

Bisiriyu Abiodun Taleat, Eunice Chesa, Lusanda Beauty Juta, Moraka Shopola, Salphinah Ubisi, Nametso Gae, Lucas Masilo

The Monitoring and Evaluation of Municipal Performance: An Empirical Interrogation of Policy Framework in South Africa

Abstract

Objective: The study investigates the elements of monitoring and evaluation in public service delivery in South African municipalities as well as evaluates the importance of monitoring and evaluating municipal activities. It also explores ways to improve municipal performance for the benefit of citizens.

Research Design & Methods: The study is descriptive, with the adoption of qualitative research techniques, using secondary sources of data. The secondary data was obtained through textbooks, journal articles, and Internet sources.

Findings: The study revealed that capacity-building plans, integration with other management systems, performance information frameworks, training and support, the tasks and responsibilities of executive authorities, as well as standards and compliance, among other things, are all key elements prescribed in the M&E policy framework.

Implications / Recommendations: Prioritising M&E will strengthen municipal performance, improve service delivery, and foster good governance. It will increase the awareness of policymakers that annual performance reviews, the enhancement of community participation, the implementation of self-evaluation processes, performance reporting, and data-driven decision-making are M&E strategies that improve municipal performance.

Contribution / Value Added: The study concluded that the monitoring and evaluation system is a managerial instrument that monitors and evaluates the performance of the public sector, thereby contributing to the achievement of service delivery outcomes in municipalities.

Keywords: monitoring, evaluation, municipality, performance, policy, service delivery

Article classification: research article

JEL classification: L38c, Z18, Z28

Bisiriyu Abiodun Taleat – Department of Public Administration and Local Government, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa; e-mail: 55601170@mynwu.ac.za; ORCID: 0000-0003-4745-095X. **Eunice Chesa** – Department of Public Administration and Local Government, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa; e-mail: Eunice.Chesa@nwu.ac.za; ORCID: 0000-0002-0458-2904. **Lusanda Beauty Juta** – Department of Public Management and Economics, Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa; e-mail: LusandaJ@dut.ac.za; ORCID: 0000-0002-6793-5965. **Moraka Shopola** – Department of Public Administration and Local Government, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa; e-mail: moraka.Shopola@nwu.ac.za. **Salphinah Ubisi** – Department of Public Administration and Local Government, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa; e-mail: salphinah.Ubisi@nwu.ac.za; ORCID: 0000-0001-7973-1292. **Nametso Gae** – Department of Public Administration and Local Government, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa; e-mail: nametso.Gae@nwu.ac.za. **Lucas Masilo** – Department of Public Administration and Local Government, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa; e-mail: Lucas.Masilo@nwu.ac.za; ORCID: 0000-0001-7472-7622.

Introduction

The South African Government has acknowledged the importance of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policies, projects, and programmes from the formulation level to the implementation level in all units at the national, provincial, and municipal levels of government. This recognition necessitates the establishment of the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation to guarantee tangible results in terms of public activities and service delivery. Monitoring and evaluation is a crucial managerial instrument utilised by municipalities in South Africa to monitor and evaluate their performance in service delivery and attaining strategic objectives (Hoffman, 2021). Under the South African Constitution and several laws, municipalities are required to establish comprehensive performance management systems (section 152 of the RSA Constitution 1996). The primary goals of these systems, as outlined by Govender and Reddy (2014), are to improve service delivery and institutional performance by aligning individual and organisational objectives. The objective is to guarantee the optimal, cost-effective, and proficient utilisation of public resources while fostering accountability, openness, and responsiveness to local demands (Govender & Reddy, 2014). Monitoring and evaluation is essential for effectively managing municipal performance in South Africa. The country's municipalities are responsible for providing a range of services to the community, such as roads, water, sanitation, power, and garbage collection. These services are crucial to the survival of human beings and the development of rural areas, and their provision is required under the South African Constitution (Hoffman, 2021).

The primary obstacle that the government faces is enhancing its efficiency in providing services. Monitoring and evaluation systems can help the public sector assess its performance and determine the elements that influence its service delivery outcomes. M&E specifically focuses on enabling users to establish causal relationships between policy priorities, resource allocation, policies and programme design, service delivery, and their ultimate impact on communities. Monitoring and evaluation plays a crucial role in informing public resource allocation decisions by providing a solid foundation of data. Additionally, M&E helps to find the most effective ways to solve difficulties and duplicate successful strategies. The Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) system serves as the comprehensive policy framework for M&E across all levels of government, including municipalities. This framework provides a clear and concise explanation of the fundamental principles, definitions, system goals, and institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the essential elements of municipal monitoring and evaluation systems, as outlined by the RSA (2007) policy framework, include: integrated development planning (IDP) and performance management; establishing key performance indicators and goals; tracking, measuring, and appraising performance; as well as assessing performance internally and community engagement in performance management (SALGA, 2019). According to the literature, the South African government employs different strategies, measures, and frameworks to ensure the effectiveness of its monitoring and evaluation systems. The focus of these efforts is to strengthen governance and transparency while also enhancing the delivery of public services to citizens.

Although there are established principles and institutional arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation policy framework, there are still ongoing challenges to effectively implementing M&E in South African municipalities. Research examining the experience of the eThekweni Municipality emphasises the difficulties that municipalities encounter when trying to find balance between compliance requirements and the environment of delivering services, while

the automation of monitoring and evaluation systems and procedures can bring advantages but also present difficulties (Govender & Reddy, 2014). Political leaders' lack of willingness to promote a culture of performance hinders the implementation of monitoring and evaluation in South African municipalities. To establish an M&E system that is accountable, effective, efficient, and responsive at the local government level, the government needs to prioritise performance management and provide the required policy and technical support (Nokukhanya & Enaifoghe, 2023).

Existing literature has demonstrated that municipalities have effectively incorporated performance management regulations into their evaluation methods. Nevertheless, the literature also confirms that the evaluative process in South African municipalities is influenced by performance management legislation, which can have both favourable and unfavourable consequences as to the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation (Chirau & Blaser-Mapitsa, 2020). Hence, there is a need to investigate the monitoring and evaluation of municipal performance established in the South African policy framework for government-wide monitoring and evaluation systems.

The broad objective of this study is to interrogate the monitoring and evaluation of municipal performance on service delivery through the provision of an M&E policy framework, while the specific objectives are to:

- investigate the elements of monitoring and evaluation as provided in the M&E Policy Framework;
- evaluate the importance of the monitoring and evaluation of municipal activities;
- analyse ways to improve municipal performance for the benefit of citizens.

The theoretical framework for monitoring and evaluation

The theoretical foundation supporting the monitoring and evaluation of municipal performance may be observed through two pertinent theories: the Evaluation Theory proposed by Shadish, Cook, and Leviton (1991), as well as the Theory of Change (ToC) as outlined by the Aspen Institute (1997). Monitoring and evaluation, in theory, consists of the systematic assessment of programmes, policies, and interventions utilising evaluation theories (Boulay & Han, 2008). The core principle of evaluation theory is to define practical methods that evaluators might employ to generate knowledge regarding the worth of social projects. This technique offers a systematic strategy for comprehending the objectives, structure, and execution of assessments. It helps to direct the evaluation process and assists in choosing appropriate methodologies and measures. They utilise a range of disciplines and prioritise stakeholder involvement, success criteria, data gathering, analysis methodologies, and the utilisation of results. Evaluation theories facilitate the assessment of the efficacy, productivity, pertinence, and durability of interventions in various fields such as education, health care, and public policy (Alkin & Patton, 2020).

Monitoring and evaluation frameworks are crucial elements that guide the monitoring and evaluation process. The purpose of clarifying programme goals is to establish clear objectives, while defining interactions between programme components helps to establish connections and dependencies. Additionally, articulating how activities lead to desired outcomes and impacts helps to explain the cause-and-effect relationship between actions and results. These frameworks facilitate the comprehension, examination, and creation of robust monitoring and evaluation plans, guaranteeing that activities are in line with the objectives and contribute to the success of the programme. When creating these frameworks, important factors to consider include establishing monitoring goals, determining evaluation inquiries, and choosing suitable

indicators and techniques for data collection. Moreover, the relevance of the theory of change as a theoretical underpinning for this study is an influential instrument for monitoring and evaluation. It delineates the process by which intended actions result in desired outcomes. The approach highlights the importance of incorporating monitoring and evaluation right from the start, establishing measurable criteria, establishing explicit standards, and connecting activities to the theory of change elements in order to guarantee efficient monitoring and assessment procedures. Monitoring and assessing the theory of change includes iterative procedures that encompass ongoing learning, adaptation, and data-driven decision-making to enhance performance.

The theory of change refers to a sequence of outcomes that help to accomplish the objectives set by the government through policies and programmes. The theory of change is employed in the public sector to adopt a strategic approach that emphasises long-term planning, implementation, knowledge management, and impact assessment (Hlatshwayo & Govender, 2015). Hence, it is crucial to incorporate the theory of change within the first phase of project development to enhance the precision and effectiveness of the interventions necessary for achieving success (Nonyane, 2019). The South African government has implemented several measures to improve public performance. However, these measures have been unsuccessful in addressing the fundamental problems related to development (van der Walddt, 2015). The failure to implement projects was due to inadequate planning, budget limitations, rapid urbanisation, and other factors that affected the provision of services, particularly in municipalities. The theory of change helps in promoting the creation of relevant and achievable objectives for government actions. The use of the theory of change helps governments discover how to solve problems in policy and programme execution, utilising an integrated strategy to ensure development. The interventions prescribed in the theory of change are implemented after identifying and planning objectives and activities, before the implementation stage.

Thus, the theoretical framework for monitoring and evaluation includes evaluation theories that offer a systematic method for assessing programmes and interventions, monitoring and evaluation frameworks that direct the evaluation process, and the theory of change that outlines the progression from actions to outcomes. These components collaborate to guarantee the efficient monitoring, assessment, and enhancement of programmes and initiatives.

Methodology

The study is descriptive with the adoption of qualitative research design using secondary sources of data to investigate the role of the utilisation of M&E in public service delivery, evaluate the importance of monitoring and evaluation in municipal activities, analyse the challenges inhibiting the implementation of monitoring and evaluation, and explore ways to improve municipal performance through M&E. Data was sourced through textbooks, articles in international and local journals, as well as Internet sources. Narrative and descriptive analysis was used to present the findings from the study's specific objectives.

Findings

Studies on monitoring and evaluating municipal performance in South Africa

Gathering empirical studies on monitoring and evaluating municipal performance in South Africa is essential to comparing the government's efficient performance. The South African government has introduced several measures to improve monitoring and evaluation at all levels of government, including municipalities. Below are some major findings from existing literature.

Ngumbela (2024) explores the function of monitoring and evaluation as a quality assurance system for efficient governance from the perspective of a local government in South Africa. The study highlighted the importance of implementing monitoring and assessment methods that utilise monitoring and evaluation more effectively while also improving opportunities for professional advancement for staff members. The study included a theoretical analysis and a literature review as the research approach. Afrocentric, Collaborative, and Theory of Change theories serve as valuable foundations for the analysis, providing conceptual frameworks for systematically analysing the data collected from the literature. Ngumbela (2024) identified a deficiency in skills within the monitoring and evaluation profession, highlighting the importance of experts in this subject to improve their knowledge and abilities to fulfil the demands of future generations. The study determined that endorsing the South African Constitution, which mandates all levels of government to deliver high-quality services to the people of South Africa, is necessary. An inadequate provision of services raises doubts about the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation as control mechanisms for managing governance in South African municipalities. If municipal administrations work poorly and their monitoring and evaluation capacities are not used appropriately, none of the strategic objectives of municipalities can be achieved. To improve the efficacy of monitoring and evaluation, it is necessary to modernise and enhance the processes of public institutions, as these directly impact human resource capacities.

Tshaka (2023) examines the difficulties associated with monitoring and evaluating effectiveness in service delivery by a municipality, specifically focusing on the housing department of the Drakenstein Municipality as a case study. The study examined the role of the performance management function in monitoring and evaluation, as well as reviewed the legislative framework for performance monitoring and assessment in the studied area. The data for this study was collected by a quantitative research questionnaire survey, administered to a sample of nine managerial officers in the housing department of the Drakenstein Municipality. The data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The study identified several issues that impede the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation. These challenges include the failure to appoint officials who have received formal training and possess the necessary qualifications, a significant level of doubt regarding the value of evaluation practices, and difficulties encountered when carrying out evaluation tasks. The study suggests the hiring of an M&E officer who has received formal training and possesses the necessary qualifications. This appointment is intended to enhance reporting and promote better governance.

Mabizela and Zwane (2023) examined the use of monitoring and evaluation as a practical methodology to improve the performance of municipalities in South Africa. They employed the qualitative research approach. Specifically, they chose twenty municipal officials from the Corporate Services and Performance Management System (PMS) units as the sample size for the study. They selected these officials due to their expertise and comprehensive understanding

of monitoring and evaluation within the context of municipal performance. The study used focus group discussions to gather data. The study focused on three distinct municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal province (KZN), namely Amajuba, uThukela, and uMgungundlovu. The study demonstrated the significance of monitoring and evaluation in enhancing the performance of local government. The study also revealed that the aim of monitoring and evaluation is to determine the necessary conditions for achieving high-performance levels that can endure for an extended period of time. Furthermore, research also demonstrated the essential role of municipal monitoring and evaluation in promoting progressive local administration. Municipalities should demonstrate their dedication to prioritising M&E. The study concludes that in order to improve monitoring and evaluation, as well as to make it easier to use, M&E practices need to be made official, people need to follow the rules and systems that are already in place, IT systems need to be integrated, and M&E methods that involve participation need to be used to check how well municipal functions and development projects are working.

Masilo, Masiya, and Mathebula (2021) examined the impact of the Monitoring and Evaluation framework on the provision of services at the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa. The study employed qualitative research methodology, which involved conducting interviews and analysing documentary data. The study determined that the Monitoring and Evaluation framework is an essential instrument that consolidates performance processes to improve service delivery. The paper concluded that the public sector should focus on implementing the Monitoring and Evaluation framework to enhance service delivery and ultimately benefit citizens. Consequently, it is advised that government departments, including the Department of Home Affairs, enhance the support services provided by their monitoring and evaluation teams and extend this framework to all levels within their departments. It is essential to have Advocacy and Communication Plans in place to address any misunderstandings or a lack of information regarding M&E. These plans should be utilised as tools to overcome challenges. Additionally, it is important to implement plans to monitor the utilisation of performance information. This is crucial in ensuring that policies, planning, and decision-making are all based on evidence.

The study conducted by Kariuki and Reddy (2017) focuses on implementing an efficient monitoring and evaluation system for local government. The study aims to demonstrate that monitoring and evaluation is a crucial tool for development, and it requires the support of both political and administrative leaders in municipalities to ensure its optimal functioning and the provision of citizen-responsive services. The study concentrated on the KwaZulu-Natal province and employed a mixed-method participatory design, which included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The study revealed that the majority of municipalities, except for the Metro, had a limited capacity for monitoring and evaluation. The towns lacked sufficient resources to employ skilled individuals for monitoring and evaluation, which hindered their ability to provide high-quality monitoring and evaluation services. Hence, the study determined that implementing efficient surveillance and assessment in local governance which would be attentive to the demands of citizens is an absolute necessity for the government. Municipalities should receive sufficient resources to ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of their human workers.

In a study conducted by Matsiliza (2017), the author investigates the methods used to monitor and evaluate municipal planning to enhance the performance of municipalities in terms of service delivery and development. The report outlines diverse approaches for monitoring and evaluating municipal planning to enhance its effectiveness and governance. The presence of a monitoring

and evaluation team during the planning process by municipalities has been shown to ensure that municipalities align their organisational priorities in planning and commit to the compliance with relevant legislation and practices. The study also demonstrated that the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation relies exclusively on meticulous preparation and readiness, gathering data, agreement among important parties on what to assess, and the analysis and distribution of information to the appropriate stakeholders. The study also found that the effective monitoring of municipal planning, preparedness, financial reporting, outcomes assessment, benchmarking for quality standards, and compliance with municipal legislation are all crucial to achieving success and promoting good governance. Matsiliza (2017) suggested that municipalities should undergo ongoing training, participate in capacity-building workshops, and engage in quality circles through inter-governmental forums. This will enable them to better understand how to implement the monitoring and evaluation of municipal planning to enhance their performance.

The study conducted by Kanyane (2014) aims to examine the difficulties faced by municipalities in South Africa from 1994 to 2013 in delivering services, to initiate discussions on how to overcome these problems and obstacles. The study prompted essential inquiries into the difficulties confronting South African towns in providing basic community necessities, such as water and electricity, among others. Although there are multiple statutory and institutional structures in place to monitor and evaluate municipal performance. The study employed a qualitative research design, using the government's official papers and contemporary literature review as sources of data. These sources included a comprehensive compilation of historical facts and narrative accounts. The study identified several variables that hinder the performance of municipal service delivery. These include limitations in municipal capacity, financial viability issues, demonstrations related to service delivery, complex political procedures, corruption, inadequate planning, and obstacles in monitoring and evaluation. It is thus advised that the primary goal of addressing issues with municipal service delivery is to prioritise professional knowledge outside of political affiliations and to diligently oversee and assess service delivery to ensure no room for uncertainty.

The study of Monitoring and Evaluation System Utilisation Model for Support to South African Municipalities, performed by Motingoe and van der Walddt (2013), is an empirical study that was carried out with a sample of thirty-six local municipalities to ascertain the degree to which the national Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) use the monitoring and evaluation system to support municipalities. To enable the COGTA and the DCoG to better fulfil their mandate, the authors' study suggested a paradigm for improving M&E system utilisation. According to them, the model comprises of the national, provincial, and local organisations as well as their roles, information flow about performance, and support for municipalities. The study found that it is essential to take into account the statutory framework, the theory of cooperative governance, and monitoring and evaluation when determining the components of the M&E system utilisation model for municipal support.

Government M&E Policy Framework

Monitoring and evaluation is essential for improving the delivery of public services in South African municipalities. The concept of monitoring and evaluation has become widely recognised and embraced worldwide, including in South Africa, as a means to enhance service delivery and assure transparency and responsibility. The fundamental elements of monitoring and evaluation

in the provision of public services in municipalities in South Africa, as acknowledged by the RSA (2007), the PSC (2008), the RSA (2011), the Unitar (2017), and the RSA (2019), are as follows:

- **A capacity-building plan** – this should include the precise tactics and steps that an organisation will take to cultivate and improve the human capital needed to fulfil its monitoring and evaluation obligations. It should also specify exactly how the institution will collaborate with other pertinent parties.
- **Integration with other management systems** – planning, budgeting, and finance management are several examples of other management systems that should be integrated with M&E systems. By integrating M&E findings, policy, programmatic, and resource allocation decisions are guaranteed.
- **The Performance Information Framework** encompasses performance information that is pertinent to an organisation and its stakeholders. It comprises indicators and standards that are generated from the organisation's values and objectives.
- **Electronic systems** – these should be able to interchange data with external systems, be integrated with current systems, and be purchased with the institution's M&E strategy in mind. They should also be able to assist M&E.
- **Training and support** – the M&E system's custodians and end users require sufficient training to guarantee that they comprehend the system and can make an effective use of its features.
- **The tasks and responsibilities** of executive authorities, legislators, accounting officers, programme managers, and designated M&E units must be clearly defined for M&E to be effective.
- **Institutions** should discover methods to disseminate the knowledge and insight that are produced by M&E procedures. This is known as knowledge-sharing and institutional learning. To encourage this sharing, tools such as learning circles, M&E forums, and other techniques might be employed.
- **Budgeting and planning** – successful monitoring and evaluation systems are established on robust planning and budgeting processes. The M&E procedures should be explicitly specified for planning, budgeting, programme implementation, project management, financial management, and reporting processes.
- **Accountability and supervision** are both crucial in ensuring that institutions utilise monitoring and evaluation findings to assess institutional performance and achieve intended outcomes and impacts. Periodic reports should be submitted to the entities responsible for overseeing the institution.
- **Standards and compliance** – monitoring and evaluation systems must adhere to applicable standards, such as the South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF), to guarantee the accuracy and reliability of the generated data and information. The user's text is incomplete and does not provide enough information to rewrite it in a straightforward and precise manner.

The above-mentioned elements are crucial for creating and sustaining efficient monitoring and evaluation systems that facilitate well-informed decision-making and enhance overall organisational performance.

Monitoring and evaluation is essential for maintaining the efficient performance and delivery of services by municipalities. Monitoring and evaluation plays a crucial role in municipalities for several significant reasons:

- it enables the process of creating policies and ensuring effective financial management. Monitoring and evaluation yields useful data and insights that guide decision-making, budget allocation, and policy formulation in municipalities (Kariuki & Reddy, 2017);
- it facilitates the ability of communities to promptly address the needs and concerns of their inhabitants. Municipalities can enhance their strategy to better cater to the community's demands by consistently monitoring performance and assessing outcomes;
- it contributes to the endeavour of promoting effective government. Implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in municipalities improves accountability and transparency. It transcends mere adherence to become an essential component of municipal operations;
- it facilitates the monitoring of progress and provides valuable insights for decision-making. The monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) enable municipalities to consistently evaluate progress and utilise the gathered information to make well-informed decisions (RSA, 2012).

To enable cooperation and accountability between different levels of government, efficient monitoring and evaluation should provide a connection between the three levels of government (national, provincial, and local) by facilitating coordinated information exchange and reporting, thereby ensuring reciprocal responsibility. M&E facilitates the use of empirical data to inform and execute strategic decision-making and action. Baseline assessments and data-collecting systems equip governments with essential information to strategise and execute evidence-based actions. M&E fosters a culture that prioritises achieving desired outcomes. Embracing monitoring and evaluation as a tool for enabling a results-oriented progressive local government helps to standardise performance and outputs across municipal departments and units (Bester, 2019).

Monitoring and evaluation is crucial for strengthening municipal performance, improving service delivery, and fostering good governance. It empowers towns to be proactive, responsible, and outcome-driven in serving their communities.

Discussion

To optimise the effectiveness of municipal operations for the betterment of inhabitants, a range of methods and strategies can be employed. Municipalities are advised to conduct annual performance reviews, as recommended in the Performance Management Guide for Municipalities. This entails presenting an annual report after the fiscal year, enabling citizens to assess the performance of the municipality and their public representatives.

Enhancing community participation is also essential for optimising performance management. One way to accomplish this is by creating a citizens' charter, which enables community engagement through the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process. The implementation of this charter serves to enhance transparency and foster confidence in the operations of the local government (Morrison, 2024).

Municipalities should implement their self-evaluation processes to enhance future performance. This can involve constructing governance registers that comply with the King IV Code of Good Governance and other applicable laws.

Reports should be delivered for evaluation in a straightforward and easily understandable format, containing information that is relevant and valuable to the specific target audience. The

reporting process should adhere to the principles of accountability, ensuring that the municipality is answerable to individuals and communities.

Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and performance indicators are essential components in establishing an efficient performance management system. They assist towns in identifying and establishing crucial developmental objectives, strategising for the provision of services, and evaluating progress through the use of indicators.

Data-driven decision-making is crucial for municipalities to make informed choices based on data. This is the process of gathering, examining, and presenting data that measures the municipality's performance, both internally and in the provision of services to the public (Jupolli & Vokshi, 2023).

The national government should assist municipalities in encouraging public involvement beyond broader strategies and frameworks. This might encompass programmes that commemorate and incentivise enhanced civic engagement.

To solve deficiencies, municipalities must enhance their leadership capabilities, extend regulatory measures, and prioritise community involvement to narrow the disparity between theory and practice. Monitoring and evaluation policy frameworks are crucial for efficient planning, monitoring the effectiveness and achievement of plans, and detecting significant deficiencies that need to be resolved. This helps in guaranteeing that municipal governments can provide exceptional public services (Selesho, 2001). The implementation of government software and automation can optimise administrative operations, optimise workflows, and improve overall efficiency in service delivery.

By employing these monitoring and evaluation measures, municipalities can enhance their efficiency and effectively cater for the needs of their inhabitants through policies and programme implementation.

Conclusions

The key findings from this study are summarised below. Municipalities in South Africa experience considerable difficulties with sub-optimal performance, primarily due to insufficient allocation of resources, limited capacity, and inadequacies in monitoring and evaluation procedures. Performance Management Systems are essential for measuring, monitoring, and assessing performance in municipalities. These methods aid in ensuring that municipalities are achieving their established goals and objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation is considered to be a pragmatic methodology that is crucial to improving the effectiveness of municipalities. Efficient performance management and high-quality service delivery need the presence of effective monitoring and evaluation systems. Integrating information technology systems is advised to strengthen and improve the implementation of monitoring and evaluation processes in municipalities. Participatory monitoring and evaluation methods are recommended for evaluating the efficiency of municipal activities and development initiatives, guaranteeing the involvement of all relevant parties in the process.

The balanced scorecard methodology is frequently employed by large cities and metropolitan municipalities. Districts within municipalities utilise the municipal scorecard, whereas local municipalities rely on spreadsheets. Furthermore, performance monitoring is crucial to ensuring that implementation follows the plan and is driven by a set of performance measures and indicators. Good governance is directly proportional to good performance in the public sector, while both performance management and strong governance are crucial to efficient public service delivery.

Finally, political interference can hinder the objective of achieving high-quality performance in the public sector, hence the doubts about the effectiveness of public sector performance.

Monitoring and evaluating the performance of municipalities in South Africa is an essential component of public sector management. The performance monitoring and evaluation system is a managerial instrument that monitors and evaluates the performance of the public sector, thereby contributing to the achievement of service delivery outcomes. The South African government has implemented structures and regulations to guarantee efficient monitoring and evaluation throughout all levels of government to enhance governance and service provision. The monitoring and evaluation policy frameworks highlight the following key points:

- Performance monitoring and evaluation serves as a method to assess the efficiency of the public sector and determine the factors that affect service delivery outcomes.
- The creation of specialised departments and systems for performance monitoring and evaluation, such as the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in the South African Presidency, shows dedication to addressing service delivery issues.
- Policy frameworks prioritise the significance of performance information in directing decision-making, enhancing accountability, and guaranteeing efficient service delivery.
- Monitoring entails gathering, analysing, and reporting data to facilitate effective management, while evaluation offers reliable information to guide decision-making for staff, managers, and policymakers.

In South Africa, policy frameworks have the overarching goal of improving governance, fostering accountability, and enhancing service delivery by implementing efficient monitoring and evaluation systems to assess municipal performance.

The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of municipal performance in South Africa is governed by a set of important regulations and documents. Given these policy documents, some recommendations are formulated for the efficient performance of municipal service delivery.

According to the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 and the Municipal Performance Regulations of 2006, every municipality must create a Performance Management System (PMS). The Performance Management System should encompass several operations, such as performance planning, monitoring, measuring, evaluating, reporting, auditing, and quality control.

Performance information is crucial to efficient management, encompassing planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and reporting. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be established as benchmarks for assessing performance and connected to the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The IDP is a quinquennial strategic plan that delineates the objectives and priorities of the municipality. The IDP should be assessed annually or as often as necessary to guarantee conformity with evolving needs and priorities.

Capacity-building interventions are essential for managing and efficiently utilising monitoring and evaluation systems. Training programmes should prioritise cultivating crucial skills and abilities for monitoring and evaluation, specifically within the framework of municipal governance.

M&E systems should be consolidated across the three levels of government (national, provincial, and municipal) to ensure effective coordination and avoid fragmentation. The Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) system should be specifically tailored to facilitate efficient management and informed decision-making across all levels.

Performance information must be precise, prompt, and readily available to the public and oversight entities to guarantee accountability and transparency. Managers can use results-based

management practices, such as performance contracts, risk management, benchmarking, and market testing, when they have access to performance information.

Evaluation is a scheduled and recurring process that aims to give reliable and valuable information to support decision-making. Feedback received from monitoring and evaluation should be utilised to enhance performance, identify areas for enhancement, and make necessary modifications to policies and programmes.

The policy framework for monitoring and evaluation is determined by the Constitution of South Africa (1996), the Municipal Systems Act (2000), and the Municipal Performance Regulations (2006). This legal framework allows towns to create and execute an efficient monitoring and evaluation system.

Consequently, the policy framework for the monitoring and evaluation of municipal performance in South Africa highlights the significance of creating a complete Performance Management System, defining Key Performance Indicators, integrating M&E across all levels of government, and guaranteeing accountability and openness. Capacity-building and training are essential for the successful implementation of these policies.

Reference List

- Alkin, M. C., & Patton, M.Q. (2020). The Birth and Adaptation of Evaluation Theories. *Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation*, 16(35), 1–13.
- Aspen Institute (1997). *Voices from the Field: Learning from the Early Work of Comprehensive Community Initiatives*. Aspen Institute.
- Bester, A. (2019). *Establishing Monitoring and Evaluation Systems for Local Government (And Other Subnational Governments)*. Workshop at National Evaluation Capacities Conference, 21 October 2019, Hurghada, Egypt.
- Boulay, D. A., & Han, H. (2008). Examining Values, Use, and Role in Evaluation: Prospects for a Broadened View. Online Submission, Paper presented at the Academy of Human Resource Development International Research Conference in the Americas, 20–24 February 2008, Panama City, FL.
- Chirau, T. J., & Blaser-Mapitsa, C. (2020). How performance management regulations shape evaluation practice in South African municipalities. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 82, 101831.
- Govender, N., & Reddy, P. S. (2014). Performance monitoring and evaluation: The eThekweni Experience, South Africa. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 7(1), 58–79.
- Hlatshwayo, N. Z., & Govender, K. K. (2015). Monitoring and evaluation in the public sector: A case study of the Department of Rural Development and Land Report in South Africa. *Asian Journal of Economics and Empirical Research*, 2(2), 91–99.
- Hoffman, P. G. (2021). The role of monitoring and evaluation on municipal performance management a case study, Matatiele Local Municipality (MLM), WordPress, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Jupolli, M., & Vokshi, S. (2023). *Municipal Performance Management – much more than just measurement*. Decentralisation and Municipal Support DEMOS, Helvetas, Kosovo. https://helvetas-ks.org/demos_two/blogs/municipal-performance-management-much-more-than-just-measurement/
- Kanyane, M. (2014). Exploring challenges of municipal service delivery in South Africa (1994–2013). *Africa's Public Service Delivery and Performance Review*, 2(1), 90–110.
- Kariuki, P., & Reddy, P., (2017). Operationalising an effective monitoring and evaluation system for local government: Considerations for best practice. *African Evaluation Journal*, 5(2), 1–8.
- Mabizela, H., & Zwane, Z. (2023). Monitoring and evaluation as a critical approach to enhance the performance of local government: South Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business & Social Science*, 12(7), 74–84.

- Masilo, M. M., Masiya, T., & Mathebula, N. R. (2021). Monitoring and evaluation in the public sector: a case of the Department of Home Affairs (South Africa). *European Journal of Economics, Law and Social Sciences* (Special Issue), 7–26.
- Matsiliza, N. S. (2017). Monitoring and evaluation of municipal planning. *Public and Municipal Finance*, 6(4), 15–22.
- Morrison, S. (2024). How to Boost Municipal Performance. Good Governance Africa. *The Guardian*, March 14.
- Motingoe, R. S., & van der Walldt, G. (2013). A Monitoring and Evaluation System Utilisation Model for Support to South African Municipalities. *Politica: South African Journal for Political Science and Public Administration*, 32(3), 4–29.
- Ngumbela, X. G. (2024). The Role of Monitoring and Evaluation as A Quality Control Mechanism for Effective Governance: A South African Local Government Perspective. *Journal of Law and Sustainable Development*, 12(2), 1–26.
- Nokukhanya, N. J., & Enaifoghe, A. (2023). Monitoring and evaluation in government: The case of South African municipalities. In van der Gerrit (Ed.), *Handbook of Public Management in Africa. Political Science and Public Policy* (pp. 92–106). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Nonyane, P. C. (2019). *Exploring the Implementation of the Monitoring and Evaluation System in Local Government: A Case Study of eThekweni Municipality*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Thesis.
- Public Service Commission (2008). *Basic Concepts in Monitoring and Evaluation*. The Republic of South Africa. The Public Service Commission (PSC) Commission House. Pretoria.
- Public Service Commission (2012). Evolution of Monitoring and Evaluation in the South African Public Service. *Official Magazine of the Public Service Commission*, February/March 2012.
- Republic of South Africa (2007). *Policy Framework for the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Systems. Layout: Internal Communications*. Shereno Printers.
- Republic of South Africa (2011). *National Evaluation Policy Framework*. Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, a final policy document.
- Republic of South Africa (2012). *Municipal Assessment Tool Trial Version 1.3*. Department, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, Federal Republic of South Africa.
- Republic of South Africa (2019). *National Evaluation Policy Framework*. Department, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, Federal Republic of South Africa.
- SALGA (2019). *Municipal Performance Management Training Programme: Overseeing Performance Management in Local Government*. Political Stream Learner Manual. South African Local Government Association (SALGA).
- Selesho, S. (2001). *Performance Management Guide for Municipalities Draft II*. Department of Provincial and Local Government, Kashan Creative.
- Shadish, W. R. Jr., Cook, T. D., & Leviton, L. C. (1991). Good theory for social program evaluation. In *Foundations of Program Evaluation: Theories of Practice* (pp. 36–67). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- The Constitution (1996). Republic of South Africa, Pretoria. Government Printers.
- Tshaka, M. (2023). *Challenges of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in Service Delivery: A Case of A Selected Municipality in The Western Cape*. Dissertation for the Degree of Master of Technology in Public Management, Faculty of Business, Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), South Africa.
- United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) (2017). *Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework*. Revised April 2017. Annexe I, AC/UNITAR/2017.
- van der Walldt, G. (2015). Government Interventionism and Sustainable Development: The Case of South Africa. *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 8(2), 35–51.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Research Ethics Committee

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Copyright and Licence

This article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Licence. Published by the Małopolska School of Public Administration – Kraków University of Economics, Kraków, Poland.

Data Availability Statement

All data will be available and shared upon request.