



**ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN STRENGTHENING
NATIONAL MONITORING AND EVALUATION
SYSTEMS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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ABSTRACT

The involvement of different stakeholders in policy formulation, accountability activities and advocacy for improved service delivery has been viewed as a mark of good governance and a critical mechanism indicator for democracy. However, with the establishment of country-led monitoring and evaluation system, stakeholder engagement has been noted to be weak, fragmented and even as tokenism thus rendering the process mute.

A qualitative study was therefore undertaken to investigate the roles played by various stakeholders in the development, institutionalization and sustainability of the South African National Evaluation System. Using semi-structured interviews, the study drew from the expertise of evaluations practitioners and government officials with varying levels of knowledge and experiences of the South Africa national evaluation system.

The findings of the study indicated that deliberate efforts of the DPME, as a central coordinating unit, facilitated the mobilization and collaboration with other government departments including the National School of Government, parliamentarians, fostered partnerships with SAMEA – VOPE, academic institutions and evaluation experts such as CLEAR-AA . The inclusion of civil society organizations played a significant role in influencing policy by providing inputs on government interventions and sharing context informed data about service delivery in communities.

Although there were systematic and institutional challenges, the study findings also revealed that stakeholders were able to strengthen the NES in three spheres which are: i) providing M&E training, funding, evaluation data and support tools, ii) improving policies to assist in the successful implementation of NES and iii) advocating for accountability in NES. This further reinforced the need to work collaboratively with different stakeholders that foster good governance, build capacity with a balance of the theoretical underpinnings and evaluation experience supported by political vision and senior managers who set the right institutional culture that is agile and responsive to the country's context and development goals/aspirations will strengthen the NES.

DECLARATION

I, Mehloti Candy Hlaise-Msimang, student number: 742812 hereby declare that **ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN STRENGTHENING NATIONAL MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS** is my own unaided work. I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others. This dissertation has never been submitted to any other university for the awarding of a similar any other degree.

MEHLOTI CANDY HLAISE-MSIMANG

FEBRUARY 2023

DEDICATION

To The Lord God be the glory.

For my late father, Morris Hlaise, you taught me that education is a key that opens doors and a gift no one can take away.

For my amazing mom, Elizabeth Hlaise, thank you for being my anchor.

For my sons, my biggest cheerleaders, Bahlaiseni and Mbuso Msimang, thank you for your patience and encouragement throughout this project. I love you to infinity and beyond.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

National monitoring and evaluation systems (NES) are critical processes which inform the development of policies, using sound indicators to determine the extent to which policy objectives have been met, identifying strengths and weaknesses that can result in policy reform. Evidence informed decision making is therefore the cornerstone for policy development and implementation of government programmes aimed at improving the lives of its citizens. The success of a NES is contingent on well-defined roles and responsibilities of a wide range of stakeholders (Takunda et al., 2018), which could either support, benefit or hinder the development and institutionalization of the system. This research study aims to investigate the roles of these stakeholders and their significance within the country's monitoring and evaluation ecosystem.

Many developing countries have embarked on developing NES in order to promote accountability and improve the delivery of services to their citizens, however this process has been challenging and slow. Consequently, gaining insight of the part played by the various stakeholders within a country's monitoring and evaluation system would provide an opportunity to strengthen the whole system which would lead to improved development outcomes for its citizens. According to Ariffin & Alizar, (2016) multi-stakeholder partnerships play an important role in facilitating the mobilization and sharing of knowledge, expertise, technologies, and financial resources for the attainment of development goals. Therefore, in order to sustain this central governance mechanism, the collaboration of key stakeholders is paramount (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Vincent et al., 2020) and catalytic to achieving an effective evidence-based policy making, accountability and budget allocation.

1.2. Background

Democratic principles clearly outline the obligations for governments to account to their citizens on how they conduct their affairs thus impacting on the trust which the public places in government institutions and their delivery of services. Moreover, due to the impact of globalisation there seems to be a growing expectation of government accountability to various other stakeholders including the international community, civil

society organisations. It is well understood that globalisation can be a catalyst for democracy and the promotion of human rights principles, consequently governments are increasingly subjecting themselves to international monitoring and reporting as seen for example in the international election monitoring actions.

African countries have been of specific focus with regards to poverty alleviation, and recipients of a lot of development funding, thus the pressure to demonstrate country results and account for spending has been a top priority. The development of monitoring and evaluation systems have been largely donor-led, as recipient countries attempt to comply with aid and funding requirements in order to meet development goals and/or debt relief conditions (Holvoet & Renard, 2007). Monitoring and evaluation is usually perceived as a technical function done for compliance to donors or funders; and where non-compliance could affect budget allocation (Holvoet & Renard, 2007). It has been noted that the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach introduced by the IMF and World Bank and adopted by many African countries has caused unwarranted pressure on nascent national monitoring and evaluation systems . This approach has put more focus on countries' performance against the development goals and budgets spent without linking government action to the evidence on the ground (Picciotto, 2013). Public sector reforms and poverty reduction strategies have played a critical role in propelling developing countries to establish monitoring and evaluation systems.

Consequently, these systems have been driven by donors in order to fulfil their own accountability requirements so as to justify the amount of aid expenditure invested in developing countries (Coventry, 2013) which has not aligned with government objectives thus becoming off limited use. This practice has, in some way, resulted in evidence generation that had a specific donor-focus and did not necessarily respond to the data needs of those developing countries. The mismatch of country-donor priorities and the delayed development of country-led M&E systems has left a number of countries struggling to gain capacity support and funding in order to effectively design, implement and evaluate these systems. In view of this disparity, there is a growing global acknowledgement that for monitoring and evaluation systems to be sustainable and achieve the desired objectives of improving policy making and producing evidence that is relevant to a country's need, they need to be country-led, involving multiple stakeholders.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s referred to as the Third Wave of democratization saw the prominence of democratic governance principles in many African countries. These democratic governance principles have been characterized by accountability, open participation by citizens, as well as transparency. The ability for citizens to have a say in the decision-making process is purported to result in better and fairer government policies. It is in these last 40 years, policymakers have sort evidence to support their decision-making processes, moving away from opinion-based decisions. The decisions made by policymakers ought to be well-informed with the backing of robust evidence (Porter & Goldman, 2013) thus emphasizing the importance of monitoring and evaluation as well as the inputs of different relevant stakeholders (Holvoet, 2007).

Kusek & Rist, (2004) acknowledged that the “misperceptions of evaluations as policing or fault-finding exercise and lack of local demand are other problems that inhibit the practice of evaluations.” This confines the effectiveness of M&E in performing its primary function as an instrument for good governance, public accountability and improved service delivery to its citizens. According to Lopez-Acevedo et al., (2012) “the intense engagement of citizens and civil society improves the quality of monitoring and the accuracy of evaluation”. While Picciotto, (2013) further emphasize that it is essential to design a responsive evaluation function which meets the accountability and knowledge requirements of stakeholders. The involvement of a diverse number of stakeholders promotes political and administrative accountability in the public sector.

As a result, a range of oversight stakeholders are noted as responsible for evaluating government performance in accordance with democratic principles (Naidoo, 2011). Therefore, monitoring and evaluation has been viewed as a powerful tool in the public management arsenal that can be used to enhance the way governments accomplish their objective (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Monitoring and evaluation of government policies, programme and project has a significant influence on the country’s effective and efficient transformation of its public service as governments respond to the needs of their citizens and to account to their parliaments. With poorly functioning public sector and the increasing pressure to account, governments had to adopt strategies that could help improve their governance structures and performance. One of the key aspects of

developing and institutionalizing an effective national monitoring and evaluation is the buy-in and involvement of key stakeholders.

Therefore, there has been a global sporadic development of monitoring and evaluation systems emerging from developed countries in the 1980s, with Latin America leading in the developing countries in the 1990s, as noted by Goldman et al., (2018). African countries such as Benin, Uganda and South Africa followed with the development of monitoring and evaluation systems in 2007. These monitoring and evaluation systems that are result based, allow governments to provide transparent, credible and readily available evidence not just of their activities and outputs but of their outcomes as well. This information should be integrated in policy formulation, programme/project planning and budget allocation processes. Thus, enabling governments to continuously track their performance, document progress, adjust and support their efforts to improve outcomes, which is incredibly useful to stakeholders inside and outside of government structures.

This, however, has been especially difficult for developing African countries as they face challenges of lack of skills and capacity to develop, support and sustain the system, competing priorities, weak administrative culture, lack of political will or the retention of institutional memory from one administration to another(Kusek & Rist, 2001). The transition to country-led M&E systems has been viewed as slow with most development partners skeptical of the quality of evidence produced by these countries. A substantial number of African countries are still struggling to finding workable ways of developing and sustaining efficient arrangements for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Therefore, a thorough understanding of the complexities and subtleties/nuances of the country context is critical to the ultimate success or failure of its NES. The involvement of a range of stakeholders in accountability initiatives has been viewed as a critical component in mitigating against these complexities as they bring technical expertise, local knowledge and are able to navigate country specific dynamics.

South Africa

In South Africa, the Constitution stipulates that the government is for the people, by the people, therefore enshrining the notion of citizen participation in every level of government. As part of its efforts to strengthen its democracy and governance, South

Africa decided to develop evidence systems for better decision making as part of their development agenda. The need to improve decision making, generate knowledge, ensure accountability, and improve performance foregrounded the establishment of a regulatory foundation set by the National Evaluation Policy Framework developed in collaboration with stakeholders inside and outside government in 2007. According to Goldman et al., (2015), with no formal evaluation system, this policy framework connected the “official statistics, performance information, evaluation and coordination of various stakeholders at the administrative center of government to champion M&E practice in government”. In 2010, South Africa established the Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) currently known as the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) within the Presidency in order to steer monitoring and evaluation across government. The DPME established the national evaluation systems in 2011 when Cabinet approved the national evaluation policy framework.

South Africa has made great strides over the past 10 years in developing and institutionalizing their NES with the government championing the process. It subscribes to the concept of inclusivity which is enshrined in its Constitution thus encouraging its citizens to participate in development processes. The South African national evaluation policy outlines a wide range of stakeholders within government involved in the institutionalization of the NES. The national evaluation policy framework further articulates the importance of the utilization of data and information from institutional M&E systems used for planning and implementation processes, as a source for other stakeholders in the NES to form an overall picture of national, provincial and local performance. The evaluation undertaken on South Africa’s NES in 2016/17 found that the NES was more prominent within government departments, both nationally and provincially but clarity on the roles of other stakeholders at different stages of the evaluation lifecycle was required as well as evidence of a shared vision (DPME, 2020). Therefore, the partnerships with stakeholders outside government was also recognized as crucial for the expansion, institutionalization, strengthening and sustainability of the country’s NES.

1.3. Problem Statement

After a decade of development, most developing countries have national monitoring and evaluation systems that are still described as embryonic (Hardlife & Zhou, 2013; Holvoet & Renard, 2007; Kusek J & Rist R, 2002) and with limited guidance, most of which are based on Western perspectives or developed countries. Holvoet & Renard, (2007) state that systems developed external to their context rarely succeed, thus developing countries are poised to remain at a nascent level and to repeat the mistakes of their counterparts if they do not learn from each other. Therefore, an effective NES require the engaged participation of multiple stakeholders involved in monitoring and evaluation of the country's development effort inside and outside of government.

Several studies have acknowledged stakeholder involvement is crucial to the effectiveness of the NES. However, stakeholder involvement has been deemed weak and fragmented, which is detrimental to development (Holvoet & Renard, 2007; Kimaro & Fourie, 2017; Tomkiv et al., 2017; Vincent et al., 2020). Additionally, Kusek & Rist, (2001) go further in pointing out that citizens, NGO groups and the private sector are often left out and it is hard to achieve the required level of stakeholder balance, representation and manage tokenism (Langer et al., 2017) As a result, there seems to be limited knowledge and research available about the inclusion of various stakeholders in the NES ecosystem, their influence on government accountability, capacity building and providing feedback to improve policies and programmes. The roles of stakeholders in the NES ecosystem have not been clearly understood or articulated therefore not adequately galvanized, with their involvement barely going beyond consultation. Enlisting the cooperation and support of various stakeholders could significantly accelerate the establishment, institutionalization, and maintenance of NES thus providing key lessons for other developing countries to support their development efforts.

1.4. Aims of the study/ Purpose Statement

Given the limited knowledge about the involvement of various stakeholders in country-led monitoring and evaluation system, this study set out to investigate the participation of these stakeholders in South Africa's national monitoring and evaluation system.

1.5. Research Objectives

Objective #1: To investigate roles that the various stakeholders play in the development, institutionalization and sustainability of the national monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa.

Objective #2: To determine how these roles participate and influence the NES?

1.6. Research Questions

- a) What roles do the various stakeholders play in the development, institutionalization and sustainability of the national monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa?
- b) How do these roles participate and influence the NES?

1.7. Significance of the Study

South Africa is seen as one of the trend setters in the development and institutionalization of national monitoring and evaluation system in the Southern African region. Therefore, gaining a better understanding of how the different stakeholders enact their roles to strengthen the NES and exercise their influence in holding government accountable, while providing critical expertise and feedback about the NES could aid other countries who have embarked on a similar trajectory.

The researcher hopes that this study would contribute to the emerging thinking around deliberate involvement of stakeholders in creating and maintaining effective national monitoring and evaluation systems that encourages greater use of evidence which informs better decision making. As well as a greater embrace of the evidence generated by stakeholders outside of government which could add significant understanding and context of how government policies, programmes and process are affecting citizens on the ground.

1.8. Study Limitation

The researcher acknowledges that legislative framework, political interests and rent-seeking tendencies, which overlay the countries' bureaucratic and policy making processes have great influence and were not fully engaged with in this study. Also, due to the constraints of time and resources, the researcher was unable to engage all

stakeholders, in government and outside government, who are relevant to South Africa's NES.

1.9. Research Report Structure

In *Chapter one*, the context of the study has been introduced. The research objectives and questions have been identified, and the value of such research argued. The limitations of the study have also been discussed.

In *Chapter two*, the existing literature on effective national monitoring and evaluation systems will be reviewed to determine the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this study and to identify the key stakeholders in the NES ecosystem, their roles, the influence they present to the NES as well as identify strategies used for greater stakeholder involvement.

In *Chapter three*, the research methodology will be presented. The adoption of a qualitative, inductive research approach will be justified, and the broader research design will be discussed, including the limitations thereof.

In *Chapter four*, key themes from the data collected will be identified and analysed. The findings of the study which attempt to answer the research questions will be presented and discussed.

In *Chapter five*, the conclusion of the study will be provided, the key recommendations suggested and areas for further research proposed.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

The Paris Declaration of 2008 stipulated that countries need to lead and take ownership of their own development which necessitate that developing countries establish their own country monitoring and evaluation systems (Development Assistance Committee, 2008). According to Holvoet & Renard, (2007), effective national monitoring and evaluation systems are required to be “multi-stakeholder, multi-purpose, multi-dimensional, multi-method, multi-layer and finally multi-criteria”; which is likely to choke fledgling country M&E systems. Therefore, it is this multi-stakeholder aspect of country monitoring and evaluation systems that requires a close examination.

Many developing countries find it difficult to develop and maintain a functioning monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system which will assist in monitoring, evaluating and reporting on government activities in order to improve performance (Hardlife & Zhou, 2013; Holvoet & Renard, 2007; Mpabanga, 2016). Most monitoring and evaluation systems in developing countries have been driven by donors which fulfils their own accountability requirements in order to justify the amount of aid expenditure invested in developing countries. Holvoet & Renard, (2007) states that systems developed external to their context rarely succeed therefore developing countries, especially in Africa, are poised to remain at an emergent level and to repeat the mistakes of their counterparts if they do not learn from each other.

2.2. The purpose of the Literature Review

Therefore, the purpose of this section is to examine literature regarding the involvement of various stakeholders in strengthening and maintaining national monitoring and evaluation systems in order to gain an understanding of the current landscape especially in developing countries, Africa in particular, as well as to situate the research conducted (Wagner, C., Kawulich, B., Garner, 2012). It aims to assist in investigating the roles that various stakeholders play in the development, institutionalization and sustainability of national monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa and the effect these roles have in strengthening the system.

2.3. Literature Sources and their significance

This literature review was drawn from a number of sources, journal articles, manuals and guides, academic papers, policy documents and annotated bibliographies using various databases such as EBSCO Host, electronic libraries, and google scholar with key words including national evaluation systems, participation, evaluation, partnerships, M&E, national assessments, oversight, and accountability. Most literature which examines the development and sustainability of M&E systems come from books published by development agencies/donors notably the World Bank, and UN agencies and other development partners with specific focus on aid or aid effectiveness (Holvoet & Renard, 2007) and thus present a westernized view of monitoring and evaluation.

The literature examined in this section outlines the body of knowledge that exist regarding national monitoring and evaluation systems and the participation of stakeholders in democratic processes. Some of the important literature that has been published include the writings of Holvoet & Renard, (2007); Kusek & Rist, (2001); and Segone, (2010) which may be viewed as major works written in relation to national M&E system assessments either at diagnosis or evaluation, all of whom approach this area from an aid effectiveness perspective. However, a new wave of scholarly papers focusing on African countries come from experts working in academia, think-tanks and consultancies across the Southern African countries which attempt to provide an understanding of monitoring and evaluation from an African perspective.

During the literature search, documentation from the various governments were mainly in a form of report and policy brief, co-authored by consultants and may sometimes be funded by donors. These are useful resources as they provide a foreground on the emergence of M&E systems from its bases in results-based management (Hardlife & Zhou, 2013), the adoption of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) which were seen as a condition of aid assistance (Holvoet & Renard, 2007) and countries' demand for evidence-based decision making (Porter & Goldman, 2013).

This chapter outlined the purpose of the literature in this study, the literature sources that were consulted in relation to national monitoring and evaluation systems and stakeholder participation and their significance and defined key concepts. It also

described the theoretical and conceptual framework of an effective NES and stakeholder engagement which helped to mould and guide this research study.

2.4. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This section provided a solid foundation of the conceptual and theoretical underpinned of an effective national monitoring and evaluation system and stakeholder participation which provided an understanding of this research study.

2.4.1. National Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Research indicates that for national monitoring and evaluation systems to be effective, the key stakeholders within the system need to be fully engaged to support its development, implementation and providing feedback as well as hold government accountable. Similarly, democratic governments are viewed as those that comply with democratic principles which include citizen participation which seek to improve government practice by ensuring higher levels of transparency and accountability. Accountability as a pillar of democratic government involves answerability and enforcement, therefore government should provide information about their decision making and actions to justify how they are spending public funds. This also means that accountability institutions should be able to sanction any non-complying party or remedy the behaviour (Ariffin & Alizar, 2016) These principles are assessable through a range of oversight stakeholders who have as their responsibility, the duty of remarking on areas of performance (Naidoo, 2011). National monitoring and evaluation systems or government-wide monitoring and evaluation systems often referred simply as national evaluation system (NES) are defined as instruments of good governance, public accountability and service delivery using evidence-based decision making to further the country's developmental priorities (Goldman et al., 2018; Lahey, 2015; Segone, 2010).

In most instances, monitoring and evaluation are used interchangeably, however, these activities are vastly different, they demand a different focus and yield different types of evidence and information (Kusek & Rist, 2001). The governments' ability to gather and use evidence about whether policies or programmes are on track (monitoring) and whether the desired objectives of those policies or programmes have been achieved (evaluation) is an important determinate of the government's performance in reaching its

development goals. There is a propensity to lean towards monitoring than evaluation in most institutions including within governments. As affirmed by Porter & Goldman, (2013) that the increased demand for evidence has led to the development of M&E systems in developing countries with an emphasis on monitoring. This therefore demands that a clear delineation between the two concepts be determined to ensure for better evidence-based decision-making process. The World Bank defines monitoring as an ongoing function which tracks development interventions at a given point in time and over a period in view of the intended outcomes. Understanding the extent of progress of policy, programme intervention is essential in providing systematic data to key stakeholders for decision-making (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Whereas evaluation objectively assesses development interventions for relevance of their objectives, efficiency and effectiveness, and impact thus providing information that is credible and useful for decision-making (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Evaluation examines the why of development interventions thus addressing the related causal issues.

Kusek & Rist, (2004) view monitoring and evaluation as a powerful public management tool that can be used to improve the way governments and organizations achieve development results. Whereas Mackay, (2010) refers to a monitoring and evaluation system as one that systematically measures the performance of government policies, programmes or projects thus contributing to sound government. The NES in most developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa are still in their infancy with some having to transition from donor-driven to country-led. Holvoet & Renard (2007) emphasised the need for countries to establish national evaluation systems which are aligned to the priorities of the country. The sustainability of these NES depends on whether governments believe in its utility and understand its benefits (Lahey, 2015)

Mackay, (2006) highlighted that governments build monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems because they directly support core government activities, such as the budget process, national planning, the management of ministries, agencies and programs or to provide information in support of accountability relationships. He emphasised that the objective of government M&E system is not only to produce large volumes of performance information or a large number of high-quality evaluations as this would reflect a supply-driven approach to a M&E system. Rather, the objective is to achieve intensive

utilisation of whatever monitoring and evaluation findings which exist, ensuring the cost-effective M&E system utilisation in support of core government functions. However, Porter & Goldman, (2013) identified that the conceptualisation of the M&E systems in some African countries was not done within a reform effort to introduce a comprehensive results-based orientation to the public services. The supply of M&E in Africa being influenced by donor demand. Their study examined how much African governments demand M&E evidence and noted the emerging evidence that demand is donor-driven and country-led however, results still fall short of focusing on development and evidence being used to account for performance (Porter & Goldman, 2013).

Mackay, (2006) settled that success factors for M&E systems include institutionalization, that is, the creation of an M&E system which produce monitoring information and evaluation findings which are judged valuable by key stakeholders and used in the pursuit of good governance. He further elaborated that another feature of the successful government M&E system is the stewardship of this process by a capable ministry (Mackay, 2006). For this reason, having an institutional lead of a M&E system close to the centre of government such as the President's Office or budget process is advantageous. Also, while documenting the experiences of Benin, Uganda and South Africa in 'deepening and widening' their NES, Goldman et al., (2018) highlighted the importance of having a central unit responsible for the NES, the development of a national evaluation policy and determining the role of stakeholders outside government and in parliament.

The central unit is critical for coordinating evaluations and tracking improvement plans. It was noted that through a peer learning programme by Twende Mbele, these countries used M&E as a tool for improving government performance and accountability. Using Holvoet and Renard's characteristics of an effective NES, the study acknowledged the role that international development agencies played in supporting the establishment of the NES and capacity development initiatives. The limited involvement of civil society organisations and lack of evaluation capacity especially within government were cited as a challenge especially since for many years, the focus has been on monitoring function not evaluation (Goldman et al., 2018).

There are a number of frameworks used to describe an effective monitoring and evaluation systems which include Holvoet & Renard, (2007)'s on the emergence of national monitoring and evaluation system in developing countries from a point of view of poverty reduction strategies. The research conducted by Holvoet and Renard (2007) examined the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation by assessing and taking stock of different M&E systems in some of the Sub-Saharan African countries participating in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) – used as framework for their aid activities. Noting shift in the monitoring and evaluation systems in developing countries, Holvoet & Renard, (2007) offered a framework on how M&E systems which are country-led could be established and assessed. This framework advocates for the winding up of 'elaborate donor-managed M&E systems' and to give preference to national M&E systems which should be expanded and improved with the support of donors and other stakeholders (Holvoet & Renard, 2007). Goldman et al., (2018) utilizes this framework to trace the status of the emergence of National Evaluation Systems in Africa. Several countries have used it as a basis of their evaluations (DPME, 2020) and other authors have drawn lessons from monitoring and evaluation systems for poverty reduction strategies (Kimaro & Fourie, 2017).

Holvoet & Renard, (2007)'s framework focused on 6 broad domains, i.e., policy, methodological issues, organisation of the M&E system and the participation of state and non-state actors, monitoring and evaluation capacity constraints, participation of civil society organisations and the role of parliament as well as the quality on national M&E systems. The *policy* element encourages countries to develop policy that are country-specific moving away from the globally prescribed ones which tend to focus on monitoring aspect of the system as opposed to the evaluation side. Most literature highlight the need of harmonization of country and donor M&E systems; however, literature provides limited information on the level to which each country has done this, or the process on how this has been done. Holvoet & Renard, (2007) argues that a country's choice to depart from following or adopting globally set targets and indicators may be a sign of country ownership as it follows its own national trends and priorities based on 'mutually integrated' *methodologies*. Coordination and oversight of the national monitoring and evaluation systems as well as the integration of relevant stakeholders should be spearheaded by an

organizational structure that is centralized to avoid fragmentation and promote standardization (Holvoet & Renard, 2007).

Weaknesses in the capacity to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities have been well-documented in literature (Goldman et al., 2018, 2019; Kusek & Rist, 2001; Mapitsa & Korth, 2017; Segone, 2010; Tarsilla, 2014). This M&E *capacity* deficit could severely weaken the country's monitoring and evaluation system thus requires partnerships from a variety of partners to provide capacity development. The *participation* of stakeholders outside government as contributors to the system is a catalyst to improving government performance as they are involved in both the demand side and supply side of evaluation therefore play a critical role in strengthening the NES system. However, this participation is seldom structured or clearly defined thus making it difficult for stakeholders to support government or to hold it accountable for its actions. Vincent et al., (2020) highlights the fragmentation and weakness in the participation of stakeholders outside government in strengthening NES while Porter & Goldman, (2013) viewed the increased service delivery protests in South Africa as indicative of the demand for government to be held accountable from citizens, line managers, parliamentarians, and profession of evaluation.

Quality element related to the accessibility and effective use of findings from the national monitoring and evaluation system for decision-making as well as the quality of the process itself (Holvoet & Renard, 2007). This was echoed by Mackay, (2010) emphasising that the intensive utilization of the M&E information in one or more stages of the policy cycle, information that meets standards of data quality and evaluation reliability; as well as sustainability, will aid the system to survive any change in administration, government ministers, or top officials.

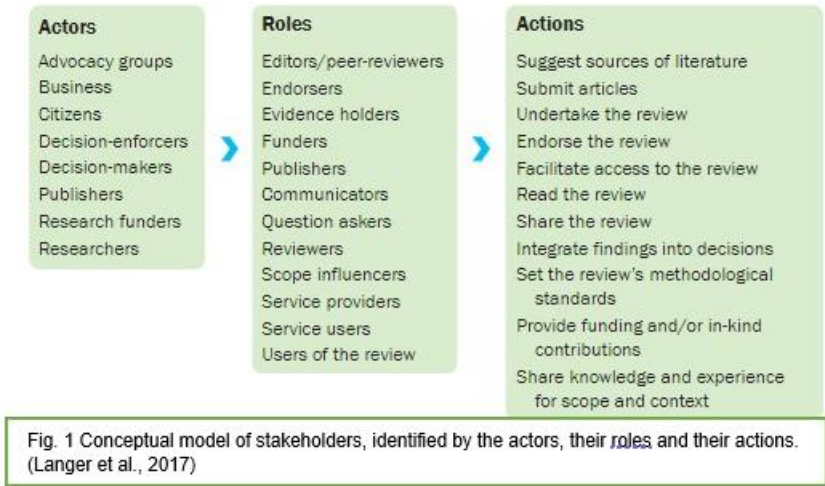
Other frameworks include Mackay, (2010)'s which outlined the effects of M&E at each stage of the policy cycle and its merits in improving government performance and the importance of utilizing M&E information. It focused mainly on the use of M&E results throughout the policy cycle with partial consideration of the involvement of stakeholders in the development and implementation of the various aspects of the monitoring and evaluation system. The three (3) characteristics proposed for a successful monitoring and

evaluation system included a focus on the theory, its propositions, and concepts (Mackay, 2010). Holvoet & Renard, (2007)'s framework is particularly useful as it elaborates on the challenges that the new framework posed to both donors who are required to depend on 'inadequate' national M&E systems to account to their stakeholders and aid recipient countries who must comply with huge data/evidence for funding provided. It also noted the disjuncture between ex post funding and ex pre-funding in terms of data collation of interventions and accountability. The study provided an overview of the transition from the comprehensive development framework to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper which are now developed by the countries themselves with the aim to encourage country ownership (Holvoet & Renard, 2007).

2.4.2. Stakeholders within the National Monitoring and Evaluation System

Ideologically, it is considered a moral imperative to involve the 'know-how and tacit knowledge of those intimately involved in the issues' at hand (Oliver et al., 2018). Lopez-Acevedo et al., (2012) maintains that for a NES to function efficiently, the concerns of stakeholders on both the demand and supply side should be taken into consideration whereas Kusek & Rist, (2004) found that the development approach which includes all stakeholders adopted through the comprehensive development framework has "resulted in pressures for the monitoring and evaluation of stakeholder participation". Therefore, as asserted by Oliver et al., (2018) the starting point for informed decisions is the engagement which includes stakeholders familiar with the local context.

Oliver et al., (2018) described stakeholders as "individuals or groups who affect and/or are affected by policy or programmatic actions or decisions." This is then reverberated in a conceptual model which Langer et al., (2017) produced, detailing categories of stakeholders which provide an understanding of who they are, what their roles are and what actions they may take in relation to the engagement process. The conceptual model below outlines a guideline which government might use to engage relevant stakeholders (especially minority groups) at different stages of development, institutionalisation and sustainability of the NES.



The main stakeholders that are interested in better development performance are governments, parliaments, citizens, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, international organizations, and donors (Kusek & Rist, 2004). It is largely challenging to clearly define the boundaries of this evaluation ecosystem. However, while attempting to describe the NES ecosystem in South Africa, Goldman et al., (2019) defined government structures as boundary partners, whereas universities, SAMEA (VOPE), CLEAR-AA, donors, civil society organizations, parliamentarians, private evaluators and so forth are classified as non-governmental organizations.

Stakeholder participation goes beyond public engagement as the parties involved have a more direct and concrete stake in the various processes relating to the NES. A study in developing countries of the Asia Pacific region explored alternative approach to help government in “fostering government accountability and stakeholder participation in the development process”(Ariffin & Alizar, 2016). It outlined the main stakeholders of governance as the state, civil society and the private sector – thus enabling society to organise itself in order to make decisions, mediate differences and exercise legal rights, as is the definition of governance. It further defined inclusive governance as ‘a system and practice of governance characterised by accountability, responsiveness and integrity among public sector service providers by ensuring gender equality and social inclusion in policies, programs and practices’ (Ariffin & Alizar, 2016).

Stakeholder participation in development processes is viewed as an important element of building trust between government and its citizens as well as to enable support

and ownership by stakeholders at different levels. Therefore, to encourage decisions that are evidence-informed and appropriate to local context, Oliver et al., (2018) advocates for the active engagement of stakeholders with decision-making for policy and practice, and with evidence production. Supporting this assessment, Ariffin & Alizar, (2016), view multi-stakeholder partnerships as an “important vehicle for mobilising and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources’ to support the attainment of developments goals. They further infer that the lack of public participation in the development effects especially marginalised groups, was a large contributing factor to the failure of the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, if development efforts are to yield any sustainable outcomes including in the development and strengthening of the countries” evaluation systems, the involvement of wider development stakeholders is critical.

2.4.2.1. Impact of stakeholders' contribution in strengthening the NES

Although the establishment of a national monitoring and evaluation system is largely viewed as a political function (Kusek & Rist, 2004) or as a management function which is more technical (Hardlife & Zhou, 2013); the benefits of establishing and cultivating partnerships could “enhance knowledge on the quality of data and improve the monitoring framework” by involving stakeholders such as experts from civil society organizations, the private sector, municipalities, academia, and other stakeholders (Okitasari et al., 2019). According to Holvoet & Renard, (2007) an effective national monitoring and evaluation systems require a “multi-stakeholder, multi-purpose, multi-dimensional, multi-method, multi-layer and finally multi-criteria” which is challenging for more mature national M&E system let alone these nascent systems. It is vital to draw on a variation in population, interventions and contexts rather than rely on a single perspective.

Many studies have highlighted the importance of collaboration and multiple stakeholder engagement in the development and strengthening of NES in order to ensure good governance, hold governments accountable and to improve service delivery to the citizens. While mapping the South African policy landscape, Stewart et al., (2018) found that policy decision makers valued building partnership and identifying the various stakeholders’ contributions; they acknowledged the need to eliminate silos and avoid the

duplication of efforts. The research conducted by Vincent et al., (2020) considered the role of stakeholders outside of government and how they impacted the building and strengthening of Zambia's whole government monitoring and evaluation system. The research found that the role of stakeholders outside of government were recognised as critical in 'improving the supply side and demand side' of the NES, but their involvement was fragmented and weak with no formalised structures to engage government.

Drawing from the 2018 evaluation report of the South African NES, Goldman et al., (2019) acknowledged the difficulties in establishing the boundaries of the ecosystem and identifying the different stakeholders within the system and their relationships with each other. This is compounded by the fact that there may be lack of balance or representativeness among engaged stakeholders as well as the management of tokenism (Langer et al., 2017). Part of creating an enabling environment for stakeholder engagement, the South Africa's Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation went with a voluntary approach which did not mandate a M&E system for government departments but engage proactively with the system. The study found that South Africa has deep divisions and profound exclusions, and the NES provided an opportunity to strengthen accountability and deepen democracy. The evaluation of the NES highlighted the need to clarify the role of different stakeholders at different stages in the system as well as building 'stronger partnerships to solidify and promote the roles of institutions like Offices of the Premier, universities, civil society organisations and other beneficiaries throughout the evaluation lifecycle' (DPME, 2020).

Though significant progress has been made in the development of the NES in South Africa, there was still a need to strengthen capacity at all spheres of the evaluation ecosystem, use of evaluation evidence, evaluation mandate and adequate resourcing of evaluations (Goldman et al., 2019). Nevertheless, Vincent et al., (2020) found that donors provided technical and financial support to the system however their support was more focused on their own interest and did not take into account the country's priorities. The research pointed out the need for parliament, civil society and donors to be meaningfully engaged and to align with government priorities in order to fast-track the development and strengthening of the country's monitoring and evaluation system (Vincent et al., 2020).

Parliaments

The oversight mandate of parliament provides an opportunity to ‘assess executive action and citizen outcomes’ thus aligning the role of legislatures as an evaluative one (Chirau et al., 2021; Zantsi, 2020). This oversight mandate is enshrined in every democratic country’s Constitution as affirmed by Khumalo et al., (2021) to scrutinize policy implementation and enforce good governance functions. There is an increasing demand for legislatures, which may sometimes fall prey to party political patronage, electoral systems and state capture. Therefore, in order to exercise this oversight role, parliamentarians require quality evidence which comes from administrative data on government activities and national statistical agencies, in-depth research and evaluation studies as articulated by Chirau et al., (2021).

Zantsi, (2020) linked legislature’s ability to conceptualise and institutionalize its M&E function and its oversight role over the executive. The study repositions legislatures as active participants in the supply side of evaluations not just as ‘user’ stimulating on the demand side of evaluations. It recommended three (3) ways in which legislatures can create a more responsive executive i.e., using evaluation results from government departments thus stimulating demand, legislature self-assessments as well as introducing Parliament-led evaluations, especially on transversal issues. Supporting this view Chirau et al., (2021) argue that the importance of pre- and post-legislative scrutiny of legislation which require evaluation evidence on its impact on policy objectives has become more critical to the work of parliaments. This also includes citizen evidence which ‘informs decision making in parliament through petitions and interactions at constituency level’ (Khumalo et al., 2021)

With reference to the South African Parliament’s self-assessment effort, Zantsi, (2020) reflects on the Independent Panel Assessment which examined the ‘accountability, responsiveness and openness’ of Parliament in meeting the expectations outlined in the Constitution including its role in promoting democracy. The study also took note of the work being done by the Joint Standing Committee (JSC) on financial management which prompted parliamentary services to enact M&E in order to improve its performance. Parliamentarian could be able to utilize parliamentary services such as parliamentary

research services and/or parliamentary budget office as knowledge brokers that develop capacity to produce and use policy relevant knowledge (Chirau et al., 2021). Therefore, evaluation information should be easily accessible through repositories which knowledge brokers can utilize. This information should be shared through parliamentary committee reports including progress reports on any improvement plans for legislators to assure transparency and accountability of how public funds are spent and the government policies, programme and projects are implemented. It is widely acknowledged that parliamentarians are driven by politics nevertheless the independence of parliaments has been noted to be crucial in the execution of its oversight authority. However, in their comparison of the link between parliaments and the NES in Uganda, Benin and South Africa, (Chirau et al., 2021) noted the weakness of this link due to lack of formalization and the silo mentality that continue to exist which negatively affects the production and use of evidence by parliamentarians. Zantsi, (2020) suggests that legislatures would play a more active role in strengthening the NES if it could integrate evaluations as part of how it conceptualizes its work therefore building an evaluative culture which would 'help sustain the NES'.

Civil Society Organisations

Civil Society Organisations (CSO) have been viewed as independent development actors, supporting governments in its development efforts as well as holding governments accountable and demanding transparency in government programmes and policies (Coventry, 2013). Due to their proximity to the society, CSO are also assumed to be representative of the poorer citizenry (Holvoet & Renard, 2007) or at least have grass-roots knowledge of poor communities (Coventry, 2013). It is for this reason that international development agencies lean towards partnering with them in implementing community-based programmes and development data gathering using donor M&E systems. However, during the review of the state of the civil society organisations in South Africa, it was highlighted that many CSOs are dominated by 'urban elites' and are funded by government which makes it difficult to speak up against government actions with the possible exception being the Treatment Action Campaign which tries to act as a partner and critical evaluator (C. A. S. E., 2008). According to Choudry & Kapoor, (2013), these tensions that exist between social change movement and non-governmental

organisations are due to their relationship with political and economic processes, thus limiting their impact of communities. Kimaro & Fourie, (2017) also acknowledges the role played by 'non-state actors in creating the demand for M&E information as well as building the capacity of supply and demand side' of NES which Goldman et al., (2018) perceive as a "key differentiator".

Chirau et al., (2020) documented the developments of NES in Anglophone African countries looking at their M&E systems in the executive, the functioning of parliamentary M&E systems, professionalisation of evaluation and the existence of an enabling environment. The countries examined included Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. The research found that the NES in these countries is maturing, and most have approved policies guiding M&E. Each country's NES is shaped by the state architecture, political administration priorities, government capacity, resources available and other enabling environmental factors. These countries also show an increased membership to Voluntary Organisation for Professional Evaluators which have been formed with assistance of donors, thus positively influencing the enabling environment that fosters an evaluation culture. Some of the VOPEs focus on M&E while others are evaluation focused only. In view of the limited resources and government capacity, engaging different stakeholders especially those external to government is crucial in strengthening the NESs. Holvoet et al., (2012) recognizes the importance that independent evidence and analysis about the implementation and impact of service delivery and policy processes may be supplied by parliaments, civil-society organizations (both national and international), research institutes, national evaluation societies, donors and other stakeholders.

2.4.2.2. Stakeholders influencing accountability in the NES

According to Holvoet et al., (2012), NES require suitable institutional structures for coordination, support, central oversight, and feedback that incorporate different stakeholders. In addition, using wide stakeholder inclusive and participatory mechanisms in establishing NES could foster gender responsiveness and change gender related power relationships, (Rohr et al., 2010; Tirivanhu & Jansen van Rensburg, 2018). Therefore, in order to build consensus and gain commitment, the views and voices of all

stakeholders must be considered (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Tomkiv et al., (2017) described stakeholder involvement as a practice involving limited parties who have more direct and concrete stake “in shaping public issues and agendas, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organizations or institutions responsible for policy development”.

Whereas Okitasari et al., (2019) views the roles of mobilizing collective expertise across levels and sectors as the responsibility of central government in order to develop vertical and horizontal governance mechanisms. These emerging mechanisms are purposed to be integrated and mutually reinforcing, thus allowing national and local governments to enhance synergies and improve policy consistency. They asserted that the early identification of emergent development challenges was dependent on government wide sharing of information among public agencies. They also highlighted the importance of cross-sector partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders within and across levels in policy development and implementation. This cross-sector partnership should be supported by the government institutions that goes beyond consultation, including providing an opportunity for academic institutions to facilitate interlinkages across sectors allowing transparency, information flow to better policy decision making for example. The involvement of expertise from the private sector, municipalities, academia, civil society organisations as well as other stakeholders is critical in enhancing knowledge on the quality of the monitoring and evaluation data thus not confining it to government (Okitasari et al., 2019). According to Rohr et al., (2010) Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) who are sometimes classified as CSOs “have also played advocacy roles and at times influenced the governments to adopt evaluation systems, evaluation standards and policies, facilitated access to resources, and offered their services as quality assurance mechanisms for key evaluations”.

The research conducted by Gildemyn, (2011) highlights the practical difficulties to involve civil society organisations in official M&E systems. Gildemyn, (2011) examined the institutional or independent involvement of civil society organisation in M&E systems in order to fulfil its dual functions of the concept of domestic accountability and feedback for improved programmes and policy. Gildemyn, (2011) suggested that CSO can engage in accountability initiative by influencing the setting of standards, carrying out investigations and demanding answers through public hearing, and where the government is found

wanting, apply sanctions in a form of protects etc. The study acknowledged that there are 'different implications of power, the different enforceability mechanisms, and the different roles' that various stakeholders can play in vertical and horizontal accountability spheres as well as the so-called diagonal/hybrid accountability. Vertical accountability being viewed as stakeholders outside government using external mechanisms such as elections, media and lobbying. While horizontal accountability involves only stakeholders within government who are "legally enabled and empowered, and factually willing and able, to take actions that span from routine oversight to criminal sanctions or agencies of the state that may be qualified as unlawful" (Gildemyn, 2011). Whereas diagonal/hybrid accountability involves external stakeholders enacting roles of oversight that are traditionally allocated to the horizontal sphere. This framework, which is aimed at improving the understanding of CSOs involvement in M&E systems within a developmental context, if utilised effectively, could intensify the input and agency of CSOs and enhance the transparency and accountability of government activities (Gildemyn, 2011).

The key functions of stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation include impact assessment, organizational strengthening or institutional learning, understanding and negotiating stakeholder perspectives, project management and planning as well as public accountability (Marisol, E & Gaventa, 2010). The importance of stakeholders in the development and effective functioning of NES is widely recognized as it stimulates both the supply side and demand side of evaluations (CLEAR, 2013; Holvoet & Renard, 2007; Laila & Kithatu-Kiwেকে Angelita, 2019; Porter & Goldman, 2013; Vincent et al., 2020; Zantsi, 2020). The complexities of the public service environment require M&E comprising of multiple stakeholders within and outside the public service for improved management (Kimaro & Fourie, 2017). Stakeholders have a role to play in 'data collection, analysis and feedback for result-based budgeting and management, iterative learning and evidence-based priority setting and policymaking' (Goldman et al., 2019).

Literature regarding the participation of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation is usually examined at a local level (Dlamini & Migiro, 2016; Sulemana et al., 2018), this is echoed by Oliver et al., (2018) who asserts that engaging stakeholders with decision-making for policy and practice, and with evidence production could encourage decisions

that are evidence-informed and appropriate to local context. Nevertheless, “a shared epistemological framework among country stakeholders, such as civil society, parliamentarians, and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs), universities, in defining the purpose of a national evaluation systems and the value its serves can help ensure that the machinery driving the supply of evaluators (universities and VOPEs) is structured to meet the nature of demand (largely driven by the state)” (Laila & Kithatu-Kiwekete Angelita, 2019).

2.4.2.3. Stakeholders' feedback in improving policies for the NES.

The engagement of the different stakeholders through participatory approaches promote accountability (Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2012). Holvoet & Renard, (2007) identifies key stakeholders within the NES to include civil society who hold governments accountable, demanding reliable objective assessment of outcomes and supplying on the ground evidence of performance as the driving force behind a functioning country monitoring and evaluation system. These Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) include Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs), universities/academic institutions and other think tanks (Rohr et al., 2010). Professional bodies like the South African Association of Public Administration and Management conduct research and analysis on public administration and management issues, including evaluation systems and generate valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies published in journals (SAAPAM, n.d.). Although the evidence generated by these stakeholders may have different focus, for example CSOs may prioritise findings relevant to their local problems and context, researchers may focus on the rigour and generalisability of findings (Oliver et al., 2018), thus providing government with what might be an epistemological multiplicity to issues.

Parliamentarians are the custodians of accountability oversight (Holvoet et al., 2012; Mackay, 2010; Zantsi, 2020) therefore they are largely viewed as the users of results or evidence generated by the national monitoring and evaluation system. They are able to influence the political systems which allows for discussion and contestation. Lahey, (2015) emphasizes the importance of oversight over the development and implementation of NES. Zantsi, (2020) posits that the role of parliamentarians includes the utilization of

evaluation results thus stimulating demand; the initiation of Parliament-led evaluations as well as legislation. Holvoet & Renard, (2007) suggests that strengthening with local research institutions, M&E experts and associations in capacity building efforts could create a culture of evidence-based decision-making which could yield strong development results. The inclusion of CSOs in the development of country-led monitoring and evaluation systems increases the likelihood of addressing critical issues, inclusion of diverse perspectives and developing innovative alternatives to development initiatives (Rohr et al., 2010).

Literature strongly suggests that due to the immediacy of CSOs to the poor, they are a wealth of knowledge and influence which could benefit the development and sustainability of NES process. They are able to provide relevant information about the performance of government and are able to hold government accountable for policy decisions made (Holvoet & Renard, 2007). CSOs have the ability to play a central role of advocating for transparency in how public budgets are allocated and spent; “ensuring accountability for the implementation of public policies; strengthening the demand for the use of evaluation to inform evidence-based policy making and, in developing the capacity of qualified evaluators to produce credible and useful evaluations based on national and international evaluation standards” (Rohr et al., 2010). The lack of capacity to meaningfully enact their roles and responsibility results in a weakened NES (Beney et al., 2015; Kusek & Rist, 2001; Mapitsa & Korth, 2017; Sulemana et al., 2018).

The study conducted by Sulemana et al., (2018) examined the participation of community level stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects. It stated the low participation of local stakeholders negatively affected transparency, accountability and maintenance of government project and programmes. It was found that there was a lack of concerted effort by government to involve community level stakeholders in the M&E of projects and programmes (Sulemana et al., 2018). Oliver et al., (2018) acknowledged that better decisions emerge when context specific knowledge and generalisable knowledge from research are ‘brought closer together to enhance evidence-informed policy and policy-informed evidence’. The increased supply of evaluation evidence in South Africa has not eliminated the challenges experienced by

universities and consultancies to feedback this evaluation evidence to the relevant government decision-making processes or structures (Stewart et al., 2018).

The peer learning brief by Twende Mbele, (2019) also documented the challenges experienced by civil society organisations to collaborate and share their monitoring and evaluation information with government departments and ministries. The brief also highlighted the uncoordinated nature of the civil society sector to engage effectively exacerbated their ability to be involved in government M&E systems and that there was a perception that CSO evidence could be less reliable. The socio political and historical factors intensify the challenges of CSOs participating in the country's NES. Some of the challenges include "a lack of collaboration opportunities between CSOs, by donor priorities as the main driver of evaluation demand and use, and a weak M&E capacity in the sector" Twende Mbele, (2019). The NES could benefit from the capacity built within CSO sector by donors with their evidence collection and with CSO's connectedness within local, regional and international networks. As a significant evidence generator, CSO's involvement in the country's NES tends to be limited and a missed opportunity to support and strengthen the system according to Twende Mbele, (2019).

2.4.2.4. Stakeholders' contribution to build the capacity of the NES.

In the past few years, there has been a number of initiatives to develop the skills necessary for decision makers to improve their ability to access, make sense of different forms of evidence and to incorporate this evidence into their decision-making processes which defines as evidence-informed decision-making skills. Stewart et al., (2018) identifies capacity building interventions as a 'nexus' of evidence-informed decision-making skills development even though their effectiveness may vary. These capacity building programmes which aim to change the behaviour of decision makers should focus on building capabilities, motivation and opportunity to change (Stewart et al., 2018). The establishment of the NES by the DPME in SA has been viewed as a step in the right direction, providing 'incentives for both motivation and opportunity' for evidence-informed decision making by policy makers. However, according to Stewart et al., (2018) the SA government does not seem to be using this role to its full potential; thus, potentially weakening the state's organisational and institutional capacity development by using

consultants on an *ad hoc* basis. There is an increasing shift for parliamentary involvement in evidence generation which goes beyond evidence use (Goldman et al., 2018) thus pointing to the need for the capacity building initiatives of parliamentarians. The lack of technical skills has been identified as one of the barriers to the use of evidence by policy decision makers.

Universities and consultancies

Universities and consultancies have been at the forefront of developing evaluation capacity building programmes to support the government officials to improve their evidence informed decision making (EIDM) skills thus increase their ability to further the objectives of the NES. Effective capacity building programmes which improve EIDM attitudes of decision makers include an aspect of mentorship and training which enhances EIDM knowledge. The challenge with these capacity building programmes is their seeming inability to influence behaviour change in decision makers thus raising questions if they target real capacity needs and the correct people (Stewart et al., 2018). Holvoet's characteristics of an effective NES were used in several studies to better understand evaluation capacity development challenges influencing the NES. Crawley, (2017) developed a framework for evaluation capacity development which articulates six spheres which included the ideological, political, relational, contextual, technical and logistical perspectives. This structured diagnostic approach incorporated previous diagnostics tools and emphasize the interconnectedness of the whole system hence proposes a comprehensive view of the state of M&E systems. Thus, this framework demonstrates the ripple effect that takes place when an intervention is introduced at any of the spheres thus creating a chain reaction that effect changes throughout the M&E ecosystem. Stakeholder collaboration and trust is required to influence each area of the NES thus circumventing any diversion, delay or rejection of evaluation evidence due to mistrust (Crawley, 2017).

Although researchers have developed and used a number of tools to help diagnose key areas of strength and weaknesses in the NES, especially applicable to the African context, which require extensive evaluation capacity development (Crawley, 2017; Holvoet & Renard, 2007; Lahey, 2015; Mapitsa & Khumalo, 2018; Mapitsa & Korth, 2017),

government officials have challenged the abstract and theoretical nature of these tools and university-led public governance and management courses, which lacked the practicalities that are required for effective and efficient implementation of EIDM. Early engagement and co-facilitation of learning with decision makers could likely improve the acceptance and relevance of capacity building programmes thus integrating a more applied approach to learning (Stewart et al., 2018). Porter & Goldman, (2013) note that most evaluators have been trained by donors in most Sub-Saharan African countries including South Africa where development aid and donor influence are not important in terms of GDP. This is supported by Stewart et al., (2018) who argue that donor funded capacity building programme can interface with the national evidence policy as an ‘insider’ in the decision-making infrastructure and maintaining ‘neutrality as the ‘outsider’. This despite Tarsilla, (2014) arguing that these evaluation capacity building efforts have yielded little of the expected long-term results.

Tarsilla, (2014) found that the evaluation capacity building initiatives undertaken by international development partners in Africa that worked well were they took into considerations existing local context and knowledge. He asserted that “neglecting the fact that local evaluation capacity already exists across the continent, international evaluation capacity development funders have often been perceived as claiming to be the ones ‘building’ it from scratch” (Tarsilla, 2014). Tarsilla, (2014) further articulates that the conceptualisation of such evaluation capacity development programmes based on Western contexts, have not been able to adequately reflect those endogenous learning needs and aspirations characterizing the M&E systems which emphasis ‘Made in Africa’ evaluations where these funders operate. This is supported by Kusek J & Rist R, (2002, pg. 9), who argue that “it is not enough to acquire skills such as social research, public management, statistics, or data management from the international community. These skills must, in some way, come to reside within the country and be available for contributing to a program of regularly assessing the performance of government”. In an attempt to develop programmes that are contextually grounded, South Africa’s DPME rolled out ‘massive’ capacity building in collaboration with the National School of Government which is based within the DPSA (DPME, 2020). When considering any synergies between ECD funders and African institutions, there seems to be a desire for

ECD Funders to partner with like-minded institutions such as the African Evaluation Association (AfriEA) which is for African VOPEs. Tarsilla, (2014) corroborated AfriEA's position to be a partner of choice that generates and disseminates 'true African evaluation knowledge across the continent.' These kinds of future partnerships promote the 'Made in Africa' evaluation capacity building, context specific evidence generations thus encourage evidence use.

Profession of Evaluation

Though VOPEs, evaluation associations and academic institutions are categorized as civil society organizations, their role in developing evaluation capacities through trainings, conferences, professional development workshops and seminars (Rohr et al., 2010) makes them critical and sets them apart. (Lahey, 2015) acknowledge that the promotion of a M&E Networks, community of practice and support for professional development would be enhanced by evaluation associations. Literature stresses the needs to cultivate educated, skilled, and capable professionals in order to support evaluation. The profession of evaluation is still emerging with the impetus for the 'supply of high-quality evaluation education and training; accelerating the harmonization of ethical, quality and competency standards; increasing the autonomy of evaluation practice; and exploring the feasibility of designation and accreditation' posed to contribute towards professionalization (Abrahams, 2015; Beney et al., 2015).

Donors and International Development Agencies

In the development of capacity building strategies for the NES, Lahey, (2015) acknowledges support provided by the international development agencies. Donors have played a significant role in establishing M&E systems to advance development aid initiatives. (Kusek J & Rist R, 2002) and Holvoet & Renard, (2007) note the sophistication of donor M&E systems while cautioning against the demands these systems placed on recipient countries. With the shift towards country led and country-owned evaluation systems, donors are expected to harmonies their systems with country-led monitoring and evaluation systems to avoid duplication and parallel structures (Kimaro & Fourie, 2017; Kusek J & Rist R, 2002; Tarsilla, 2014). Most authors echo the Paris Declarations and the Accra Agenda regarding the role of donors being to support countries as they develop

their own NES. Donors are required to respect country leadership and support the strengthening of country systems, and to integrate their monitoring and evaluation systems (Development Assistance Committee, 2008). Most literature highlight the donors' roles in building the M&E capacity in various countries through training, knowledge exchange, and partnerships. Stewart et al., (2018) found that donors still fund a lot of the research use programmes which might raise concerns about their motivations and mandate. They recognise that in order to increase acceptability of donor-funded initiatives, it is important that donors understand the country's context and priorities (Stewart et al., 2018). The effectiveness of donors and other international development stakeholders is likely to be maximized if they are managed and coordinated by countries themselves (Development Assistance Committee, 2008).

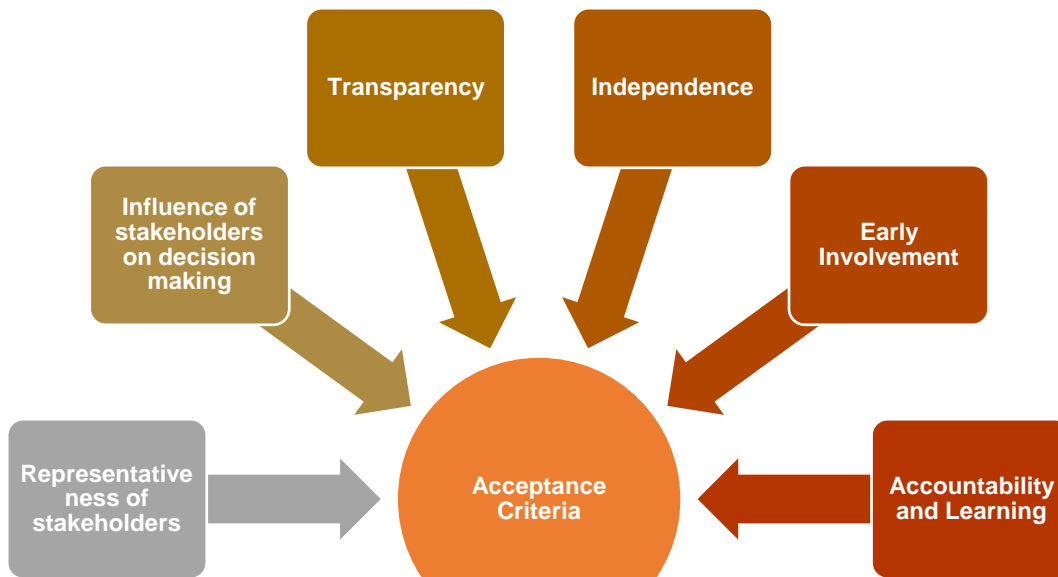
2.4.2.5. Strategies for engaging stakeholders in the NES

Stakeholder engagement is a driver of change in development and a main pillar of democratic government, it allows government to gain reliable information, provide feedback required to monitoring access and quality of public services delivered, stimulate operational efficiency, and serve as an overseer (Ariffin & Alizar, 2016). Stewart et al., (2018) found that senior government decision makers identified the need to pivot towards the use of evidence that is based on scientific primary research instead of drawing from the experience or opinions of individual experts and interest groups. Although this is partly echoed by Oliver et al., (2018) who argued that the engagement of both formal research and the know-how and implied knowledge of the people most closely involved should complement each other when it comes to decision-making. Thus, creating the opportunity for collaborative work with stakeholders within the evaluation ecosystem is critical to not just the development of a country's monitoring and evaluation system but also the maintenance of the system over time.

In order to support policy makers in their endeavour for robust evidence-based decision making, literature provides a number of different approaches used to involve a wide range of stakeholders in policy processes, ranging from advisory groups to co-creation (Govender, 2013; Krick et al., 2005; Langer et al., 2017; Matsiliza, 2012; Tomkiv et al., 2017). The framework proposed by Rowe & Frewer, (2000) consists of two (2)

stakeholder engagement evaluation criteria for measuring the success of a participation process. The framework presents the components of the acceptance criteria included representativeness of stakeholders, influence of stakeholders on decision making, and transparency of process, while process criteria included resource accessibility, structured decision making, and cost-effectiveness. Tomkiv et al., (2017) viewed this framework to “reflect the democratic principles always in play but often neglected in the interests of greater efficiency”, and they require the necessary resources, time and skills if they are to be successful. Rowe & Frewer, (2000) also articulate a comprehensive description of formalised participatory methods that could be adopted to increase stakeholder involvement in the democratic processes. Tomkiv et al., (2017) noted that the limitation of Rowe and Frewer’s framework was “too focused on the acceptance of the outcome and evaluation of efficiency of the process” neglecting the contextual aspects of stakeholder involvement especially the political and political-economic context in which they are held (Tomkiv et al., 2017).

In view on the stated limitations of Rowe and Frewer’s framework, Tomkiv et al., (2017) proposed an extended framework towards the acceptance criteria which examines the aspects such as representativeness, independence, early involvement, influence, and transparency, with the addition of accountability and learning as depicted in model A below. He viewed *representativeness* as going beyond just ensuring that each stakeholder grouping is present but inclusiveness which takes into account the voices, opinions of different stakeholders especially the marginalised. The timing of the involvement of stakeholders needs to be seriously considered for buy-in, interactivity and continuity where possible, thus *early involvement*. As part of the *independence* criteria, issues of bias, conflict of interest or self-interest and the impact that might have should always be considered.



Model A: The Researcher's depiction of Tomkiv et al., (2017)'s extended framework of assessing stakeholder engagement.

Influence is described as ‘genuine impact on policy’, this could be reflected in clear way forward on how feedback and recommendations will be used, thus feeding into the institutional aspects of the process. *Transparency* involves making information available and documentation of processes which aids structure decision-making and ensures credibility. Tomkiv et al., (2017) considered the stakeholders engagement process as an *accountability and mutual learning* endeavour hence its inclusion in their proposed extended framework which they viewed to be contextually based and respected the democratic values. Tomkiv et al., (2017) argued that any framework which evaluates stakeholder engagement should not only look at the how (methods), but to incorporate the why and in what context when applying these criteria. Contextual application of any method, approach or criteria is important in furtherance of inclusive stakeholder participation. They further recognised that deliberative stakeholder engagement is a condition of democracy, a practice central to building a stable and responsive society with legitimate institutions (Tomkiv et al., 2017).

On the other hand, Oliver et al., (2018) proposed a framework of engaging stakeholders with decision-making and knowledge production that is informed by both context specific knowledge and generalisable knowledge. This framework provides a spectrum of engagement which acknowledges advances and clarifies the potential to

deepen engagement. On the onset, Oliver et al., (2018) emphasis stakeholders mapping which identifies people who contribute or may affect decisions then analysing their influence, preferences and interests which would contribute to the outcome, and legitimacy of the engagement.

Table 1: Framework for Assessing Elements and Depth of Stakeholder Engagement

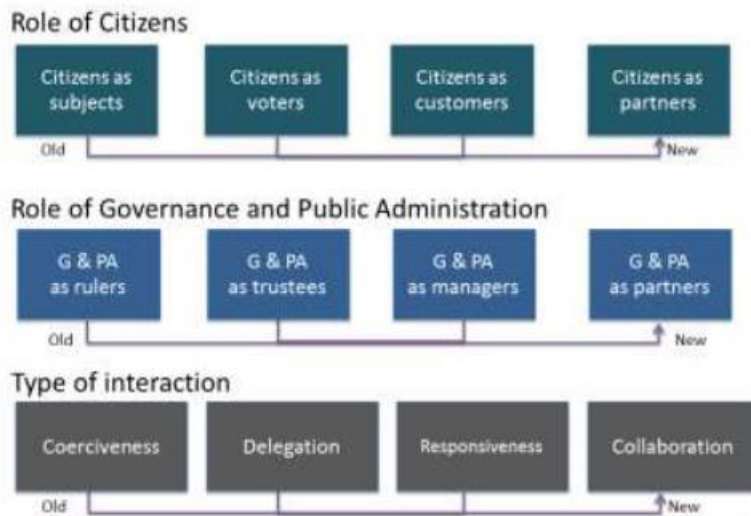
<i>Elements of Engagement</i>	Research Activities and Projects	Research Priorities and Policies	Research Governance & Systems
<i>Transparency</i>	Degree to which stakeholders are aware of research plans, methods and theory of change; and how this is achieved.	Degree to which stakeholders are aware of research priorities, policies, budgets and approach; and how this is achieved.	Degree to which stakeholders are aware of research system governance, ownership and control and use; and how this is achieved.
<i>Participation</i>	Degree to which stakeholders are engaged in developing research plans, methods and theory of change; and how this is achieved.	Degree to which stakeholders are engaged in developing research priorities, policies, budgets and approaches; and how this is achieved.	Degree to which representative stakeholders are engaged in research governance; and how this is achieved.
<i>Learning & Feedback</i>	Degree to which stakeholders are engaged in providing feedback on the implementation of research plans, methods and theory of change, and there is appropriate adaptation as a result; and how this is achieved.	Degree to which stakeholders are engaged in providing feedback on the implementation of research priorities, policies, budgets and approaches; and how this is achieved.	Degree to which stakeholders are engaged in providing feedback on research governance, and there is appropriate adaptation as a result; and how this is achieved.
<i>Complaints & Redress</i>	Degree to which stakeholders can raise grievances and receive redress if necessary; and how this is achieved.	Degree to which stakeholders can raise grievances and receive redress if necessary; and how this is achieved.	Degree to which stakeholders can raise grievances and receive redress if necessary; and how this is achieved.

The framework presented in Table 1 above describe the elements of stakeholder engagement in evaluation research as transparency, participation, learning and feedback, complaints and redress, which Oliver et al., (2018) also used to assess the depth of stakeholder engagement. From a systems thinking point of view, these process elements can be directed to individual activities, priorities, policies and governance (Oliver et al., 2018). This framework considers the idea of learning loops or levels of learning and different components of accountability (Oliver et al., 2018). The series of learning loops could enhance accountability to stakeholders.

An alternative approach for enhancing stakeholder engagement and government accountability in the development process which Ariffin & Alizar, (2016) summarised to include collaboration, upfront non-coercive communication, formalised stakeholder partnerships, relationship built over time and government commitment to participation being the foundations to effective stakeholder engagement. The approach advocates for a process that moves engagement from coercive to collaborative. While citing Hardy's evolutionary continuum below, Ariffin & Alizar, (2016) indicates that citizens are

dissatisfied with conventional processes of engagement which are often authoritative. Therefore, in order to foster accountability in government institutions and build trust between the public and government, a transformative process which incorporates deliberative democracy and inclusive governance system would need to be adopted.

Figure 1 : An Evolutionary Continuum



Source : Hardy (2016)

The proposed continuum of stakeholder engagement moves participation from passive involvement to active engagement. This then follows that for stakeholders to make effective and informed decisions, there must be adequate, useful and timely information accessible to them thus advancing transparency. Consequently, this solidifies the view that “a responsive government and empowered citizens are important conditions for inclusive development’ (Ariffin & Alizar, 2016). This framework however falls short in articulating the institutional context necessary for stakeholder engagement to be effective.

The above frameworks confirm that stakeholder engagement sits on a spectrum which must be considered to achieve the desired outcomes. The selection of appropriate strategies to be used to engage stakeholders depends on how well understood is the local context and how generalisable is that knowledge (Oliver et al., 2018). Regardless of which stakeholder engagement approach is utilised, it is paramount to consider the politics of the various stakeholders as it will influence what gets monitored and/or evaluated, the type of evidence sought and whether the evidence will or will not be accepted or used to

influence decisions (Oliver et al., 2018). It should also be noted that there are unequal power dynamics, competing priorities (such as political patronage) and motivations amongst different stakeholders which will hold sway on their interactions.

Therefore, in view of the above reviewed literature and background, this research study adopted Tomkiv et al., (2017) expanded framework of representativeness, independence, early involvement, influence, transparency, accountability and learning as its theoretical framework to assess how various stakeholders have been engaged at each of the six characteristics of the NES described by Holvoet & Renard, (2007) in South Africa as reflected within the broader democratic theory. This framework echoed the tenants of the new public governance which foster ideas of coordination and collaboration between public and private sector, stakeholder engagements and network relationships thus promoting the interdependence and relationships that are often ongoing. This framework was used to guide this research study, as the basis of developing interview questions and the analyses of data gathered. However, as asserted by Anfara & Mertz, (2015) there is no theory or theoretical framework offers a perfect explanation of what is being studied, so Tomkiv et al., (2017)'s framework is the most comprehensive incorporating the elements of both Ariffin & Alizar, (2016) and Oliver et al., (2018) 's frameworks.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed existing literature regarding national monitoring and evaluation systems in developing countries, and this provided the context which underpinned the involvement of stakeholders in the system. The various literature sources were explored which provided insight into a range of knowledge about national monitoring and evaluation systems as well as the participation of various stakeholders. The chapter provided an overview of monitoring and evaluation, explored the significance of national monitoring and evaluation systems in the democratic process and outlined the different elements viewed as critical to the development of an effective NES. The knowledge gaps that exist around evidence generation and use at various level and more important for this study knowledge gaps relating to the involvement/participation of key stakeholders in the NES.

Different authors have highlighted the gaps in the participation of stakeholders which include lack of formalization and the silo mentality that continue to exist which negatively affects the production and use of evidence. As well as the lack of capacity to meaningfully enact their roles and responsibility thus weakening the NES, which can sometimes be compounded by the fact that 'engaged stakeholder may not be balance or representative' and the challenges of tokenism. The fragmented, and weak nature of stakeholders' participation led to difficulties in establishing the boundaries of the ecosystem and identifying the different stakeholders within the system and their relationships with each other. It is on this basis that this study explored the roles of stakeholders in strengthening the national monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa.

Through the literature examined, authors have advocated for the roles that parliaments, civil society organisations including VOPE, universities and consultancies, as well as international development agencies can play in building capacity, influencing, and improving policies, evidence generation and use in order to strengthen the effective functioning of the NES. Based on the above literature, the involvement of stakeholders in all stages of the NES is evidently paramount to its development, functioning and maintenance. In conclusion, this chapter further surveyed some potential approaches and methods for the inclusion and engagement of various stakeholders which might be useful for the NES process. The next section provides the detailed research methodology aspects of the study which were followed.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This section provides a detailed outline and rationale of the research design choices made for the study. A description of the steps which the research process undertook to investigate the roles that various stakeholders play in the development, institutionalization and sustainability of national monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa and the effect these roles have in strengthening the system are discussed. The section starts with outlining the theoretical aspects that underpin the research approach, followed by the discussion about the research tools and their application, sampling, and the process of analysis employed. It also describes the ethical issues considered for this research study as well as matters of how issues of trustworthiness of the research have been assured. Key limitations of the study have been stated as well as actions taken to mitigate against them as well as outline the ethical considerations.

3.2. Background into Research Approach

The core research philosophy advocated for in this research is one of interpretivism. The interpretivism paradigm argues that “reality can only be fully understood through subjective opinions and interventions” (Ryan, 2018) Taking into consideration the subjectivity of this paradigm, it is recognised that the participants’ social construction is context dependent and therefore it cannot be generalised into a common reality (Wagner et al., 2012). This interpretivism epistemology allowed the researcher to play a significant role in exploring the multiple realities of different stakeholders within the monitoring and evaluation ecosystem. Therefore, the researcher’s own values and belief cannot completely be separated from the world or phenomenon being observed and will inevitably inform the way data is gathered, interpreted, and analysed (Creswell, 2007).

To this end, the researcher adopted a research approach which was inductive, allowing the data collected to generate theory instead of using established set of theories which is confirmed by collected data. An inductive research approach searches for meanings from the data collected in order to identify patterns and relationships in the experiences or observations of the participants to build a theory (Wagner et al., 2012). Therefore, a qualitative research design was deemed appropriate for this research study

as it was aligned with the research aims and objectives to investigate multiple social constructs that exists with regards to stakeholder involvement in the national monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa. According to Bryman, (2012) the use of a basic qualitative descriptive research design enables the research study to capture numerous perspectives thus ensuring the emergent themes from the data collection process are adequately identified.

This research study's intention was to investigate the roles that various stakeholders play in national monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa and the effect these roles have in strengthening the system from the perspective of the individuals who work with the system and experienced it (Bryman, 2012). Although a quantitative research design might provide numerical data which would have been useful for comparison and measurement of social reality, a qualitative approach was better placed to provide in-depth and detailed information which increased the understanding of realities and context of stakeholders regarding their roles within the country's monitoring and evaluation system. Consequently, in order to describe the perspectives of the participants accurately and reliably, the researcher interacted with the participants of the study, which the qualitative approach allowed.

3.3. Research Instruments and their Application

The researcher was the primary instrument of data collection using in-depth interviews which were semi-structured as a technique to collect data. The study engaged the views of participants around their involvement in South Africa's NES, thus using semi-structured in-depth interviews provided an opportunity the participants to give as much details as possible while the researcher guided the direction of the interviews using a list of questions (Bryman, 2012).

Although short answer questions from a survey could have been used for this research, they were unlikely to provide the kind of rich data that in-depth interviews provided. In-depth interviews also enabled the researcher to ask probing questions in order to clarify or confirm participants' responses. An interview guide was developed by the researcher with 10 semi-structured list of open-ended questions which were informed by the literature. The development of these questions was guided by (Tomkiv et al.,

2017)'s framework which explored the transparency, independence, influence, representativeness of stakeholders, as well as the accountability and learning as per Annexure 1. However, in line with the interpretivist research approach, some of the questions evolved as the study progressed. These questions were descriptive and non-directional aimed to examine the study more broadly, what Creswell, (2009; and Wagner et al., (2012) describe as the 'grand tour'. Probing questions were used to focus on appropriate areas as well as to guide the interviews.

An introductory letter was sent to participants via email prior to the interview sessions and the relevant permissions were obtained as well. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the interview, and they were allowed to respond to only the questions that they were comfortable answering. Participant to the study were also assured the confidentiality of their response and the security of the data collected which will be used only for the purpose of this study. The interview sessions had a duration of no more than 45 minutes per participant and all sessions were recorded.

The interview sessions were conducted in English face-to-face, via Zoom. The interview sessions were scheduled to take place at a time suitable for the participants which ensured that participants were at ease, and they were able to adequately answer the interview questions. The interviews were carried out in "naturalistic" settings in which the probe was adaptable and directed by the participants' comments, which in some instances was used to construct explanations of their views and perspectives. The researcher's session notes, and the interview sessions recordings made up the primary data for this research. Where possible, secondary data may be sourced in a form of documentary data that may support and collaborate information provided by participants and add value to this research process.

3.4. Sampling

3.4.1. Population/Sampling Frame

The population that was engaged for this study constituted by participants from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), CLEAR Anglophone Africa, Twende Mbele, members of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) a Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation, Civil Society

Organisations and other relevant M&E professionals who were able to provide insight to the research.

3.4.2. Sample and Sampling Method

For this qualitative descriptive research study, a non-probability purposeful sampling which is not random, was used to identify specific individuals from the above-mentioned population who provided information rich. The researcher used a snowball sampling method, where participants were able to refer other participants from among their acquaintances, in order to access as many of the participants as possible. This research study sought to investigate the roles of stakeholders involved in the development, strengthening and institutionalisation of the national evaluation system in South Africa. Therefore, the researcher engaged with individuals those who are knowledgeable in terms of South Africa's development and institutionalization of the national monitoring and evaluation system.

In doing so, these stakeholders were identified based on the literature conducted which was used to select the participants for the study. Participants who responded to the study had varying levels of knowledge and expertise around the South African national evaluation system. The specific individuals selected ranges from government officials, consultants, researchers, who have experience working with the South African government focusing on NMES. 25 participants were identified, however only 18 were available for the interviews.

The study participants comprised of past and present government officials including those from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME); consultants and evaluators of the NES, experts in academia and those working across the African continent on emerging practice regarding country-led monitoring and evaluation systems, parliamentarians and those working in parliament, civil society respondents implementing development programmes in communities, as well as members of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) – a Voluntary Professional Evaluation Association. The selection of the study participants was based on existing literature where Goldman et al., (2012) expounded on the stakeholders proposed to be part of a country's monitoring and evaluation ecosystem and guided by

Tomkiv et al., (2017)'s extended framework on the assessment of stakeholder involvement.

The researcher was able to gain access to 3 national departments, 1 provincial department and 2 government agencies however the monitoring and evaluation officials engaged with were at a junior level thus struggled to make the connection between the work they were doing to the overall strategic obligation of good governance, transparency and accountability. No access to the Premiers' offices, local government or SOEs was received despite several attempts.

The researcher approached SAMEA and gained permission to engage with its members for the purpose of this study. The Association shared the introductory letter with their database to participate in this research. The participants were selected based on their involvement and knowledge of the South African monitoring and evaluation system, which resulted in a small but very knowledgeable cohort from the VOPE.

3.5. Process of Analysis

Interpretive analysis which qualitative research largely lean towards means that the research result is ultimately the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of data (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Ryan, 2018; Wagner et al., 2012). Hence, the data analysis strategy employed for this research study identified patterns and themes from the data collected from sampled population. This strategy afforded the researcher the opportunity to engage with the plurality of views in the data and to draw parallels while contextualizing the information gathered.

The voice recorded data was transcribed verbatim, cleaned and coded using Atlas IT software to generate themes for analysis. The data analysis identified the common themes that emerge from the transcripts of the participants and data was reduced according to those themes. The more prominent themes were summarized and compared across the various participants.

The researcher used a reflective, constant comparison process of data analysis where the emerging themes from the data collection were used to draw parallels and differences. This critical reflection of data took place from the time data was collected though to its analysis and it was replicated in the documentation of the findings. The

researcher approached the reflection on data from the point of view of the participants and the data collection instrument was adapted according to the data received and to conform to the context of the study.

All decisions made in the process of conducting the study were documented and the researcher acknowledged any biases that she may have and the impact they might have on the study (Wagner *et al*, 2012). Where relevant documentary data was used, this has been incorporated into the overall analysis of the study. Commonalities and differences were highlighted, and a detailed description of the findings presented in Chapter 4 of this report.

3.6. Limitations, feasibility & positionality

The researcher acknowledged that there were limitations inherent in every research study and there are certain limitations that are intrinsic to research methods therefore by choosing a qualitative research design. The study needs to be understood within the context in which it was conducted therefore generalisation would be one of the key limitations.

This researcher focused on stakeholders within and outside public sector to gain better insight into the role of the stakeholders of interest. However, the researcher was not able to gain access to the relevant officials in all the government departments and agencies especially Department of Public Services Administration (DPSA). The views relating to the DPSA came from secondary sources and the researcher acknowledges that the lack of direct representation of DPSA might provide a distorted view of their role in the establishment, institutionalisation and sustainability of the national evaluation system.

The researcher was not able to conduct in-person interviews with the participants due to the restrictions posed by COVID-19 lockdown in order to limit the spread of the coronavirus. In order to mitigate against this, the researcher used technology to overcome this challenge and used ZOOM, video and telephone calls to conduct interviews. The interviews were conducted at a time convenient for the participants and all the relevant permissions and security protocols were adhered to. The data collection took longer than expected as the security protocol to interview with government officials was lengthy and

it took an extended period to identify and gain access to the relevant individuals. The researcher presented herself as a master's student when conducting this research and not in any other capacity, this enabled participants to feel at ease and more willing to participate in the study.

3.7. Trustworthiness of the study

As part of authenticating the data collected during this proposed research study, the researcher utilized participant checks where the transcripts are shared with the relevant participants in order to make sure that they reflect the views they presented. This also provided an opportunity for the researcher to confirm the interpretations of the data and to clarify specific aspects of that data.

By correlating the data received from participants inside, outside and at different levels of government as well as those with a vast knowledge about the NES, the researcher was able to triangulate the information at hand thus complimenting the participant checking process thus ensuring the validity of data. The researcher also used peer debriefing as a method of checking whether the researcher's interpretation of data and its implications.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting this research study, the researcher applied for ethical approval from the University of Witwatersrand's ethics committee. All relevant permissions to access participants and other documentary information was secured prior to conducting the study if necessary. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and an explanation provided that their participation in the research study was completely voluntary, confidential and they were free to withdraw from the study at any point.

All individuals who participated in the research study were made aware that by engaging in the interview process they were giving consent, and they were requested to sign a consent form or provide verbal consent which included all the necessary ethical consideration and notification that the interview session was recorded. The signed and verbal consent were used as an indication that they understood the parameters and implications of participating in the proposed study. All data collected was used only for the purposes of this research study and has been stored in a safe place to ensure the

adherence to confidentiality and the length of storage will be 3 years then the researcher will destroy it thereafter. All participants were made aware of the research process and how to access the final report should they chose to.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology and inductive qualitative approach which adopted an interpretivist paradigm for this study. Based on 's framework, semi-structured interview questions were developed and utilized to gain insight from 18 interview participants who have the prerequisite knowledge about South Africa's national monitoring and evaluation system. The sampling, analysis methods and limitations were described as well as the study's ethical considerations outlined.

CHAPTER 4: THE IMPACT OF STAKEHOLDERS ON THE NES

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study which explored the participation of various stakeholders in South Africa's national monitoring and evaluation system and the impact they have in strengthening the system. The investigation aimed to gather data which answered the following research questions which guided the study:

- a) What roles do the various stakeholders play in the development, institutionalization and sustainability of the national monitoring and evaluation system in South Africa?
- b) How do these roles participate and influence the NES?

The structure of the chapter starts by presenting the themes which were identified from the interview transcripts during the analysis of data in a tabular form, followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings relevant to responding to the study's research aims, objectives and research questions. This chapter ends with a concluding summary of the key findings which set the preamble for the recommendations and conclusion chapter of the study.

4.2. Themes identified during the study.

The data collected from the research participants was analysed using thematic data analysis and the following 6 themes with multiple codes were generated i) awareness of the importance of M&E, ii) capacity of South Africa to champion the NES, iii) leadership of the NES, iv) challenges faced during the NES implementation, v) role of stakeholders in the NES and vi) strategies for engaging stakeholders in the NES, as illustrated in Table 1 below. These shall be discussed in detail in the subsections that follow.

Table 1: Themes generated in this study.

Theme #	Theme description	Codes
1	Awareness of the importance of M&E	Publicly available documentation Participation/exposure in M&E activities Accessibility of M&E information Training workshops

Theme #	Theme description	Codes
2	Capacity of South Africa to champion the NES	Availability of resources Staff competences Implementation approach
3	Leadership of the NES	Changes in Leadership Political Priorities
4	Challenges faced during the NES implementation	Approach to NES/evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncoordinated process • Oversight by DPME at provincial level • Prioritisation of M&E initiatives • Evidence-based planning Perception of M&E initiatives as a punitive tool Silo and fragmentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inside government • Outside government Professionalisation of Evaluation Practice Limited resources to support NES initiatives.
5	Role of stakeholders in the NES	Improving policies for NES Advocating for accountability in NES Providing training, data and support tools
6	Strategies for engaging stakeholders in the NES	Collaboration and multi-departmental teams Forums Discussions and study tours Formal consultations Biannual conferences

4.3. Presentation of the Key Findings of the Study

Based on the themes identified above, this section presents and describes the key findings of the data collected from the study related to the research aims, objectives and research questions for the study. The key findings from this study were cross-referenced with existing literature to give an in-depth understanding of the results. According to Tomkiv et al., (2017) the assessment of stakeholder involvement needs to take into consideration the institutional and political-economic contextual aspects in which they operate.

4.3.1. Awareness of the importance of M&E

As Lahey (2015) indicated the sustainability of the NES depends on whether governments believe in its utility and understand its benefits. Accordingly, this study revealed that publicly available documentation, training workshops, and participation/exposure in M&E activities increased the awareness of the importance of M&E. This aligns with the *transparency* element of Tomkiv et al., (2017)'s extended framework which asserts that credibility of system is contingent on stakeholders having the relevant information and knowledge of the process which supports structured decision-making and the accountability relationships. Participant 3 advocated that a creative approach should be employed regarding evaluations and M&E information.

“So, I do think people in evaluation in government systems need to be much more creative about how they (a) talking about it [evaluation data] (b) showing it, demonstrating its value and (c) using it.” Participant 3

The study found that the awareness of M&E was generally appreciated within the government and some of the people have an understanding of the importance of undertaking evaluations and benefits it brings. In agreement, Participant 12 stated that,

“So, I think they [the government departments] do see the importance of it, perhaps maybe, in terms of prioritizing what needs to be done at certain points”.

Moreover, it was further revealed that some of the government officials do not see M&E as a policing tool to their activities, but they see the value that it can bring to monitoring progress and improving service delivery. This is supported by the Participant 7 who stated that,

“And also, they don’t regard it as a policing tool for them to do certain things because they are the ones coming to us asking us for assistance in producing these provincial evaluation plans. So, I think, they do realize the importance of M&E and the importance of undertaking evaluations.”

However, it was also revealed that most of the people who have an awareness of M&E are at national and provincial levels of government but those at local and community have limited awareness. According to Participant 9,

“The awareness is quite extensive at national and provincial level, but not that much awareness when you get to the locals’ field”.

In agreement, Participant 2 states that some politicians and public servants have poor understanding of monitoring and evaluations which leads to use the two terms (i.e., “monitoring” and “evaluation”) interchangeably; yet they do not mean the same thing. In most instances, the data for monitoring and evaluation are used interchangeably; however, these activities are vastly different, they demand a different focus and yield different types of evidence and information (Kusek & Rist, 2001). The following statement from Participant 2 supports this notion,

“So, you even hear many politicians and some senior public servants when they talk, they use the words monitoring and evaluation interchangeably, and they start monitoring something and they say we are monitoring and evaluating it. As though monitoring and evaluation is the same thing”.

This reinforces Participant 9’s assertion that awareness of M&E is mostly at national and provincial levels which is a small percentage relative to the rest of the politicians and public servants. Kusek & Rist (2004) acknowledge that misperceptions of evaluations as policing or fault-finding exercises including lack of local demand for evaluations are some of the problems that inhibit the practice of evaluations. Nevertheless, it is important to note that even though there are still a lot of politicians and public servants who have a limited awareness of the M&E; awareness of M&E has generally improved over the years. This perception is supported by the following statement from Participant 17,

“I think it [M&E awareness] has improved over time... I would say, 10 years ago, [there was] very little awareness of it”.

However, despite this improvement in M&E, politicians still find it difficult sometimes to

engage in M&E activities; particularly if they do not see their value. According to Participant 17, politicians typically prefer doing activities that can show the public that they are improving the lives of the people because if they do not do so, they risk not being re-elected for the next term. This notion is reflected in the following statement by Participant 17,

“politicians say ‘I’d rather spend money on building a new road than giving you money for an evaluation on where we should put a new road’. Because that also garners greater public recognition for a politician, their lifespan is five years, if they are lucky and there is no cabinet reshuffle but it’s like they are thinking about the term of office, and what they can demonstrate to the public that they have actually been able to deliver services in that five year period”.

This statement speaks to the self-preservation nature of the political arena, as highlighted by Morkel and Bradshaw (2021) regarding legislatures falling prey to the electoral system of five years in office, political patronage and even state capture. In light of this, politicians would do activities that can gain them public recognition and show their supporters that they are indeed doing something for the communities. But this unfortunately only brings short-term gains at the expense of the long-term gains.

Lastly, it was also further indicated that public servants were also made aware of the importance of M&E through information existing online on the DPME website and offline at the DPME offices. This was pointed out by Participant 1 who indicated that:

“There are two types of accessibility, [they can] physically access it. So, so there’s some sort of budget information... In terms of DPME work for example, the quarterly reporting against outcomes, was put on the website, and the evaluations once they’re approved by cabinet, were put on the evaluation repository”.

This was also further supported by Participant 3 who stated that,

“all the evaluations are on the website and there’s annual performance plans, you know annual report etc”.

This is also consistent with Goldman et al., (2015) who stated that the DPME website has all the guidelines and tools that were developed, and the current status of evaluations is in the public domain and can be accessed from the Evaluation Repository. Furthermore, Participant 9 indicates that although M&E information is available for public consumption;

not all information can be accessed without following the given clearance protocols for data security management. This is supported by his following statement:

“But it's very tricky about data. You must be very careful because there are data protocols that have to be followed. For example, there are certain things I can share with you and there are certain things I cannot, that's the nature of data, the way it is”.

According to Abrahams (2015), “some of the reported challenges faced by the system and DPME include inadequate information management systems. Although the M&E information may be available, inadequate information management systems may negatively impact the accessibility of the M&E information. This highlights that M&E information is indeed available it may require having good relationships with the people who manage the data who are able to provide guidance thus make it easier to pass through the clearance protocols.

4.3.2. Capacity of South Africa to champion NES

Several authors have highlighted that stakeholders' lack of capacity to enact their roles could result in a weaken NES as an instrument of good governance, public accountability and service delivery using evidence-based decision making to further the country's developmental priorities. According to Kusek & Rist, (2001) the capacity to champion NES has been especially difficult for developing African countries as they face challenges of lack of skills and capacity to develop, support and sustain the system, competing priorities, weak administrative culture, lack of political will or the retention of institutional memory from one administration to another. Nevertheless, the study revealed that capacity of South Africa to champion NES is lacking in three dimensions which are availability of resources, staff competencies and implementation approach.

Firstly, availability of resources to champion NES was reported to be lacking. This was pointed out by Participant 3 that the funds to support NES were limited and to conduct any evaluation there needs to be budget set aside for that. In view of this, there is need for concrete evidence of how evaluation activities will add value to the overall system as it may be difficult to gain support for funds to be allocated particularly when the funds are being contested by different priorities. This perception is supported by the following statement from Participant 3:

“But I guess there's something around resourcing and around capacitating people but like you know having money for evaluation is very important, because you have to do evaluation to show the value of evaluation”.

In the early days of the NES, South Africa's mitigation strategy in view of limited resources was to facilitate the collaboration of the DPME and other stakeholders especially other government departments. The DPME and national government departments co-funded evaluation for various intervention. This is reflected by Participant 1:

“first, what we did was, we did a call for evaluations, and we then went through (the responses) and saw which of them fitted the criteria that we had. And we said, we will co-fund them, so they were done as a partnership”.

This assisted the NES to produce some of its first national evaluation report and for the DPME to pilot the processes, guidelines, and tools which were developed in collaboration with the stakeholders both internal and external to government.

The study also found that the lack of resources also included human resources which is required to operationalise the NES, thus creating monitoring and evaluation capacity constraints which Holvoet & Renard, (2007) stated that it is one of the key domains of an effective country NES that should be resolved. Participant 7 speaking about the DPME's internal capacity stated that,

“.we are a bit under capacitated in our unit, the evaluations unit. We are experiencing some issues of capacity”.

This was also further corroborated by Participant 8 who indicated that,

“there's lack of capacity, because we're only three of us who are doing the whole work of supporting national, provincial etc”.

Moreover, lack of evaluation capacity especially within government were cited as a challenge especially since for many years, the focus has been on monitoring function not evaluation (Goldman et al., 2018).

Likewise, it was also pointed out that capacity of South Africa to champion NES is further limited by the lack of staff competence within the sector in relation to conducting M&E activities. Additionally, it was also indicated by Participant 18 that staff competences vary from one department to the other depending on the overall skills that the department

possesses. He further reinforced that although the staff has training, and some are upgrading their educational qualifications on evaluation; there is still a need for practical training in addition to the theoretical understanding of M&E. This is consistent with Participant 18's statement:

“I would say like it's [M&E skill level in government departments] not evenly distributed, you have some departments that have more evaluation capacity than others... the National evaluation policy framework has been ambitious in terms of its expectation with regards to the existing capacities of the system without actually reconciling the experiential kind of, let's say requirements to be able to do that”.

This is believed to negatively affect the efficiency and effectiveness of M&E initiatives as the people on the ground are not adequately equipped to action them. This then creates a situation in which NES plans are not realised due to lack of experienced and skilled personnel to make them happen. In agreement, Lahey (2015) asserts that M&E capacity gaps needs to be considered in a broader context and built around more than simply traditional training initiatives. However, Participant 13 acknowledging the limited staff competences to conduct proper M&E, indicated that the skills of the staff should be upgraded in order to allow them to conduct data collection and analysis within their departments. This will then enable them to implement some action plans towards improving service delivery. Participant 13 supports this notion in his following statement:

“What we want to focus on is for everyone to have the skill to collect information, collect data on their own performance, analyse their own performance, and look at what the problem areas are and be able to actually implement some kind of improvement plan”.

This assertion acknowledges that comprehensive capacity building programmes with experiential aspects are one of the improvement levers that the NES, inevitably the DPME, could focus on. This could expand the capabilities of stakeholders in various settings to further the aspiration of the NES as outlined in the National Evaluation Policy Framework. This is supported by Participant 13, given that she is the only analyst, that it would be better if departments and their units be capacitated to collect and analyse data on their own and this would make it easier to synthesize data from diverse sources to make a consolidated report. This is reflected by her following statement:

“If we capacitate different units, different committees to collect their own data to analyse it, it becomes a little bit easier than for me to synthesize, but I can't get raw data from 50 different places and in 10 days, ... So, we have a problem of capacity and it is not numbers, it's skill”.

It was indicated that although training of M&E is conducted, it is mainly done theoretically but the practical experience of doing the M&E activities is limited. This then created a situation where the people would have been trained theoretically but are unable to apply their theory in practice because they lack the prerequisite practical skills and experience which are much needed for the successful implementation of NES. In light of this, Participant 3 asserted that:

“...how long are we going to keep training people and not actually give them experience on an evaluation. I call a moratorium on training, and let's rather put our money into doing an evaluation and making sure there's a team of experienced people”.

Also, Stewart et al. (2018) indicated that university-led public governance and management courses are often focused on theoretical models and do not communicate skills that are practical enough to fit into the work routine of civil servants. This further highlights the need to move from theory to practical training in evaluations.

Therefore, Abrahams (2015) asserted that the increasing and open interaction on SAMEA created an awareness of the growth of M&E training courses being offered at various institutions. He further goes on to state that the growth in the availability of M&E training opportunities was steady and reflected in the areas of demand. Additionally, Participant 1 indicates that trainings were conducted in M&E to enhance its understanding amongst public employees which led to an improvement in the acceptance of M&E related activities within some government departments. This is supported by his following statement:

“We organized training in evidence-based policymaking and implementation for the top three levels of the public service and we trained over 350 of those top public servants. So, DG, DDG, Chief Directors and some directors, and that was explicitly to try and get people to understand why M and E was important, and also particularly why evaluation was important and it was successful in that. We did some evaluations that would otherwise not have been done, treasury was resisting but they did one. So, departments started getting involved in the system because of that training”.

Training and the provision of relevant information therefore demystified the NES process and encouraged stakeholders to get involved. According to Lahey (2015), the training of country officials is one of the key foundation pieces to a sustainable, effective, national, and country-owned NES. It was further indicated that the M&E training workshops and international study tours were done with Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA). This was reported to have improved their understanding of M&E and how South Africa was doing in relation to other countries. Nevertheless, it was also pointed out that knowledge and experience gained from these trainings is not retained within government institutions as the people who are trained typically are changed when there is a new administration in power. This is supported by the following statement from Participant 1,

“And we did a lot of training for SCOPA and in fact we took them on to study tours, we took them to Uganda and Kenya. We took them to Canada and the US... but unfortunately in 2014 with the next election, every single member of SCOPA changed”.

Finally, it was also indicated that the implementation approach has not yet reached a level where it can fully support NES. Participant 3 reported that some of the M&E activities are done just to tick boxes without an intention of acting or learning on the findings. This is highlighted in his following statement,

“evaluation and even monitoring is done in such a boring way, and it's literally just done to putting in the APP (Annual Performance Plans) and, you know, whatever tick some boxes”.

Therefore, M&E initiatives are not taken seriously in many government departments but as they are done as tick box activities without the intention to action the findings. This is a huge blow against the successful implementation of NES as it depends on continuous improvement in M&E initiatives within these departments. This goes to show that much still needs to be done to improve the capacity of SA to champion NES. Participant 9 also agreed that M&E activities still need to be worked on, even though there have been improvements, but they are being done at a slow pace and are yet to make a considerable impact on NES. This is supported by the following statement from Participant 9:

“I think we haven't moved with the necessary speed that is required.... we are striving to improve to the next level in terms of our use of the NES for broad evaluations”.

As Lahey (2015) also acknowledged that there might be technical hurdles that require a lengthy process to put in place and develop credible data systems. Consequently, it also

takes time to train M&E specialists and educate managers throughout the system on how and where M&E information will be used. The findings indicated that there was limited capacity for South Africa to be able to champion NES. As such, this is adequately summarised by Participant 1 who states that:

“Capacity is an issue. And I think with DPME's role having weakened. It makes it much more difficult because the main champion for it is much weaker than it was. Weaker in resources, weaker in strength of its staff, and it is weaker in the approach its taking so it's much less powerful. That is the problem”.

This then signify that the changes within the DPME in recent years have amplified issues around methodological approach, resource and capacity deficits and quite possibly the quality of the NES. These issues if they are not systematically resolved are likely to pose a risk to the institutionalisation and sustainability of the NES in SA.

4.3.3. Leadership of the NES

According to Chirau et al., (2020) each country's NES is shaped by the state architecture, political administration priorities, government capacity, resources available and other enabling environmental factors. This study found that the influence of politicians and their political-will had a profound impact on South Africa's NES from its inception. The NES was created in 2009 during the changeover from President Mbeki to President Zuma which had a profound impact to the NES as per Participant 1:

“...the system was created in 2009 at the time of the changeover from Mbeki to Zuma. I think it [NES] lessened a bit, as the Zuma presidency wore on, it became less of a priority, there were other political priorities that were playing out”.

Nevertheless, in 2011, due to the focused dedication of the Minister in the Presidency and Senior Executives in the DPME, a pilot evaluation was conducted together with the Department of Social Development which led to the development of guidelines, and in 2012 there was development of NES standards which would be used in evaluation appraisals. This was supported by the following statement from Participant 1:

“And we use that pilot evaluation which was again with some of those same stakeholders... the first evaluation was on ECD (with the Department of Social Development) and we use that to think through how we wanted the system to work in detail. So that started in October 2011, that evaluation ... Then we thought through how do we want to do the inception

phase. And we did the inception phase then we said okay, we liked that, let's write that up as a guideline".

The deliberate early involvement of other government departments and members of parliament helped establish buy-in and the co-creating process gave the NES momentum it needed. Therefore, the DPME trained members of cabinet as mentioned by Participant 1,

"So, from a parliamentarian side, we did training, and originally in 2011 or so, we were asked to report in Standing Committee on Appropriations (SCOPA)".

Unfortunately, the 2014 elections saw the refocusing of political priorities, and resulted in the change in a large number of cabinet ministers, so all the efforts made to ensure M&E capacity was built at senior level, was therefore lost as explained by Participant 1.

"So, there was no institutional memory [after 2014 elections] but also the committee we report to changed, so that whole investment in those relationships completely went".

Lack of political will or the retention of institutional memory from one administration to the other is a huge challenge for the adoption and implementation of NES as it negatively affects continuity of effort and strategic initiatives towards successful implementation of NES (Kusek & Rist, 2001). This was evident during President Zuma's era, with the NES given less priority and it almost faded into obscurity. This underscored the crucial role played by politicians in promoting or devaluing the importance of policies that may not align with their political agendas.

Several participants commented that it was the changes in leadership within the DPME during the 2017/18 period that have impeded the progress that was made since the establishment of the NES in 2011. With the NES having gone through this "hibernation" as referred to by Participant 1, this affected its credibility and the buy-in that it initially gained from other government departments and stakeholders.

"...the system [NES] went into hibernation. But basically, it basically more or less stopped, it went into hibernation".

Also, the DPME being viewed as dormant and less active between 2018 and 2019, saw its relationship with the National Treasury also become weak during that period. This is supported by Participant 5 who stated that:

“But I don't see the DPME doing as much as they used to. DPME until 2018/2019 was very active. Now, there's not anything happening or very little happening. National treasury was also unclear. DPME and national treasury did not really work together”.

Additionally, Participant 5, an evaluation expert, expressed an increasing level of frustration at the state of the NES especially after the efforts that was put towards the evaluations. This is highlighted in the following statement,

“we did good evaluations within the National Evaluation System. We did good ones for the Department of Environmental Affairs, but the whole system like evaluation of a national evaluation system did not come to anything”.

The study found that most participants recognized that leadership's inaction was the cost of inaction inside the DPME. This was also further negatively impacted by the takeover of a new Director General in 2017 who had an autocratic leadership style and did not do much on evaluation. This is consistent with Participant 1 who stated:

“The main change, the biggest changes have been there was a new DG came in and I think 2017, and she had a very different leadership style. She was a very autocratic person and she started trying to, well initially she did not do very much about evaluation”.

In view of this, the strong institutionalisation of evaluation that had begun between 2016 and 2017 did not make headway due to the changes in leadership. According to Participant 6,

“I was involved in evaluations that showed strong institutionalisation of evaluation process in 2016/2017, but things have shifted up to this point, then that institutionalization was not sustained”.

This data indicates that the system requires active, continuous engagement and focused handover mechanisms able to transition from one office bearer to another. The institutionalisation of the NES during any changes in administration, senior officials and government ministers could also be safe guarded by the rigorous use of reliable M&E information as advocated by Mackay, (2010).

The study also found that the consistent application of policy decisions needs to be reinforced during periods of transition to ensure the sustainability of the system. In view of this, lack of consistency was cited as a problem because there would not be any follow up on the previous efforts made, resulting in loss of time and effort.

“...our biggest problem in South Africa is that we are not consistent. So, we start new initiatives, and we run with them for like a few years or something. And then because they did not achieve miraculous results in a short period of time, we close them down and start something else”. Participant 2

Consequently, some of the M&E initiatives may be stopped by politicians before they mature to yield positive outcomes without any acknowledgement that policy impact is a long-term endeavour. This ultimately affects the whole NES implementation process as noted by Participant 2’s statement that:

“That’s probably the biggest risk to the evaluation system in South Africa, that the politicians will say, ‘Oh, this wasn’t having much impact, we closed it down, and we’ll forget about this evaluation stuff’. Like they do with almost all the other programs that they start, they always close them down before they’ve even had a chance to succeed”.

For the NES to thrive, Lahey (2015) recommended four building blocks of a NES which include vision of leadership, an enabling environment, capacity to supply and analyse M&E information and capacity to demand and use M&E information.

The Covid-19 pandemic deeply affected the DPME and consequently, slowed processes around the NES even further. Despite that, the NES has recently been expanded to provincial, municipal and local levels, with plans to include state owned entities. This is consistent with Participant 7:

“COVID affected us in a way, but DPME revised their national evaluation framework policy towards the end of 2019, and I think it got approved late 2019 or early 2020. So, what we did in that framework is that we are trying to expand the scope, now we moved from National Evaluation Plan, we moved to a provincial evaluation plan”.

Furthermore, Participant 9 also supports this notion of NES evolving into a more refined process. This is indicated in his following statement,

“So, I would say it has evolved compared to the national evaluation plan. And also, what has evolved much more, is the process that we have been using to identify areas that we need for example to evaluate”.

The above data shows that there is a concerted effort being made to work collaboratively as well as to involve other spheres of government in identifying and conducting evaluations which will strengthen the NES. However, the need for leaders whether political

or executive to make their own mark by introducing new initiative or adopting radically different leadership styles poses significant risks to the continuity of the NES. The short-term view of policy benefits or success limited its utility. Therefore, looking at the impact of policies, projects and programme to immediately produce the desired results because leaders view policies through the lens of their short political life is counterproductive for a country's development goals. These changes make it difficult for the DPME to fully embody its role as a central coordinating office as well as exacerbated challenges that are generally experienced by national evaluation systems in developing countries.

4.3.4. Challenges facing the implementation of the NES in SA

There are challenges that are inherent in the development and introduction of any policy initiative. However, some the challenges currently facing the DPME which have been exacerbated by the declining state of NES in South Africa due to political and leadership changes. Therefore, understanding these challenges provide an opportunity to develop mitigation strategies to strengthen the system to which stakeholders are key.

4.3.4.1. Approach to NES

Even though at first the DPME initiated the NES implementation through a consultative approach in which each department was consulted on which evaluations would be conducted. The study found that there was contention about whether or not the DPME should impose evaluations to government departments. Participant 1 stated that:

“...there was a bit of a debate about how much should DPME be directing which evaluations to be done, in the national evaluations, I'm not talking about provincial. Then there was this debate about how much we should be saying, these are the ones we want to do”.

The new leadership felt that the DPME should dictate to government departments the evaluations to be prioritised. This created resistance among these stakeholders resulting in them rejecting that approach. Participant 1 explained this as follows:

“And when this new DG came in, she basically said no, we're going to tell departments which ones we're going to do. She tried to do that, and it failed completely. Because departments just said no, we're not going to do it”.

This clearly asserted these stakeholders' *influence* on the NES thus setting the scene which calls for a preference to work collaboratively with the DPME instead of this adversarial approach that was being presented. The study also revealed that implementation of NES required collaboration between government departments, and this meant that the DPME had to work in a cooperative manner as opposed to being dictatorial in order to make NES implementation a success.

Uncoordinated processes

The study found that a number of processes were still uncoordinated which defeated the whole purpose of rapid evaluations. This is explained by Participant 17 as follows:

“I think they're moving towards embracing rapid evaluation more, for a very functional purpose that is just quicker, seemingly quicker and cheaper. And the evidence can be provided in a quicker manner. The problem is that the evaluation itself can be condensed to a shorter period of time. The hiccup is that the system of approvals and procurement hasn't changed”.

Although the data collection process could happen quicker, the commissioning and approval processes slowed the speed at which evaluations could be conducted. This lack of synergy and proper planning may consequently result in these rapid evaluations increasing the cost of the process.

The study findings also indicated that there is a lack of focused and goal-oriented evaluators who are in a position to ask the right questions which can bring to light the required information for generating accurate reports. In view of this, some M&E initiatives can be done in tick box fashion just to say we have conducted an evaluation but without asking the right questions that would bring the truth out. In view of this, M&E initiatives may not yield the intended results and this may in turn also affect the successful implementation of NES. As such, Participant 6 advocated that,

“a very clear intent for the evaluation, that needs to be stated very clearly in the terms of reference and sufficient data needs to be given to the evaluation team to conduct it”.

This creates a platform for evaluators to be focused and goal-oriented to allow them to yield valuable outcomes. This also impedes the successful implementation of NES in SA.

Although Lopez-Acevedo et al., (2012) asserted that the quality and accuracy of monitoring and evaluation is enhanced by the intense engagement of citizens and civil society. Participant 18 questioned the frequency, timeliness and quality of evaluation that are conducted. He believed that the consulting practices employed the government diminished the potential value and impact of evaluations.

“The problem is, do they happen frequently enough? Do they happen strategically? And do they happen at sufficient kind of quality and timeously to actually inform the decision that we need them for? some of the kind of existing consulting practices, which I think diminish the potential value and strategic impact of evaluations”. Participant 18

This then suggested that in some cases by the time monitoring and evaluation reports are produced, the evidence in them may no longer be applicable or relevant to the situation they relate to.

Moreover, this can be categorised as wasteful expenditure because it just means that M&E activities are just be done for the sake of doing them without an intention of implementing the recommendations from the reports. Mackay (2006) contends that the objective of government M&E system is not only to produce large volumes of performance information or a large number of high-quality evaluations as this would reflect a supply-driven approach to the M&E system. Rather, the objective is to achieve thorough utilisation of whatever monitoring and evaluation findings which exist, to provide information in support of accountability relationships and to ensure the cost-effectiveness of M&E system (Mackay, 2006).

Oversight by DPME at provincial level

The findings of the study also revealed that the DPME lacked oversight at provincial level which makes it a challenge to implement NES. This lack of oversight at provincial level suggests that there is no representation of DPME at provincial level which may negatively impact the promotion of M&E initiatives. In this regard, lack of DG of evaluations in provinces may indicate that the M&E interests may not receive adequate attention at the top of the political hierarchy within the provincial government departments. This may compromise the attention and budget allocation that can be attributed to the NES implementation. Participant 17 supported this notion and stated that,

“So, there isn't a DG of evaluations or something like that or the DG of the province. And the DG in the DPME has no official oversight over anything that happens in the province with regards to evaluation so it's all kind of its own ecosystem”.

Holvoet & Renard (2007) are of the opinion that coordination and oversight of the national monitoring and evaluation systems as well as the integration of relevant stakeholders should be spearheaded by an organizational structure that is centralized to avoid fragmentation and promote standardization. In this regard, without DPME oversight at provincial level it may be difficult if not impossible for it to steer provinces into successfully adopting the NES. As such, the successful implementation of NES may be severely negatively impacted.

Prioritisation of M&E initiatives

The study revealed that there is lack of prioritization of M&E initiatives, and this creates a challenge for the successful implementation of NES. The DPME sits under the presidency which was reported to be responsible for determining which M&E initiatives can be prioritized which has a bearing on the accountability. In view of this, the office of the presidency may suppress or promote certain M&E initiatives which may negatively impact the successful implementation of NES due to reduced accountability. As Goldman et al. (2018) pointed out one of the challenges facing the NES as a stronger focus on monitoring than on evaluation, and a lack of acceptance and resistance to evaluations. This further highlights the challenge of the lack of prioritisation of M&E initiatives. In support of this, Participant 5 states that:

“There's no prioritization of evaluation and like there's nothing to be accountable for. The office of the president can determine whether evaluation is important or not, and if it's determined to be not important then there is no accountability... I mean I can't really comment on that now because the fact is that I think that they had a prioritization issue, their agenda in terms of what they were to achieve changed”.

Furthermore, lack of prioritisation of M&E initiatives is also seen in other government departments and because of this, it is often difficult to get approvals for implementing evaluation recommendations in these departments. Participant 12 supports this by stating that:

“Now, we do get challenges because that improvement plan has to be approved, and it has to be approved by their DGs (Director Generals) or senior officials, but we struggle with getting them to approve the improvement plans... we really struggle with some departments to get them”.

In agreement with this notion, Participant 16 states that

“wholistically I don't think there's a willingness [to conduct M&E initiatives]”.

This suggested that the people who are in position of power may want M&E results to be published as it may expose their wrongdoings and therefore, may not want to be held accountable. This is also corroborated by Participant 17 who suggested that the M&E initiatives may reveal the incompetence of politicians which could become a political embarrassment for them. He highlighted this when he stated that,

“the early warning is about everything that could cause political embarrassment or things like potholes and all those kinds of indicators on the ground about service delivery”.

In this regard, politicians are generally not in favour of M&E initiatives particularly if it is in conflict with their self-interests. According to Goldman et al. (2018), prior to 2017 as part of mitigating the lack of prioritisation of M&E initiatives; the DPME proposed to Cabinet in 2014 that some priority programmes be evaluated in all sectors that were not well represented. Notwithstanding the political agendas that hold sway on the programmes to be evaluated, it seems that prioritisation of M&E initiative has become a matter of concern again but there is still room for improvement in this regard.

Evidence-based planning

It was also reported that lack of evidence-based planning is a factor that causes the government programs to fail as most decisions are made on the basis of political whim. In view of this, many politicians may decide to conduct certain programs not because they are for the greater good, but they may be doing so to serve self-interests. Moreover, self-interests of politicians may not be necessarily consistent with the implementation of NES. Participant 2 supports this by stating that,

“I think the problem is that is that government programs are usually designed on the basis of political whim not on the basis of proper consultations or evidence-based planning. So, if a minister is convinced that he's going to put in place a certain program to address a social problem on the basis of his personal political whim, his personal views as to what

the key problem is, it doesn't matter how many platforms you set up and how consultation that can take place he's still going to do that".

This is echoed by Participant 14 who advocate for that government leadership should be committed to the country's dreams and aspirations and have the courage of their convictions. This is highlighted in this following statement:

"Government must be committed to the dreams and aspirations of our countries, of what our country is about, and not pay lip service. And then when you draw in expertise, and you are a visionary who has the courage of conviction to change the status quo.... to understand that they are in office to serve".

However, there is an increasing demand for legislatures, which may sometimes fall prey to party political patronage, electoral systems and state capture, to strengthen evidence-informed decision-making (Morkel & Bradshaw, 2021). This may eventually lead to the adoption on evidence-based planning which could have a positive impact on the success of the NES implementation.

4.3.4.2. Perception of M&E initiatives as a punitive tool

The challenges of lack of understanding of the importance of M&E presented in 4.4.1. of this chapter have given rise to the notion that evaluations are used for punitive purposes instead of as opportunities for learning and improvement. According to Participant 4:

"...there's this punitive idea around M&E. If it's a punitive tool, not everybody will be receptive to publishing what it says. Because, you know, at a political space, it might be understood to imply that you are sort of highlighting our weaknesses, that's that could be another issue that could cause the level of reception to M&E".

The study findings point out that the perception of M&E initiatives being seen as a punitive tool is an obstacle to the successful implementation of NES. This is because politicians and senior managers may view M&E initiatives as a way of highlighting their wrongdoings and weaknesses which may sway the public opinion about their fitness for office against them. As such, politicians may not see M&E initiatives in the right light and therefore, may endeavour to disrupt them as part of their own self-preservation. In agreement, Participant 18 states that:

"I think people that are afraid of being held accountable, are kind of uneasy about evaluations in the same way that they are about audit. But I think that evaluations can be a

lot less painful, a lot more insightful, a lot more participatory and I think ultimately more beneficial to the state. I do think sometimes there is too much of an audit perspective and influence on monitoring, that kind of spills over into what data we have in evaluations and otherwise. And I think that's a limitation for sure”.

Kusek & Rist, (2004) acknowledged that the misperceptions of evaluations as policing or fault-finding exercise and lack of local demand are other problems that inhibit the practice of evaluations. On the other hand, managers in different departments view conducting evaluations as something outside the scope of their mandate and therefore, see it as unwarranted additional work which they see as voluntary.

“I think they [evaluations] are seen as a lot of work.” Participant 18

“...there were some people feeling that that (process of evaluation) was somehow voluntary, that we shouldn't be doing it in a voluntary way...” Participant 1

In view of this, by forcing managers to conduct M&E activities as part of their managerial duties, some may also view it as a punitive to them. Consequently, lack of support from the management may make it nearly impossible to achieve successful implementation of NES. This is supported by Participant 9 who stated that:

“...program managers, their understanding is still a little bit behind, they see it, not as part of their management. They see it as another added thing that they need to do... but the official in charge of implementing various programs sometimes see it as additional work to them. So, it's like they are being forced, especially with evaluations, to be thinking about evaluating their programs.”

Goldman et al. (2018) also supports the view from Participant 9, they state that evaluation is often seen as an accountability tool rather than as a tool for learning. This unfortunately makes the people who work on programmes that are being evaluated to perceive it as a punitive tool that may affect their budget allocation or be seen as incompetent at their work thus reducing the demand for evaluations which could have brought new insight and learnings to the NES.

4.3.4.3. Silos and Fragmentation

Numerous studies acknowledged that meaningful contribution of key stakeholders form part of an effective NES; however, the weak and fragmented nature of the involvement of stakeholder may be detrimental to the country's developmental goal (Holvoet & Renard,

2007; Kimaro & Fourie, 2017; Tomkiv et al., 2017; Vincent et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the study found that limited or no role definition for government departments led to lack of clarity in the boundaries that each department may have. This in some cases causes clashes between departments impeding the progress that could be made in NES implementation. This is supported by the following statement from Participant 2:

“there is no document anywhere, saying for each department this is your roles and responsibilities and this is your scope of work... there's quite a few examples of overlaps and lack of clarity regarding the boundaries of roles and responsibilities between different departments. And it's never been resolved”.

This is consistent with the findings of the 2017 evaluation of the NES which stated that “with DPME largely regarded as the appropriate champion for evaluation, the role of different stakeholders, at different stages in the system, was not always clear. In addition, a shared vision amongst key stakeholders for the NES was not always evident” (DPME, 2020). This was confirmed by Participant 15 who highlighted that the DPSA and DPME has some overlapping functions that has created conflict between the two departments as they fight for control. This ultimately created challenges for the successful implementation of NES. According to Participant 15,

“DPSA And DPME have a long-standing love hate relationship. I say that cautiously because we find ourselves sometimes overlapping in some functions”.

This lack of clear role definition was also experienced between the DPME and the National Treasury in the area of budget allocation. Participant 5 highlighted this by stating that,

“National Treasury had their own planning and accountability functions”.

This created friction between the two departments which potentially hindered the successful implementation of NES. This was emphasised by Participant 16 in his following statement:

“So, because of the issues between Treasury and DPME, because Treasury feels like by us saying; this is the issue and whatever, they feel like we are encroaching to their mandate for budget allocations, but we are responsible for the planning side so we say in terms of plans and policies”.

Moreover, to avoid such frictions the NES evaluation report recommended that buy-in from Provincial Treasuries and National Treasury should be sought by DPME to allow the smooth implementation of NES (DPME, 2020).

It was also further highlighted that the DPME and DPSA were also at loggerheads with each other due to territorial disputes. The DPSA felt that it was their role to implement NES due to their limited understanding of what DPME was doing. This lack of collaboration between these two departments resulted in unwarranted friction leading to a slowdown in the NES implementation. According to Participant 2:

“There was always tension between the DPME and the DPSA, DPSA always felt that DPME were encroaching into their territory and that it actually wasn’t necessary for the DPME to exist, and it was actually part of their role to develop the evaluation system and in fact, they did have a chief director for monitoring and evaluation. But they’d never put in place a national evaluation system, and the DPSA people not only didn’t understand what we were doing, they were also opposed to what we were doing because they based it on the grounds that they thought that they should do it not us”.

As reported by Abrahams (2015), the DPME’s custodial role for M&E is similar to the functions of National Treasury for financial management (FMPPI) and the human resources management responsibility of the DPSA. This can also create a source for role clashes and tension between these institutions which can in the long run have negative consequences on the success of the NES. Moreover, Participant 8 also pointed out that lack of collaboration between the departments is a challenge toward NES implementation. He indicated that policy guidelines are formulated in silos without any collaboration between the various departments. This may be less efficient than doing a stakeholder meeting with all the ideas being shared and debated to come up with collective solutions. With Stewart et al. (2018)’s realisation that policy decision-makers valued building partnership and identifying the various stakeholders’ contributions, they acknowledged the need to eliminate silos and avoid the duplication of efforts. This is supported by the following statement from Participant 8:

“You see, now we're working in silos. I'll just give you an example, if we're developing a guideline on Inception Report, what will happen is that DPME in a small corner will do that guideline, and then ask for the stakeholders to give inputs. That's not supposed to be the case, what should happen is that as we are developing the instantly the inception report, or

the concept note or whatever it may be, we ought to be together in the same room and say, look, we're developing this thing, how do we go about it, collectively so".

The current situation seems to be in contrast to the stakeholder engagement during the establishment of the NES. According to Goldman et al., (2015), "the DPME with the support of the Programme to support Pro-poor Policy development brought together those departments already undertaking evaluation to share their experiences and learn from the foremost exponents of evaluation systems". It was further indicated that there is no collaboration when it comes to M&E process as each department seems to be doing its own thing and this makes the implementation of NES quite difficult. This is pointed by Participant 16:

"I think there's a big problem when it comes to that because people separate themselves according to branches rather than saying, how do we meet government's overall mandate or overall goals in ensuring a capable state for example".

DPME (2020) highlighted the need to build stronger partnerships to cement and promote the roles of institutions such as offices of the premier, centre of government departments, universities, civil society organisations, and programme beneficiaries throughout the evaluation lifecycle. It was also indicated that the planning department and the finance department are not under one umbrella. With the planning department is under the presidency whilst the finance department is on its own. This was pointed out that it creates coordination and collaboration issues. Furthermore, ministers might work to protect their mandates and may disregard working together towards achieving collective goal. This notion is supported by Participant 16 who states that,

"So now, there are viewpoints when it comes to ministers when they want to protect their mandate. And they don't work together to achieve a particular goal. So, I think, then the work itself becomes not impactful, you are just doing a framework, whether it's taken up that's a different story".

According to Goldman et al. (2015), one of the reasons for poor implementation is that there is a lack of congruence between the main planning system (strategic plans and annual performance plans), budget system and implementation systems, often via implementation programmes. Also, the study also discovered that even if issues with the NES implementation are identified, it still has to go through the hierarchy in order to be

heard. However, this may not also be possible as some of the official may not follow through with sending the issues to the top hierarchy. This creates silos within the system and hinders collaboration between the stakeholders involved which may hamper NES implementation. This is highlighted in Participant 16's following statement:

"I don't think there's a system to do that. Because as a DD I can only tell my chief director or my director that these are the problems, whether they take it out to DG level, it's a different story. The DG liaises with the DG of Treasury, wouldn't know. And because of the whole [thing] about hierarchy that it creates a problem, it creates sort of silos".

The acknowledgement by the DPME in its papers that silos exist, and the challenges they create is indicative that potential strategies may be put in place address these issues.

The silo mentality does not only exist within government, but the study also revealed that there is a lack of synergy between government and stakeholders outside government which may affect the successful implementation of NES. Additionally, CSOs may also have different M&E needs which may not be consistent with NES and this may impede its successful implementation. This was noted by Participant 17 who points out that CSOs involvement is limited because this focus and priorities may be different from those of government departments.

"I don't think that these much involvement of civil society in the actual system itself,..., I don't think that there's necessarily an overlap, I think it's kind of next to it". Participant 17

Nevertheless, the role of stakeholders outside of government is recognised as critical in advancing the supply side and demand side of the NES. According to Vincent et al. (2020), there is a need for parliament, civil society and donors to be meaningfully engaged and to align with government priorities in order to fast-track the development and strengthening of the country's monitoring and evaluation system.

4.3.4.4. Professionalisation of Evaluation Practice

The study found that the lack of a degree in M&E indicated that less weight is put to M&E as a profession as it may mean that anyone can perform M&E activities which negatively impacts the credibility of the profession. Although Abrahams (2015) indicated that M&E academic qualifications were available at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels

but may not have been popularised as it seems some of the participants in this study were only aware of the post graduate qualification at post graduate level. As Participant 4 noted,

“there’s no degree that’s offered at university that is for M&E”.

In view of this, limited appreciation of M&E practitioners may negatively affect the implementation of NES as without the M&E practitioners being respected for what they do; it will make it a challenge for NES to be appreciated. This created a perception in which M&E practitioners are seen as chance-takers not professionals in their field. This is supported by the following statement from Participant 4,

So, it might necessarily mean that if you're an economist, if you're a nutrition specialist you can also be an M&E person but I'm not sure if people might also doubt the credibility of the profession because lawyers have some way of affiliating somewhere, accountants have a place, really have a way of [being] affiliated somewhere. So, the level of professionalisation within the sector also might have contributed to people [saying] that these are just 'chance-takers'. Of course, it will impact on the actual evaluations that are conducted”.

Professionalisation of the sector especially having a stand-alone M&E degree in educational institutions could go a long way in creating credibility for practitioners. However, Abrahams (2015) highlighted the longstanding international debate about the professionalisation of evaluation which needs to be informed by expected or required competencies of evaluators, standards and guidelines that should inform evaluation practices, its development as a discipline and the role of voluntary organisations for professional evaluation in the pursuit of professional practices.

The study discovered that this unregulated professional practice also affected the commissioning of quality evaluations and called to attention the lack of corporate stakeholder diversity. Current relationships are predominately with white owned enterprises thus created an inclusivity challenge for the implementation of NES as this requires stakeholder buy-in from other demographic areas. According to Participant 15:

“If you're looking into a quality element, because we're also faced with being criticized about working with white owned companies for most of our projects, so we've been trying to work with more BEE companies”.

According to Abrahams (2015) there were a limited number of people capable of doing good quality evaluations as well as poor competition within the field, result in the quality of the evaluation reports that are usually weak and/or substandard. As such, DPME, together with academic institutions and SAMEA, should endeavour to facilitate the professionalisation of evaluation practice to attract more people of colour into the evaluation profession and increase competition in the sector. This could give the profession the necessary authority it requires and improve the *representativeness* of stakeholders in order to increase the buy-in for NES implementation.

4.3.4.5. Limited resources to support NES initiatives.

The study revealed that limited resources to support NES initiatives are an impediment to its implementation. It was reported that international development agencies and donors that used to support NES implementation have moved their support to something else due to South Africa being labelled a middle income country. This has contributed to the lack of resources to support NES initiatives. This is confirmed by the following statement from Participant 3,

“...you know a lot of donors left. And a lot of that money is now going to places like Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, you know.... big donors like CIDA and German AID, UKAID, all that sort of stuff, they go through the multi-donor trust and don't really support smaller initiatives”.

In addition, Abrahams (2015) established that government agencies and non-government organisations often use international donor funds for their own projects, and they are reported to have been engaged in outsourcing evaluation studies. Furthermore, because of limited resources, some M&E activities may not have sufficient budget allocation necessary to execute them. This obviously creates a challenge for the successful implementation of NES. According to Participant 17:

“there's a different resourcing at national than it was at provincial level. So very often, province only had a budget that was sufficient to employ the staff members in the evaluation unit, and there was no money for goods and services to actually roll out evaluations, and that was really often a huge obstacle, that as we have these fantastic plans, but there's no money and departments haven't linked with any budget to conduct evaluations”.

This demonstrated that a lack of resources at provincial level can create obstacles to the successful implementation of NES. Furthermore, evaluation plans need to be aligned to the budget cycle and the overall planning process if the NES is to be sustainable at all levels of government.

4.3.5. Impact of stakeholders' contribution in bolstering the NES

4.3.5.1. *Influencing policies for NES*

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)

A number of participants acknowledge that the DPME is the lead department that commissions evaluations whose recommendations are meant to inform policy changes as described by Participant 6:

“So, how it's supposed to work is you conduct an evaluation, and you come up with a range of different recommendations, which are either accepted or rejected by the evaluation commissioners, they come up with a management improvement plan. And that management improvement then informs policy changes, including the Annual Performance Plan (APP), for example. That is how it's intended to work”.

However, Participant 6 also acknowledges that there is a mismatch in the timing of the evaluation and the policy making cycle. He states that,

“I think, often evaluations are conducted outside of the policymaking cycle... So, some evaluations don't lead to specific policy changes”.

The study findings further indicate that the role of the DPME is to facilitate the formalisation of embedding M&E results in planning and budgeting in government departments. This helps to identify loopholes in government expenditure, and this could be used to improve the utilisation of government resources. This notion is supported by Participant 5 who stated that:

“Planning and Budgeting must be systemically drawn from the results of monitoring and evaluation so if you get the results of evaluation and says you're not spending your money properly, you actually have to use that to plan your budgets and your finances”.

Although, in view of the challenges that the DPME is facing, Participant 1 noted that the authority of the DPME has weakened in the eyes of other government departments. He highlights this in the following statement,

“I think departments have taken it (DPME) less seriously, they're more frightened of the Auditor General. The Auditor General is the big motivator and generally, most people tend to respond to that”.

On the other hand, Participant 14 proposed that the role of the DPME should be to capacitate the system to be self-sufficient:

“...[DPME] should stick to the original principles... They should be far more focused on capacity development, ensuring that monitoring and evaluation are integrated into the professionalization of the public service, and then assisting those departments that do not yet know how to conduct effective assessments.They may continue to perform what they have done in the past, such as presenting examples of excellent practice and aiding departments with obtaining approval for assessments such as to support cabinets”.

This assertion is viewed as a way to bring more credibility and reliability back to the DPME, thus making it more effective and impactful.

Government departments

It was also found that some government departments use recommendations from M&E reports to improve their operations and service delivery performance.

“You do have departments that have used the evaluation results to enhance their programs. I know, the department of human settlements have actually used recommendations of evaluations, and some social development evaluations have been used as well. Even the economic sector and the education department has used the recommendation”. Participant 12

In this regard, government departments have the role of implementing the recommendations that come from M&E initiatives because if they do not do so then the efforts of conducting M&E activities will be pointless and unfruitful. Participant 12 acknowledged that this area still needed a lot of work, which confirmed Goldman et al., (2018)'s assertion that suitable mechanisms needed to be put in place to track implementation of evaluation recommendations and to have conversations on how to support effective implementation. This idea is supported by Participant 12 who states that:

“but it's an area that, you know, we need to work on, because it's not at the level that we would hope it would be”.

So, around 2019, the feedback received from the government departments was that the evaluations were taking too long, and because of this, plans were initiated to make the evaluations shorter. Participant 1 explained that,

“People were saying this is taking too long so with the pressure to move towards more rapid ones [evaluations]. So, in the new version of the national evaluation policy framework in 2019 it talks about more rapid ones”.

This led to the development of guidelines for rapid evaluations which was cited in the updated version of the national evaluation policy framework. This highlighted the impact which government departments have in influencing policy direction and the responsiveness of the DPME by adapting accordingly.

Parliamentarians

The study findings confirmed the important role that parliamentarian have regarding the oversight of policies. The evaluative nature of the role of legislatures brings with it a huge responsibility to hold the executive accountable (L. Khumalo et al., 2021). This is supported by Participant 8 who states that:

“Parliament's role is to hold the executive accountable, that's their only role. They will say, look, there is this number of evaluations that DPME has conducted, they want progress and feedback because that's government money. So, the role of Parliament in holding the executive accountable is by making sure that on the work that government promised to deliver, it needs to report back to Parliament”.

Members of parliaments play a role in monitoring service delivery issues in their constituency during the parliamentary recess period. The study found that use of parliamentary recess is intended to allow members of parliament to go back to their constituencies and engage with them, however as one of the participants pointed out, this does not usually transpire.

“The understanding is that they (parliamentarians) are in their constituencies, basically constituency offices where you come from as a member. You then go and check service delivery, monitor service delivery. If it's a provincial issue, you know what is a provincial competency, or a national competency. And at the end of this period, members are meant to actually come back to Parliament with reports which can be considered by Parliament, with clear recommendations and there's supposed to be follow up. But that doesn't happen. It is a de-facto holiday for members”. Participant 14

Participant 14 also noted that parliament's responsibility to hold the executive accountable is not efficiently exercised even when there are set policies guiding this process.

“From a parliament point of view, very simple thing that Parliament was supposed to do, read the report from cover to cover, if they are not happy with any aspect of the report, they're not supposed to use a political process to rewrite the report, or change the recommendations in the report. What they are meant to do is to go to a court of law and say, ‘Please review this report because we think that this, that and the other doesn't add up’. But parliament didn't do that...” Participant 14

This then alludes to possible conflict of interest of members of parliament between their oversight duties and party-political patronage, and bias because of rent-seeking thus set a precedent that allows corruption to thrive and question the independence of parliament. However, Participant 9 disagree as he points out the great efforts that parliament is doing to make sure that the M&E initiative are a success. This is highlighted in his following statement:

“Like for example, we are currently concluding two evaluations that were demanded by cabinet. So, from time to time, we do get parliament saying ‘please DPME assist in undertaking this particular evaluation’, and in most cases, it might emanate from a particular issue, or priority that might have been brought to their attention”.

The aspirations of the NES become weakened when the evaluative role of Parliament is not effectively executed however the fact that there is an increasing demand for evaluations on government actions by parliamentarians pointed to a move in the right direction even if this is still done intermittently. This corresponded to Goldman et al., (2018)'s emphasis of the importance of role for parliament and CSOs in holding departments to account for implementing these improvement plans.

Civil Society Organisations (CSO)

Civil Society Organisations typically play the role of providing advocacy and locally informed inputs that would be used to improve policies and are instrumental to the implementation of the NES. Participant 1 acknowledged CSOs as a critical stakeholder and referred to a complex but collaborative relationship that exists between CSOs and government departments.

“ CSO is extremely important in implementation. So, there's a lot of collaboration not always easy collaboration. But collaboration is to some degree of hostility I think between the department and CSO.” Participant 1

These tensions arise due to differing political ideologies, priorities and sometime lack of trust. The research findings pointed out that CSOs typically want to work with the government, however government required them to be under an umbrella body in order to address their issues in a collective manner. This disparity created a less optimum working relationship between CSOs and government.

“South Africa has a varied history with CSO however we're pretty organized for lobbying government or advocating but there has never been a formal platform for 14 departments about monitoring and evaluation for example”. Participant 18

Although the importance of CSOs is not in dispute, government departments are wary of working with individual CSOs who are not able to speak for the collective needs of the sector. The research found that CSOs who work in specific sectors, such as health, social development for example, have become increasingly organised except those who aim to work directly with the DPME, this notion is supported by Participant 9 who stated that:

“Civil society is not organized, and when you work with government, we need organized institutions. ...They don't represent their civil society organization broadly so that's why sometimes it becomes a bit challenging for government to maximize their way of working with them. However, we see them as a very important stakeholder”.

Nevertheless, the study found that CSOs have limited influence on the NES or the DPME unless invited to participate in platforms when evaluations are the main focus. Participant 17 surmised that:

“When you're talking about the state and the machinery of the state, I'm not quite sure whether outside actors can have any kind of influence from the outside. What could possibly happen is that, maybe if you're invited into that space from the outside like on the evaluation technical Working Group, which is quite a closed space”.

The representativeness of stakeholders as advocated by Tomkiv et al., (2017) should go beyond their presence, but it should take their voices and perceptions into consideration. This coincided with Participant 11's recommendation for the NES:

“Take our expertise into consideration, involve us, maybe not even in decision making but planning, brainstorming, identifying the gap, that kind of involvement. I think we would bring a different perspective to system development because I believe that we are looking at data and service delivery from [a] slightly different perspective”.

For CSOs to add value into the national evaluation system, they should be accommodated by creating space for better engagement. Goldman et al. (2018) contended that by having established seats at the table for selecting evaluations and in overseeing the system the role of NGOs and donors became stronger.

Donors and International development Agencies

Donor have played a significant role through the provision of funding, technical support and capacity development. Their contribution is noted as follows by Participant 9:

“The donors have helped us in terms of capacity development, funding of certain projects and so forth... overall, we do appreciate donors that really work closely with us”.

However, it was stated that donors have little say in the selection of evaluations because South Africa is focused on its own country priorities unlike donors who have an external perspective based on how their funding was used. Participant 17 explained that donors may have initially provided some funding for the establishment of the NES, their influence on evaluations is limited.

“they [donors] don't have a very strong say in how evaluation is done in that country. It's also very external, it's evaluation to allow the donor to have perspective on whether their money was invested appropriately or not. In South Africa, we've got a much more internal focus. ...And even though we did get some external funding, seed funding; whatever you want to call it, to start the evaluation program in South Africa.”

Participant 9 acknowledged that donors continue to provide technical support to South Africa, and this has to be in accordance with the country's priorities.

“we have started receiving a lot of technical support from development partners. ...But remember we are government, we are clear on how we will be serving the citizens of the country, and we acknowledge that sometimes donors themselves when they come, they have a tendency of having a mandate that they want to save. If it's not in line with what we are doing. We don't shy away from saying thank you keep your euros your dollars”.

According to Vincent et al., (2020), donors have provided technical and financial support to the NES; they typically do so in a way that is more focused on their own interest and do not take into account the country's priorities.

Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs)

The study found that SAMEA as a VOPE played a role of creating a platform for engagement, influencing thinking of government officials and conducting continuous professional development in the evaluation sector. VOPEs are believed to be instrumental in the improvement of policies which would assist in the development of the NES. This is consistent with Participant 4 who stated that:

“... VOPEs can influence the thinking about what are the competencies that colleagues should have... Because VOPEs provide a platform for engagement, provide a platform where people come for a conference or a workshop where they are able to, if you are a lecturer, sitting in a room when people are raising their concerns about the type of education, they are receiving that has a way of influencing you upon thinking about the work that you do, and so forth....also continuously train people

Goldman et al. (2018) further points out that more work is needed to bring in evidence brokers such as think tanks which will help in widening the pool of evaluators as well as widen dissemination using these important knowledge brokers. This could aid in the strengthening the impact of NES initiatives which could yield positive results with regards to the successful implementation of NES.

Academic institutions, think tanks and Evaluation Consultants.

Academic institutions and consultants have been commissioned to conduct evaluations which were co-funded by the DPME and other government departments. Some of the recommendations from these evaluations resulted in massive policy implication while no action was taken on others as stated by Participant 5:

“...the evaluation of the business processes services (BPS), I mean what we did there was amazing and made huge differences, and the BPS and the Global Business Services industry now in South Africa is one of the big promising one that's going to create every job for everyone in South Africa, that's what you hear the President and the 4IR strategy talking about”.

As Goldman et al., (2018) stated, the main involvement of the private sector is as consultants undertaking commissioned evaluations, or in some cases being part of the evaluation steering committees. In this regard, their involvement can help improve NES policies and utilisation of expert capacity that is available for reliable evaluations.

It was also indicated by the study findings that educational institutions have a role to play in the development of the NES as they are involved in the training of current and potential government employees in M&E skills. The study found that the competences that were developed by the DPME have been incorporated in the M&E courses that universities are offering as per Participant 1's assertion.

“we develop the competences, some of the universities, took on those competencies and incorporated them into the training they were doing”.

CLEAR AA at the University of Witwatersrand and Twende Mbele play a key role in training in evaluations including building the capacity of evaluators to conduct evaluations and government capacity to commission, undertake, manage and use evaluations (Goldman et al., 2018). By doing so, they improve the skills and knowledge of these employees about M&E which could contribute positively towards their appreciation of the importance of M&E initiatives. As such, think tank also play a role of providing feedback to the development of the NES which can bring positive outcomes. This is consistent with Participant 8 who states that,

“we have Twende Mbele and CLEAR-AA, they are providing also technical inputs in our documents”.

This could also assist in the development of the NES as they may be equipped with the necessary knowledge and experience to contribute positively towards this endeavour. This is supported by Participant 10 who states that:

“I think one of the big things when you think of an institution, like Wits and its influence on policy, first in education, there's an opportunity to educate the public sector, focus on M&E to study. So, when they are being taught Public and Development Management, they are putting in M & E”.

As alluded by Goldman et al. (2018) the fact that South Africa is one of those countries looking to institutionalise evaluation, working with the evaluation associations, universities and so on to provide the support system which will enable evaluation to flourish. However, Participant 3 questioned the calibre of graduates produced by these educational providers and criticised their focus on the theoretical aspects of M&E without the prerequisite practical experience needed to conduct evaluations. This is highlighted in his following statement:

“...there’s definitely enough education providers, whether or not they’re pumping out quality graduates is another question. And then there’s the work experience, you know....”.

There is a need to create more experiential opportunities for emerging evaluators, especially those of colour. Furthermore, data shows that in order to build competent capacity, educational institutions should ensure that their programmes not only provide the theoretical aspects of M&E but also create opportunities to practice those skills, in partnership with other stakeholders. This would produce a calibre of graduates, especially those of colour, who are able to engage meaningfully in the NES thus improving its policies, programmes and processes that contribute to good governance, transparency and accountability.

4.3.5.2. Advocating for accountability in NES

Enforcing evidence-based decision making

The DPME was reported to have a role in influencing accountability in the NES through M&E initiatives that promote evidence-based decisions. As such, M&E initiatives encourage politicians and those in positions of power to account for their actions as M&E reports may reflect areas of improvement that need to be acted on. In light of this, the politicians will be forced to account and report of their progress in terms of actions the recommendations identified areas of improvement. However, it was reported that some politicians may promise to use evidence-based decision making but may not actually do it as it may not reflect well on them. This may lead them to make decisions that advance their political careers at the expense of proper service delivery. This was highlighted by Participant 2 who stated that:

“...despite the fact that there is a national evaluation system in place, and it has been approved by cabinet, you will find that most ministers, haven’t really internalized that, and that when they design a new program, they do it on the basis of political whim, not on the basis of evidence”.

This is also supported by Participant 14 who states that:

“They used their political process to avoid implementing the resolutions that were contained in the report.... instead of the evidence being used, they get politicize. They just personalize these things around the personality that is in office”.

Mackay, (2010) emphasises that the intensive utilization of the M&E information in one or more stages of the policy cycle, information that meets standards of data quality and evaluation reliability; as well as sustainability, will aid the system to survive any change in administration, government ministers, or top officials.

Promoting home grown M&E solutions

The study also emphasised the importance of promoting home grown M&E solutions that are contextualised to the South African environment and that are of best interest to the country. It was highlighted that sometimes international organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have their own M&E process that they require countries have borrowed money for them to follow. However, these M&E activities are aimed at serving them and may not necessarily align with the interests of the countries who have borrowed from them. In view of this, the study suggested that home grown M&E solutions should be established that are understood by the citizen and that also work in the best interest of the country. This notion is supported by Participant 4 who stated:

“Firstly, I think it is important to have homegrown solutions about things. And I say, I think sometimes M&E is often associated with the dawn of new public management, where new systems were put in place by international organizations such as IMF, the World Bank and so forth, purely for accountability of the money that they give to countries and that came with some frameworks indicators, the language that is understood by those who give you money... But I think we must promote solutions that we have as Africans”.

Goldman et al., (2018) notes that African countries are moving to using theory of change and logic models as core elements of the process. It seems many countries are starting to adapt Western models of evaluation to local realities so to make the process of evaluation more efficient and effective.

Establishing stringent auditing that enforces accountability.

The study also pointed out that CSOs do not necessarily want to be in partnership with the government but some of them typically take an opposition stance on the government. This is because if they are in opposition to the government, they are able to monitor the activities of the government objectively and bring them to account. In this regard, Goldman et al. (2018) suggest that the involvement of CSOs can strengthen national M&E systems which can provide different points of view, that in turn enhance accountability whilst

keeping the pressure for implementation of the recommendations of evaluations. Otherwise, if the government is left unchecked it may become too corrupt beyond measure. This was supported by Participant 17 who stated that:

“...partnership is also not something which everybody, all non-state actors actually want, some civil society actually wanted to be in opposition to the state, because their activism is built on making sure that they hold the state accountable”.

Furthermore, Participant 6 indicates that by making the government accountable through auditing it ensures that all state actors are working in the best interest of the citizens and the country. In this regard, auditing and evaluations should not be done for the sake of doing them but they should have associated ramifications for those who abuse state resources by being brought to account for their actions. This endeavour would help to reduce corruption within government department which may lead to improved service delivery performance. This is supported by the following statement from Participant 6:

“I think that evaluations should have kind of accountability, auditing and some teeth behind checking if people are doing the job as they should be, because there's rampant corporate corruption in the South African government and people who don't do the jobs that they are supposed to. So as much as it should be, you know, useful, improving development outcomes, it should also be used for enhancing accountability, transparency about how public funds are being used”.

Encouraging transparency in public funding and expenditure

It was also pointed out that some of the CSOs who take an opposing and introspective stance on the government help to encourage transparent in public funding and expenditure. This ensures that allocated budget are being spent on the things they are budgeted for. The following statement from Participant 14 who stated that:

“Opposition parties and civil society organizations are doing a great deal to put matters in the spotlight that otherwise would never have been attended to... So, I raised this because civil society organizations often associated with the idea of being counter revolutionary, and those that come from the alliances of the ruling party, don't do much to help the situation, because they are part of the establishment. We need more independent voices who don't have self-interest to maintain any status quo”.

It was further indicated that the public or citizens also plays a role in encouraging transparency in public funding and expenditure as they have voice and power to bring

government officials and politicians to account particularly on corruption activities that do not need any scientific method to prove. This is supported by the following statement by Participant 14:

“And people without using any scientific method, they could see who perform well and who didn't. When they wanted to see the scores and how the decision was made, they were not forthcoming, so they went to court, and Parliament was forced to restart the whole process”.

4.3.5.3. Providing training, data and support tools

The study indicated that CSOs data contributions are important in strengthening the NES as they typically collaborate with government entities and in some cases, they provide evidence that can assist in the successful implementation of the NES. Participant 3 explained that CSOs typically have data that is important to DPME. Through collaborative work with CSOs, the DPME can access it without paying another consultant to collect the same data. This is supported by his following statement,

“lots of CSOs has data, and has access to information that you don't have to pay a consultant to go repeat collecting it, but you have to have a sort of ongoing system of collaboration to do that”.

This is supported by Participant 1:

“they [CSOs] are very important and they do participate in processes of NGOs, and they do take on some of the evidence that come from evaluations that are done by CSOs”.

Participant 15 highlighted the deliberate nature of ensuring the inclusion of civil society, with notable focus on sector specific engagements.

“it depends on the sector that you are in, the social sector has its own elements, as well as the education sector, so we do consult with the National department in terms of who they feel should be the correct representation with regard to civil society, we are really deliberate about that”. Participant 15

In this regard, CSOs are seen as important collaborative partners to government departments and the DPME, and they can help to boost the demand for the use of evaluation to inform evidence-based policy making. The study findings also suggested that conducting evaluation for the industrial innovation support program, environmental governance framework, the IDC and DTI helped DPME to come up with recommendations

that were useful in strengthening the NES. This was indicated by Participant 5 who stated that,

“...we did another evaluation for the industrial innovation support program that was really useful that we did for the IDC and DTI, now that was also a really good one. We did an evaluation of the environmental governance framework and I believe that information also fed good recommendations that were listened to”.

The study also revealed that the DPME contributed to sustaining the NES by instilling a culture of evidence-based decision making in various departments within the government. This endeavour helped to align these departments to M&E initiatives that would contribute positively towards the implementation of the NES. This was supported by the following statement by Participant 8:

“What DPME has now provided to government [departments], which people should appreciate, even if it's working at a snail's pace, is that now there are tools in government planning system, now everything that we're doing has got evidence, there's data that is collected, in as much as it's getting there slowly”.

As asserted by Goldman et al., (2015) that “a range of capacity development tools have been used, ranging from developing competencies for evaluation, learning-by-doing support through direct experience of undertaking evaluations, just-in-time short courses to help staff working on evaluation and building capacity of senior managers and MPs to demand and use evaluation results. This involves working with a wide range of stakeholders of which a key partner is the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR)”. The study also further revealed that DPME has a partnership with academic institutions which are involved in the training and development of M&E skills of employees within various government departments. This perception is supported by the following statement by Participant 15:

“DPME also has various partnerships with tertiary institutions, one of them Wits through CLEAR-AA, and the formalised course which is the Postgraduate Diploma in M&E as well as the Masters in monitoring and evaluation. So, we also we have partnerships with them, as well as with Stellenbosch University, and basically, they also have a master's degree M&E, they do it through the organization called Crest, and UCT also has a master's, and from what I understand a PhD”.

This results in the enhancement of the skills of the government employees which in turn

reinforces efforts towards the implementation of the NES. The study findings further revealed that CSOs and educational institutions are quite instrumental in helping to build the capacity of NES. It was pointed out that DPME sometimes collaborates with CSOs and/or educational institutions to develop M&E courses and trainings that are aimed at developing the M&E skills of the people who will be involved in the roll-out of the NES. Also, it was also pointed out that some of the educational institutions identify M&E skills that are lacking in government employees and then incorporate them into their courses and training material. This helps to build the capacity of the NES. It was also reported that the coordination between the CSOs and educational institutions is typically facilitated by SAMEA. This is supported by the following statement from Participant 1:

“So, we originally had a collaboration with CLEAR, they were involved in developing our initial courses. We also did the presentations to all the universities so that they would see what we were trying to do and the types of skills and capacity and they understood the processes we were undertaking etc. And then also SAMEA played quite a good coordinating role in terms of linking with DPME and the higher education institutions”.

Furthermore, the study also indicated that most of the top executive have received adequate training on M&E initiatives but the implementors which are the middle managers and people on the ground have to receive such training. In view of this, it was pointed out that it is integral to build the M&E skills and knowledge of these people as it is critical for the development of capacity of the NES. This was highlighted by Participant 9 when he stated that:

“So, the understanding on the role of M&E is still very critical. Work was done at an executive level which is okay, our director generals and other senior people are fine... the need [now is] to focus on middle managers, because these are the doers, and for managers to be able to say something, it's because of how the middle manager did everything”.

Additionally, the study also indicated that although CSOs and educational institutions play a significant role in the building capacity of the NES. It is actually the responsibility of the National School of Government to train government officials. This is an agreement with Participant 8 who stated that:

“The National School of Government is legislated to train government officials, that is their responsibility in government, so we do work closely with them, especially on capacity development”.

As such, DPME was reported to be also working closely with the National School of Government in building the capacity for the NES. This collaboration is critical for the induction of new public servants and when there are changes in evaluation roles within government departments in order to retain institutional memory on evaluation activities.

4.3.6. Strategies for engaging stakeholders in the NES

For stakeholders to meaningfully contribute and add value to the NES in South Africa, a deliberate participatory approach had to be employed, which they viewed to be a condition of democracy, central to building a stable and responsive society with legitimate institutions. This approach was adopted by the DPME, as the central unit responsible for the NES, during the inception of the system by instituting the following strategies.

4.3.6.1. Collaboration and multi-departmental teams

In spite of the political changes that came with the 2014 elections, one of the strategies that the DPME used in the early years of the NES, was to engage with stakeholders in its development. This collaboration was done in various ways, such as forming multi-departmental teams that would gather to share and discuss ideas on how M&E initiatives may be improved which fed into the development of the NES. This is highlighted in the following statement by Participant 1:

“Right from the beginning, I think that really was important and then we used that nucleus of people to establish what we called an evaluation technical working group to steer the evaluation system ...”.

Participant 1 went on to further point out that multi-departmental teams were selected from different government departments to form the evaluation technical working group, which ensured representativeness and fostered transparency of the NES development process. Participant 1 elaborated that,

“...we had a workshop with the same set of people, we brainstormed what we thought a national evaluation plan should be. We together came up with the concept of a plan and how it would work, how we would select evaluations ...we would meet at least twice a year. And it was that group that actually selected the evaluations, so it was a cross government group that did the selection wasn't just the DPME”.

Moreover, Goldman et al. (2015) stated that a cross-government Evaluation Technical Working Group was used as a sounding board and to advocate for the system. This may also have helped in fostering collaboration and multi-departmental teams which had a positive impact on the successful initial roll-out of the NES.

According to Participant 9, there are various mechanisms that the DPME used to obtain buy-in for M&E initiatives and this includes involving government departments in various M&E activities including conferences. This assisted in getting their inputs and perspectives on various M&E initiatives and by incorporating their ideas and suggestions facilitated their buy-in and support when NES policies were introduced. This is highlighted in Participant 9's following statement:

“So, the other mechanisms that we put in place to ensure that we get buy in from department we involve them in various activities that we do to promote evaluations in government and monitoring in government”.

Furthermore, collaboration was done with other stakeholders such as the National School of Government which would collaborate with the DPME when it comes to the creation of courses and training programs to improve the M&E skills and knowledge of public servants. This is corroborated by Participant 9:

“We host a lot of capacity development sessions in various forms, to try to stimulate the understanding so that buy in can be there... we have a series of capacity development programs that we implement collaboratively with National School of Government is another way of stimulating and getting buy-in”.

Additionally, Participant 9 further points out that the DPME is an oversight department and not an implementing department. In view of this, collaboration is very important as it help the DPME to perform its duties by working together with other departments in the development of the NES. This is supported by his following statement:

“...that was very important for DPME in order to do our main task is to oversee. We are an oversight department, not an implementing department. So, key collaboration and working together... we need understanding and cordial relationship from them [implementing departments]”.

Stewart et al., (2018) stated that “the NSG is legally mandated to hold compulsory training courses for all prospective public services thus serve an endogenous body for evidence

informed decision-making capacity building”. The data illustrates that this would ensure that the M&E initiatives become institutionalised in all levels of government thus improving accountability and therefore the development efforts of the country. This would also ensure that new and up-to-date knowledge around M&E and the ongoing evolution of the NES is continuously communicated which would improve relations between key departments such as the DPSA, Treasury, Auditor-General and so on.

4.3.6.2. Forums

The study findings also suggested that the DPME used forums as one of the strategies for engaging stakeholders in the NES development processes. In this regard, forums created and facilitated the engagement of different stakeholders such as people from the Premiers’ offices and M&E practitioners. By conducting forums and providing this level of transparency, different stakeholders would engage and debate ideas which in the process initiated policy change and improvement which helped the efforts towards the development of the NES. This is supported by Participant 2 who stated that,

“Over and above that we also had a forum with the M&E people from all the premiers’ offices in the provinces, who we engaged with on the various drafts and asked them for inputs. And in addition to that we actually went and visited premiers’ offices and made presentations and what we were doing and asked for their inputs... And the evaluation branch had some forums where they consulted with M&E practitioners, outside of government as well, and got the inputs and views on the evaluation policy as we developed it”.

Forums provided the opportunity for provincial leadership, who are also political principals, to embrace the NES and perhaps champion that process at that level and even at local municipalities. It is important to note that political support is an essential driver to launch and fund the NES exercise, lead the change in organisational culture that may be needed, provide the NES champion(s), ensure an enabling environment, deflect resistance to M&E and the changes it might imply, and help ensure the long-term sustainability of the NES (Lahey, 2015).

4.3.6.3. Discussions and study tours

It was further indicated that discussions and study tours were one of the strategies used by the DPME to engage stakeholders in the development of the NES. Moreover, early

engagement of departments in discussions was also reported to bring to light some important insights that would help in the implementation of the NES. Participant 1 supports this notion in his following statement:

“So, at the beginning, we found out who was doing evaluation at the time, there was the Public Service Commission, there was [department of] social development, there was [department of] education and might have been one more department, they were really the only departments that were doing evaluations at the time. So, we involved them in the discussions from the beginning, and then we took them on the study tour”.

This also indicated that some of the employees in government departments went on study tours in order to bolster their knowledge and skills related to M&E initiatives. This would then help them to make meaningful and informed contributions to the development of the NES.

4.3.6.4. Formal consultations

The study also revealed that DPME initially utilised formal consultations with various stakeholders and this helped in the development of the NES. This is because by engaging stakeholders, ideas can be shared and issues with the current policies can be pointed out so that they can be addressed. This is in agreement with Participant 1 who stated that:

“So, once we drafted the policy, we then went on a consultation process, so we consulted with the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) and we had a sort of like a formal consultation. We consulted other stakeholders, CLEAR-Anglophone Africa got involved, they have just been established, and they got involved also in that process then. And so, the main consultation was through SAMEA and I think we had a couple of regional meetings where we discussed it as well”.

Abrahams (2015) also further points out that DPME and SAMEA have an on-going collaboration with separate MoUs with each government department. This collaboration has assured SAMEA’s ability to successfully run its biennial conferences and sustain its membership. SAMEA as a national association viewed an independent voice, a critical friend that provides expert advice to the DPME – the custodian of M&E within government.

4.3.6.5. Biannual conferences

The collaboration of DPME and SAMEA culminated in the co-hosting of biannual conferences as one the strategies used to engage stakeholders in the development and

implementation of the NES. These conferences were important in obtaining buy-in to SAMEA from various stakeholders as there was typically sharing of ideas and constructive debates that also help to enrich the development of the NES. Furthermore, it was pointed that these biannual conferences were also platforms in which CSOs can also give their inputs and engage with various government departments and with other CSOs in the process creating a space of constructive dialogue. This type of sharing and learning platform could also lead to gaining positive evaluation outcomes in the development of the NES. This is supported by the following statement from Participant 18:

“And I think the biannual conferences become a great opportunity to kind of hear from experts and engage in that space. I think that has enriched the system since it started, its [DPME] participation and buy-in to SAMEA has been consistent over time and I think that's been excellent. And then I think there's like, kind of both the academic and kind of advocacy space where civil society [organisations] can just network on its own, kind of critique, prompt or engage”.

Additionally, it was indicated that the DPME also sometimes collaborates with CSOs to gain their input into the development of the NES even though it is not always possible due to some evaluations being private. But it was nevertheless indicated that their input is very important as they typically have experience in conducting evaluations and maybe quick to identify areas of potential improvement which would help in the overall development of the NES. This is supported by Participant 3 who stated that:

“So, I mean, one of the things we're working with the DPME is getting more civil society input into the NES and so we're starting small. But like basically there is very little mandate or opportunity for non-government folks to be involved in either the evaluation system more broadly or evaluations and especially when some of those evaluations are very private, looking into the service delivery and all that”.

This was also corroborated by Participant 15 who highlights that CSOs are typically invited in some of DPME's stakeholder workshops to contribute and add their inputs which could be potentially useful in the development of the NES. He points this out in his following statement:

“...civil society entities, especially relevant NGOs, they get brought into the various stakeholder workshops that we have, when we come to the fore with the initial findings, post the field work. We actually invite them to our stakeholder workshops in that way. So

that's how we've bring the element of civil society in and of course, depending on that specific evaluation”.

However, the participation of external stakeholders in this technical working group seems to be limited as Participant 17 described it as a closed space:

“What could possibly happen is that, maybe if you're invited into that space from the outside like on the evaluation technical Working Group, which is quite a closed space, I feel quite privileged that CLEAR-AA has been invited to be part of that working group. Because I think we are the only ones that's external everybody else is from the state”.

Participant 9 proposed that engagements around evaluations between civil society and government departments could start small and bring the CSO network together. He highlighted this in the following statement:

“So, I think, starting initially with policy dialogues and we can start small if is an NGO that can, as civil society organization that can put together their teams and open up to say, ‘Okay, I’ll try and make sure that my other colleagues come on board’. We start small with seminars, policy dialogues, and all those”.

The CSOs like CLEAR-AA therefore have the obligation of advocate that this space to be opened a bit wider for the inclusion of more diverse voices who have a concrete stake in shaping public agendas and policy-forming activities as alluded by Tomkiv et al., (2017). Therefore, these strategies need to be purposely driven and coordinated in order to mobilise the available relevant data/information, expertise and leverage resources advancing the aims of the NES.

4.4. Concluding Summary

This chapter identified the key themes of the study, presented and discussed the findings emanating from the data collected as well as provided insight of the different roles of various stakeholders involved in the NES. The study acknowledged that although there are still several challenges facing the NES and a number of obstacles both within and outside the DPME. The study found that mobilising the knowledge, expertise and sometimes resources of various stakeholders, built momentum in creating awareness of the importance of M&E, building evaluation capacity and sustaining the conduct of evaluations. This resulted in the credibility of the NES and its aims to promote good governance, facilitate *accountability* and improve service delivery.

Therefore, the study made it apparent that the involvement of stakeholders at different stages of the NES and employing deliberate engagement strategies helped change perceptions about M&E in government departments, aided the provision of resources for evaluations, encouraged the expansion of relevant M&E capacity development programmes and courses as well as the professionalisation of evaluation practice to address capacity deficit issues in the sector. It was further noted that the DPME should be given the authority and political support necessary to facilitate the implementation of evaluation recommendations with implementors of the NES, thus ensuring its sustainability in the long run.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

With most of the developing countries embarking of a trajectory to develop their own country-led monitoring and evaluation systems to support good governance, transparency and accountability. Several authors have emphasized the need to involve stakeholders in a country in order to develop and maintain an effective national monitoring and evaluation system. According to Tomkiv et al., (2017) the practice of involving limited parties with a direct and concrete stake in shaping public issues and agendas, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organizations or institutions responsible for policy development is the very definition of stakeholder participation. This study aimed to investigate the different roles played by various stakeholders involved in the South Africa's national monitoring and evaluations system and their effect on this system.

The study identified the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency as the central coordination unit, government departments at national, provincial and local level as implementing agencies, Parliament, Civil Society Organisations as accountability partners as well as SAMEA, Academic Institutions, think tanks and consultancy as knowledge brokers. This corresponds with the description of stakeholders within government as boundary partners and those outside government as non-governmental organisations offered by Goldman et al., (2019).

This chapter concludes the study by providing an overview of the research findings, practical recommendations for the different stakeholders to strengthen national monitoring and evaluation systems in developing countries, thereafter, suggest areas for further research will be made at the end.

5.2. Overview of the Research Findings

5.2.1. The role of the DPME

The study found that the role of the DPME in coordinating the involvement of stakeholders during the early development stages of the NES was found to be instrumental in fostering collaboration. This was done by exposing members of parliament, senior executives in government and other stakeholders outside of

government to the latest evaluation practice around the world through study tours, formal consultations, forums as well as conferences, thus facilitating strong buy-in.

The study also discovered that the pilot evaluations that the DPME initiated in collaboration with the Departments of Social Development, Basic Education, Environmental Affairs and others, catapulted the development of practice informed evaluation guidelines, tools and standards, which are accessible for use on an online repository. This helped guide the conduct of evaluation at national and provincial levels of government, and even increased the demand for evaluations by cabinet. The deliberate approach employed and focused strategies utilised by the DPME to ensure representativeness of stakeholders, encourage collaboration and transparency, and enable mutual learning, became the catalyst for the implementation of the NES. This galvanised stakeholders inside and outside government to enact their roles thus strengthened South Africa's NES.

The study found that this was possible due to initial political support, visionary leadership and a strong desire to improve the country's development goals from different levels of government. However, the study findings also pointed out inherent challenges that exist in developing NES which included sporadic understanding of the importance of M&E, capacity deficits, and resource limitation. These challenges were later exacerbated by shortcomings in leadership as well as divergent political agendas during transitional periods.

5.2.2. The role of government departments

The study found that when the importance of M&E is not understood, the NES is weakened due to lack of buy-in from government stakeholders. It was indicated that government departments should improve transparency about the M&E initiatives and processes through the provision of relevant information, participation in M&E activities and availability of training opportunities for better governance, accountability and the delivery of services to South African citizenry. The awareness of M&E initiatives was indicated to be predominately high at the national level but mediocre at provincial and community level. This was believed to be something that would negatively affect the implementation of NES in South Africa.

The study found that the early involvement of government departments allowed the NES to test out the developed evaluation resources when conducting evaluations thus creating opportunity for improvement and refinement. Due to the collaborative manner that was adopted during the development of the NES, the study indicated that government department had a level of ownership which inspired them to co-create processes and co-fund evaluations. However, the capacity deficits within government departments hindered the embedding of M&E activities, therefore, evaluation action was not maximised to benefit programme initiatives. The study also found that capacity deficit that exist is not just the availability of qualified experienced M&E practitioners in the evaluation sector, it was also due to the attrition of knowledgeable senior officials who had the institutional memory to drive the NES. The lack of a systematic handover/transitional measures to retain institutional memory severely weakened the NES and lost the momentum that was initially built.

Although government departments are willing to co-create processes, co-fund commissioned evaluations, the study found that there were still challenges with signing off completed evaluations, implementing the recommendations as well as following up on the implementation plans especially when the results are not favourable. This weakened the NES and the DPME still struggled with holding these departments to account, unlike the Auditor General whose actions had direct budgetary implication which is frightening for government departments. Government departments also have the ability to halt the activities of the NES when its leadership is hostile and dictatorial, this study discovered.

This study recognised that the DPSA is noted as responsible for human resources and public sector performance, and National Treasury for budget allocation and accountability, this resulted in some boundary issues and overlap with the DPME. These overlapping roles between National Treasury, DPSA and DPME continued to create tensions which require urgent resolutions least they hinder the achievement of good governance and accountability which the NES aspires towards.

5.2.3. The role of Parliament

In this study, it was also confirmed that parliamentarians are responsible for holding the executive accountable therefore there are sporadic request for evaluations to be

conducted on some programmes. However, it was indicated that there was a lack of administrative capacity within parliament inhibited the timeous engagement with evaluation results. Also, although during the early phase of the NES, members of parliaments especially those who were part of the Standing Committee of Public Accounts (SCOPA) were trained and exposed to M&E activities which provided greater buy-in and build capacity for parliamentarians, nearly all members of SCOPA were changed when changes in administration took place, leaving a large capacity gap.

It was also found that policies and processes are not adequately adhered to when there are disputes regarding the findings or recommendations in reports presented at cabinet. Instead of bringing the matter through the courts, as per the described procedure, parliamentarians seem to defer to political agendas, and bias thus subverting the accountability mechanisms that are put in place. The study also discovered that members of parliament play a role in monitoring service delivery issues in their constituency during the parliamentary recess period. However, the parliamentary recess is taken as a de-facto holiday with little engagement with constituency members thus rendering this process ineffective to their overall oversight role. The evaluative role of parliament was indicated to be weak due to political self-interest and lack of enforcement of processes as well as the attrition of knowledgeable champions who were initially trained.

5.2.4. The role of the SAMEA-VOPE

The study also found that played a crucial role in linking the DPME and academic institutions and therefore, through the collaboration and mutual learning process, areas in need of improvement came to the fore. These included the professionalisation of evaluation practice and lack of capacity within government to conduct evaluation. which led to concerted efforts to collaborate with the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, a voluntary organisation for professional evaluation to help promote evaluation as a profession. This partnership resulted in the develop the competences and standards, co-hosting of biannual conferences and consultative workshops, which supported that continuous learning of evaluators in South Africa and more directly for the NES, access to new research and innovative approaches to enable it to evolve and potentially become a learning entity. The conferences created a space for evaluation

practitioners to network, share best practice and exchange ideas thus help improve policies and encourage the use of evaluation data.

5.2.5. The role of Academic institutions, think tanks and consultancies.

The findings of the study showed that academic institutions do not only conduct evaluation capacity development programmes, but they also get commissioned to conduct evaluations by the state. Their expertise provided integrity of the evaluations process and a level of authority to their results. This study also brought to bear the need for government departments including the DPME to work together with universities/academic institutions, think-tank and consultancies like CLEAR-AA and Twende Mbele who are able to provide their expertise of conducting evaluations, build capacity and create opportunities for peer learning.

The inclusion of competencies that were developed by government in evaluation capacity development programmes was viewed as a step in the right direction. There was, however, a call to restructure the evaluation capacity building programme that academic institutions, were viewed to be theory driven with no clear plan of incorporating experiential opportunities to new evaluators. This seemed to be a particular frustration/criticism as it intensified the credibility of evaluation practitioners in view of lack of available formal evaluation undergraduate qualifications. However, in view of this disparity, the study also noted that universities have started creating undergraduate courses with M&E as a focus, there already were post graduate course in M&E and the plead was that more practical aspects be included. The research aspect of this group continues to build a body of knowledge that government and the sector as whole can tap into therefore solidification the aims of the NES.

5.2.6. The Role of Civil Society Organisations

The study confirmed that CSOs are regarded as an important stakeholder due to their proximity of the citizens on the ground. However, it was also found that their involvement was sector specific with Departments of Health, Social Development and Basic Education (among other) leading the way with the deliberate involvement of CSOs. Consequently, government commitment to participation relationship and relationship built over time as articulated by Ariffin & Alizar, (2016) will foster trust, accountability and

mutual learning between government and CSOs. CSOs are able to share critical information that can influence policies and improve programme implementations.

It was also determined that some CSOs prefer to be in opposition with the government in order to critic and put pressure on non-delivery of services or to highlight any misuse of public funds. This maintained their objectivity and independence thus solidify their aim of holding government accountable. The complexity of the relationship between government and CSOs acts as a double-edged sword which can sometimes strengthen or hinder the objectives of the NES.

5.2.7. The role of donors and international development agencies

It was pointed out that there is limited availability of resources to sponsor M&E initiatives to champion NES in SA. Moreover, it was also revealed that the donors that may fund some of the M&E initiatives have their own objectives and priorities that may not necessarily be in alignment with those of NES due to competing priorities. This ultimately creates a situation in which the priorities of the NES may not receive sufficient funds to be actioned which may lead to poor implementation of NES.

The study confirmed that although donors do not have a seat at the Technical Working Group, they are able to bring in financial resources that support the activities of the NES and technical expertise. Their financial support has also funded evaluation research initiatives whose results has influence the evaluation body of knowledge over the years. It was strongly expressed that donor financial support and technical expertise was only accepted if it is aligned with South Africa's objectives. A lot of donor funding also supported the development of evaluation capacity development programmes and training for emerging evaluators. These training initiatives helped to mitigate against some of the capacity deficit that existed during the establishment of the NES. However, there seems to be differing views regarding the extent to which donors and international development agencies are funding M&E initiatives in South Africa. There seems to be a perception that with South Africa being categorised as a middle-income country, most donors have opted to prioritise lower income country in Southern Africa.

The overall findings of the study seem to suggest that South Africa's NES development trajectory is divided into 2 distinct periods that vastly directed its complex course. The

initial period was full of vision and innovation as various stakeholders collaborated to develop a policy framework, pilot evaluations, develop guidelines, standards and tools that shaped the implementation of the NES. The study findings also revealed that stakeholders are able to strengthen the NES in three spheres which are: i) providing M&E training, funding, evaluation data and support tools, ii) improving policies to assist in the successful implementation of NES and iii) advocating for accountability in NES. This was followed by a tumultuous period where political and executive support for the NES seemed to wane. There was little collaboration among stakeholders which contributed to a lack of trust, attrition of skills and loss of institutional capacity which affected the demand for evaluations and budget allocation for such evaluations.

The challenges that South Africa faces in view of the political and institutional space in which it operates are not unique, but they seem to be intensified by lack of political will and changes in leadership which slowed the momentum that the DPME had initially built as well as the deliberative stakeholder approach it had previously used. This had a profound impact within the DPME and government departments as well as with stakeholders outside government. These challenges seem to affect NES implementation in several spheres such as leadership, collaboration and synergy within government departments and with stakeholders, decision making, resources, perception of M&E initiatives and the extend of authority and power of DPME. In light of this, the identified challenges are big, and their scope is wider and they may adversely affect the successful implementation of NES. As such, swift action needs to be taken to resolve these identified challenges with the hope of improving the successful implementation of NES in South Africa. Recently, however, there has been an indication of some effort being made to rebuild and recover lost gains of the initial approach in order to revive the NES, therefore working and collaborating with various stakeholders is quite necessary for the successful implementation and sustainability of the NES.

5.3. Recommendations of the study

Recommendations for central coordinating units

- a) The DPME through the Presidency should align the functions of the with budgeting offices (Treasuries, national and provincial) and performance management of public

servants (DPSA). The collaboration of these 3 departments would eliminate tension that exist and improve accountability and transparency.

- b) The DPME should improve its own internal administrative culture to eliminate the silo mentality by facilitating collaboration between difference branches of the DPME and that feedback loops are consciously fostered.
- c) If the DPME aims to regain the momentum built during the initial phase of the establishment of the NES, it should reinstitute the strategies it employed such as focused training for parliamentarians and senior managers at national, provincial and local government. The use of formal consultations, forums and conferences to gain buy-in and facilitate collaboration.

Recommendations for implementing agencies/departments/ministries.

- a) A concerted effort needs to be made to orientate all public servants, at all levels of government especially provincial and local levels, of the importance of monitoring and evaluation of programmes that they implement. This could be done through induction programmes and other periodic development programmes which could be conducted in partnership with the National School of Government, which already has the mandate for government training and capacity development. This awareness would improve the efficiency of monitoring and the demand for evaluations as well as eradicate the idea of evaluations being viewed as punitive. As such, increasing awareness of M&E initiatives at both provincial and community level may help to yield positive results for the NES.
- b) There is an urgent need to align the policy-cycle, the evaluation cycle and the budget cycle for improved planning and accountability which would strengthen the NES and other oversight mechanisms government has at their disposal.
- c) A uniform funding approach should be developed which would increase the demand for evaluations at national, provincial and local levels.
- d) Overall, if it recommended that all stakeholders inside government should be creative in the way they speak, use and demonstrate the value of evaluations to ensure its buy-in and sustainability.

Recommendation for VOPEs

- a) SAMEA should explore becoming an evaluation accreditation body, like the South African Institute for Chartered Accountants or South Africa Council for Educators, able to facilitate the professionalization of evaluation practice. This affiliation would give legitimacy to evaluation as a career and attract diverse people to the profession.
- b) The partnership between SAMEA and the DPME has to be well defined, if SAMEA's role is to be an independent voice it should be cautious of any bias and perception of conflict of interest especially if DPME funds activities like the conferences.

Recommendation of Academic Institutions, Think tanks and consultancies.

- a) Popularize the undergraduate degrees on M&E to attract more people into the profession thus create pool evaluators for the sector.
- b) Academic institutions should formalize their collaboration with the private sector such as think tanks and consultancies to provide trainee evaluators the opportunity to gain practical experience which would strengthen the skills, they have learnt in the lecture rooms.

Recommendation for Civil Society Organisations

- a) More CSOs, especially those that have a national footprint, should be invited to become members of the Evaluations Technical Working Group. Their participation could be sector or context specific, but their inclusion would elevate the presence of diverse local voices. As Tomkiv et al., (2017) demonstrated representativeness is a value add to the policy making process.
- b) CSOs used platforms such as conferences, forums, and formal consultations share their expertise and to collaborate with government departments at all levels. This could foster meaningful engagement and alignment of priorities which could fast track the country's development goals.
- c) CSOs should also advocacy and put pressure on government to ensure that the evaluation recommendations and the improvement plans are implemented in order to ensure that departments are held accountable for spending public funds and to improve service delivery. This will also boost the demand for and use of evaluations.

Recommendations for parliaments

- a) Members of parliament should be oriented regarding their oversight role and how M&E initiative enhance their ability to make evidence informed decisions.
- b) Parliamentarians should be encouraged to demand evaluations especially for those government activities that seems less prioritized.
- c) The administrative capacity of parliament should be systematically developed in order to produce accurate, timeous and good quality reports for the various portfolio committees.
- d) Information of the latest M&E developments should be periodically shared with parliamentarians so they can keep abreast of new insights which would make them more responsive to the development priorities.
- e) Specific mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that parliamentary processes and procedures are adhered to and regularly enforced.
- f) Parliamentarians should endeavour to build trust with citizens by exercising the oversight duties fostering accountability and transparency as articulated in Tomkiv et al., (2017)'s framework to limit any coercive behaviour.
- g) As advocated by Zantsi, (2020) , members of parliaments should periodically assessment their own evaluative role and adjust accordingly in order to facilitate accountability, transparency and good governance.

The deliberate efforts as the key to mobilizing the expertise of different stakeholders that foster good governance, build capacity with a balance of the theoretical underpinnings and evaluation experience supported by political vision and senior managers who set the right institutional culture that is agile and responsive to the country's context and development goals/aspirations will strengthen the NES.

5.4. Areas for Proposed Further Research

This study provides scope for further research in which other aspect of a country's monitoring and evaluation systems can be subjected to detailed exploration. The following topics are suggested for research in related fields:

- a) A quantitative study on the roles of stakeholders in strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems, would allow for the results that a generalizable and comparable.
- b) Approaches to capacity development initiative in order to facilitate the implementation of the NES.
- c) Cooperative strategies to align the policy-cycle, the evaluation cycle and the budget cycle for improved planning and accountability.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Interview Guide

1. Background Information

Some information that will help me describe the sample:

a) Please state your name, surname and current professional status.

b) Are you involved with any monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and/or projects?

c) Have ever been involved in the National Monitoring and Evaluation System in South Africa?

i. How did you get involved?

ii. In what capacity were you involved in the NES? As a representative of an institution or as an individual?

iii. Please describe your role and responsibilities in the process. What is the nature of your involvement/your role?

iv. How long were you involved in the NES?

v. How has your involvement changed over time?

2. Representativeness

a) Which stakeholders were involved in the development of the NES in South Africa?

b) Do you think the participants, including those within government, in this process are representative of evaluation ecosystems? And why?

c) How should government have ensured inclusivity in this process? **OR** Describe how government ensured the inclusion of relevant stakeholders in this process?

d) What platforms exist for stakeholders to engage with government about the system?

i. How often do they take place?

ii. What is the notification period for upcoming engagements?

iii. Who facilitates these 'events' and why?

- e) Do you think that the stakeholders understand their roles within the NES?
- i. If not, why not?
 - ii. If so, who and how are these roles defined?
-
- f) What do you believe is expected of the different groupings within the NES ecosystem?
- i. Government Departments
 - ii. VOPE
 - iii. Donors
 - iv. Parliamentarians
 - v. Civil Society Organizations
-

- g) To what extent are issues discussed and highlighted representative for societal views?
-

3. Independence

- a) How is/was conflict of interest of stakeholders handled during the process?
-
- b) How are decisions made about the framing of the issues to be discussed?
- i. To what extent are stakeholders involved in framing the discussion agenda?
-
- c) Throughout your involvement with the system, where there ever any areas of its development, its institutionalization or maintenance that needed to be considered or addressed but were not?
- i. How did you bring attention to this?
 - ii. How were this resolved, if ever?
-

4. Early Involvement

- a) What advantages would the early involvement of specific stakeholders provide to the development, operationalization and maintenance of the NES?
-
- b) What disadvantages would the early involvement of stakeholders provide to the development, operationalization and maintenance of the NES?
-

- c) What are some of the challenges you experienced as a stakeholder within the NES?
- i. How, if ever, were these challenges resolved?
 - ii. If not, what solutions would you propose?
-

- d) What are some of the benefits that came out of your involvement with the NES?
-

5. Influence

- a) How does/ did your role within the system influence its functioning or sustainability?
-

- b) To what extent do you think stakeholders are able to influence the actions of government?

- i. Government Departments
 - ii. VOPE
 - iii. Donors
 - iv. Parliamentarians
 - v. Civil Society Organizations
-

- c) How outcomes of various stakeholder engagements and inputs implemented?
-

6. Transparency

- a) What criteria is/was used to select the participants involved in the development, institutionalization and maintenance of the NES?
-

- b) How transparent do you think the engagement of stakeholders is in the development, institutionalization and maintenance of the NES?
-

- c) What recommendations could you make to improve the process?
-

7. Accountability

- a) What measures have been put in place within the system for stakeholders to hold government accountable?
-

b) Which mechanism do the different stakeholder groups use to hold government accountable for its actions?

c) How do you provide feedback about the system to government?
i. How do you know if your feedback has been considered or acted upon?

d) How do different stakeholders hold each other accountable for the roles and responsibilities that they have to the system?

e) How do the different stakeholder groupings exact roles of oversight within the system?

8. Learning

a) Do you feel that you/your institution are/have made a useful contribution to the system? In what ways?

b) What could have been done differently to maximize or to make your contribution more useful to the system?

c) What can the government do to leverage the expertise of stakeholders which could contribute to the strengthening and sustainability of the NES?

d) What kind of capacity building initiatives would you recommend to ensure that the different groupings are able to exercise their roles effectively within the NES ecosystem?

- a. Public Servants
 - b. VOPE
 - c. Donors
 - d. Parliamentarians
 - e. Civil Society Organizations
-

e) To what extent do/would capacity building initiatives for stakeholders contribute to the strengthening and sustainability of the NES?

f) What changes would you suggest to ensure maximum involvement, influence and effectiveness of stakeholders in order to strengthen the system as a whole?

g) Is there anything else that you would like to say about the involvement of stakeholders, inside or outside in South Africa's National Monitoring and Evaluation System?

Thank you for taking the time for this interview.