Leadership: The Means to Ensure Efficiency and Effectiveness in Monitoring and Evaluation in the Public Sector in South Africa

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of any Public Service is to deliver effective services to citizens in order to improve their quality of life. Unfortunately this is not the case in South Africa as the performance of the public service to deliver quality services is often questioned against alleged financial irregularities, maladministration and corruption and mismanagement.

To address the situation some form of performance measurement is thus inevitable. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can play an important role in this regard but with a need for active citizenry where two-way information gathering and sharing between citizens and government takes place. M&E practices could enable citizens to communicate their grievances and seek redress at the point of delivery and thus provide on-going insights into service delivery. Although the benefits of using M&E include improvements in transparency, accountability, learning, feedback and productivity, should cognisance be taken of the danger of ignoring professional judgement and not seeking a nuanced understanding of the underlying reasons for good or poor performance. Unintended consequences can be the manipulation of results, ignoring non-targeted areas, alienation of professional staff, increase in bureaucracy and blocking innovation and learning. It was, however, found that evaluation in government is still only applied sporadically and is not adequately informing planning, policy-making and budgeting.

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It is therefore important that on an institutional level M&E capacity development should involve providing technical support in the form of guidelines, advice, tools and frameworks related to improving M&E processes, structures, resources and infrastructure. This requires strong, ethical leadership and does citizen-based monitoring and participatory M&E approaches proved practical opportunities to build this leadership culture in society. Ethical leadership is also responsible to ensure that M&E findings result in consequences where there is poor performance and no serious attempt at improvement.

1. INTRODUCTION

An efficient public service is vital to a well-functioning country that maximises its developmental potential and the welfare of its citizens. The public service should play a particularly important role in developing countries, working to extend services and reduce inequalities, and demonstrating to citizens that their society is capable of organising itself in an efficient way. In Africa and specifically South Africa the public service is unfortunately rapidly gaining a reputation for inefficiency, corruption and incompetence as governmental institutions routinely receive qualified audits, thereby undermining, rather than maximising, the developmental potential of the country [1,2].

A manner to address this situation is through the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems to evaluate individual as well as institutional performances in terms of policies, programmes and projects. In government these control mechanisms should be understood within the context of the specific institutional characteristics and the dynamics of the environments in which they are functioning. Apart from the traditional political, social, economic and physical environments, the governing and managerial functions of legislators/politicians and officials have become so complicated and challenging that it requires continuous and ingenious planning to meet the demands of their communities in such a way that they are able to stand the test of accountability. To address this, ethical leadership can play a meaningful role.

Ethical leadership, seen as either the behaviour of an individual or the organization as unit of analysis, creates a culture that integrates what the organization claims it believe and how it actually behaves in a critical element in optimizing organizational performances [3]. Ethical leadership should thus make the organization more relevant, create and propose innovative problem solving solutions, and see to that policies which were introduced to address the changes been brought about by modernization and transformation, are effectively implemented. This also applies to the monitoring and evaluation measures created by government. The objective of the paper is to determine the role of ethical leadership in monitoring and evaluation in order to enhance service delivery and institutional performance.

Examples of ethical leadership and monitoring and evaluation systems are present in South Africa. However, a lack of service delivery and performance still exist and therefore necessitates the research. Regarding the research method, a literature study of appropriate primary sources containing authoritative publications, books, journals, the internet and official documents such as departmental policies will be conducted to gather information, while the field operations include interviews with practitioners and academics in the field of public administration and management.

2. MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN PERSPECTIVE

The questions of how citizens can be confident that they receive high quality public services, how service providers can compare their performance with others and encourage a culture of continuous improvement, and how governments can be sure that public services are effectively, efficiently and equitably provided, necessitate that some form of performance measurement is inevitable. According to Pidd [4] can the reasons for measuring performance be consolidated in the following table when analyzing the contributions of Bird et al. (2003), Behn (2003) and Poister (2003/2010). Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of mechanisms that can be implemented to evaluate performance.

Although a variety of mechanisms are identified to measure performance, is it evident that monitoring and evaluation form an integral part of evaluating individual as well as governmental institutional performances in terms of policies, programmes and projects and will attention subsequently be focused on these aspects.

2.1 Monitoring Defined, Monitoring Variables and Techniques

Monitoring ensures that policies, programmes and projects are on track to achieve desired results as envisaged in the planning process. It furthermore ensures an alignment and relationship between policies and activities of government, the effective utilization of resources, the progress and execution of activities, the generation of information on inputs, outputs and outcomes, and identifies the need for corrective action if necessary [5]. According to Pauw, Woods, Van der Linde, Fourie and Visser [6] should the variables of *costs, time* and *quality* be taken into consideration to determine the effectiveness of any activity. Feedback from the focus group discussions highlighted that currently the South African government regards output and outcomes as more important than inputs when *costs* of government activities are measured. It should, however, be noted that the use of resources, ie inputs, does play a major role in evaluating the efficiency of producing the outputs. The aim of costing is to determine the expected costs of the planned resources to be used in the activities that will produce the output that are designed to achieve the desired outcomes. If the monitoring functions are thus not effective, it can lead to the waste of public resources.

A further variable is that of *time.* Ile et al. [5] assert that by managing time effectively, can tasks be completed on time by ensuring that suffice time is spent on each activity as well as to detemine in which order activities should be tackled. This will lead to be more organized, to better planning, the effective monitoring of plans, elimination of time and resource wastage and ultimately better productivity. Linked to the notion of costs and time, is *quality.* Quality must according to Odora [7] and Pidd [4] be seen as part of the whole process in the collection and collation of 'facts' to improve the ways in which public services are provided to the inhabitants. Services should exceed the expectations and should be worth the resources invested in such services. The focus group discussions

unfortunately highlighted that the current service delivery protests do not reflect that quality services are rendered to South African inhabitants [8]. It is therefore important that a culture of the promotion of quality should be adopted by legislators/politicians with quality indicators and techniques developed and agreed upon as part of the interventions ensuring support for the effective and efficient implementation of policies, programmes and projects. One such recommendation was the review and of the Batho Pele principles ('putting people first') as part of the quality criteria to meet the country's service delivery needs [9,10]. All principles should be adhered to as this will ensure, if applied in conjunction with departmental activities, quality delivery. Further recommendations were the use of tools such as checklists, peer monitoring, and benchmarking.

Peer monitoring refers to the monitoring of internal organizational activities, but could also include external activities. Marvel and Marvel [11] point out that by focusing on monitoring, the implication is that monitoring levels for internally provided services should more closely approximate those for contracted services, thus not only for different departments or spheres of government, but for non-profit and other governmental service providers as well. Benchmarking is known as the adoption of best practices, which, according to Wan, Wan, Abdullah and Husain [12], can be defined as a systematic and continuous process to identify, determine, measure, compare, learn, adopt and implement the best practice obtained through internal and external evaluation of an organisation so that performance of a higher standard can be achieved and improved. Lamming [13] states that benchmarking involves the detailed study of productivity, quality and value in different departments and activities in relation to performance elsewhere. Benchmarking therefore forces organisations to look outward and assists in breaking paradigms by providing a new appreciation of how exemplary organisations conduct their processes. It allows an organisation to set performance targets based on a true assessment of the gap between its own practice and best practices. Naidoo [14], however, states that it is not sufficient simply to identify best practices of other organisations. These practices need to be modified, adapted and improved over time to the own specific situation of the organisation, involving creativity and innovation in applying the best practices from elsewhere. The process of

benchmarking in government can be difficult due to a number of factors, i.e. the indicators to be used; the priorities and needs of the different role-players; and the absence of a profit motive which is easy to quantify and measure as opposed to qualitative measures to ensure community upliftment and development [15]. The use of monitoring instruments therefore promotes applicable and effective implementation and decision-making which is based on regular and systematic verification of resources, actions and results [16]. Closely associated with monitoring is the term evaluation.

2.2 Evaluation Defined and the Necessity There of

According to Govender et al. [8] can evaluation be described as the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy including its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the fulfilment and relevance of objectives, development efficiencies, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learnt into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors [17]. Evaluation should be viewed as a judging process to compare explicit and implicit objectives with the projected outcomes or results [18]. In this endeavour can the utilization of administrative aids and techniques such as programme evaluation enhance the success of policy implementation, but this should go hand-in-hand with the commitment to entrench an evaluation culture and to ensure that the benefits of evaluation are fully derived to deliver high quality services to inhabitants [19]. Evaluation thus seeks to address the issue of causality, giving evidence of why targets and outcomes are or are not being achieved and can be a needs assessment, a process, outcomes based or impact based.

The above-mentioned is necessary to ensure that through evaluation, the following benefits can be achieved:

- To promote political and administrative accountability where both politicians and officials strive towards the successful implementation of programmes, projects and policies [20];
- To promote openness and transparency through reporting as there is a thorough

analysis of the decisions made, the nature of the processes utilized and the implementation of the policy;
- The comparison of inputs against the results obtained to ascertain whether resources were effectively utilized to save sources;
- Increased stakeholder participation; and improved management through the use of improved management tools and functions [5].

When combining monitoring and evaluation as management tools to assist organizational efficiency, effectiveness and economy in service delivery, it can be utilized to assist in identifying problems and their causes, suggest solutions, and review the current strategies and progress. However, Bekker et al. [19] opine that the popular contemporary approach towards the design and application of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and methodologies is primarily based on the concept of balanced performance planning, measurement and control. The underlying idea is that institutional performance is not a unilateral, but multi-dimensional phenomenon. Since this concept is most popularly associated with t*he Balanced Scorecard* of the American scholars Kaplan and Norton as cited by Minnaar [21]*,* it is appropriate to refer to their argument in this regard, namely that organizational performance cannot any longer be measured in terms of financial performance only, but that such performance must be measured in a balanced manner to include a variety of key issues (or areas) that constituted performance in a modern organization, which are:

- Performance in terms of organizational learning and growth;
- Performance in terms of organizational systems and processes;
- Performance from the perspectives of customers; and
- Financial performance.

This viewpoint is shared by Wu, Tsai, Shih and Fu [22] and Grasseova [23] asserting that an efficient performance measurement system is essential for controlling, monitoring and improving service quality in governmental organizations. By applying the balanced scorecard it furthermore leads to the integration of financial, citizen services and internal work processes as well as learning and growth perspectives in the evaluation procedure and

ultimately the confirmation of improvements. In an organizational context, this implies that strategic plans must cater for performance forecasts in respect of each of the categories that, if put together, constitutes balanced performance [24,4]. These plans should then form the basis of implementation plans which, on their turn, inform the organization scorecard. The outcomes of a scorecard serve as an indicator that performance measurement, reporting and ultimate control and accountability relate to these areas of organizational performance. To thus ensure that individual and institutional performances are sound should monitoring and evaluation systems be implemented (see Table 1). Feedback from the focus group discussions furthermore concurred that the application of the South African Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&E) adhere to these principles, but recommended that success can only be achieved if prudent leadership is exhibited.

3. THE ROLE OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Combating inefficiency, ineffectiveness and incompetence requires a dynamic and multi-faceted strategy or strategies that use scarce resources effectively on a constructive, shared basis. In developing such a strategy/strategies, one should not purely develop it for compliance with legislative frameworks, but should it be developed out of necessity guided by the environments in which one operates to ensure that the outcomes and outputs address the unfavourable conditions. What therefore needs to be achieved is to improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability; improve the application of systems and policies; support a good corporate culture; put public interest first; inform the reinforcement process with a shared commitment; and strive for the deterrence, prevention and detection of these conditions [25].

To achieve this, is strong, coherent leadership and pro-active political and administrative leadership necessary. Although leadership is proposed as significant for modernization and improvement it is often alluded to without definition. According to Hartley [26] there are at least two levels of analysis in the concept of leadership. In the first, leadership is the behaviours and actions of individuals, whereas the second approach has the organization as unit of analysis, working with other agencies in the locality and having particular responsibility for

addressing the needs and aspirations of the inhabitants.

In the public sector the managerial leadership advises elected officials (politicians) in formulating policy and determining services, uphold the law, implement policy, and deliver services, and direct or coordinate the administrative structure and manage the resources of the organization. They balance responsiveness to the preferences of the elected officials and demands from citizens with a commitment to promote public interest for the community as a whole and to advance professional standards and successful practices [27]. Often there are tensions between responding to the aspirations and pressing current needs and addressing important potential problems and long-term needs. The creative tension between political and managerial leadership embodies the continuing challenge of reconciling these perspectives. According to Fitzgerald in Rosenbaum et al. [28] should these two leaderships see themselves as operating within a strategic partnership where the respective leadership roles would be understood and accommodated. The point would not be to remove tensions, or any possibility of tensions, as this would be impossible and undesirable. The aim should be the creation of a culture capable of handling and resolving such tensions as normal challenges within the governance process.

Nel, Werner, Haasbroek, Poisat, Sono and Schultz [29] distinguish between the concepts leader and leadership. The authors argue that it is viable to distinguish between the person, the position and the processes in terms of leadership. The idea of leadership as a set of processes concerned with the influencing of people and achieving objectives are reflected in the definitions of leadership by Heifetz [30] (mobilizing people to tackle 'tough' problems); Mulgan [31] (strengthening the capacity of citizens and communities to govern themselves); and Cumming [32] (creating a strong sense of direction for the organization and the people in it and the values that need to go alongside this direction), enabling governments and other stakeholders to develop a value system of responsibility to the future.

In recent times ethical leadership came to the fore and boils down to know and do what is right [33]. However, it is difficult to define the word 'right' as different cultures, religions and individuals might define the word differently.

Ethical leaders are characterized by being people-orientated, aware of how their decisions impact upon others and how to use his/her power to the advantage of others [3]. This implies that individuals will be motivated to put the needs or interests of the group ahead of their own. Ethical leaders distinguish themselves by taking decisions that are inconvenient and unpopular; addressing solutions form an interconnected and multidisciplinary nature that in the long-run will be to the advantage of the organization, and extend trust in workers to suggest problem-solving solutions [34]. It is thus clear that there is a leadership role for particular individuals in shaping visions of the future and encouraging government as organization to look beyond immediate pressures in order to direct innovative actions to address a stronger external focus and responsiveness towards inhabitants.

In this endeavour the notion of distributed leadership where one moves beyond the traditional leadership models and highlights the roles taken jointly by politicians, managers and front-line staff, should be embraced. This is a different dimension of leadership than is sometimes assumed from the debates about 'strong' leadership, which often imply more of a command and control approach from the strategic apex of an organization [35]. Distributed leadership therefore requires a paradigm shift for government, their management and their practices, with managers, politicians and others accepting their own role in leadership.

In implementing ethical leadership in government, a distinction between different perspectives of leadership should furthermore be taken into consideration. It can either be the perception of the follower of the relationship with the leader, or a character-based perspective [36].

Although these perspectives were seen as functional equivalents, Clark and Payne [37] opine that in service delivery entities such as government, a character-based approach has advantages insofar as the ethical leader may have authority to make decisions that have a significant impact on those to whom for instance particular services are rendered or not rendered. Ovadje [17] concur that one cannot do without leadership when one enquires into public sector productivity and efficiency, necessitating according to Jarbandhan [38] new skills such as managing change, human resources, multi-lateral negotiations and risk. This will also apply to leaderships' role in designing and implementing, thus the governance of monitoring and evaluation systems. The levels on which this leadership should be applied are in the societal, intergovernmental and institutional environments. According to Van der Waldt [39] does societal leadership require a holistic approach where organizational processes must be identified, managed, reviewed, and improved to ensure a positive impact on society, customer satisfaction, people satisfaction, supplier and partnership performance to develop an M&E culture. Ethical leadership will provide direction so that the vision of continuous monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects is achieved. Ethical leadership on intergovernmental level is important as the creation of a more mature M&E system requires interdependency, alignment and coordination across multiple governmental spheres, which, according the to feedback from the focus groups, does not currently exist in South Africa. To address the afore-mentioned situation are transformational leadership and performance driven organizational strategies necessary as public sector managers would not be able to fulfil their tasks without proactive and directional leadership to achieve excellence [8].

Table 1. Consolidated view of reasons for measuring performance

Category	Bird et al. (2003)	Behn (2003)	Poister (2003/2010)
Planning	See what works	Learn / improve	Quality
Monitoring		Control / motivate	Monitoring / reporting
Evaluation	Identify competences	Evaluation	Program evaluation / benchmarking
Accountability	Public accountability	Promote	Communications
Financial budgeting		Budget	Strategic planning / Budgeting
Individual performance management		Celebrate	Performance management

(Pidd 2012:31)

Ethical leadership on organizational level is of paramount importance to channel individual efforts within an organization to manage policies effectively and accomplish organizational goals. Without ethical leadership, most members are likely to function in a manner that suits them regardless of the impact on the organization, leading to disorganization [5]. To thus prevent this, Kohli [40] stresses that ethical leadership should lead by example and employ the tools of motivation, communication, inspiration and trying out new ventures.

Without ethical leadership, will accountability, governance, capacity development and performance management of M&E systems not be increased.

4. CONCLUSION

From the above-mentioned it is evident that the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems is important to evaluate individual and organizational performance to provide high quality public services to inhabitants. Monitoring ensures that programmes, projects and policies are on track taking into consideration costs, time and quality of each activity. Evaluation is seen as the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy including its design, implementation and results. To achieve this can administrative aids and techniques be utilized to enhance policy implementation, but should go hand-in-hand with the commitment to entrench an evaluation culture in the organization. Monitoring and evaluation systems should be based on the concept of balanced performance planning, measurement and control. However, it was argued that ethical leadership can be utilized as a mechanism for the successful application of M&E systems.

Ethical leadership should be aware of their respective roles, duties, responsibilities and obligations and should communication be clear to avoid misunderstanding and will necessitate new skills such as managing change, human resources, multi-lateral negotiations and risk. Ethical leadership should be applied to societal, intergovernmental and institutional environments and will require a holistic approach where organizational processes must be identified, managed, reviewed, and improved to ensure a positive impact on society. It will furthermore require interdependency, alignment and coordination across multiple governmental spheres as well as organizational leadership to ensure that individuals do not follow their own goals instead of that of the organization. Only then can M&E systems be implemented with success to ensure improved performance. Ethical leadership is thus of cardinal importance.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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