

CHAPTER ELEVEN

INSTITUTIONALISATION OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Siviwe Mditshwa

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a critical analysis and proposition for the institutionalisation of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system in the South African local sphere of government. Despite the 2007 introduction and instruction for implementation by all three spheres of government of the policy framework on a Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&E), the focus of local government has been on the municipal performance management system, which is more of a mechanism that seeks to monitor, review and measure progress in the implementation of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

M&E is widely accepted as a key management tool to enable the enhancement of performance management and ensure efficiency and accountability. It is an important input to the process of programme and project planning, implementation and measurement of outcome and impact. M&E also facilitates better management of a complex public service environment that aims to institutionalise M&E as a systematic and well-conceptualised phenomenon. This chapter's objective is to conceptualise and contextualise the institutionalisation of M&E in the South African local government and determine its interrelationship with the municipal performance management system (PMS).

The literature analysis reveals that institutionalisation of M&E in local government could be implemented by building it into the interrelationship with municipal PMS aspects of the existing legislative provisions of the two concepts. However, the institutionalisation of M&E in local government should be done in a systematic manner.

Key words: monitoring & evaluation, institutionalisation, performance information management, performance management system

BACKGROUND

What gets measured gets done. If you don't measure results, you can't tell success from failure. If you can't see success, you can't reward it. If you can't reward success, you are probably rewarding failure. If you can't see success, you can't learn from it. If you can't recognise failure, you can't correct it. If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support. (Osborne & Gaebler. 1992)

Since the formal introduction of the M&E concept by government in South Africa, all spheres of government except the local government have gained an increased understanding of it and its application, and that it assists government to better understand what works and does not work based on evidence.

At a local government level, the PMS is more of a mechanism that seeks to monitor, review and measure progress in the implementation of the IDP for the realisation of the pre-determined objectives (South African Local Government Association, 2018). A PMS is one of the governance tools within municipalities used to promote accountability and assist with evidence-based information for decision-making. Within the PMS guidelines and process, the monitoring and reporting elements are prominent while the evaluation component is almost non-existent.

Institutionalisation of any system in any environment is often subject to internal and external factors. These factors are also applicable to the M&E system. Considering the local government environment, this chapter presents prerequisites and enablers for the successful M&E institutionalisation while appreciating the existing related system. Moreover, this chapter expands to articulate the performance information-related concepts and their linkages with the institutionalisation of M&E in local government.

In the realm of local government, M&E is pivotal for effective governance and development planning, particularly when integrated with tools such as the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP). According to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), M&E within local government involves systematic processes to track progress, assess performance, and improve decision-making (ICMA, n.d.). The SDBIP, as outlined by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), provides a structured framework that aligns municipal activities with strategic priorities, guiding resource allocation and implementation efforts (SALGA, 2016).

Integrating M&E with the SDBIP enables local governments to enhance accountability and transparency by monitoring the achievement of set targets and outcomes (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2012). This approach fosters adaptive management practices, allowing for timely adjustments and improvements in service delivery and policy implementation (UNDP, 2012). Moreover, by actively engaging stakeholders and communities in the M&E process tied to the SDBIP, local governments can foster greater citizen participation and support for initiatives that directly impact their lives. Ultimately, a robust understanding of M&E within the local government sphere, anchored by the SDBIP, facilitates adaptive management practices that promote sustainable development and responsive governance (World Bank, 2000).

A brief conceptualisation and contextualisation of performance information management, M&E and PMS in South Africa, and political and legal frameworks for M&E institutionalisation are presented. The chapter also draws from a global perspective to help deepen the understanding of the issue under investigation.