use of empirical information as Oliver et al. (2014, p. 6) suggest that evaluators are able to generate context-relevant empirical information if they have a proper understanding of the policy and development context that can be obtained from the programme and/or policy specialists. Equally, the evaluators help the decision makers/ policy specialists to better understand social problems and offer possible solutions (Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Rogers, 1962).

It is pointed out that the higher the awareness of technical aspects and the value of the evaluation function, the greater the chances of stakeholder buy-in and uptake of findings in decision making (Kawonga et al., 2013). By implication, capacity building should be provided to all levels of staff on a continuous basis in order to achieve

stakeholder technical awareness (Amo & Cousins, 2007; Kawonga et al., 2013). Crona and Parker (2011, p. 7) argue that "the form and content of social interactions between researchers and policy makers influences knowledge utilisation above and beyond the technical quality of science information" as it plays a key role in ensuring credibility and legitimacy of empirical information. Consensus on methodological strategies is critical in ensuring meaningfulness and uptake of the generated empirical information, in terms of its validity and reliability (Patton, 2010).

Also emerging from the findings is strict adherence to the institutional values and ethical standards. This is a critical determinant for uptake of empirical information since Patton (2015) points out that evaluators/ researchers are required to recognise and respect institutional values and ethical standards in order to solicit buy-in of the users. Thus, Respondent 11 (line. 4318-4320) points out that "evaluation recommendations that are not sensitive to our values and ethics 'eh', we normally don't consider them; recommendations that are undermining the whole system are treated differently". Sensitivity of the evaluation process to the ethical and cultural standards is also cited by Roger (1962) as a critical determinant for utility of empirical information.

The maintenance of balance between the scientific rigor and the institutional context/ priorities is a good practice that ensures production of the evaluation findings which parallels the information needs and priorities of the decision makers. Adherence and sensitivity to the institutional values and ethical standards is also critical in producing context-relevant empirical information that induces high uptake. By implication, evaluation specialists should acknowledge that they do not produce empirical information for themselves but for the social actors, hence the importance of understanding the information needs and priorities of users. Equally, it is important for the social actors to acknowledge that, the social scientists bring skills that enable them (users) to better understand and solve social problems.

The user-oriented approach put emphasis on the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation process in order to secure their (stakeholders) buy-in and sense of ownership and thus increasing the chances of uptake in decision making, as pointed out by Patton (1978).

The findings in Section 4.1.4 show that the stakeholder involvement is partially inclusive and inconsistent and thus implies that some key users do not actively participate in the evaluation process. There is no systematic involvement of programme managers

and/or policy specialists in conceptualisation of evaluations. The coordination of the evaluation function is fragmented and unsystematic and thus some evaluations are conducted without the involvement of evaluation specialists and other key stakeholders. There have been confirmed cases of limited implementation of evaluation findings and/or recommendations due to lack of buy-in as a result of non-inclusive stakeholder participation. Patton (1997, p. 436) points out that "…use is not something one becomes interested in at the end of an evaluation", hence there should be concerted efforts towards ensuring active participation of all relevant key stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation process. Walugembe et al. (2015, p. 10) established that effective utilisation of empirical information hinges on continuous engagement of the key stakeholders "before, during and after the research process".

The buy-in and sense of ownership in the evaluation process have emerged as the main benefits of comprehensive active stakeholder participation. By implication, the higher the inclusivity of stakeholders, the greater the chances of the uptake of empirical information in decision making. Patton (2010) points out that comprehensive participation of key stakeholders helps in lessening the lengthy dissemination of information and ensures timely feedback since the users are engaged from the onset. Respondent 10 (line. 4055-4059) states that "change becomes seamless since there is no need to explain in detail as to why certain decisions have to be taken as the users are already on board, hence the implementation of recommendations becomes easy". Respondent 9 (line. 4049-4051) points out that "the findings are usually well received and the users are able to develop their own action plans based on the findings", what Green et al. (2009) and Patton (2010) calls 'inculcation of change-mind-set'.

It is pointed out that inclusive stakeholder collaboration minimises any elements of bias or undue manipulation and leverage on skills capacity to generate empirical information that meets the scientific rigour and yet is context-specific. For instance, stakeholders from the "academic fraternity will make inputs on technical aspect of the evaluation process" (Respondent 11: line. 4064-4066), while policy specialists will provide inputs on the content and institutional context. A collaborative approach provides leverage through a wealth of different expertise, knowledge and ideas and thus contributes to the production of credible and technically sound information (Green et al., 2009; Rogers, 1962). Oliver et al. (2014, p. 6) suggest that if the evaluators/ social scientists "…have a good understanding of the context surrounding the policy priorities" there is

more likelihood of them generating technically sound and yet context-specific empirical information and thus increasing the chances of uptake in decision making.

Greene (1987) points out that active participation of programme and/or policy specialists helps the evaluators to gain insight into the programme content and institutional policy context that would have not been possible through document reviews. The policy specialists have an advantage in the context of possessing knowledge on culture, values, principles, ethical standards and strategic priorities that define their institution (Preskill et al., 2003). Thus, their (policy specialists) participation helps in enriching the content of empirical information, while also assisting the social scientists to observe the applicable ethical standards. By implication, the lower the representation of key stakeholders, the greater the chances of disputes over credibility and validity of evaluation results, and the fewer the chances of uptake of empirical information in decision making. It is pointed out that the user-oriented approach enables appreciation and sharing of multiple perspectives and provides opportunity for inculcation of change mind-set throughout the evaluation process (Greene et al., 1987, 2009).

On the other hand, it has emerged that there are some disadvantages associated with involvement of all stakeholders and such challenges are manifested through polarised principles, ideas and interests as well as conflicting cultural and political orientation. It is pointed out that coordination of large groups is usually characterised by divergent views on what defines the institutional context and/or strategic priorities (Greene, 1990). She argues that the latter also include disagreements on stakeholder composition, evaluation methodologies and procedures as well as trade-offs between users' needs and technical standards. However, reaching consensus is critical as benefits of inclusive stakeholder collaboration outweighs the associated challenges. This is also acknowledged by Patton (2010) in pointing out that interacting with large groups of stakeholders might be marred by challenges relating to ineffective coordination of inputs and lack of adherence to the set timelines. By implication, there should be careful consideration of stakeholder composition and effective management of the evaluation process, without compromising inclusive representation as that might result in low uptake of the findings.

The finding on weak stakeholder collaboration indicates that the user-oriented evaluation approach is not yet fully applied within the department (research setting) as outlined by Patton (1978). The key decision makers, such as programme managers and/or policy specialists, do not participate actively in conceptualisation of evaluations

and this might result in limited stakeholder buy-in and low uptake of the evaluation findings.

Practical leadership advocacy for the evaluation and/or research functions plays a critical role in creating demand for the use of empirical information in decision making, as pointed out by Patton (1978) and Görgens and Kusek (2009).

The findings in Section 4.1.5 indicate that the role of the leadership and/or decision makers in the evaluation process is limited and unsystematic, hence evaluations are largely initiated and driven by the internal evaluators. The limited awareness and/or application of the evaluation policy framework and fragmentation of evaluation activities is a manifestation of ineffective advocacy for institutionalisation and the creation of demand for use of empirical information in decision making. Kawonga et al. (2013) and Görgens and Kusek (2009) point out that the existence of the evaluation policy framework is meaningless without active leadership to drive its application. Kawonga et al. (2012) attributes fragmentation of evaluation activities to lack of leadership champions, which result in duplication of efforts and production of less credible empirical information. By implication, fragmentation of evaluation efforts impact negatively on information and knowledge management and thus result in limited use of the findings in decision making.

It is pointed out that uncoordinated evaluation activities result in overwhelming public officials with numerous requests for information and uncoordinated actions for implementation of evaluation interventions/ action, as also found by Heunis et al. (2011). The assertion that some programme managers and other key stakeholders are still reluctant to participate in the evaluation process since they view it as policing tool, implies that the evaluation function is not yet institutionalised and/or embedded within the departmental decision making processes. Oliver et al. (2014, p. 6) suggest that "lack of managerial will and support" for the evaluation and/or research functions result in unsystematic procedures and low uptake of empirical information in decision making.

On the other hand, the role played by the Executive authority at a provincial level concerning vetting and ratification of evaluations is critical in creating the culture for evidence-informed decision making. Though not systematic, the practice of driving implementation of evaluation findings and/or recommendations through an official communication from the head of department is also critical in entrenching the use of empirical information in decision making. It is argued that relevance, effectiveness and

sustainability of the evaluation and/or research systems hinges on the willingness of the Executive and Administration authorities to measure performance of policies and development programmes (Patton, 1997). Kusek and Rist (2004) point out that effective leadership advocacy for the evaluation function plays a critical role in entrenching the culture of basing decisions on empirical information. Thus, Respondent 8 (line. 4585-4589) points out that "peoples' attitudes also matter in terms of the genuine interest in bringing improvement towards attainment of the development objectives as there are instance where people resist change". Green et al. (2009) suggest that active advocacy by the leadership helps to legitimise the evaluation and/or research functions and promote the desire to change through evidence-informed decision making and thereby discouraging counter reformers.

Although there are no instances of certain evaluations not conducted due to lack of financial and human resource capacity, the fragmented evaluation units indicates partial leadership support. Görgens and Kusek (2009) point out that the leadership support should be less rhetorical and more tangible in terms of availing the resources (financial and human) that are essential to the production of empirical information. Moreover, the department has not yet fully applied the national and provincial policy which requires that 1 per cent of the departmental budget should be allocated to the evaluations, which also shows that there is limited practical support from the leadership. Oliver et al. (2014) suggest that good leadership and constructive authority are the key facilitators for institutionalisation of the evaluation function and uptake of empirical information in decision making.

Notwithstanding the role of the Executive authority at provincial level, it is apparent from the findings that the role of the departmental leadership and/or management in entrenching the evaluation function is partially active. Thus, there is a risk for inefficient evaluation resource management, uncoordinated knowledge management and less uptake of empirical information in decision making.

The capacity of the institution in terms of the available personnel with appropriate evaluation/ research skills and knowledge is a critical determinant for production of credible empirical information that induce demand for its use in decision making.

As indicated in Section 4.1.6, the departmental evaluation human technical capacity is fragmented and uneven, with some sections more capacitated than others. Thus, evaluations are largely outsourced to the external practitioners to complement the

internal capacity. However, lack of integration for the internal human technical capacity results in a silo approach that is characterised by limited application of the evaluation policy framework and poor knowledge management. Görgens and Kusek (2009) point out that the existence of the evaluation policy framework is meaningless without adequate institutional and human technical capacity to implement the evaluation/ research activities. Ledikwe et al. (2014) attributes inadequacy of human technical capacity and other essential resources to the lack of leadership will in production of empirical information. Thus, the production of less credible information, which implies less demand for use of empirical information in decision making. Rogers (1962) points out that high demand for use of empirical knowledge hinges on the production of technically sound information, which is dependent on the availability of adequate human technical capacity to generate the information.

It is argued that social scientists are mostly valued by the policy makers provided that they are able to produce empirical information that enables them (policy makers) to find solutions to social problems (Oliver et al., 2014). The Gauteng Department of Health does not leverage on the existing internal evaluation technical capacity due to lack of integration and unsystematic coordination of the evaluation and/or research functions. By implication, fragmentation of evaluation and/or research activities limits institutionalisation and legitimacy of empirical information in the context of informing decision making.

The extent to which the decision makers become knowledgeable and get persuaded about the attributes of a social phenomenon depends on effective information dissemination strategies.

The findings in Section 4.1.7 indicate that there is a lack of uniformity and systematic procedures for the dissemination of the evaluation findings to the users for decision making. The findings are re-packaged as per the information needs/ preferences of different key decision makers but this is also not done in a uniform and systematic manner. Thus, in some instances, the information does not reach certain key users or decision makers, as pointed out that sometimes the findings end up being shelved and without going down to the lower levels of administration. Manto Management (2007) also established that information feedback and dissemination mechanisms across the Gauteng Provincial Government are not properly documented and lack consistency. They also established that the findings are not disseminated to the lower levels of the

administration structure and that results in recurrence of undesirable practices. Heunis et al. (2011) also established that lack of information feedback to the health facility levels (front-line staff) result in limited implementation of the interventions from the evaluation results. To compound the problem, in some instances the evaluation findings are not fully disseminated to the users if they are deemed unfavourable to the interests of some public officials.

Additionally, there is missed opportunity in terms of inculcating a change mind-set or continuously disseminating information throughout the evaluation process due to partial involvement of the users, as postulated by Patton (1978). The user-oriented approach as postulated by Patton (1978) includes constant and timely feedback on the evaluation progress and preliminary findings, with careful consideration of the stakeholder inputs. Thus, the findings of this study show that there are instances where evaluations findings are overtaken by the development events in terms of programme implementation and strategic policy shifts and therefore, becoming history and irrelevant in the decision making process. It is pointed out that empirical information loses relevance if not disseminated timeously, especially in the public sector space (Green et al., 2009; Kawonga et al., 2013). It is pointed out that the user-oriented approach helps in facilitating awareness of the evaluation process as it unfolds and thus soliciting stakeholder buy-in into the findings before they become final (Greene, 1987). Above all, inclusive stakeholder engagement lessens the lengthy consultation process that is associated with dissemination of information after completion of the evaluation process and enables timely delivery of the findings (Patton, 2010).

These findings indicate that there is weak institutional practice concerning dissemination of the evaluation information to the users and thus potentially resulting in limited uptake of empirical information in decision making. The latter manifested by unsystematic and untimely dissemination of findings and thus risking the legitimacy of the evaluation function as untimely information loses relevance in decision making. The latter might also result in fruitless and wasteful expenditure if the produced empirical information is not used in decision making. Hence, the importance of acknowledging that decisions on delivery of the public good cannot be put on hold due to unavailability of empirical information. These findings also underscore the importance of advocacy by the leadership/ champions in driving systematic and timely dissemination of empirical information to all levels of the administration.

The legitimacy of the evaluation is determined by the extent to which its findings and/or recommendations are accepted and used to inform decision making. As indicated in section 4.1.8, the majority of evaluation findings and/or recommendations are adopted, though not given the same weight in terms of priority. Rogers (1962) suggests that empirical knowledge is not used in a linear approach (give and take) within the public sector space due to the complexity of the public sector environment. She point out that acceptance of empirical information hinges on its ability to offer alternatives and take into account the external factors as well as be sensitive to the institutional ethics and cultural expectations. Thus, Caplan (1979) suggest that policy makers are concerned with policy aligned empirical information that should also consider external factors as they (policy makers) have to use it to account to the communities that they serve.

Context-aligned evaluation findings and effective stakeholder engagement are some of the key institutional factors that contribute to acceptance of the findings and recommendations. The relevance of empirical information to the institutional development context and/or ability to solve social problems is highlighted by Rogers (1962) and Caplan (1979) as a key determinant for adoption and use of the findings in decision making. Patton (2015) point out that buy-in into the findings should be facilitated throughout the evaluation process by collaborating with the users so that they do not learn about the findings upon completion of the evaluation process. There is direct positive correlation between inclusive stakeholder participation and high uptake of evaluation findings, as pointed out by Patton (1978). Thus, Respondent 2 (line. 3436-3438) suggests that stakeholders "feel empowered and that they own the evaluation process" if they are allowed to actively participate in the evaluation process.

It is pointed out that the user-oriented approach facilitates inculcation of the change mind-set as well as stakeholder commitment and dedication towards realisation of a shared evaluation objective. Thus, Patton (2010) suggests that decisions about the use of empirical information do not just happen once-off upon dissemination of findings but are rather facilitated throughout the evaluation process. Green et al. (2009) point out that the desire to change and non-existence of counter reformers plays a key role in soliciting demand for uptake of empirical information in decision making.

The findings of this study show that actual use of evaluation information hinges on certain institutional conditions and/or capacity to implement the recommended evaluation interventions. The conditions include availability of resources (financial,

human and technical) versus the pressing strategic development needs and priorities. Political buy-in and/or interest in the evaluations as well as credibility and timely dissemination of empirical information also emerged as key determinants for utilisation. By implication, social scientists should recognise the institutional context in terms of "when, under what circumstances and how information are used in the policy-making process" in order to ensure uptake of empirical information in decision making (Nelson et al., 1987, p. 571). For instance, public officials use empirical information to implement public policies and account to the political principals, while politicians would use it to account to their electorate and the legislature, with the legislators using it to develop legislation and hold public officials and politicians to account (Caplan, 1979; Görgens & Kusek, 2009).

By implication, institutional resource capacity, active leadership and less complex social conditions play a key role in the uptake of empirical information in decision making, hence the importance of formulating the evaluation findings in a more pragmatic manner so as to create demand for utility. This implies that evaluation recommendations/ interventions that require exorbitant resources are less likely to materialise, at least in the near future since the public sector is not profit driven but rather focused on delivery of public good, as pointed out by Bamberger and Rugh (2009). Nelson et al. (1987) point out that uptake of empirical information in the public sector context does not happen in a give and take approach (linear) but rather involves trade-offs and thus requires recognition and understanding of what defines reality in terms of the public good. The latter is reiterated by Oliver et al. (2014, p. 6) in suggesting that competing priorities in terms of economic, political and cultural factors have an effect on the use of empirical information in the policy making and implementation process.

Over and above context-relevant empirical information, timely dissemination of evaluation findings also ensures relevance of information in decision making. Thus, the findings of this study reveal that in some instances, the evaluation results are overtaken by the development events and/or public policy strategic shifts. Hence, Nelson et al. (1987) point out that taking cognisance of timely dissemination of findings is critical since delivery of the public good cannot be put on hold based on unavailability of empirical information. Noteworthy, lack of systematic dissemination of empirical information that emerged from the findings of this study might affect legitimacy of the evaluation function and thus, limiting uptake of its findings in decision making. The active role of the

leadership/ champions is critical in managing non-use or partial use of empirical information as a result of the public officials feeling burdened or overwhelmed by frequent policy changes that arise from the interventions of evaluation results.

Certainty and confidence in taking decisions are cited as the main benefits of using empirical information to inform conclusions and/or actions on social problems or development interventions. It is pointed out that a good reward system for the use of empirical knowledge is a good institutional practice that helps in creating culture and demand for evidence-informed decision making (Rogers, 1962; Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Green et al., 2009). Webber (1987) suggests that empirical information enables the public representatives to account for delivery of public services and thus help them to maintain their public legitimacy. However, there is no clear demonstration for the existence of a systematic and/or formal institutional reward system to create demand for the utilisation of empirical information in decision making. The latter might be linked to unsystematic and uncoordinated procedures for implementation of the evaluation function as well as an inactive role of the leadership/ champions for use of empirical information in decision making.

The findings on actual use of empirical knowledge highlight the importance of soliciting stakeholder buy-in and facilitating their understanding and acknowledgement of the value of empirical information in decision making. The institutional resource capacity, active leadership and less complex social conditions also play a key role in the uptake of empirical information. Thus, the importance of underpinning evaluations to the institutional context and formulating pragmatic evaluation interventions in order to create more chances for the utility of the findings in decision making. The findings indicate that the evaluation information is used for legitimate reasons rather than used for malicious purposes or personal interests. The lack of systematic procedures for dissemination and implementation of evaluation findings poses a risk of overwhelming public officials with uncoordinated instructions and thus limiting utility and legitimacy of the empirical information. The lack of systematic institutional reward systems for the utilisation of empirical information might hinder the creation of demand and a culture for evidenced informed decision making.

In order to entrench the culture of evidenced informed decision making, there should be a systematic procedure for confirming the implementation of evaluation findings and/or recommendations, as postulated by Rogers (1962) and Patton (1978).

The findings in Section 4.1.9 show that there is no systematic procedure for evaluating implementation of the evaluation interventions. Thus, tracking implementation of the evaluation findings is left up to the affected programme managers/ policy specialists to use their own discretion on how to confirm implementation of evaluation interventions. Tracking is also limited to the quarterly and annual review sessions that are not organised and aimed at evaluating implementation of the evaluation interventions.

Patton (1978) suggests that there should be consensus on potential uses of findings, including a plan for evaluating the use of the evaluation interventions – right from conceptualisation of evaluations. Fleischer and Christie (2009) established that developing a plan and agreeing on the procedure for evaluating implementation of evaluation findings helps in facilitating utility of empirical information. It is pointed out that sustaining good information utilisation methods and procedures is critical in creating demand for use of empirical information and thus maintaining legitimacy of the evaluation function (Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Green et al., 2009).

The weak connection between the role of evaluation interventions and achievement of development might be attributed to the fragmented and unsystematic evaluation procedures as well as the inactive role of the champions/ leadership. If there is no systematic procedure for confirming the implementation of the evaluation findings, there is little likelihood of learning about the contribution of evaluation interventions on achievement of the broader development agenda. It is pointed out that evaluations cannot add value to the development agenda if their information is generated in a haphazard manner and not used appropriately/ systematically (Peersman et al., 2016). Evaluations are judged by the extent to which they contribute in enhancing attainment of the development imperatives (Patton, 2010).

However, evaluating programmes that do not have an explicit theory of change might hinder the measurement of causal linkages and thus result in conclusions that are based on assumptions and arbitrary causations. By implication, measuring the linkages/ causality between the evaluation interventions and achievement of development objectives becomes difficult and arbitrary. Thus, the majority of the confirmed causal linkages are limited to the evaluation of short-medium term objectives (outputs) and are less focused on achievement long-term results. Hence, it is pointed out that the public officials are mostly inclined towards confirming what appears in their performance contracts, which is commonly output focused rather than outcome and/or impact

oriented, in so far as the bigger picture is concerned. It is pointed out that the need to comply with the output oriented performance reporting requirements usually outweighs the importance of measuring the realisation of the medium-long term development strategic objectives (Kawonga et al., 2013). Peersman et al. (2016) argues that the institutional culture on the use of empirical information in decision making has an influence on what is deemed worth advancing or investing in. It is stated that starting by outlining the desired impact/ long-term results in designing development programmes helps in making explicit what are usually "implicit questions and assumptions" about the basis of programme and/or project design (Peersman et al., 2016). By implication, this approach helps to put in place the appropriate indicators and data production, collection and analysis procedures, with clear methods of measuring causal linkages.

The absence of systematic procedures and strategies for confirming use of evaluation findings might result in some evaluation interventions falling through the cracks and thus risk the legitimacy of the evaluation function. By implication, some successes and failures of evaluation interventions might not be recognised and thus miss the opportunity to learn from them, as pointed out by Osborne and Gaebler (1992), in Kusek and Rist (2004). It is apparent from these findings that lack of an explicit theory of change (results chain) for development programmes has a negative effect on the measurement of causal linkages between evaluation interventions and achievement of development strategic objectives. Thus, it has been established that despite the advances in monitoring and evaluation within the South Africa public sector, the focus is still largely on the use of empirical information to measure output performance that is not oriented towards achievement of the broader development agenda (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, 2012). In all, this finding demonstrates an institutional gap that has a negative bearing on the uptake of empirical information in decision making, as pointed out by Rogers (1962) and Patton (1978).

5.2 Evaluation characteristics that influence use of evaluation information

In this section the research findings that relate to the evaluation process elements that have positive influence on use of empirical information in decision making are interpreted.

The findings in Section 4.2 show that, largely, the generated evaluation information meet the applicable norms and standards in terms of the scientific rigour.

Clear and simply logic of the evaluation reports (internal coherence), average size of reports as well as use of simple language also emerged as key facilitators for the uptake of empirical information in decision making. By implication, the findings should be presented in a less technical language as well as a coherent and concise manner, inclusive of the executive summary. It is pointed out that empirical information that is characterised by technical jargon serves as a deterrent to utility as users struggle to easily grasp the messages that are conveyed by the evaluation reports (Oliver et al., 2014). It is suggested that the language and approach of the evaluation findings should carry tailored messages that are simple and more concrete than abstract and enriched with analogies that can be well understood by the policy makers (Green et al., 2009). Oliver et al. (2014) argues that the policy makers have busy work schedules, hence the importance of including the executive summary that covers key content of the evaluation report in a brief and concise manner.

It is pointed out that the findings should be user-friendly and objective – implying that there should be no element of bias and/or malicious manipulation that will result in misrepresentation of reality (Green et al., 2009). Coherence between the findings and conclusions also emerged as being critical in ensuring credibility of the evaluation findings – implying that conclusions should be based on facts rather than personal opinions of the social scientists. Oliver et al. (2014, p. 6) point out that "the evaluators and/or researchers are valued more when it is clear that they are non-partisan or unbiased" and in possession of the necessary expertise/ skills.

Responsiveness of evaluation findings to the information needs and priorities of the users and/or decision makers also emerged as the key determinant for uptake of empirical information in decision making. It is pointed out that empirical information should demonstrate validity and relevance to the strategic priorities of the institution in order to induce demand for uptake in decision making (Caplan, 1979; Green et al., 2009; Patton, 2010). The evaluations should be able to draw the causal linkages (theory of change) that underpin the programmes, instead of basing the analysis on arbitrary assumptions. It is pointed out that empirical information should be able to offer solutions to the social problems and thus enable the users to take properly informed actions (Rogers, 1962). However, there have been instances where evaluation results have been inconsistent with applicable scientific standards due to lack of human technical capacity and thus not adding any value to the information needs of the decision makers.

In all, credibility and/or usability of empirical information is determined by impartiality, user-friendliness and responsiveness of the evaluation findings to the information needs and priorities of the users/ decision makers. By implication, the institutional leadership should allocate resources (human, finance and technical) and facilitate continuous capacity building for all staff so as to ensure production of credible information. Thus, entrenching the organisational culture of evidence-informed decision making.

5.3 Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal the key institutional factors and evaluation process elements that influence use and/or non-use of empirical information in decision making, particularly within the public sector context. Responsiveness of the evaluation findings to the information needs and priorities of the decision makers emerged as a critical determinant for utility. Thus, the need for social scientists to understand and acknowledge the nature of the public sector environment, in the context of what drives the demand for use of information from the perspective of public representatives, as pointed out by Patton (1978); Caplan (1979) and Greene (1987).

Maintenance of the balance between the scientific rigour and responsiveness to the users' information needs and priorities is also critical in generating credible findings that induce demand for utility, as suggested by Greene (1990); Patton (2010) and Rich (2010). Thus, the need for social actors to also acknowledge the contribution of social scientists in terms of helping them (social actors) to better understand the social circumstances and take properly informed actions on social problems/ occurrences, as postulated by Patton (1978) and Caplan (1979). By implication, the higher the users' awareness and knowledge of the technical information production process, the greater the chances of them acknowledging the value of empirical information and thus resulting in high uptake of information in decision making. The authenticity of the intentions behind the evaluations also emerged as a determinant for stakeholder buy-in and uptake of the evaluation findings in decision making, as Patton (1978) and Caplan (1979) also point out.

The lack of a comprehensive user-oriented evaluation approach limits stakeholder buy-in and uptake of evaluation findings in decision making. By implication, limited representation of policy specialists affects content validity, while partial involvement of

technical specialists affects the scientific rigour and thus results in the production of less credible and/or unusable information, as also established by Patton (1978) and Greene (1987). Additionally, the more comprehensive the stakeholder representation, the lower the chances of malicious manipulation of evaluation findings and thus the greater the chances of uptake in decision making, as also established by Preskill et al. (2003) and Oliver et al. (2014). The limited leadership advocacy for use of empirical information hinders institutionalisation of the culture for evidence-informed decision making and thus results in inefficient resource management as well as uncoordinated knowledge management. Unsystematic and/or poor information dissemination procedures result in delayed communication of findings and thus also result in limited uptake of empirical information in decision making, as also pointed out by Rogers (1962); Patton (1978) and Green et al. (2009).

The adoption and actual use of the evaluation findings hinges on the ability of the institution to implement the recommended evaluation interventions. By implication, the higher the institutional financial capacity, less complex environment as well as context-aligned evaluation interventions, the greater the chances of adoption and use of empirical information in decision making, as pointed out by Caplan (1979); Patton (2010) and Rich (2010). The lack of formal reward for evidence-informed decision making result in ad hoc and isolated demand for use of empirical information, as also found by Görgens and Kusek (2009). The lack of systematic procedures for implementation and evaluation of the adopted evaluation interventions result in discretional and isolated application of the evaluation recommendations and thus reduce the impact of empirical information on the achievement of the development agenda, as Rogers (1962) and Patton (2010) also point out. By implication, the more unsystematic the procedure for implementing the evaluation interventions, the lesser the chances of measuring and learning from the contribution of empirical information on the institutional development agenda.

Additionally, the lack of explicit programme theory results in presumption analysis of causal linkages and arbitrary conclusions, as also found by Nelson et al. (1987). Credibility and/or usability of empirical information hinges on impartiality, user-friendliness as well as responsiveness of the evaluation findings to the information needs of the users/ decision makers, as also pointed out by Patton (1997) and Qotywa (2009).

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter a summary of the research findings is presented. Thus, the chapter includes a synthesis of the research procedure and findings in Section 6.1, conclusions and limitations in Section 6.2 and the recommendations in Section 6.3.

6.1 Summary of findings and conclusions

This research mainly focused on examining the institutional factors and evaluation characteristics that serve as facilitators and/or barriers for utilisation of evaluation information within the Gauteng Department of Health. The research premised from the fact that there is little or no evidence for use of empirical information in decision making within the Gauteng Department of Health as established by Manto Management (2007). They point out that the focus on achievement of the short-term development results (outputs) was cited as a factor that limits use of empirical information to inform realisation of the medium-long term development objectives.

This research was driven by the objective to generate empirical information that will contribute towards enhancement of public governance and administration practices and possibly add information to the existing literature. By implication, the high uptake of empirical information in decision making results in enhanced governance and administration practices and thus results in greater chances for effective delivery of public services and efficient utilisation of financial resources. The identified key root causes for non-use of evaluation information include, (i.) lack of use-oriented approach, (ii.) misalignment between the findings and the institutional context/ priories, (iii.) lack of leadership advocacy for use of empirical information, (iv.) less credible information, (v.) lack of adequate human technical capacity, (vi.) poor information dissemination, (vii.) lack of financial resources to implement evaluation interventions, (viii.) poor strategies/ systematic actions for implementing the adopted evaluation interventions, including (ix.) poor strategies for confirming implementation of the evaluation interventions (Rogers, 1962; Caplan, 1979; Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Green et al., 2009; Patton, 2010).

A conceptual framework for this research ensued from understanding the research context/ setting and associated problem, to identification of the knowledge gap

through the existing literature and then the development of the explanatory framework through the lens of the existing theories on the use of empirical information. This study aimed to answer two main questions, (i.) the institutional factors and (ii.) evaluation process elements that influence use and/or non-use of empirical information in decision making. Patton's (1978) utilisation-focused evaluation theory was found to be capable of explaining the institutional factors and evaluation process elements that serve as facilitators and/or barriers to the use of evaluation/ empirical information in decision making.

The reviewed past and current studies on the use of empirical information could not describe the underlying institutional factors, including detailed description of evaluation process elements that positively influence the use of the evaluation and research findings, specifically within the public sector context. Further, the majority of the reviewed studies applied quantitative research techniques that describe the extent and significance of the phenomenon and thus fall short of explaining why certain problems are persistent. Thus, this research applied a qualitative strategy to establish the institutional and evaluation process facilitators and/or barriers for use of evaluation/ empirical information in decision making within the Gauteng Department of Health.

The adopted research strategy enabled the researcher to explore and understand the reality concerning the use of empirical information through the lens and experiences of the social actors, as suggested by Bryman (2012). This study made use of primary data that was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews that were subsequently transcribed and organised according to the unique codes as well as fragmented through a matrix table until content themes emerged, upon which an analysis was done. Additionally, sourcing inputs from different categories of respondents enabled triangulation of responses and thus enhanced the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Ethical approval from both the authorising academic institution (University of Witwatersrand) and the research setting (Gauteng Department of Health) was obtained. Additionally, consent to conduct the interviews was also obtained from the respondents. The findings of this research provided an insight into the merits for use and/or non-use of evaluation/ empirical information within the Gauteng Department of Health. They are summarised according to the two categories, (i.) the institutional factors as well as (ii.)

evaluation process elements that serve as determinants and/or barriers for utility of evaluation/ empirical information in decision making within a public sector context.

6.1.1 Institutional factors that influence use of evaluation information

There is a strong emphasis on alignment of the evaluation findings to the institutional context, in terms of the development priorities as well as the values that define the institution. This alignment is a critical determinant for uptake of empirical information as it helps to solicit stakeholder buy-in and ensures relevance of the findings to the information needs of the users/ decision makers, as pointed out by previous research (Görgens & Kusek, 2009; Green et al., 2009; Patton, 1978; Rogers, 1962; Snow, 1959). However, lack of explicit programme theory affects the meaningfulness of the evaluations in terms of drawing causal linkages in the context of the broader developmental agenda and thus resulting in minimalistic and/or arbitrary interpretations and conclusions.

There is partial involvement of the key stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, including non-identification of the possible uses for the information to be generated prior to implementation of the evaluation process. This implies that there might be limited content validity and scientific rigour due to partial participation of the policy and technical specialists and thus resulting in the production of less credible and/or unusable information, as pointed out by Patton (1978) and Caplan (1979). Noteworthy, it has emerged that the evaluation process is sometimes delayed due to polarised stakeholders' interests, values and viewpoints. However, the benefits of inclusive stakeholder participation outweighs the coordination challenges, as pointed out by Greene (1987) and Patton (1997).

Evaluations are based on genuine intentions rather than malicious individual interests and thus the greater the chances of stakeholder buy-in and uptake of information in decision making, as established by Patton (1978) and Greene (1990). The confirmed maintenance of balance between the scientific rigour and production of context-aligned empirical information is critical in generating credible findings that induce demand for utility, as pointed out by Greene (1990); Patton (2010) and Rich (2010). The higher the users' awareness and knowledge of the technical information production process, the greater the chances of acknowledging the value of empirical information and thus resulting in high uptake for decision making. There is limited leadership advocacy for use

of empirical information in decision making. Thus, derailing institutionalisation of the culture for evidence-informed decision making and therefore, resulting in inefficient evaluation resource management as well as uncoordinated knowledge management, as also established by Preskill et al. (2003); Görgens & Kusek (2009) and Patton (2010).

The institutional evaluation human technical capacity is fragmented and thus missing the opportunity to leverage more from the existing capacity through harmonisation and uniform application of the evaluation policy framework. By implication, the more fragmented the institutional human technical capacity, the greater the chances of silo evaluation activities. Thus, resulting in uneven adherence to the evaluation policy framework and uncoordinated information and knowledge management procedures and therefore, limiting uptake of empirical information in decision making, as also established by Kawonga et al. (2013) and Oliver et al. (2014). It is pointed out that the production of credible empirical information ensue from the adequate and consolidated human technical capacity, which facilitates users' confidence in the evaluation findings (Mackay, 2009).

The findings of this study also show that the strategies and procedures for dissemination of empirical information are unsystematic and therefore, result in delayed communication of findings and limited uptake in decision making. Rogers (1962); Nelson et al. (1987) and Patton (2010) point out that the public policy context is not static, hence the risk of empirical information becoming overtaken by the development progress and the strategic policy shifts and thus becoming irrelevant in decision making. Noteworthy, the dissemination of findings would have been timely and seamless had Patton's (1978) user-oriented approach been applied, since it focuses on facilitating the use of empirical information throughout the life cycle of the evaluation process. Noteworthy, he points out that "…use is not something one becomes interested in at the end of an evaluation", hence there should be concerted efforts towards ensuring active participation of all relevant key stakeholders (Patton, 1997, p. 436).

The findings of this study also reveal that the capacity and the strategic focus of the institution, in the context of financial and development agenda, forms a basis for the adoption and actual use of the evaluation findings, as also pointed by Caplan (1979); Nelson et al. (1987); Görgens and Kusek (2009) and Patton (2010). This implies that, the higher the institutional financial capacity, less complex environment and context-aligned evaluation interventions, the greater the chances of adoption and actual use of empirical

information in decision making. Additionally, it also emerged that the plans and procedures for actual implementation of the adopted recommended evaluation interventions are unsystematic and not uniform, hence the application depends on the discretion of the responsible authorities and/or public officials. Hence, Patton (1978) suggests that there should be a consensus on possible uses of the information and a clear plan for actual utility, right from conceptualisation of the evaluations. Thus, there is little demonstration of how the evaluation findings are used in decision making. There is also a lack of formal reward for evidence-informed decision making and thus resulting in ad hoc and isolated limited demand for use of empirical information in decision making, as also found by Fleischer and Christie (2009) and Görgens and Kusek (2009).

6.1.2 Evaluation characteristics that influence use of evaluation information

The credibility of the evaluation findings emerged as a main characteristic that serve as a determinant for uptake of evaluation information in decision making. Information credibility is informed by application of the scientific rigour, in terms of reliability, objectivity and content validity for the generated empirical information, as pointed out by Görgens and Kusek (2009); Mackay (2009); Patton (1997) and Rogers (1962). Credibility and/or usability of empirical information is informed by impartiality, user-friendliness and responsiveness of the evaluation findings to the information needs of the users, as pointed out by Patton (1997) and Qotywa (2009).

Additionally, the evaluations should be able to draw causal linkages in line with the programme theory, however this is difficult to achieve due to lack of an explicit results chain and thus resulting in arbitrary interpretations and conclusions. Qotywa (2009) points out that interpretation of findings and conclusions should be based on facts and linked to explicit programme theory rather than informed by opinions of social scientists. The consistency between the conclusions and the evaluation objectives is also cited by Green et al. (2009) and Rogers (1962) as the key determinants for promoting credibility and uptake of empirical information in decision making.

Last, the format of the evaluation reports, in terms of the length (average size), the internal logic, the use of simple language as well as the application of triangulation methods also emerged as the key determinants for uptake of empirical information, as also established by Görgens and Kusek (2009); Green et al. (2009); Mitsunaga et al. (2013); Oliver et al. (2014) and Patton (2010).

6.2 Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight some institutional factors that have a positive influence on the utilisation of empirical information in decision making. They include, (i.) alignment of the evaluation findings to the institutional context and strategic priorities, (ii.) genuine intentions/rationale for the evaluations, (iii) maintenance of balance between the scientific rigour, and context-aligned evaluation findings. The latter demonstrates tolerance between the social scientists and social actors (policy specialists) concerning recognition of unique contribution by both parties. The institution has abundance of capacity in terms of technical and policy specialists, though not yet utilised optimally and thus result in missed opportunities in terms of leveraging from the available capacity to streamline production of credible empirical information. Last, the institutional conditions that necessitate trade-offs in the adoption of the recommended evaluation interventions highlight the importance of generating empirical information that is responsive to the information needs of the users. By implication, the more insight the social scientists have on the institutional policy context, the greater the chances of producing usable empirical information and putting forward evaluation interventions that have greater chances of being adopted for implementation or used in decision making.

The evaluation process elements that have positive influence on utility of empirical information include, (i.) application of the scientific rigour, (iii.) use of user-friendly language, (iii.) clear and simple report formats and, (iv.) objective interpretation of findings.

The findings of this research also reveal some institutional factors that might have a negative influence on the utility of empirical information and institutionalisation of the evaluation/ research functions. They include, (i.) partial involvement of the key stakeholders in the evaluation process, (ii.) non-identification of possible uses of the evaluation findings at conceptualisation stage, (iii.) fragmented human technical capacity, (iv.) lack of formal reward system for the use of empirical information as well as, (v.) inactive leadership advocacy for use of empirical information in decision making. However, though inclusive stakeholder participation is beneficial to the uptake of empirical information, there should be careful consideration of the stakeholder composition so as to manage delays that ensue from polarised interests, principles and cultural orientation, as suggested by Patton (1978) and Greene (1987). Moreover, the lack of awareness as well as partial implementation of the evaluation policy framework also

has a negative influence on institutionalisation of the evaluation function and thus results in limited uptake of empirical information in decision making.

Further, negative influence on the utility of empirical information might also ensue from, (i.) unsystematic strategies and procedures for dissemination of empirical information and implementation of the adopted recommended evaluation interventions as well as, (ii.) lack of systematic procedures for confirming implementation of the evaluation interventions. The latter has a ripple negative effect on evaluating contribution of the evaluation interventions towards the achievement of the broader development objectives. Rogers (1962) and Green et al. (2009) point out that the extent to which the decision makers get persuaded to act on social problems hinges on sound information dissemination strategies. Nelson et al. (1987) point out that decisions can be taken without empirical information in the public sector context, hence the importance of timely dissemination of empirical information.

Additionally, the lack of explicit programme theory has a negative effect on meaningfulness of the evaluation findings, concerning the inability to draw causal linkages as per the outlined results chain and thus resulting in arbitrary interpretations and conclusions. Thus, the lack of explicit programme theory perpetuates output oriented evaluations, which commonly mirror output focused performance management strategies and procedures, as also established by the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (2012). Kawonga et al. (2012) point out that although the latter does not negatively influence the utility of evaluation findings, it however lessens the impact of empirical information on the achievement of the broader development agenda.

The evaluation process elements that might negatively influence the utility of evaluation findings include, (i.) inconsistency between the conclusions and content and/or objectives of the evaluations as well as, (ii) lack of internal logic in the presentation of the evaluation findings, interpretation, and conclusions. Patton (1997) and Qotywa (2009) point out that the interpretation of the evaluation/ research findings and conclusions should be strictly informed by the gathered facts rather than being based on personal opinions and/or viewpoints of the social scientists.

5.4 Limitations

Based on the nature of the applied research strategy (qualitative), this study could not measure the extent to which the highlighted factors have an influence on the utility of

empirical information. Additionally, the extent to which the evaluation findings are used in decision making also could not be measured. Thus, the quantitative research strategy can be used to possibly achieve the highlighted shortcomings. Moreover, the results of this study cannot be generalised across the Gauteng Provincial Government and other public institutions since the scope of the research was limited to a small fraction of the public officials within the Gauteng Department of Health. However, the findings of this study can be transferred to similar settings i.e. Gauteng departments and other public institutions, as suggested by Merriam and Associates (2009) and Bryman (2012). Further, the study did not include the political principal (MEC) and the head of department (HoD) and thus their perspectives do not form part of the findings of this research. Last, since this study was conducted to fulfil the academic requirements for a Master's degree, the time allocated was limited. Thus, the execution of the whole research process (conceptualisation, data collection, processing and analysis) was limited to one researcher. However, the latter helped in assuring reliability and validity of the research findings as this emerged as leverage in terms of gathering in-depth rich responses since the researcher understood the rationale for the questions, the objective of the study as well as the conceptual framework. Last, the respondent validation of research findings was not performed, including auditing of the interview transcripts by peers due to limited time.

6.3 Recommendations

In this section the recommendations that can be used to improve governance and administration procedures are presented to guide future studies on the use of empirical information in decision making.

The evaluation policy framework should make a provision for setting up of a formal systematic procedure for stakeholder involvement and composition as well as the identification of potential uses of the evaluation findings, as emphasised by Patton's (1978) utilisation-focused evaluation theory. The latter is intended to ensure inclusive participation and uniform involvement of the key stakeholders so as to avoid omission of the key users and facilitate utility throughout the evaluation process, as pointed out by Patton (1978) and Greene (1987). Additionally, the terms of reference should be developed to guide stakeholder participation in order to manage challenges that arise from polarised interests, principles, cultures and values. The development programmes should have an explicit theory of changes in order to avoid conducting evaluations that are output

focused, without causal linkages that are based on arbitrary interpretations and conclusions rather than based on an explicit programme results-chain.

The evaluators should understand and recognise the institutional context that determines the adoption and actual use of empirical information so as to produce usable empirical information and propose implementable/ pragmatic evaluation interventions, as suggested by Caplan (1979); Nelson et al. (1987) and Patton (2010). The evaluations should be coordinated centrally in order to harmonise the evaluation activities and enhance knowledge management, thus increasing the chances of high uptake of the evaluation findings, as established by Görgens and Kusek (2009) and Ledikwe et al. (2014). A central repository should be established so as to enhance knowledge management and avoid silo evaluation interventions that are commonly characterised by duplication of efforts and thus result in wasteful/ fruitless utilisation of public financial resources, as established by Heunis et al. (2011).

In addition, there should be continuous capacity building for all institutional officials so as to drive evaluation awareness and ensure consistent production of technically sound empirical information, which is critical in ensuring effective utility, as also suggested by Heunis et al. (2011) and Mitsunaga et al. (2013). The institution should drive awareness of the evaluation policy framework so as to ensure its uniform application. The evaluation policy framework should guide the procedure for dissemination of the evaluation findings in order to ensure systematic and timely provision of empirical information to the users, as stressed by Rogers (1962) and Green et al. (2009). Importantly, dissemination of information should be done throughout the evaluation process so as to facilitate change management and inculcate utility before completion of the evaluation report, as pointed out by Patton (1978). Noteworthy, utility of empirical information is not a once-off event that "one becomes interested in at the end of an evaluation" (Patton, 1997, p. 436). The evaluation policy framework should set standards and procedures in order to guide systematic implementation and evaluation of the adopted evaluation interventions, as suggested by Fleischer and Christie (2009) and Rogers (1962).

The institution should establish a formal reward system in order to drive demand for use of empirical information in decision making, as suggested by Görgens and Kusek, (2009) and Patton (2010). Further, the evaluation policy framework should clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the leadership/ champions so as to enable

institutionalisation of the evaluation function and thus enhancing the utility of empirical information in decision making, as pointed out by Görgens and Kusek (2009); Mackay (2009); Rich (2010) and Kawonga et al. (2012).

Last, further research can be conducted in order to examine the extent to which the highlighted institutional factors and evaluation process elements influence the utility of the evaluation information, which could not be established through a qualitative research strategy. A quantitative study can be conducted to determine the extent to which the evaluation information is actually used in decision making. Further research can also be conducted to determine the actual effect for non-use of evaluation/ empirical information towards achievement of the development objectives as well as its effect on efficient use of public financial resources.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Declaration by the Researcher

Research Title: Utilisation of Evaluation Information in the Gauteng Department of Health

Dear Participant

My name is Sibulele Sidzumo, currently enrolled for Master of Management in Sector Monitoring and Evaluation at Wits School of Governance and working for the Gauteng Provincial Government, Office of the Premier, which has also funded my academic programme. I am conducting research on use of the evaluation findings in the decision-making processes. You have been chosen to participate in the research based on your direct involvement in evaluations and decision making processes. I ask you to allow me to conduct one interview with you about your knowledge and opinions of evaluation and decision making within your Department or section. The interview process will last for approximately ½ hour. Kindly understand that your participation is voluntary and you are not being forced to take part in this study. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may also withdraw your participation should you feel to do so and you will be not be penalised or prejudiced for doing so.

Confidentiality
We will not record your name and the research information will not be presented in a way that will connect you to the answers you give. The details of your participation may be reviewed by the research team for confirming compliance with research principles and standards. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

We are asking you to give us permission to audio-record the interview in order to accurately record research data. Your responses will be stored electronically in a password protected storage device and used for research/ academic purposes now or at a later date in ways that will not reveal your identity. Your responses will be linked to a fictitious code number or a pseudonym (another name) and we will refer to you in this way in the data, any publication, report or other research output.

Risks/discomforts
There are no risks associated with your participation in the study.

Benefits
There are no personal benefits associated with your participation in the study. However, this study will be extremely helpful in that its findings will potentially help towards improving the information management systems within the Department of Health and Gauteng Provincial Government. Feedback from the study will be provided to your through Departmental workshops and other relevant forums/ meetings.

If you feel that your privacy has been infringed upon by participating in the research, you are free to contact the University ethics at; 011 717 1231/33. If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call the Supervisor at: 011 717 3677 or Kambidima.Wotela@wits.ac.za.

Appendix 2: Ethics Approval from the Gauteng Department of Health



GAUTENG PROVINCE
HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OUTCOME OF PROVINCIAL PROTOCOL REVIEW COMMITTEE (PPRC)

Researcher's Name (Principal investigator)	Sibulele Sidzumo
Organization / Institution	Wits School of Governance
Research Title	Use of Evaluation Information in Decision Making within the Gauteng Department of Health
Contact number	Address: N/A Contact no: 011 531 4347 Cell: 083 357 7611 Email: fconradie@witshealth.co.za
Protocol number	P06012015
Date submitted	27/01/2015
Date reviewed	February 2015
Outcome	APPROVED
Date resubmitted	N/A
Date of second review	N/A
Final outcome	APPROVED

It is a pleasure to inform you that the Gauteng Health Department has approved your research on "Protocol Title: A Phase 3 open-label trial assessing the safety and efficacy of bedaquiline plus PA-824 plus linezolid in subjects with pulmonary infection of either extensively drug- resistant tuberculosis TB (XDR-TB) or treatment intolerant/non-responsive multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). The Provincial Protocol Review Committee kindly requests that you submit a report after completion of your study and present your findings to the Gauteng Health Department.

Approves / not approves

Dr R Ilebethe
Acting DDG: Hospital Services

Date 11 03 2015

Appendix 3: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

I hereby agree to participate in research on use of the Evaluation findings in the decision-making processes. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

…….
Signature of participant **Date**:……..

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

I hereby agree to the audio-recording of my participation in the study.

…….
Signature of participant **Date**:……..

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

…….
Signature of participant **Date**:……..

Appendix 4: Questionnaire

1. Demographic Data

1.1 Age	<25		26-35		36-45	46-55		>56		
1.2 Gender	Male			Female						
1.3 Designation (job title)										
1.4 Length of service at research setting	<1yr		1-5yrs		6-10yrs		11-15yrs		>15yrs	
1.5 Number of individuals present										
1.6 Elements of the physical setting										

2. Information Production

2.1 What is the process of initiating or commissioning evaluations?

2.2 Which stakeholders usually take part in the evaluation process and what are their specific individual roles?

2.3 How and when are the stakeholders engaged during the evaluation process?

2.4 What role do the evaluators play during the evaluation process? Do they collaborate with the rest of stakeholders, including users?

2.5 What role do decision makers, including political heads play during the evaluation process?

2.6 What are the key considerations taken into account when setting the evaluation agenda?

2.7 How is the general relationship between evaluation practitioners and users or decision makers during the evaluation process?

2.8 How does the evaluation agenda address the Institutional contextual issues, in terms of the broader developmental context?

2.9 What prevails between the Institutional context and the evaluation methodology, in terms of setting the evaluation agenda and how is the balance between the two, maintained considering validity, reliability of the evaluation information?

3. Information Use

3.1 How is the evaluation information disseminated upon finalisation of the report?

3.2 What happens to the information upon dissemination?

3.3 How is utilisation of information measured or tracked?

3.4 Specifically, how is the evaluation information used in decision making, by who and for what?

3.5 What are the incentives for using the evaluation information in the decision making process and what importance do the evaluation findings have in the decision making process?

3.6 What is the prevalence of cases where evaluation findings confirm or legitimatise decisions which are already taken or about to be taken and how rampant are the cases where evaluation information influence change from a position that a decision maker is already inclined towards?

3.7 What response is given to the evaluation findings and recommendations, in so far as the adoption is concerned?

3.8 What are the characteristics of evaluations that yield useful information for decision making, and what is the status of your evaluations with regard to the characteristics?

3.9 How does the evaluation information benefit the decision-making process or decision maker?

3.10 What influence does stakeholder participation have on effective use of evaluation information?

3.11 How predominant are the instances of deliberate non-utilisation and/or selective utilisation of the evaluation information? In other words, are the recommendations that are selectively passed over or ignored and why?

3.12 How is the relationship between the evaluation results and achievement of developmental objectives; are the evaluation results always responsive to users' needs and priorities?

3.13 What are the factors that contribute to use/ non-use of your evaluation findings?